

A HISTORY OF THE XHOSA c 1700 - 1835

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OF RHODES UNIVERSITY

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The candidate would like to express his appreciation to the Ernest Oppenheimer Memorial Trust whose scholarship for 1820 Settler and Eastern Cape History has made this research possible.



## PREFACE

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, who have made everything possible.



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## NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

The official orthography of the Xhosa language has recently undergone another change, and its results, especially in the spelling of proper names, are not yet final. I have tried to adhere to the new orthography, as reflected in the Xhosa press, as closely as possible. By 'Phalo' is sometimes spelt 'Phalho', 'Rhotomane' is sometimes spelt 'Rhotomani', 'Kobe' is sometimes spelt 'Kobi', 'Xato' is sometimes spelt 'Xhotho' and 'Nagase' is sometimes spelt 'Nagasea'. In all cases the name of the individual should be clearly recognizable. Chiefs who are mentioned in European but not in Xhosa sources, and whose proper Xhosa names are not apparent are given in inverted commas, for example, 'T'Zatin'.

The Xhosa language, like all Bantu languages, works with a system of prefixes. These prefixes have been dropped, except where their absence would lead to confusion. Specifically, 'Rharhabe' is used to refer to the chief Rharhabe himself (more correctly, it would be uRharhabe); the 'uRharhabe' are the people of Rharhabe; two Rharhabe persons are 'uRharhabe'; a number of Rharhabe persons (as distinct from Rharhabe's people as a whole) are 'abRharhabe'. The prefix 'ama-' may change to 'ala-' for phonetic reasons, hence 'amalinge' and not 'alalinge'.



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Abo. Com. Report of the Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements), Parl. Papers, No. 538 of 1836 and 425 of 1837.
- C.W.D. Vol. 1: Caffre War and Death of Hintza, Parl. Paper, No. 279 of 1836.  
Vol. 2: Caffre War: Copies or Extracts of any further Despatches, Parl. Paper, No. 503 of 1837.
- L.M.S. London Missionary Society.
- O.H. Oxford History of South Africa, eds Wilson and Thompson.
- R.C.C. Records of the Cape Colony, 36 Vols, ed G.M.Theal
- R.C.E. (Report of the Commissioners of Enquiry). Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Inhabitants of Southern Africa, Parl. Papers, No. 50 of 1835 and No. 252 of 1835.
- W.M.S. Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

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The Xhosa language, like all Bantu languages, works with a system of prefixes. These prefixes have been dropped, except where their absence would lead to confusion. Specifically, 'Rharhabe' is used to refer to the chief Rharhabe himself (more correctly, it would be uRharhabe); the 'amaRharhabe' are the people of Rharhabe; one Rharhabe person is an 'umRharhabe'; a number of Rharhabe persons (as distinct from Rharhabe's people as a whole) are 'abaRharhabe'. The prefix 'ama-' may change to 'imi-' for phonetic reasons, hence 'imiDange' and not 'amaMdange'.



I have removed prefixes where they would be clearly pedantic; for instance, I speak of 'the Xhosa' or 'the Thembu', rather than 'the amaXhosa' or the 'abeThembu'. Prefixes have been dropped when nouns act as adjectives, hence 'the Rharhabe army'.

It may be necessary to point out that the term 'Caffre' or 'Kaffer' which is today extremely derogatory did not have the same connotation in the early nineteenth century. 'Justus' titled his violently pro-Xhosa book The Wrongs of the Caffre Nation, which S.E.K. Mqhayi translated as Izoniwo zamaXhosa. Sometimes the word 'Caffre' was applied specifically to the Xhosa, as opposed to their neighbours, the Thembu ('Tambookies') and Mpondo ('Mambookies').

The country is a vast, open plain, with a few scattered hills and mountains, but better suited to stock-farming than intensive agriculture. The country tends to be well wooded, especially along the mountain slopes and the river banks. The hills in summer are often covered in a thick growth of grass and the land is well drained by numerous rivers which run from the mountains to the sea. There are virtually no mineral deposits, except for some diamonds found in the Teyateyan and Hai Rivers.

There are general characteristics which for considerable local variations. The full complexity of the vegetation would be adequately described here, but it may be roughly summarized as comprising forest with a few scattered

Note 1. The following is derived primarily from J.F.W. Ainslie's Wild Fowls of South Africa, (London, 1937); H.C. Pritchard and E. Smeeth's Geographical Zoology of South Africa, (London, 1937) were supplied by the Government Printer, Pretoria, and two excellent contemporary descriptions of the area between the Teyateyan and the Hai, that of L. Senghas, dated 1st March, 1926, to H.M. Thomsen, Journal of the Cape Colony, 1926, (London, 1927-1928) (hereafter H.C.O.), Vol. 1, 1927, pp. 38-41, and that of L. Senghas, Journal of the Cape Colony, 1927, (London, 1928) (hereafter H.C.O.), Vol. 2, 1928, pp. 1-4. The abridged version of the latter which appeared in L. Senghas' Journal of the Cape Colony, in H. Thomsen's Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa (London, 1927), reprinted 2 vols., Cape Town, 1927-28, II, pp. 216-22, gives much relevant information. I would also like to thank Prof. Colin Webb of the University of Cape Town for his helpful comments.



PROLOGUE: THE XHOSA AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT<sup>1</sup>

The boundaries of the territory occupied by the Xhosa fluctuated considerably, but in the period 1700 - 1835 they did not often extend west of the Sundays River, or east of the Mbashe River, along the coastal strip which separates the escarpment of South Africa's inland plateau from the Indian Ocean. It is an area of temperate grassland, such as maize, millet, tobacco and pumpkins, but better suited to stock-farming than intensive agriculture. The country tends to be well wooded, especially along the mountain slopes and the river banks. Rain falls in summer and the land is well drained by numerous rivers which run from the escarpment to the sea. There are virtually no mineral deposits, except for some ironstone around the Tyhume and Kei Rivers.

These general characteristics allow for considerable local variations. The full complexity of the vegetation cannot be adequately described here, but it may be roughly understood to comprise four adjacent belts running

Note: 1. The following is derived primarily from J.P.H. Acocks: Veld Types of South Africa, (Pretoria, 1953); N.C. Pollock and S. Agnew: An Historical Geography of South Africa, (London, 1963); maps supplied by the Government Printer, Pretoria; and two excellent contemporary descriptions of the area between the Fish and the Kei; that of I. Stocker, dated 1st March, 1820 in G.M. Theal Records of the Cape Colony, 36 vols, (London, 1897-1905)(hereafter R.C.C.); Vol. XIII, pp. 32-81, and that of J. Brownlee: enclosed in C.O. 163 J. Brownlee - C. Bird 26th August, 1822. The abridged version of the latter which appeared in J. Brownlee 'Account of the Amakosae' in G. Thompson: Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa (London, 1827; reprinted 2 vols, Cape Town, 1967-8), II pp. 214-8, omits much relevant information. I would also like to thank Prof. Colin Webb of the University of Cape Town for his helpful comments.



parallel to the coast.<sup>2</sup> The slopes of the escarpment, particularly those to the north-east are covered with sourveld.<sup>3</sup> From the point of view of pasturage, it is sheep rather than cattle country, except in summer. Further south are the smaller mountain ranges such as the Winterberg and the basins of the great rivers: Sundays, Fish, Buffalo, Kei. The pasturage here is mixed, and is composed of both sweetveld and sourveld (Valley Bushveld).<sup>4</sup> Between this belt and the coast lies an area where the veld is relatively sour (Eastern Province Thornveld) and the rainfall poor. This breaks through to the coast about halfway between the Bushmans and Sundays Rivers. Along the coast, the tertiary limestone outliers and outcrops permit sweetveld, causing this belt (Alexandria Forest west of the Keiskamma; Coastal Forest east of it) to resemble Valley Thornveld except that it is inferior to it as cattle country because of the thickness of the bush. These four belts are intersected by the valleys of the rivers, the vegetation of which is Valley Bushveld.

The rainfall varies too, being high in the mountains and along the coast but inadequate elsewhere. The lower reaches of most of the rivers dry up for at least a few days each year. Severe droughts extending over wide areas occur occasionally. This used to cause herdsmen from several chiefdoms to converge on the few well-favoured areas (such as the Kat River Valley) where the rivers continued to run.

Note: 2. For a full description of the vegetation of the area, see Acocks.

3. It appears that the areas west of the present Sourveld region were previously sourveld. See Acocks, pp. 115-6, 154.

4. Terms underlined are as given by Acocks.



Rivers and mountains were the magnets which determined the pattern of human settlement, for it was there that wood and water were to be found in the greatest abundance. In sourveld areas, rivers had the additional attraction of providing a fragile sweetveld. Areas with many rivers and streams accommodated many people and chiefdoms; a large land area drained by a single river would be occupied by the people of one chiefdom only. Thus each chiefdom had its own river, and each of its sub-chiefdoms had its own tributary. This is illustrated by the fact that all indigenous Khoi and Xhosa places of residence are named after rivers, except for a very few named after mountains and lakes. Gardens, tended mostly by women, were usually located between the huts and the rivers, and protected from cattle by mimosa bushes. The rest of the land was given over to pasturage and hunting-grounds.<sup>5</sup> The hunt was the most important food supplement in time of drought, and some game, such as the bluebuck, provided marketable commodities.

Xhosa land-usage may have appeared very wasteful to Europeans, who occasionally expressed the opinion that the Xhosa had all the land they required. This derives

Note: 5. The village settlement pattern has been diagrammatically represented by R. Derricourt: 'Settlement in the Transkei and Ciskei before the Mfecane' in C. Saunders and R. Derricourt (eds.): Beyond the Cape Frontier (London, 1974) p. 66. Derricourt's discussion (pp.69-71) is weakened by his failure to situate his model in a local context. His diagram on p. 67 correctly places his local community on both sides of the river, but that on p. 68 contradictorily places larger political units ("tribal clusters") on different sides of the same river.



not only from cultural prejudice,<sup>6</sup> but from the different manner in which Europeans and Xhosa understood land tenure, and in particular their differing attitudes towards water and land. The European concept of tenure was one of a clearly defined piece of land with a farmhouse in the middle and the use of whatever water happened to be running through it. Xhosa focussed on the river, the hinterland of which was seen as its obvious appendage. The whole belonged to the community jointly. The difference in settlement pattern reflected the relative density of the Xhosa population, compared with the European.

The economic rationality of the Xhosa may be seen in their pasture management. They have been described as semi-nomadic, but this is incorrect. Xhosa did migrate for political reasons, and their demand for land increased with every generation, but their use of pasturage was that of a settled community. Sourveld provides excellent grazing in summer but loses most of its nutritional value after about four months so that an exclusive diet of it causes botulism and stiff sickness in cattle.<sup>7</sup> Sweetveld retains most of its nutritional value throughout the

Note: 6. "Officials uniformly observed ... that there was plenty of land for the tribesmen if they would be more provident and industrious. The incongruity of such assertions with the acceptance of the necessity of huge farms of 6,000 acres or more for European settlers was not recognized." J.S. Galbraith: Reluctant Empire (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963), p. 48.

7. The discussion of the properties of sourveld and sweetveld is taken from South Africa. Department of Agriculture: Handbook for Farmers in South Africa, 3 vols., (1957), Vol. III 'Stock Farming and Pastures', pp. 620-623.



year, but an excess of it was believed at the time to give rise to a lung disease.<sup>8</sup> Moreover whereas sourveld is extremely tough, sweetveld is delicate and can easily be destroyed by overgrazing. Consequently, the best combination is to graze cattle on the sourveld in the summer, while resting the sweetveld, and to graze them on the sweetveld in winter when the nutritional value of the sourveld is at its lowest. Alternatively, it is possible to burn sourveld to make it sweet, a practice which causes minimal damage to the soil if not overdone.<sup>9</sup> The Xhosa adopted both practices. Transhumance (seasonal rotation of livestock) knew no boundaries. The amaMbalu chief, Langa, was "in the habit of moving away for a short time each year and then resuming his stay among the Christians."<sup>10</sup> One traveller found the amaMbalu chiefs west of the Fish while their huts and villages were maintained in perfect order east of the Fish.<sup>11</sup> Nor was it only colonial boundaries that were disregarded.

Note: 8. L. Alberti: Alberti's Account of the Xhosa in 1807 (Original Dutch edition, 1810; trans. W. Fehr, Cape Town, 1968), pp. 16-17n.

9. For examples of field burning, see R. Collins: 'Relations of a Journey into the Country at the Bosjemans and Caffre People' in D. Moodie (ed.): The Record (Cape Town, 1838-41), Part V, p. 39; J. Backhouse: Narrative of a Visit to the Mauritius and South Africa (London, 1844).

10. Quoted in J.S. Marais: Maynier and the First Boer Republic (Cape Town, 1944), p. 17.

11. J. Barrow: Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa, 2 Vols., (2nd ed., London, 1806), I, p. 144.



Langa's son, Nqeno, a supporter of chief Ngqika, continued to send his herds across the Fish into the territory of Ngqika's rival, Ndlambe.<sup>12</sup> The Gqunukhwebe chief, Chungwa, alarmed the Colonial authorities by annually moving closer to Uitenhage, the seat of the local administration. But the regularity of his movements between the Sundays/Zwartkops in summer and the Bushmans in winter indicates that he was only moving his *stock* between their summer and winter grazing (see Table I). Similar patterns cannot be documented for chiefs who resided east of the Fish, but they were even more likely since these chiefs did not have to adapt to the European presence. Rotation would not, however, have necessitated movements over equally long distances, since pasturage was mixed to a far greater degree.

Politics were, if anything, even more important than ecological preferences in determining land usage. A powerful and ambitious chief could never have too many subordinates. Rharhabe and Ndlambe, for example, wanted the Colonists to drive the weaker chiefs into their land. Chungwa went so far as to confiscate cattle from two minor chiefs to force them to stay with him.<sup>13</sup> Even when they had been pushed beyond the Keiskamma River, Xhosa chiefs welcomed Mfengu immigrants because they added to their political strength.<sup>14</sup> Possession of good grazing-land was therefore an important source of political and military power. On the other hand, it did not guarantee it. For, if the immigrant groups

Note: 12. C O. 2575 G. Stolz - J. Cuyler, 29 December, 1810.  
The herds were in charge of Nqeno's brother,  
'Kamma'.

13. See Chapter IV (3), p. 109.

14. See Chapter VII (3), pp. 199-200.



were stronger than their hosts they might well try and turn the tables and seize power themselves. This happened when the amaTshawe defeated the amaCira to become the rulers of the Xhosa. Later, the immigrant amaNgqosini tried to overthrow the amaTshawe but failed.<sup>15</sup> Later still, disputes broke out when Bawana's Thembu and the amaMfengu resisted the political overlordship of the Xhosa chiefs on whose lands they had settled.<sup>16</sup> The circular relationship between possession of military power and possession of good land (power→land; land→power) can allow of no general statement concerning which of the two preceded the other among the Xhosa.<sup>17</sup> It can only be said that the two reinforced each other so that the best lands were occupied by the most powerful chiefs.

In a closed system, a homeostatic tendency prevents political competition having a wasteful effect on land use. As powerful chiefs gain land, less powerful chiefs lose it, so that the amount of land used remains constant. The Xhosa system was not closed since it was possible for less powerful chiefs to migrate beyond the reach of their

Note:15. See Chapter II (1), p. 63.

16. See Chapter VII (3), p. 203

17. A good example of the complex relations between land and power is that of the Bemba who became a powerful military state because their natural resources were so poor, they were virtually forced to conquer in order to survive. See A.D. Roberts: A History of the Bemba (Madison, Wisc., 1973), especially Chapters VI and IX.



superiors. But since the new areas into which the Xhosa moved were not empty and the indigenous population was not expelled but incorporated into the Xhosa policy,<sup>18</sup> it cannot be said that the Xhosa political system led to underutilisation of ecological resources.

Because the concept of 'subsistence' is largely a question of definition, because any expanding national group always feels that it is short of land,<sup>19</sup> and because we lack anything like adequate figures,<sup>20</sup> it is impossible to name a point at which Xhosaland would have become objectively inadequate for carrying its population.<sup>21</sup> But in view of the continuous willingness of chiefs to absorb obedient subordinates, it would appear that in the early period, need for land should be seen primarily in political terms. Each chief wished to have enough land to support his people at the economic level to which they had become accustomed without at the same time subordinating himself to another chief.

Note: 18. See Chapter II (1).

19. M. Sahlins: 'The Segmentary Lineage System: An Organisation of Predatory Expansion', American Anthropologist (1961), reprinted in R. Cohen and J. Middleton: Comparative Political Systems. (Garden City, N.Y., 1967), p. 117.

20. See Collins, V, p. 8.

21. On the general question of the relationship between man and his environment, and on the question of 'optimum population', see A.G. Hopkins: An Economic History of West Africa (London, 1973), pp. 14, 15.



By closing the frontier, and then causing it to contract, the Colony introduced the principle of political homeostasis. It was no longer possible for a chief to increase his power, except at the expense of another chief. The ecological impact of the frontier closure was initially cushioned by the relatively low population density and the presence of hunting-grounds which could be turned into pasture. But it too was to have its effect eventually.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
3. B. G. 73 *Brasão-Madrugado*, 27th April 1795.
4. B. G. 74 *Brasão-Madrugado*, 16th September 1795.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 100. (As Servin points out, this is far north of Chagres's usual area. The probable reason is that, having just made peace with the British, Chagres wished to keep as far west as possible. In accordance with this wish, he changed his transhumance pattern from west-east to north-south. This hypothesis is strengthened by



# TRANSHUMANCE PATTERNS.

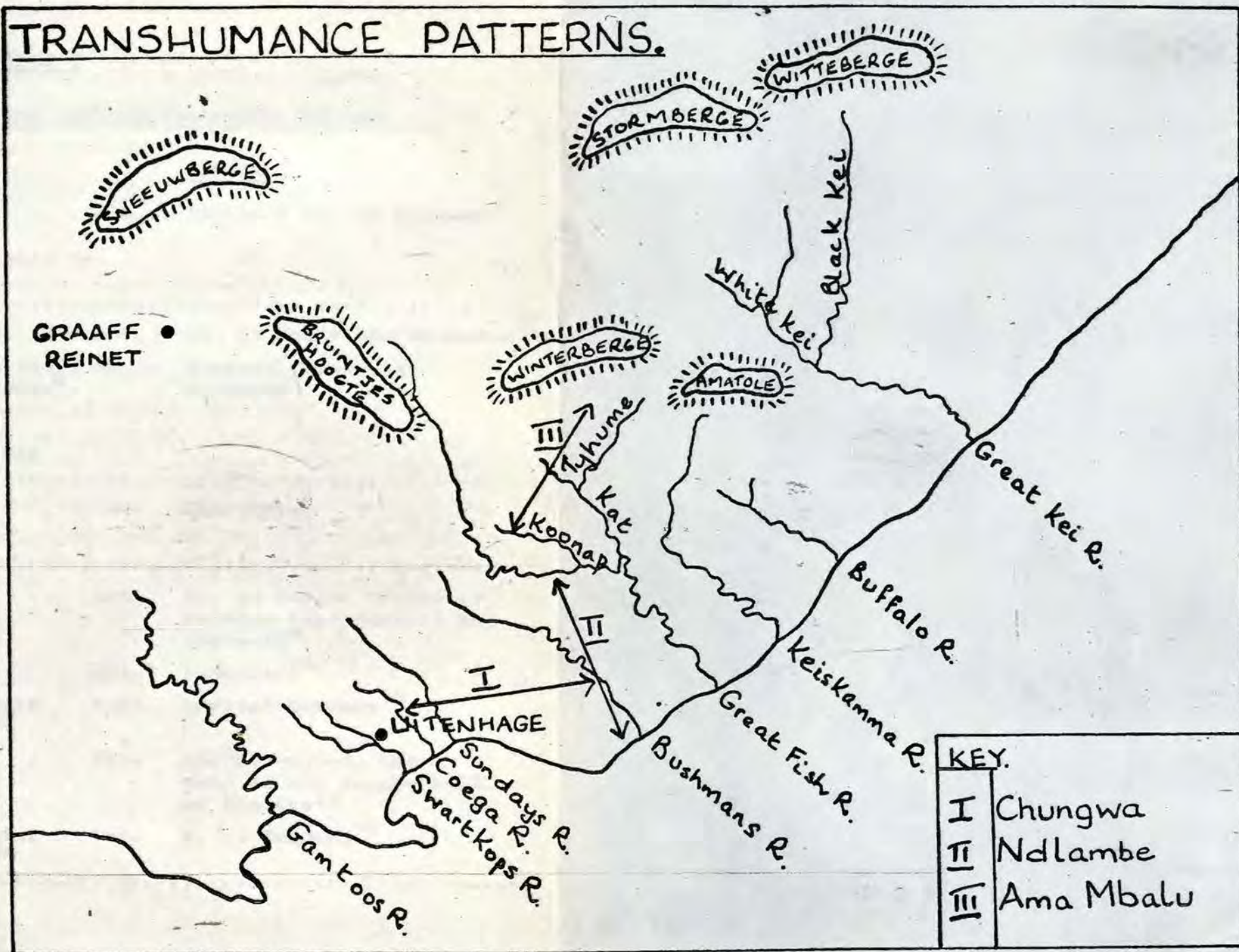




TABLE I

RECORDED RESIDENCES OF THE GQUNUKHWEBE CHIEF, CHUNGWA

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>WINTER</u>	<u>SUMMER</u>
1792		Feb. Tshaka & Ch. on Bushmans <sup>1</sup>
	June Tshaka trekking to Sundays <sup>2</sup>	
1797		Nov. Ch. at Kowie and Bushmans <sup>3</sup>
1798	April Between Zwartkops and Van Stadens <sup>4</sup>	Sept. Bucknas forest, nr. Bushmans <sup>5</sup>
1799	April at Sundays <sup>6</sup>	?
1800	May/June Bavians River <sup>7</sup>	
1801		Nov. Zwartkops <sup>8</sup>
1802	August? Bucknas <sup>9</sup>	
1807		Sept. Ch. at Koega: followers between Van Staden's and Gamtoos <sup>10</sup>
1808	?	Oct. Langkloof <sup>11</sup>
1809	Somewhere east of Sundays <sup>12</sup>	Sept. Arrives Sundays <sup>12</sup>
1810		Feb. Ch. has moved, but many of his people still at Sundays <sup>13</sup>
	Somewhere east of Sundays <sup>14</sup>	Oct. W. of Sundays <sup>14</sup>

SOURCES AND COMMENT

1. Chiefs (presumably with main body) at Bushmans, some followers at Sundays (February being transitional part of season) Marais, p. 17.
2. Marais, p. 18.
3. Marais, p. 49.
4. B O 73 Bresler-Macartney, 27th April 1798.
5. B O 74 Bresler-Macartney, 16th September 1798.
6. Marais, p. 106.
7. Marais, p. 124. (As Marais points out, this is far north of Chungwa's usual area. The probable reason is that, having just made peace with the British, Chungwa wished to keep as far west as possible, in accordance with their wishes, and changed his transhumance pattern from east - west to north-south. This hypothesis is strengthened by



fact that when Ndlambe resided in the area, he too followed a north-south pattern. (C O 2572, J. Cuyler - Caledon, 25 Dec. 1809; Collins, V, p. 50). Unfortunately there is not enough information on Ndlambe's movements to reconstruct his transhumance pattern.)

8. Marais, p. 132. (From this time on, we find a shift in Chungwa's transhumant pattern, almost certainly due to the arrival of Ndlambe west of the Fish).
9. Marais, pp. 142-3.
10. This move far to the west is probably due to a "great mortality" in his cattle at the Koega, his usual residence in the Sundays area. C O 2561 Cuyler - Barnard, 26 Sept. 1807; Collins, V, p. 53. Chungwa also complained to Cuyler about Ndlambe's presence in his area.
11. D. Moodie, V, p. 59.
12. C O 2566 Cuyler - Colonial Secretary, 9 Dec. 1809. Chungwa told Cuyler that he could not stay at his old place because he had lost over forty head of cattle there. It was at this time that the incident of the ox took place. See p. III.
13. C O 2572 Cuyler - Alexander, 10 Feb. 1810. (Chungwa moved ahead of his subjects (transitional part of season again) in order to please Cuyler.
14. C O 2575 Cuyler - Colonial Secretary, 8 Jan. 1811. Chungwa made a pretence of moving early because of Cuyler's threats but soon sent a message saying he wished to return because wolves (hyenas) were destroying his cattle.



## CHAPTER I : XHOSA HISTORIOGRAPHY

### 1. Oral Traditions

There are three types of Xhosa oral traditions directly related to history: genealogies (iminombo), praises (izibongo) and tales (amabali, singular ibali).

The genealogy is today the most highly esteemed and politically relevant of these. For the chief it is the essential proof, and the only necessary proof, of his chiefship. It is still the crucial index of seniority. All chiefs can recite their genealogies even if only very incompletely, and most have a more detailed written one readily available.<sup>1</sup> For the historian who already has the names, this emphasis on genealogies is counter-productive since, in many cases, it satisfies the need Xhosa feel for historical knowledge without preserving much information. Both clans and chiefs have praises. Clan praises, usually consisting of only one word, are still in universal use. When one Xhosa tells another the name of his clan, the latter will probably respond with a clan-praise. (For instance, "I am an umNgwevu" "Ah! Tshangisa!"). The praises have historical roots. For instance, 'Hlomla', one of the praises of the Cira clan, refers to the famous incident in which Cira demanded a bluebuck from Tshawe.<sup>2</sup> Unfort-

Note: 1. During my fieldwork, when an official meeting was called to 'give the history', I often found that this consisted of only the genealogy, and had to recommence my explanations of what it was that I wanted. For example, interviews with Chief Thabatile Sigcawu, Jujura Location, Willowvale District, 2 Nov. 1975; Chief Blorweni Mdibaniso, Ntlahtlane Location, Willowvale District, 30 Oct. 1975; Chief Qalindawo Feni, Qolora 'C' Location, Kentani District, 13 Jan. 1976.

2. See Chapter II (1), p. 40.



unately, very few Xhosa can explain any of their clan-praises, the usual explanations being that the praise is the name of 'some old chief or other'.<sup>3</sup> It should, however, be standard practice for historical fieldworkers to obtain clan praises and, where available, explanations from their informants.

The character of Xhosa praise-poetry has changed considerably, from being primarily memorised and therefore fixed to being primarily improvised.<sup>4</sup> Fortunately, many of the old praise-poems were collected and published by W.B. Rubusana.<sup>5</sup> But they are difficult to use as historical sources because of the obscurity of most of the allusions.<sup>6</sup> Most of the more comprehensible

Note: 3. The duplication of certain praise-names in the praises of different clans raises intriguing possibilities in tracing relationships, but there are too many documented coincidences of names to permit hypotheses on these lines. For instance:

Xoxo - son of Nqgika

Xoxo - son of Mapassa, son of Bhurhu

Mapassa - son of Bhurhu

Mapassa - grandson of Tshatshu, son of Xhoba (Thembu)

Tshatshu - son of Xhoba (Thembu)

Tshatshu - son of Ciko (Ntinde)

4. J. Opland: 'Praise Poems as Historical Sources' in Saunders and Derricourt, op cit

5. Zemk'iinkomo Magwalandini ('The cattle are leaving, you cowards!' i.e. you are losing your heritage), (London, 1906).

6. I regularly question<sup>ed</sup> informants concerning allusions in praise-poems given by Rubusana, but in no case was I able to get an explanation of a point I did not already understand. For example, interviews with descendants of Anta, Teko Location, Kentani District, 5 Jan. 1976; descendants of Feni, Qolora C Location, Kentani District, 13 Jan, 1976. See praises of Anta and Feni, Rubusana pp. 251-2, 298-9.



lines are either simple metaphors or stereotypes. Praise-poetry was far from sycophantic, but criticism was usually implicit<sup>7</sup> - damning with faint praise, being a typical technique - and is therefore completely lost through the obscurity of the allusions. Occasional details are illuminating, such as the following from the praises of Rharhabe:

He dresses himself in short garments

But they suit him well

Because he says the big ones hide his knees

The point is that Rharhabe was restless and liked freedom to move about.<sup>8</sup>

Valuable as such details are to descriptive history, they do not contribute substantially to the sort of interpretative general history with which we are here concerned. Praise-poetry's greatest asset is its ability to provide the reader with the 'feel' of the period, but it is best read as it stands rather than in prose paraphrases.

The most important historical vehicle in Xhosa oral tradition is the ibali, or tale. Amabali may be remembered because they explain how certain present circumstances came to exist. The story of Tshawe, for instance, tells how the amaTshawe came to be the royal house, and the story of Phalo's two brides explains the rise of the Right-Hand house. They may be purely local, dealing with circumstances of interest to the

Note: 7. See, for example, A. Mafeje: 'The Role of a Bard in a Contemporary African Community', Journal of African Languages, VI, (1967).

8. S.E.K. Mqhayi: 'URarabe' in W.G. Bennie: Imibengo (Titbits) (Lovedale, 1935).



particular group which relates them, such as histories of particular chiefs or clans. Others may be remembered for their entertainment value. These include stories concerning the origins of the War of the Axe and the War of Ngayechibi (the Ninth Frontier War), the cattle-killing disaster and the death of Hintsa. Each tale is a separate unit, and they are not thought of as a sequence over time. It is up to the genealogy to take care of chronology.

The amabali are free in form, and their transmission is random in that there was no institutionalised means of making certain that they were remembered.<sup>9</sup> They were communicated, like all other necessary general knowledge, at court, round the fires, and in the circumcision schools. Inasmuch as chiefs and important councillors took care to instruct the sons who would succeed them, there was some assurance that a body of historical information would accumulate, and *that it would be passed down. Despite this, it may readily be seen* that there was plenty of scope for distortion and loss of traditions through failure of memory.

Distortion is inevitable in oral cultures, and is far more socially significant than the random forgetting which occurs in literature cultures.<sup>10</sup> Since the oral cultures usually lack the means of

- Note: 9. For a discussion of the effect of the means of transmission on the tradition, see J. Vansina: Oral Tradition (French edition, 1961; trans. H.M. Wright, London, 1965), pp. 31-45.
10. For an excellent discussion of the differences between oral and literate societies, see J. Goody and I. Watt: 'The Consequences of Literacy' in J. Goody (ed.): Literacy in Traditional Societies (Cambridge, 1968).



fixing the memory of the past, they are able to avoid being confronted with its differentness from the present. This results in a tendency to bring the past into line with the present and to believe that things have always been as they are, a tendency which is exemplified in the presumption that custom is immutable. This influences what is remembered: the more socially relevant the tradition, the more people are likely to know it, and the longer it remains so, the longer they are likely to remember it.<sup>11</sup> The way it is remembered is also influenced. The more widely remembered the tradition and the further back in time it goes, the more mythical and non-specific it becomes. It is far better to view such myths metaphorically, as summaries or interpretations of past events, than literally, as straight-forward narrations of events that actually occurred.

Distortion also occurs for political reasons. Even when political behaviour appears to adhere to a stringent set of rules, there is usually considerable room for flexibility and manoeuvring.<sup>12</sup> Irregular seizures of power, for instance, can often find some justification. As the event recedes into the past and the victor becomes even better established, the circumstances fade and only

- Note: 11. Functionalist anthropologists such as Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown used to argue that since all myth was functional to the present, oral societies could transmit no valid information about the past. See Vansina, p. 12. Recently, symbolists have adopted a similar position. See, for example L. de Heusch: 'What shall we do with the drunken King?' Africa, XLV, (1975). These anthropologists seem to have ignored mnemonic devices, institutionalised means of transmission, and survivals of the past in the present, all of which lend some certainty to diachronic myth-interpretation.
12. Similar arguments have recently been put forward for the Tswana by J.L. Comaroff: 'Chiefship in a South African Homeland', Journal of South African Studies, I, (Oct. 1974).



the justification survives. The dispossessed groups may retain an independent recollection of events but this is likely to disappear as soon as they accept the situation. Often, however, the tradition makes use of 'clichés' to cloak the ambiguities, and these supply clues to the historian: twins, for example, may indicate a succession dispute, and the return of a prodigal/formerly wronged son may indicate an invasion.<sup>13</sup> Oral genealogies, particularly those which place members of the same generation in ranking order, therefore tend to be chronicles of successes and failures rather than simple family history. Political distortion is not confined to quarrels, as, for instance, when peripheral individuals or groups claim or receive genealogical affiliations which enhance their prestige.

These forms of distortion are common to most oral traditions, and Xhosa traditions are particularly subject to them because of their relatively loose form and method of transmission. For the same reasons, they are also liable to distortion through transposition of setting, aetiological error, lack of time depth, telescoping and contamination from written sources. Although the episodes and plot of a tale cannot be changed without destroying its coherence, the setting ("the time and place in which the tale unfolds, and the names of the persons who appear in it")<sup>14</sup> is not an integral part of the tale,

Note: 13. Vansina defines a cliché, which he calls a wandersagen or complex stereotype, as follows: "a literary device for explaining a historical fact which is already known, for adding colour to a narrative, or for describing a disagreeable past event without upsetting existing cultural values." (p. 74).

14. Vansina, pp. 62-3.



and can easily be forgotten or mistaken. It is not uncommon to find an informant remembers a story perfectly, but is not sure of the names of the heroes. Sometimes it seems to be simply a question of putting the most appropriate chief into the vacant slot. Among the ama-Gcaleka, for instance, a tale dealing with the high classical period will usually be attributed to Sarhili, and one dealing with the very earliest period to Phalo or Gcaleka. Aetiology ("inference from the present")<sup>15</sup> occurs at all levels, from major institutions, like the Right-Hand house, to specific details, as in the case of one Gcaleka informant living in the Willowvale District who said that Ndlambe was living in the Idutywa district at the time of the abduction of Thuthula whereas in fact the amaNdlambe only arrived in Idutywa after 1857.<sup>16</sup> Aetiology is closely related to lack of time depth. The personal characteristics of the last chiefs of the classical period: Sarhili, Sandile, Maqoma, Mhala, Siwani, Phato, Khama, are remembered to some extent, whereas Hintsa, Ngqika, Ndlambe, Mdushane and Chungwa are little more than names. Even so, it is the later life of the former chiefs which is most clearly remembered. Many traditions concerning the War of Ngayechibi survive, but none at all concerning such dramatic incidents as Sandile's detention under false pretences in 1846, or his followers' killing of James Brownlee by mistake in 1851. Oba and Anta, ferocious fighters in the Eighth Frontier War, are remembered as men of peace because they did not fight in the

Note: 15. Roberts, p. 45.

16. Interview with Thabevu Monayi, Jujura Location, Willowvale District, 3 Nov. 1975.



Ninth.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes this factor combines with transposability of setting to produce an apparent falsehood.<sup>18</sup> Telescoping, the reduction of several events to a single story, is frequent. The rivalry between Ngqika and Ndlambe, for example, is boiled down exclusively to the abduction of Thuthula, and the deeper issues are forgotten. Transposition of setting and telescoping joined up in the case of an informant who, having combined the stories of Nongqawuse and the 1885 famine, which she had lived through as a girl, believed that she had experienced the famine which followed the cattle-killing.<sup>19</sup>

Another problem is contamination from written sources since most informants have had some schooling. The best known oral historians in Xhosaland, Chief E. Bhotomane and N.C. Melane, prided themselves on their ability to cite dates, and were respected for this by other Xhosa. Several other informants possessed copies of Rubusana's Zemk'iinkomo Magwalandini, or W.G. Bennie's Imibengo. Furthermore, most of the skilled historians knew each other, except for one small group which neither knew nor were known by the other historians. Although such contamination has had a serious effect on the traditions themselves, they need not deceive the historian, provided he takes the elementary precaution of asking his informant for his sources.

Note: 17. Interview with Bomvane Fikile Anta, Teko Location, Kentani District, 8 Jan. 1976; 'Umfi uOba Ngonyama Tyali' (Obituary of Oba), Izwi la Bantu, 23 Apr. 1907.

18. For instance, one informant asserted that Maqoma had refused to kill his cattle in 1857. Subsequent investigation showed that Maqoma's son, Kona, from whom the informant was descended, had indeed refused to kill. Interview with Chief Gladstone Maqoma, Ngqungqe Location, Kentani District, 19 Jan. 1976 (Notebook only).

19. Interview with Mrs. Elizabeth Mpanga, Thwecu Location, King Williams Town District, 19 Aug. 1975.



Most informants were proud of what they had read, and cited it with pleasure, and they also enjoyed discussing other historians. School history is so alien to Xhosa oral history that apart from the dates, it has simply been ignored. Even printed vernacular history has not penetrated to any great extent. Good and detailed histories of Maqoma and Ndlambe are readily available in Xhosa,<sup>20</sup> but neither the amaJingqi (Maqoma) or the amaNdlambe referred to them, although both chiefs were well-educated men.<sup>21</sup> The one exception is Mqhayi's story of the twins of Vuyisile, which was widely known, even among illiterate people.<sup>22</sup>

It is very apparent that Xhosa oral tradition has declined considerably in the twentieth century. The reasons are not hard to find. Unlike folktales, whose undying appeal is lodged in the fantasies of the subconscious and which still flourish in Xhosaland,<sup>23</sup> history is closely tied to the external world. The world of the traditions is very unreal to the Xhosa today, and difficult for them to visualise. Chiefs approximate more to the local bureaucracy than to the fighting leaders of a hundred years ago, and the presence of the white West permeates even the remotest corner of Xhosaland, so that it is impossible to imagine a time when all Xhosa wore red ochre and managed their affairs independently. Today the men go out into the

- Note: 20. S.E.K. Mqhayi: 'UMaqoma' in Mqhayi: Ityale Lamawele (The Lawsuit of the Twins), (Lovedale, 1914);  
N.C. Mhala: 'Ukuvela kwamaNdlambe' (The Origin of the amaNdlambe) in Bennie op cit.
21. Interview with Chief Ngwenyathi Makinana, Ndlambe Great Place, Mdantsane District, 1 Sept. 1975;  
Interview with Chief Gladstone Maqoma, Ngqungqe Location, Kentani District, 19 Jan. 1976.
22. Interview with Nyuthi Waphi, Jujura Location, Willowvale District, 2 Nov. 1975.
23. See H. Scheub: The Xhosa Ntsomi (Oxford, 1976).



cities and the mines, and when they return, the conversation revolves around jobs, employers and machinery, and the exploits related to these, and not the heroes of an epoch now irrevocably dead. Alternative entertainments - radio, films and liquor - have taken their toll, primarily in the towns, but that is where most Xhosa men spend the greater part of their lives, leaving the children in the rural areas to be brought up by women, who do not know amabali.

Oral education is commonly regarded as a poor second to school education, even among the illiterate. Two examples should demonstrate this point. I was at a beer-drink with one of my best informants, who was acknowledged locally as an expert on history and custom, when he was approached for his opinion on a tricky point of marriage custom. While he was giving it, a third man interrupted, saying, "Well, that's your opinion, but will the magistrate agree with you?" The neighbour then left to find someone who knew the official ruling on the subject.<sup>24</sup> On another occasion, I was interviewing Nongqawuse's great-nephew, a man whose mother had actually known the prophetess personally. In the middle of the interview, his sister walked in and told him he was talking nonsense. She knew the true story of Nongqawuse from her English school reader, and proceeded to recite it to me - in English!<sup>25</sup> Chiefs now seek secretaries who are literate and speak the official languages. These are often complete outsiders, and it is they who are

Note: 24. The informant was N. Qeqe. The incident occurred at Shixini Location, Willowvale District on 30 Nov. 1975.

25. Interview with Wallace Sukutu, Urban Location, Alexandria, 27 Feb. 1976.



responsible for official business, which includes the history of chiefdom. Once this has been written down, it is considered to be 'known', and there is no functional need for history beyond it.

On the other hand, oral tradition will never entirely disappear. There are about fifteen basic amabali in Xhosa,<sup>26</sup> and any reasonably well-informed Xhosa will know at least ten of them, and probably one or two more about his clan or his chief. Ironically enough, one reason why Xhosa oral traditions have yielded relatively little new is that we already know so much from written sources. Because of our greater ignorance, Thembu oral traditions would probably furnish much more new information though they are probably no better preserved than those of the Xhosa.

Now that the initial enthusiasm for oral traditions has passed, there has been something of a reaction against them as a historical source. It seems to me that those who raise objections to the use of oral tradition do not understand the claims that have been made on its behalf. These claims have always been very modest, and those historians who have used them with the greatest success have always been the first to acknowledge their limitations, and the tentative nature of their conclusions. It seems therefore useful to commence an assessment of the historical value of oral traditions with an assertion of what oral traditions are not. Xhosa oral traditions do not give the 'Xhosa side' of frontier history. They can not tell how the Xhosa reacted to the Glenelg treaty system, nor what Sandile was thinking in 1850. They may, of course, throw

Note: 26. For a list of these, see Appendix IC.



light on these points, but they do not provide a version which justifies Xhosa actions to set up alongside the European tradition which justifies Colonial actions. Unlike the details of their internal relationships, these circumstances are no longer socially relevant to the Xhosa today. Most long-established amabali dealing with Xhosa-European relationships have been superseded by the 'new oral history', which will be discussed below. Second, the episodic structure of the traditions, the loose manner of their transmission and their tendency to telescope and transpose settings cause the traditions to be factually inexact, and sometimes extremely so. The historian who asks pointed questions, and then concludes that his informant is ignorant because he gets names muddled up, will not learn much from oral traditions. Third, the historian cannot hope for articulation of the guiding principles of social, political or religious behaviour which are assumed as normal by informants. It is only by accumulation of examples and the identification of key words and phrases that the historian can deduce these. Even less can he expect explanations of past events which seem to him clearly impossible, particularly those of a magical-religious nature. If the informant is not so Westernised as to be himself ashamed of his people's 'superstition', his attitude will probably be that 'we know that such things do not happen today but things were different then' or 'we know that we ordinary men could never do such things, but Nxito was no ordinary man.' Researchers who press their informants too hard will, at best, upset them, and at worst, be told whatever nonsense the informant thinks will please. Oral tradition is, by definition, passed down over



the generations: the informant should not say one word more than what his own informant told him, and, if he does, it is not worth hearing.

Nevertheless, if oral traditions are not judged by the exacting standards of a historiography buttressed by documentary evidence and a detached, comparative approach, much of value may be found. To begin with, they do supply us with information which, however defective, can be found nowhere else. The information on Gcaleka history in this thesis, for example, is derived almost entirely from oral tradition. Second, simply by providing a history of the Xhosa people in their own language and by providing examples of particular processes, they allow outsiders to acquire an empathy with Xhosa presuppositions, assessments and general modes of thought and behaviour, which is of considerable assistance in interpreting documentary evidence. Finally, and most important, whatever their literal truth, all traditions conceal some information of historical significance, even though it may be couched in metaphorical or mythical form. Perhaps the most important skill which the historian of African peoples needs to bring to his subject is an ability to interpret such myths, to disentangle cliché and embellishment from substance, to set the tradition in its historical context, and to interpret its significance. Since any interpretation is open to question, and since the procedure may appear to be reminiscent of the worst excesses of Levi-Strauss, the following passage from Vansina is worth quoting in full. What he says applies to all historians, and not only to historians of oral societies:

Every historian is obliged to interpret the sources he is dealing with. He does not and cannot have an unlimited knowledge of history, and there is usually



more than one interpretation of the facts at his disposal. In addition, the historian adds something of his own to these facts, namely, his own particular flair, which is something more akin to art than to science. The only concession to history as a scientific discipline he can make here is to ensure that he discloses what his sources are, so that his readers will be informed as to the reasons for the choice he has made in his interpretation of the texts. Interpretation is a choice between several possible hypotheses, and the good historian is the one who chooses the hypothesis that is most likely to be true. In practice it can never have more than a likelihood of truth, because the past has gone for good and all, and the possibility of first-hand observation of past events is forever excluded. History is no more than a calculation of probabilities.<sup>27</sup>

Interpretation of oral tradition is not only possible, but essential. If a historian cannot understand a tradition, then he cannot possibly have understood the people who consider the tradition sufficiently important to keep alive. The most compelling reason for the historian to make use of oral tradition is that he cannot afford to ignore it.

Note: 27. Vansina, pp. 184-5.



## 2. The 'New Oral History'

Oral history among the Xhosa has not remained static. The decline of the amabali, the influence of school education and written history, and the force of nationalism have combined to forge a new oral history, which, although it runs counter to 'objective' history of the type attempted here and is moreover destructive of the older oral traditions, must be recognised as the most potent force in Xhosa historiography today. The new oral history is based in the towns and among the rural elite. It caters to those who feel that the old oral history is irrelevant, although its ablest practitioners are well versed in amabali. Its distinguishing features are that it is to a considerable extent based on written school history in the tradition of Theal<sup>28</sup> and that, unlike the amabali, individual events are subordinated to a unifying historical conception - the conquest of the Xhosa by the Europeans, and their struggle against it.

As a result of the prestige of a school education and the incomparable quality of writing as a mnemonic device, school history drove oral history from the centre

Note: 28. G.M. Theal wrote a multivolume history of South Africa (Various editions, London, 1892 - 1919) with a distinct pro-Colony, anti-Xhosa and anti-Khoi bias. This has set the tone for much subsequent historical writing. Although he was repeatedly criticised in his lifetime by, among others, the Cape Archivist H.C.V. Leibbrandt, the first major onslaught on his integrity was J.S. Marais: Maynier and the First Boer Republic (Cape Town, 1944). Since then his role in South African historiography has continued to be a subject of controversy.



of the Xhosa elite's historical consciousness. At the same time, a history in which the Xhosa were portrayed as villainous and foolish savages became increasingly unacceptable as missionary influence gave way to nationalism. The balance was redressed by the creation of a history of counter-assertions, which Mr. I. Sangotsha, a prominent Ciskei politician and secretary to the late Rharhabe Paramount Mxolisi Sandile, described as "my grandfather's version of their version".<sup>29</sup> Sangotsha is famous in the Ciskei for having asked a leading Republican official one of the new oral history's favourite questions at an official gathering. Reacting to the traditional charge that the Xhosa were always stealing Colonial cattle, he asked 'Where did those cattle come from? Did the whites bring them over the sea in those old wooden ships?'

To the Xhosa, with the limited amount of historical information at their disposal, the answer seems self-evident: the Colonial cattle were stolen from the Xhosa in the first place. Current issues are projected back into the past: there is a tradition concerning the manner in which the whites stole the land by a trick, and another concerning the erection of beacons, which are part of the unpopular 'trust' land programme. The Xhosa are seen as the victims of history: the Nongqawuse incident was engineered by Sir George Grey, and quarrels between chiefs or black nations are seen as the result of 'Divide and Rule' policies. These ideas have in no way been influenced by the polemical writings of Majeke

Note: 29. Interview with Isaac Sangotsha, Ntsikizini Location, King Williams Town District, 2 Sept. 1975.



and others, which are virtually unknown.<sup>30</sup> They are part of a spontaneous new tradition which is shared by Xhosa of all political persuasions in both the Transkei and Ciskei. The facts of the new oral history are the facts of school history, but they have been rearranged and supplemented to provide a more satisfactory explanation of the past.

The academic historian may easily find flaws in these arguments, and deplore the trend they exhibit. Perhaps therefore it is as well to point out that after nearly fifty years of academic refutation the spirit of Theal still dominates the historical thinking of most white South Africans, and is likely to do so in the foreseeable future. Because history is important and functional to a people, they prefer the history that best accords with their own self-image. This is why the new oral history has such a hold on the Xhosa today.

### 3. Xhosa Written Sources

The first Xhosa newspaper, Ikhwezi (The Morning Star) (1844-5), published the first Xhosa historical writing.<sup>31</sup> It was both appropriate and significant that the subject was Ntsikana, the Christian prophet, for all the major contributors to the Xhosa historical record have been

Note: 30. N. Majeke: The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest (Johannesburg, 1952).

31. For the history of Xhosa literature, see A.C. Jordan: Towards an African Literature (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1973); D.P. Kunene and R.A. Kirsch: The Beginnings of South African Vernacular Literature (Los Angeles, 1967). These deal with some of the authors mentioned, as does A.S. Gerard: Four African Literatures (Berkeley, 1971), which is however occasionally inaccurate, and not particularly helpful.



devout and practising Christians, if not actually ministers.<sup>32</sup> From the narrowly historical viewpoint, this circumstance has been detrimental. These men's religious duties and inclinations prevented some of the most capable from writing more history.<sup>33</sup> Their constant friendship with sympathetic Europeans and their attachment to Christianity caused them to suppress or mute historical opinions or attitudes which they felt reflected discreditably on the Xhosa people. On the other hand, it seems unlikely that their association with Christianity and Europeans caused them to lose contact and sympathy with their own people, since they would hardly have bothered to write Xhosa history had that been the case. They were motivated by a feeling that their Xhosa cultural heritage was fast disappearing, and that something should be done to preserve it. This is reflected in the title of Rubusana's great anthology, Zemk'iinkomo Magwalandini - 'the cattle (i.e. the things of our 'home') are leaving (us), you

Note: 32. I. Wauchope and J.K. Bokwe (see note 33 below), W.B. Rubusana, T.B. Soga: Intlalo kaXhosa (The Xhosa Path) (reprinted Lovedale, 1974), and J.H. Songa were all ministers. W.K. Ntsikana (note 39 below) was Ntsikana's son. W.W. Gqoba (note 39 below) was a Methodist lay preacher. S.E.K. Mqhayi was a member of the Congregational Church and an enthusiastic supporter of the Independent Order of the True Templars, a temperance movement. S.M. Burns-Ncamashe is a leading member of the Order of Ethiopia.

33. This is especially true of I. Wauchope and J.K. Bokwe, whose meagre writings reveal the extent of their knowledge. Bokwe's Ntsikana (Lovedale, 1914), is an undistinguished synthesis of the Ikhwezi articles, but the traditions told by him to the German missionary A. Kropf (Das Volk der Xosa-Kaffern) (Berlin, 1889), p. 3 ff are excellent. For I. Wauchope, see "A Native Minister": The Natives and their Missionaries (Lovedale, 1908).



cowards (who do not do anything about it).'

The very fact of literacy affected the purity of the traditions. Xhosa writers were acquainted with European historical writing, mostly in the tradition of Theal, and they incorporated it in their works to give them 'scientific' status. Most of the written vernacular histories synthesised a number of traditions, failed to identify their sources, fused variant accounts, and eliminated anomalies and disputed issues. To a certain extent, this tendency was minimised in newspaper articles when an author set out to give the history of his chief, but it was universal in the longer works.

Most Xhosa historical writing is widely scattered, and much of it is in extremely rare newspapers and school textbooks. The reader who has consulted the anthologies Zemk'iinkomo Magwalandini and Imibengo, and S.E.K. Mqhayi's Ityala Lamawele will have a good idea of the nature of this material. Since it is impossible to deal with all the written histories here, the discussion will be confined to the three most important figures.

(1) S.E.K. Mqhayi (1875-1945) is generally acknowledged as the most outstanding figure Xhosa literature has yet produced.<sup>34</sup> He was an umNgqika, who spent six extremely important formative years in Kentani district near Chief

Note: 34. For Mqhayi, see Jordan, Kunene and Kirsch, Mqhayi's autobiography UMqhayi waseNtab'ozuko (Mqhayi of the Mountain of Glory) (Lovedale, 1939), and the December 1975 special Mqhayi memorial, edition of the South African Outlook. One of the English books Mqhayi read was 'Justus' (R.M. Beverley): Wrongs of the Caffre Nation (London, 1837).



Kona, son of Maqoma, and a great deal of the rest of his life among the amaNdlambe at Macleantown and Berlin. He also taught for a short time at Lovedale, where he became friendly with the educationalist, W.G. Bennie. He left because he disagreed with the way the Africans were presented in the official European school histories. He may also have been stimulated to write history by the contempt with which the Xhosa are regarded by some other Africans, particularly the Zulu, who say that 'Xhosa was a dog that ran away from Tshaka'. Mqhayi is reputed to have written a full history of the Xhosa which has not yet been made public, but it is probably safe to say that the thrust of his historical thinking is contained in the following passage:

Among all these nations, the Xhosa have never obtained even a small share of their portion. Tshaka founded the Zulu kingdom with his stabbing-assegai, his heroism, and the young men of his nation, in the time of Hintsa ... the very Hintsa who already possessed a kingdom which, with its outposts, began at the Mbashe and extended to the Gamtoos River and the mountains of Somerset East. Mshweshwe (sic) founded the kingdom of LuSuthu with his understanding and his wisdom and the wise old men of his nation, and he nursed it as a nursing mother nurses her baby; but he was the same age as Maqoma ... and the land of Mshweshwe was not more than that of Maqoma, his age-mate among the Xhosa.<sup>35</sup>

Note: 35. 'Ubukumkani bukaXhosa' (The Kingdom of the Xhosa) in Ityala Lamawe, (9th impression, Lovedale, 1931), p. 114



Mqhayi set out to prove that the Xhosa were second to none, not even the whites, in the glories of their past, the greatness of their heroes, the justice of their law, and the level of their culture and customs. In the process, he revealed a deep knowledge of Xhosa history, only a proportion of which appears on the printed page. His favourite mode was the biography,<sup>36</sup> but his greatest achievement was Ityala Lamawele (The Lawsuit of the Twins), in which he painted a somewhat idealised picture of court procedure in the time of Hintsa. In fact, all his work suffers from idealisation, and avoids direct criticism of both the Xhosa and their enemies.

(2) John Henderson Soga (1859-1941) was the son of the great Xhosa essayist and churchman Tiyo Soga (1829-1871) and a Scottish mother, and was himself educated in Scotland. He spent much of his life as a Presbyterian minister in Bomvanaland, and like his father was a composer of hymns and a translator of religious writings. He is best known as a historian, and his two volumes, The South-Eastern Bantu<sup>37</sup> and The Ama-Xosa: Life and Customs<sup>38</sup> are still the standard sources on Xhosa history and ethnography for the English-speaking reader.

As a historian, Soga is inferior not only to Mqhayi but to men like W.K. Ntsikana and W.W. Gqoba, who wrote

Note: 36. Apart from in the sources already cited, there are several of these in W.G. Bennie (ed.): The Steward Xhosa Readers. (Lovedale, n.d.).

37. Johannesburg, 1930, translated from his own as yet unpublished Xhosa manuscript.

38. Lovedale, n.d. (1929?).



only short pieces.<sup>39</sup> While Ntsikana and Gqoba tended to confine their borrowings from European historians to dates and proper names, Soga depended heavily on them, and his Xhosa writings seem more concerned to inform the Xhosa about what Europeans had written than to recount Xhosa opinions.<sup>40</sup> Soga's work has a tendentious quality which indicates that European history was never far from his mind. His assertions with regard to amaRharhabe independence, for instance, were made with the behaviour of Lord Charles Somerset and Sir Harry Smith specifically in mind.<sup>41</sup> His desire to be 'scientific' led him to include large doses of the then fashionable Hamitic theories,<sup>42</sup> and his reliance on the accuracy of printed material led him to make some rather spectacular mistakes in dating.<sup>43</sup> He was also inclined to dismiss traditions which conflicted with his opinions,<sup>44</sup> and to pass off his own rationalisations as traditions.<sup>45</sup> On occasion, he relied heavily on only a single informant.<sup>46</sup> Yet despite all this, Soga's

Note: 39. These may be found in Bennie and Rubusana. Gqoba may be responsible for 'UNxele' (in Imibengo) an interesting piece of historicism in which the cattle-killing disaster is viewed as God's just punishment for the Xhosa decision to follow Nxele rather than Ntsikana.

40. See, for example, his 'UPhalo' and 'ULanga' in Bennie.

41. I have somewhat altered the view expressed in my 'Right-Hand House' article, p. 118, in which I attributed the emphasis primarily to his amaRharhabe partisanship. This may have also been a factor, of course.

42. SE Bantu, Chapters I-III, V-VI.

43. For, example, Khawuta's reign is dated 1792-1820. This is important because it allows Soga to confuse the capture of Hintsa with the battle of Amalinde. SE Bantu, pp. 145, 157-9.

44. See, for instance, the way he treats the myth of origin of the Right-Hand House. SE Bantu, pp. 36-7.

45. For instance, he invents a law allowing for the killing off of sons of chiefs to explain the presence of only one chief per generation in the early part of the genealogy. SE Bantu, pp. 103-4.

46. See Chapter IV, Note 30.



achievement remains impressive. He set out to write a complete history of all the Nguni people and although those sections in which he relied on the work of others may be discarded, his work on the Xhosa-speaking nations of the Eastern Cape has provided a solid frame of reference for all of his successors. He recorded many traditions and genealogies now forgotten, visited most of the Xhosa chiefs, and classified the information into its present-day categories. Unfortunately, his biases intruded, and most of the history is Rharhabe history and history dealing with Xhosa-Colonial relations. Inter-chiefly relationships among the amaGcaleka appear spasmodically in anecdotal form - a sign that he knew more, but was afraid that such parochial material would not be of interest to readers. Ironically, it is his deep interest in such parochial matters that have given his work its lasting value.

(3) S.M. Burns-Ncamashe obtained a Bachelor's degree in Education from the University of Cape Town in 1954. He is active in Ciskei politics and is a former Minister of Education. He is also well-qualified from the traditional point of view, having been a praise-singer and secretary for the late Paramount Chief Archibald Velile Sandile, and has recently been recognised as chief of the amaGwali. Ncamashe is undoubtedly the best-educated and most widely-read Xhosa ever to write Xhosa history. His output, like that of most of his predecessors, has appeared mainly in newspapers. He wrote an irregular column for Imvo Zabantsundu in the 1950's and 1960's called 'EzobuRarabe Jikelele' (Round and about the amaRharhabe) under the pseudonym



'Sogwali kaNtaba' (Harp of the Mountain; perhaps also a pun on the amaGwali), which included a great deal of historical writing, alongside news of schools, hospitals, churches and the various chiefs.<sup>47</sup> He deals only with the history of the various chiefdoms, and the interrelationships of the various chiefs. Ncamashe seems reluctant to tackle the bigger issues, such as Colonial-Xhosa relations or the cattle-killing episode, in print, and passes few historical judgements. Apparently, he knows too much to commit himself to the new oral history, although he has hinted his sympathy with it from time to time. As a public figure he has been less restrained, and has used his historical knowledge to attack the amaMfengu and make new claims for the boundaries of the Ciskei. He has also written a number of memorials to the Department of Bantu Affairs on behalf of aspirant chiefs in the Ciskei, and has seen many of these granted, including his own.

Ncamashe has never written the major work on Xhosa history of which he is capable. There is reason enough for this in the pressure of his other commitments and the magnitude of the task, but two other possibilities suggest themselves, which, even if they do not in any way reflect Ncamashe's thinking, illuminate important aspects of Xhosa historiography. First, as he has said, "I write for the people".<sup>48</sup> As far as the people are concerned, there is little history of the Xhosa as such, but rather the history

Note: 47. Burns-Ncamashe's only published book, Masibaliselane (Let us tell each other stories), (Cape Town, 1961) contains only the more topical material.

48. Interview with S.M. Burns-Ncamashe, Zwelitsha, 17 Sept. 1975.



~~of the Xhosa as such, but rather the history~~ of the various clans and chiefdoms which make up the Xhosa nation and with which the people identify personally. Furthermore, even a cursory glance at black South African literature reveals that both writers and readers, for reasons best explained by sociologists, much prefer articles and short stories, newspapers and magazines to books. Second, oral culture is to a certain extent inimical to written culture. Ngqika once said that "he had it not in his power to be so accurate as those who possessed the art of noting everything down with precision."<sup>49</sup> Ncamashe himself has observed that "a book is only a book, it cannot be asked questions because it does not know how to reply".<sup>50</sup> Oral tradition is part of a political culture which depends on ambiguity, flexibility, and the possibility of forgetting old quarrels and changing sides and opinions. Ncamashe's historical knowledge has brought him great power and prestige, he often clinches a point with a historical reference that few dare dispute. Since time distorts and confuses memory, there is little chance that he will be challenged or that a subsequent contradiction in viewpoint or political behaviour will ever be pointed out. These advantages would be lost if he were to commit himself to the ineluctable medium of the printed book, as opposed to the ephemeral newspaper. Thus Ncamashe's

Note: 49. 'Minutes ... of a conference between His Excellency Lord Charles Somerset and the Caffer Chief Gaika at the Kat River on the 2nd April 1817', R.C.C., XI, p.315.

50. 'Sogwali kaNtaba': 'Ukuphala KukaPhalo uyise wamaXhosa' (The scraping out of Phalo, father of the Xhosa) Imvo Zabantsundu, 23 Dec. 1961.



behaviour, like that of the new oral historians, may be a response of the oral tradition to the age of literacy.

#### 4. European Sources

Much has been written about the Xhosa by European travellers, government officials, missionaries, settlers and politicians. Most of the more substantial early accounts contain an attempt at Xhosa history, and later European contemporaries wrote about current events that have since become history. It would be impossible to discuss such a mass of material here, and the reader is referred to the footnotes and the bibliography.

Early South African historical writing grew out of contemporary politics. John Centlivres Chase, who was one of the authors of the first history of the Cape was a prominent public figure, and his opinions are reflected in his book.<sup>51</sup> Theal, even at his most liberal, thought Godlonton's polemical history of the War of 1834-5 was a "thoroughly reliable history".<sup>52</sup> Thus the early histories tended to exhibit the biases of their early source material.

It is worth noting that even at this early stage, interest was shown in Xhosa oral traditions. Theal, who taught at Lovedale and was Government agent with Oba's imiNgc Janetelo during the Ninth Frontier War, "applied to various antiquaries throughout Kaffirland", and even interviewed Sarhili.<sup>53</sup> His chapter 'History of the Xhosa

Note: 51. A. Wilmot and J.C. Chase: History of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope (Cape Town, 1869).

52. G.M. Theal: Compendium of South African History and Geography (3rd ed., Lovedale, 1877), p. iv.

53. Ibid.



tribe' before 1800 is excellent as far as it goes.<sup>54</sup>  
It is a pity that no notes from these interviews are known to have survived. Sir George Cory did a series of whirlwind interviews which are preserved in the Cory Library, Grahamstown, and are extremely valuable despite Cory's habits of asking leading questions and emphasising factual issues. An ambitious attempt was made in 1904-5 by J.M. Orpen, to synthesise documentary and oral evidence into an authoritative history of the Africans of South Africa. He was too old to undertake the research himself, and government officials among the Xhosa responded very poorly, although valuable accounts of the Mfengu and Bhaca were obtained.<sup>55</sup>

The mighty edifices of Theal and Cory have fixed the predatory barbarian image of the Xhosa in the school-books up till now. The liberal historians of the twentieth century, although sympathetic to the Xhosa, still concentrated on the Colonists.<sup>56</sup> Instead of rapacious Xhosa depriving peace-loving Colonists of their cattle, they tend to depict rapacious Colonists depriving peace-loving Xhosa of their land. But even on this view, the Xhosa were more acted against than acting.

- Note: 54. G.M. Theal: History of South Africa under the administration of the Dutch East India Company (London, 1897; edition used: 2 Vols., Negro Universities Press, New York, 1969) II, Ch. XVIII.  
55. N A 623, Cape Archives, I would like to thank Mr. R. Moorsom for drawing these to my attention.  
56. For example Marais op cit, J.S. Galbraith; Reluctant Empire (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963); and especially W.M. Macmillan: Bantu, Boer and Briton (2nd ed., Oxford, 1963).



The revolution in African historiography, heralded by the appearance of the Journal of African History in 1960 and Vansina's De la tradition orale in 1961, made its presence felt in South Africa by the appearance in 1969 of the first volume of the Oxford History of South Africa.<sup>57</sup> The Xhosa have also featured, though not prominently, in two follow-up collections, African Societies in Southern Africa (1969)<sup>58</sup> and Beyond the Cape Frontier (1974).<sup>59</sup> For the first time, an attempt was made to write the history of South Africa with at least some Africans cast centre stage. However, as regards the Xhosa specifically, despite some useful insights, what was written was too brief and too general to provide the basic who, what and where information which is the sine qua non of historical interpretation and further research. Moreover, none of these used vernacular sources, whether written or oral.<sup>60</sup> After forty-five years, Soga still stands alone.

Note: 57. M. Wilson and L.M. Thompson: The Oxford History of South Africa, 2 Vols., (London and New York, 1969-71), henceforth O.H.

58. L.M. Thompson (ed.): African Societies in Southern Africa (London, 1969).

59. C. Saunders and R. Derricourt (eds.): Beyond the Cape Frontier (London, 1974).

60. Wilson does cite a number of Xhosa written sources, (O.H., I, pp. 85-6n) but she hardly uses them. For the exceptions, see pp. 92-3, 122.



## CHAPTER II : THE BIRTH OF THE XHOSA NATION

Before the emergency of the great polities of the present day - Xhosa, Mpondo, Zulu, Swazi and others - the basic Nguni social and political unit was the clan, an exogamous kinship group with a distinctive set of praises.<sup>1</sup> Today, most clans are scattered and lack a commonly recognised head, but there are exceptions, particularly among the Thembu, where the clan has survived as a political and local unit. One common theme of pre-colonial Nguni history is the rise of certain clans or lineages of clans to dominance over their neighbours, and the concentration of political power in their hands. The royal clan of the Xhosa are called the amaTshawe, and Xhosa history may be said to begin with their inauguration as rulers, which is remembered in the following myth.

### 1. The Story of Tshawe

Among his mother's people Tshawe was a favourite on account of his courage, and when he reached manhood was granted, in accordance with custom, a considerable number of retainers, who formed the nucleus of a tribe. After a time, probably desiring to distinguish himself, and considering himself sufficiently strong, he collected all his people and set out ostensibly to visit his father Nkosiyamntu, though he probably knew that

Note: 1. For a full discussion, see Appendix IIA.



his father was dead.<sup>2</sup> As he proceeded, numbers of broken men from other tribes joined him and he reached his father's place to find the heir, Cira, in power. For a time he settled down, no sufficient excuse presenting itself for the trial of strength which he contemplated with his elder brothers of the Great and Right-Hand House ... On a certain day a general hunt was proclaimed, and all sections of the tribe joined in. Tshawe

Note: 2. The story of the return of the prodigal son/ wrongfully dispossessed sibling is obviously a cliché disguising the conquest of the country by a new dynasty. Vansina cites no fewer than 25 African peoples among whom it is found (Vansina, pp. 74, 211). Several passages in the myth ("broken men from other tribes", "excuse ... for the trial of strength", "usurpers rule") make it quite clear that this is also the case here. The idea that the three main actors were in fact brothers should also be discarded. False genealogical affiliation is quite common among the Xhosa, being obvious in the attempts of the amaBamba (Interview with Mr. K. Billie, Mdantsane, 3 July, 1975) and the amaNgqosini (J. Maclean (ed.): A Compendium of Kafir Laws and Customs (Cape Town, 1866; reprinted Grahamstown, 1906), p. 171) clans to relate themselves to the amaTshawe. There is also a tendency to try and link all the Nguni nations in a single genealogy (for example, genealogy in Maclean; interview with A.M.S. Sityana, Alice, 11 Sept. 1975). Any genealogy which includes the name Xhosa is clearly fictitious in part because there was never any such person (see G. Harinck: 'Interaction between Xhosa and Khoi' in Thompson: African Societies, p. 152n). The names of Xhosa's 'son' and 'grandson', Malangana (One who follows) and Nkosiyamntu (Lord of Man), are further indications that they are mythical. Some amaTshawe even tell the story without indicating any relationship between Cira and Tshawe, as a straight story of conquest (for example, K.B. Manxiwa, Ntlabane Location, Willowvale District, 19 Nov. 1975).



was successful in killing a blue-buck antelope, and, following the usual custom, the principal chief, Cira, required that a certain portion should be reserved for him. This Tshawe refused, on the plea that the animal was too small. Cira replied that it was old, as it had horns.<sup>3</sup> But Tshawe's refusal was final ... (Cira) asked for the assistance of Jwara, chief of the Right-Hand House,<sup>4</sup> and this was given ... During the course

- Note: 3. This apparently frivolous argument, which Soga does not explain, is in fact the crux of the Tshawe justification for the usurpation. Cira, as the chief, was entitled to demand his portion of the bluebuck, but since the bluebuck was too small, there would not have been enough for the rest of the people to eat. By insisting on his royal prerogative at the expense of his people's well-being, Cira contravened the ethic of generosity and therefore merited deposition. Today the amaCira all agree that Cira was wrong to insist on his share.
4. Soga was a Jwara, and that is doubtless the reason why he introduces the amaJwara here. No informant who told me the story mentioned the amaJwara, unless specifically questioned. The few informants who, when questioned, agreed that Jwara was there, were probably responding to the question; most denied it. Soga compounds the error by asserting that the amaJwara clan of the Xhosa is the same as the amaJwara clan of the Bhele (Mfengu), and a look at the assertion shows that he is arguing a case, not presenting a well-known fact (Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 107-8). Jwara informants (Notebooks: informant at Great Place of imiDushane Chief, Phikisa, Kentani District; headman Soga, Ncizele location, Kentani District) agreed that Jwara and Jwara Bhele were not related. It has already been pointed out that coincidence of names is not rare among the Nguni (Chapter I n<sup>3</sup>).



of the fighting which was going against Tshawe, he sent to the neighbouring tribe of Pondomises for assistance, and the clan of the AmaRudulu of the Imi-Haga section was sent. These being fresh warriors and in numbers considerable gave the advantage to Tshawe,<sup>5</sup> who completely overthrew his older brothers, and usurped the chieftainship of the Xhosas ... Cira ignobly elected to stay under usurper's rule, but his authority was gone. Jwara ... went off with a certain following to seek a new home. He left behind him, nevertheless, his son and heir, Mazaleni, who remained with Tshawe, and acted as spokesman of the tribe ... the ama-Cira are now broken and hold no position of authority in the Xhosa tribe.

(J.H. Soga)<sup>6</sup>

Note: 5. As the result of their assistance, the amaRudulu (who became known as amaNgwevu) were "offered chiefship" by Tshawe. They refused, saying they would rather serve Tshawe. They accepted special status and were given their own "ox", iQawuka, in other words, the right to act as chiefs without the equivalent rank. The head of the iQawuka became a powerful man in the chiefdom, though his position as most powerful commoner was later challenged by the heads of the amaNdluntsha and iNtshinga. (Series of interviews with N. Qeqe, current head of the iQawuka, Shixini Location, Willowvale District, Nov. 1975).

6. Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 104-6.



Reduced to its essentials, the story of Tshawe tells how indigenous clans (amaCira and amaJwara) were conquered and incorporated by invading clans (amaTshawe, assisted by amaRudulu). This interpretation is explicitly stated in the following tradition:

There were various nations (izizwe) who were distinct in their greatness and their kingship. These used to rule themselves over there, like the amaTipa, the amaNgwevu, the amaQocwa, the amaCete, the amaNgqosini and the amaNkabane. These nations stood alone and were ruling themselves long ago. They were abolished by fighting (bagqugqiswa ngokulwa) by Tshawe, they were overcome so that they became one nation.<sup>7</sup>

Commoner clans were of either Bantu or Khoisan origin, and they were incorporated either voluntarily or involuntarily. Clans became incorporated voluntarily when they immigrated into the territory occupied by the amaTshawe and submitted to them, usually without a struggle. Examples of these immigrant clans are the amaBanqo, amaVundle (both Sotho), amaMaya, amaQocwa ('Thembu'<sup>8</sup>), amaGiqwa (Khoi), amaNgqosini

Note: 7. William Kekale Kaye ("Native Interpreter"), MS n.d. (nineteenth century), Grey Collection, 172c, South African Public Library, Cape Town. MS has a translation attached, but I prefer my own. There are no major discrepancies between the two.

8. 'Thembu' should be taken to indicate a general direction (that is, just to the east of Xhosa-land) rather than former adherence to the Thembu chiefs.



(Khoi or Sotho), amaMpinga, amaNgwevu (both Mpondomise).<sup>9</sup> To these must be added members of clans, the majority of whom are located elsewhere, such as the amaNtlane and amaZangwa, who are found in great numbers among the Xhosa but who say that most of their fellow-clansmen still live in Mpondoland. All of these clans have traditions of migration which account for their origin, and their entry into Xhosaland. Clans became incorporated involuntarily when the territory they occupied was invaded by the expanding amaTshawe. Many of these were Khoisan: amaSukwini, amaGqwashu, amaNqarwane (Khoi), amaCete (Khoi or Bantu), isiThathu (mixed Khoi and San). Others obviously belong to this category through their 'decent' from Nkosiyamntu, 'father' of Tshawe: these include the amaCira, amaJwara, amaKwemntu, amaQwambi. There is a residual category of clans which remember little or none of their history. This seems to be because they can no longer conceive of a time when they were independent and not subject to a Tshawe.<sup>10</sup> No person who is not a Tshawe can be termed a chief, and the word 'Tshawe' is used as the common Xhosa word for 'royal person' - the British royal family, for instance are called amaTshawe. This was demonstrated by one good informant, an umTipha, who said, in discussing the history of his clan: "the amaTipha used to be great, together with amaTshawe, their names were Bayeni and Tshewu, and it is said they lived where they were amaTshawe (bakwangama-Tshawe) but this is beyond comprehension (silahlekwe apha)".<sup>11</sup> These clans include

Note: 9. Clan histories will be found in Appendix IIB. The incorporation of a particularly important clan will be noticed at appropriate stages of the narrative.

10. The same process occurred among the Bemba. See Roberts, pp. 45-7.

11. Interview with R. Cakata, Xobo Location, Idutywa District, 5 Dec. 1975.



the amaBamba, amaTipha, amaNtakwenda, amaNkabane and amaNzoto, and they are taken to be formerly independent clans who were absorbed by the amaTshawe.

Enlightening as the story of Tshawe undoubtedly is with regard to the founding of the Xhosa polity, there are many questions it leaves unanswered. It cannot, for a start, be dated. Attempts have been made to date the reign and then multiplying back by the number of chiefs in the genealogy.<sup>12</sup> This is inadmissible because the genealogy is certainly faulty and the length of the average reign of Xhosa chiefs in different lineages varies greatly.<sup>13</sup> Archeology has as yet told us nothing.<sup>14</sup>

Note: 12. For example, Wilson in O.H., p. 89; G. Harinck: 'Interaction between Xhosa and Khoi' in Thompson: African Societies p.155n.

13. See J.B. Peires: 'Chronology of the Cape Nguni till 1900' (M.A. Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1973).

14. R.M. Derricourt, when appointed to the University of Fort Hare, "aimed to carry out problem-orientated fieldwork. The major interest is the examination of patterns of post-Pleistocene adaptation and interrelationships of hunter-gatherers, herders and mixed farmers of the Ciskei and Transkei. Essentially this involves the comparison of sites in different ecozones viewing the use of technological and natural resources, and attempting to view cultural change with the background of archeological and economic data." (R.M. Derricourt: 'Archeological Survey of the Transkei and Ciskei: Interim Report for 1971', Fort Hare Papers, V(3), (1972). It is not clear how far Derricourt had proceeded on this ambitious project before he moved to Zambia. An article promised for African Studies, 'Variability in the latter prehistory of the Transkei and Ciskei' has not appeared in any of the issues now available (year ending 1975). Derricourt examined chiefs' graves as reported by Soga, but Radiocarbon dates of these are not yet available. He did not apparently examine sites of ironstone working. See also Derricourt: 'Archeological Survey of the Transkei and Ciskei: Interim Report for 1972' Fort Hare Papers, V(6), (1973).



Shipwreck chronicles of the fifteenth century indicate small-scale political organisation, but these are too vague and unreliable to build a case on.<sup>15</sup> The first substantive account was that of the survivors of the Stavenisse in 1686, on the basis of which Theal and all successors dated Togu until Harinck proved them wrong.<sup>16</sup> The first reliable date is 1736, at which time Phalo was chief of the Xhosa.<sup>17</sup> Nor do we know where the clash between Cira and Tshawe took place. Only one of my informants - and a relatively poor one at that - even hazarded a guess.<sup>18</sup> Such information as there is points to an early association between the Xhosa and the Mpondomise to their north-east. A Mpondomise tradition of origin remembers the two nations as being together on the Dedesi River in the foothills of the Drakensberg,<sup>19</sup> the amaRudulu who came to help the amaTshawe are definitely

- Note: 15. Wilson used these in a famous article which laid to rest, in academic circles, the notion that white and black arrived in South Africa simultaneously. M. Wilson: 'The Early History of the Transkei and Ciskei', African Studies, XVIII, (1959). Much of this is reprinted in O.H. I, pp. 78-85. See especially, accounts of Santo Thome and Santo Alberto, pp. 79-81.
16. Harinck in Thompson: African Societies, p. 154n. There is, however, much in this lengthy note which must be rejected. It is surprising that one who showed such perspicacity in rejecting the date 1686 should have uncritically accepted the date 1702 (see Chapter IV, note 1 below). He further follows J.K. Bokwe in confusing Gandowentshaba with Gwali (See Chapter IV, note 2). Finally his identification of 'Tokhe' with the Mpondo chief Tahle is unsubstantiated, and, in fact, unnecessary. 'Tokhe' must have been a minor chief or headman, for the Stavenisse survivors explicitly name 'Magamma' (unidentifiable) as ruler of the Xhosa. D. Moodie: The Record, I, p.426.
17. See Chapter IV, note 4 below.
18. Interview with Nombanjana Tyali, Kobonqaba 'B' Location, Kentani District, 12 Dec. 1975.
19. 'Vete' in F. Brownlee (ed.): The Transkeian Native Territories: Historical Records (Lovedale, 1923), p. 111. Derricourt: 'Settlement', p. 54, is correct in pointing out that this is a Mpondomise tradition only, but even so, it must be dealt with.



related to the Majola royal clan of the Mpondomise, the name Sikhomo occurs on both the Xhosa and Mpondomise genealogies,<sup>20</sup> and Togu, the name of a Xhosa chief, is also the name of a Mpondomise clan.<sup>21</sup> Yet this evidence is not conclusive, and it seems better to confess our ignorance than to leap to an unwarranted conclusion.

A more profound question is that which asks why the amaTshawe triumphed rather than some other clan. A tradition recorded by Theal suggests that Tshawe introduced iron to the Xhosa.<sup>22</sup> Apart from the fact this might simply be the attribution of a useful commodity to a folk-hero, there is no evidence that superior knowledge of iron-working conferred political benefits among the southern Nguni. It certainly did not do so for the amaQocwa or the amaMfengu when they arrived among the Xhosa, or for the amaKhuma who introduced iron-smelting to the Thembu.<sup>23</sup> Since we do not know the geographical origins of the parties, we cannot tell whether or not ecological factors played a role. Thus this question is also unanswerable at present.

The rise of the amaTshawe must also be seen in the wider context of Nguni history. Throughout the Nguni area, certain clans were emerging and establishing their dominance over others. In the southern area, the amaHala(Thembu), amaMajola (Mpondomise) and the amaNyawuza (Mpondo) were expanding their hegemony alongside the amaTshawe, and in

Note: 20. 'Vete' and 'Mabasa' in F. Brownlee, pp. 111, 116.

21. W.D. Hammond-Tooke: 'Descent Group Scatter in a Mpondomise Ward', African Studies, XXVII, (1968) p.87.

22. Theal: History of S.A. under the D.E.I.C. II, pp. 111-2.

23. For the amaQocwa, see Chapter VI below; for the superior smelting skills of the amaMfengu, see Kay, p. 133; for the amaKhuma, see Mqhayi: UMqhayi wase-Ntab'ozuko, p. 2.



the north, the Mthethwa, the Ndwandwe and others were doing the same. The process of polity-building had two aspects: the establishment of the royal clan vis-a-vis the commoner clans, and the maintenance of political unity among its members. It will be seen that the success of the Xhosa on the first count was by no means matched by success on the second. The view presented here of the Nguni nations or 'tribes' as accretions of clans differs from the usual one which sees the nations as one and indivisible with a common history throughout. In fact the clan composition of each nation fluctuated considerably: the amaNgqosini, to take an extreme example, who were culturally Sotho or Khoi, were at one time Xhosa, then became Thembu, and finally switched back to being Xhosa again.<sup>24</sup> There were minor cultural differences between nations, but a clan would discard the fashions of his old home for those of the new: thus the amaNgqosini adopted red ochre when they came to live

Note: 24. A certain chief Mjobi was met by one Grosvenor search party in 1783 and indicated that he was a Xhosa chief at war with the Thembu. Another party in 1790 met Mjobi living a little further north and calling himself a Thembu. ('Expedition of Muller and Holtshausen' in P. Kirby (ed.): Source Book on the Wreck of the Grosvenor (Cape Town, 1953), p. 193; J. van Renen: 'A Journal of a Journey from the Cape of Good Hope undertaken in 1790 and 1791' (ed. and trans. E. Riou, 1792; reprinted in C.G. Botha (ed.): The Wreck of the Grosvenor, (Cape Town, 1927), p. 155. If this is Mjobi, the Ngqosini chief who was definitely a contemporary, then he certainly ended up a Xhosa. For Mjobi, see Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 194-8. The amaNtshilibe clan also changed from Thembu to Xhosa. See M. Mbutuma, 'Ibali laba Thembu', unpublished M.S., Cory Library, Grahamstown.



among the Xhosa, and the amaZangwa (Mpondo origin) stopped scarifying their faces and started circumcising their children on their arrival in the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup>

The amaXhosa should not therefore be seen as the descendants of a single common ancestor, Xhosa, but as the subjects of the royal amaTshawe clan.<sup>26</sup>

The view that the Xhosa nation is heterogeneous in origin, rather than from the first a defined 'tribe' clearly distinct from its neighbours, and that it expanded and incorporated rather than migrated, has important implications with regard to the old problem of the western boundary of Xhosaland. European colonists,

Note: 25. For the amaNgqosini, interview with S. Ndamase, Shixini Location, Willowvale District, 26 Nov. 1975. Information on amaZangwa, obtained from informant at home of M. Sinkunzu, Nkomkoto Location, Kentani District, Dec. 1975. Both statements notebook only.

26. The word 'Xhosa' is derived from a Khoi word meaning 'angry men'. See Harinck in Thompson: African Societies, p. 152n. It should not be considered extraordinary that the nation took its name from foreigners: 'Vete' said that the Mpondomise were named by the Thembu ("Halas"), F. Brownlee, p. 111. In some contexts, the adjectives 'Tshawe' and 'Xhosa' may be used interchangeably, since the borders of the Xhosa polity were coterminous with those of the people who acknowledge subordination to the Xhosa paramount. Cf "Both rulers and subjects formed a fairly homogenous society which derived its identity as a 'tribe' from a common subordination to (the Bemba Paramount)", Roberts, pp. 46-7.



keenly aware that they were intruders in the southern tip of Africa and had dispossessed the original Khoisan inhabitants, were anxious to ascertain where the Xhosa had begun encroaching on the Khoisan. Colonel Collins, who proved to his own satisfaction that the 'Caffres' were east of the Keiskamma in 1736, felt that this showed that the Xhosa had as little right to the area west of it as the Colonists had.<sup>27</sup> Both nations had dispossessed the original Khoi inhabitants. This viewpoint fails to consider what had become of those original inhabitants. They - the Gona, Dama and Hoengiqua - had not been expelled from their ancient homes, or relegated to a class of hereditary servitude on the basis of their skin colour. They had become Xhosa, with the same rights as other Xhosa. The limits of Xhosadom were not geographical or ethnic, but political: any persons or groups who accepted the amaTshawe as rulers were Xhosa.

## 2. The Dynamics of Xhosa Expansion

Xhosa expansion was a natural consequence of generational increase and intragenerational conflict. This is evident from an examination of the institution through which the sons of Xhosa chiefs (hereafter termed 'princes') became chiefs: circumcision.<sup>28</sup> At the age of ten or twelve,

Note: 27. Collins, V, p. 9.

28. The account of circumcision is taken mainly from contemporary records, because the social organisation of the ceremony has since changed considerably. These include Alberti, pp. 39-40; H.H. Dugmore: 'Papers' in Maclean, pp. 160-4; W. Shaw: The Story of my Mission in South-Eastern Africa (London, 1865), pp. 455-60; J. Brownlee, II, pp. 204-5.



Xhosa male children were sent off to their parents' chief. They tended his cattle and were instructed in the basic arts of war. When one of the chief's sons reached maturity, the group of male children then at the Great Place were circumcised with him and became his first councillors. Local clan-heads usually succeeded in having a son circumcised with the chief, and the ceremony might even be delayed to permit the son of a particularly important councillor to attain this honour.<sup>29</sup> Thus the political unit of chief and councillors is reproduced every generation, and the councillorship like the chieftainship is hereditary.<sup>30</sup> Important princes had large numbers of commoners circumcised with them; one reliable figure for a minor Gqunukhwebe chief reports nearly forty companions.<sup>31</sup> The first boy circumcised became the isandla senkosi (hand of the chief), that is, his chief administrator, and the others served as his administrative bureaucracy, as well as his advisers. The chief's father usually delegated one or two elder councillors to his son's council, and outstanding individuals and representatives of newly-acquired subjects were added on as time passed, but in essence, the chief's council was drawn from his age-mates.

- Note: 29. Interview with S. Mabala (iNtshinga Headman), Ngqaqini Location, Willowvale District, 29 Feb. 1976. Even today, every Xhosa adult can name the chief 'with whom he was circumcised', although they were not actually together. Backhouse, p. 232.
30. On this point see also Soga: Ama-Xosa, p. 29.
31. W. Shaw: The Journal of William Shaw, ed. W.D. Hammond-Tooke, (Cape Town, 1972), p. 100.



The arrangements at the circumcision lodge reflected and in turn influenced the political relationship between chief and commoner. Turner, whose seminal studies of circumcision among the Ndembu of Zambia have won wide acceptance among anthropologists, maintains that three months in a circumcision lodge normally has a democratising effect:

Complete equality usually characterises the relationship of neophyte to neophyte where rites are collective ... The liminal group is a community or comity of comrades and not a structure of hierarchically arrayed positions. This comradeship transcends distinctions of rank, age, kinship position ... Much of the behaviour recorded by ethnographers in seclusion situations falls under the principle: "Each for all, all for each" ... All are supposed to be linked by special ties which persist after the rites are over, even into old age ... This comradeship (possesses) familiarity, ease, and, I would add, mutual outspokenness.<sup>32</sup>

Among the amaGcaleka, the different huts of the circumcision lodge were allocated with the political ranking of the councillors well in mind. The representative of the powerful Giqua clan slept in the same hut as the chief, while that of the less powerful Nkabane clan slept in a different hut.<sup>33</sup> The prince could also expect slightly better food

Note: 32. V. Turner: The Forest of Symbols (Ithaca, N.Y. 1967), pp. 100-1.

33. Interview with M. Ranayi, (head of the amaNdluntsha), Sholora Location, Elliotdale District, 18 Feb. 1976. N.C. Melane said, in response to a direct question, that the Paramount was better fed than his age-mates. (Interview Qwaninga Location, Willowvale District, 24 Feb. 1976). This may reflect only the position of the Paramount in Sarhili's time and subsequently, since it is known that he endeavoured to add to his mystical powers (Interview with N. Qeqe, Shixini Location, Willowvale District, Nov. 1975).





than his comrades. It is not clear whether this also applies to the amaRharhabe whose chiefs never assumed the mystical powers associated with chiefs Gcaleka and Sarhili. Despite this recognition of hierarchial differences, the circumcision lodge must have increased the extent of the councillors' influence over the chiefs. In the light of this it is significant that Dingiswayo, who laid the foundations of what later became the Zulu state, abolished circumcision.<sup>34</sup> Whatever his reasons, and they may have been military, the result can only have been to strengthen internal discipline. Whereas the loyalty of the newly circumcised males, certainly the most numerous and enthusiastic component of any Southern African fighting force, was, among the Xhosa, given primarily to the young chief, their age-mate, their Zulu equivalents were subordinated directly to the supreme chief. Whereas a Xhosa chief's scope of action was bounded by the criticism and occasional forcible sanction of peers who had come to know his weaknesses and predilections, the regiments which replaced the circumcision lodge as the initiation school for the Zulu youth gave rise to no spirit of criticism and individual judgement, but only to what Turner would call the "complete obedience which characterises the relationship of neophyte to elder."<sup>35</sup> Moreover whereas the Xhosa was enabled to release sexual and other tensions during the liminal period, the Zulu could release his only in blood. Writers who have stressed the introduction of the age-set as a key factor in Zulu military success are only partly correct. The

Note: 34. L.M. Thompson in O.H., I, p. 341.

35. Turner, p. 100.



age-set exists among all Nguni - the Zulu innovation was to use it as an instrument for the creation of a military despotism, both internally and externally.

The newly-made chief acquired not only a following, but wealth and territory of his own. All the novices received gifts of cattle from their parents on completion of circumcision, and the chief himself received additional gifts from his father's people, and friendly and related chiefs. The new chiefdom then established itself in its own territory.<sup>36</sup>

The practice of drawing one's council from one's age-mates was an additional source of division and friction within Xhosa society. The Council of the deceased chief remained in existence as an independent unit, shorn of its decision-making powers but retaining the personal power created at the local level in the course of its term of office. The longevity of these age-sets as collective entities may be illustrated by Hintsa's delegation of his father's councillors to supervise the missionary Shaw, a full twenty years after his father's death.<sup>37</sup>

Conflict between the generations was most likely in situations where there had been a regency, or where a living chief had an adult son who was not the heir. In both cases, two councils headed by their chiefs faced

Note: 36. On this point, see also H. Lichtenstein: Travels in Southern Africa (2 vols.) (German ed. 1810-2; trans. A. Plumptre, London, 1812-5, reprinted Cape Town, 1928), I, p. 354.

37. Shaw: Story, pp. 485-6.



each other with no prospect of the conflict being resolved by the death of the ruling chief. The most famous case of intra-generational strife is that of Ngqika and Ndlambe:

Ngqika did not wait to be given his chiefship which had been kept with clean hands by his uncle, Ndlambe. He took it himself by force, together with his councillors. Not waiting a day after he had come out of the circumcision lodge, he went to live with his age-mates at Mgqkwebe forest together with that body of choice children of councillors.<sup>38</sup>

Rivalry between chiefs and sons-but-not-heirs must have been an important factor in the estrangement between Ndlambe and his son, Mdushane, and Ngqika and his son, Maqoma. Rivalry between chiefs and their heirs was rare, due largely to the fact that the Great Wife was usually married late in life, and the heir was often only a child when his father died. This usage was probably due not only to the fears of the chief himself, but also to the influence of his entire generation, whose influence was restricted to the lifetime of the chief if the heir was an adult, but which would usually extend into the regency if the heir was a child.

The tensions of the intra-generational conflict were relieved to a large measure by the dispersion of young chiefs and their followers to territories of their own. This enabled each chief to build up a chiefdom commensurate with his own abilities, without treading on another's toes.

Note: 38. W.F. Xatasi: 'Ubukosi basexhibeni kwaNgqika' (The ixhiba chieftainship among the amaNgqika) Izwi laBantu, 27 May 1902. The role played by Ngqika's age-mates is also noticed by J. Brownlee, II, p. 194.



Not all chiefs used this safety valve. Some chiefs contested with others for precedence, such as Mdange and Gwali, or Ngqika and Hintsa. Others restrained themselves while young, in the hope of future benefits. The descendants of Mdushane claim that Mhala usurped the amaNdlambe chieftainship by staying at home and 'creeping in' with his father, and Tyhali used the same approach with his father, Ngqika.<sup>39</sup> Many chiefs who were unable to go it alone joined forces with a more capable brother, and several councils who had lost their chiefs allied their 'houses' with those of living chiefs.<sup>40</sup>

The dispersion of the young chiefs benefited the polity as a whole in other ways too. Apart from extending the territory over which the amaTshawe reigned, it assisted in the subordination of commoner clans. Concentrations of commoner clans in single places were broken up as members of the clan followed different chiefs to settle in new areas. The arrival of a Tshawe chief in an area would increase the hold of the amaTshawe on that area, as he co-opted representatives of the local inhabitants onto his council. It is not impossible that some clans were completely without a commonly recognised

Note: 39. Interview with Chief Meakin Phikisa (imiDushane), Nyumaka Location, Kentani District, 14 Jan. 1976. The tradition is in fact inaccurate as Mdushane did become chief after Ndlambe's death. Mhala rose in consequence of the succession dispute between Mdushane's sons, Siwani, Siyolo and Qasana, which the imiDushane today prefer to forget. For more details on this and on the relationship between Tyhali and Ngqika, see Chapter VII below.

40. See, for example, the affiliation of the house of Cebo with Mdushane, and of Ntimbo and Anta, Soga: SE Bantu, p. 149.



head when the amaTshawe arrived, and that their absorption was due to peaceful penetration alone. Against these advantages, was the disadvantage that increasing decentralisation in an era of poor communications must inevitably have led to decreasing political cohesion and the ultimate break-up of the polity, unless checked by the growth of political institutions at the centre. Of course, the process was a gradual one, and the Xhosa who adopted it from the previous generation never stopped to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of what seemed to be the natural order of things. When a young man grows up among the Xhosa, "his father gives him an axe, and says 'Go and extend the homestead. Set up an outstation (i.e. your own home)'".<sup>41</sup> The father continued to exercise control over his newly autonomous son, but this faded as generations passed after the death of the father, the elder brother would have less control than the father had had over the elder brothers, and eldest son would have even less control over the cousins, and so on. In this matter of expansion, as in many others besides, Xhosa political behaviour was modelled on that of the simple homestead.

### 3. The Xhosa and the Khoisan

The relationship between the Xhosa and the Khoi seems to be indicative of that between them and their neighbours generally during the period of expansion. Three stages may be discerned: in the first, the Xhosa exerted informal influence over Khoi affairs; in the second, they participated directly in them; in the third, they incorporated the Khoi. The limitations of the evidence make it impossible

Note: 41. Interview with C. Phaphu, Grahamstown, 12 July 1975. N. Qeqe refers to Phalo as having given Rharhabe an 'axe' when he crossed the Kei. Interviews Shixini Location, Willowvale District, Nov. 1975.



to chronicle the transition from independence to subjection of a single Khoi chiefdom, but it is to be hoped that the examples which will be provided of each stage will be adequate to sustain the contention.

Van Riebeeck, the first commander of the Dutch fort at the Cape, was told that the king of the Inqua, "altogether the greatest and mightiest of the dirty Hottentot race" was the "highest lord of the Hottentots"<sup>42</sup> and "one of the principal chiefs or captains of Chobona (the Xhosa)"<sup>43</sup> This has clear implications of subordination, but is not confirmed elsewhere. One way in which the Xhosa initiated relationships was through marriage. The chief of the Chainouqua, and independent people under Inqua influence, was married to a Khoi woman brought up among the Xhosa, and given by them to the chief. Van Riebeeck reported that "It is a mark of great favour when any one gets a wife out of Chobona's house; it is thus that he attaches these tribes to his interest."<sup>44</sup> Such an alliance had practical implications: when this Chainouqua chief was defeated by a rival, he requested aid from the Xhosa.<sup>45</sup> Xhosa appear to have been constant visitors to the Chainouqua.<sup>46</sup> Quite possibly, these links were originally established in the course of trade which eventually blossomed into a network

Note: 42. 'Memorie van Jan van Riebeeck vir sy opvolger' in A.J. Boëseken: Suid-Afrikaanse Argiefstukke; Belangrike Kaapse Dokumente, 2 Vols. (Cape Town, 1966), p. 34.

43. D. Moodie: The Record, I, 111. 'Chobona' was used by the Cape Khoi to refer to any Bantu-speaker. In this case, the geographical location of 'Chobona' near the Inqua rather than the Nama indicates that the Xhosa rather than the Tswana are referred to.

44. D. Moodie, I, p. 110

45. Ibid, p. 152.

46. Ibid, pp. 218, 225.



linking Xhosa, Khoi and Tswana, and including cattle, copper, iron, hemp and tobacco.<sup>47</sup>

Direct intervention of Xhosa in Khoi affairs might come at the invitation of the Khoi themselves. One instance is the request for military aid against a rival, such as that of the Chainouqua chief mentioned above. It may be presumed that the Xhosa did not lack similar ties closer to home which might result in similar requests. The Hoengiqua chief Kohla ('Ruiter') sent his cattle to the Xhosa for protection against the San.<sup>48</sup> The San menace may well have caused Khoi groups to exchange their independence for greater security. In some cases, the Xhosa took the initiative in direct participation, as when the Xhosa chief Gwali, defeated by his uncle, fled to the Khoi chief Hinsati.<sup>49</sup> It seems likely from the geographical location of Hinsati's chiefdom and the military power he demonstrated in subsequent battles, that he was the chief of the Inqua.<sup>50</sup> If so, Gwali and Hinsati were

Note: 47. See Chapter VI below, pp. 160-163.

48. C.A. Haupt: 'Journaal ... op de togt door den Vaandrig August Frederik Beutler' (1752). Reprinted in E.C. Godee Molsbergen: Reizen in Zuid-Afrika in de Hollandse Tijd, 4 Vols. (The Hague and 's-Gravenhage, 1916-32), Vol. III, p. 288.

49. See Chapter IV below, p. 86.

50. For the location of the Inquas, see R.H. Elphick: 'The Cape Khoi and the First Phase of South African Race Relations' (Unpublished PhD thesis, Yale University, 1972), p. 53. Ensign I. Schryver, who visited the Inqua in 1689 found them under the chief 'Hykon', which is not incompatible with Hinsati. The Xhosa ('Kubuquas') were then living five days away in the direction of the coast. Schryver also reports that 'they live sometimes in great enmity, and do each other great damage' but it is not clear whether he meant internal Xhosa quarrels, or conflict between Xhosa and Inqua. D. Moodie, I, p. 437.



probably acquainted before Gwali's flight. Intervention led to incorporation. Hinsati was ultimately defeated by Gwali's rivals. In other cases, conquest was completely unprovoked, as when Rharhabe defeated the Khoi chieftainness, Hoho.<sup>51</sup> Khoi leaders became the councillors of Xhosa chiefs. Incorporation also occurred peacefully, as with the gradual absorption of Dama and Gona by the largely Khoi Ntinde and Gqunukhwebe chiefdoms.<sup>52</sup> Semi-servitude seems to have been obligatory in the transition from free non-Xhosa to fully-fledged Xhosa, for the Thembu experienced it during the period of Xhosa ascendancy,<sup>53</sup> as did the Mfengu later. The relationship between Gona and Xhosa has been well described by Haupt:

Near (the Xhosa) and with them mix the Gonaqua Hottentots these the Kaffers use as servants and in war time, they also serve them as soldiers; their clothes and lifestyles are precisely alike and they intermarry without differentiation.<sup>54</sup>

It is certain that a Gona who entered Xhosa society did so on terms of distinct inferiority, but since this inferiority was expressed in economic terms and not in social or racial ones, it may be assumed that the inferiority was only temporary, and that the Gona's children would be accepted

Note: 51. See Chapter IV below, p. 89.

52. For the Dama, see Theal: South Africa under D.E.I.C., II, p. 122; the Gona were a factor on the frontier throughout the period under discussion, and were considered halfway between Xhosa and Khoi.

53. F. von Winkelmann: 'Reisaantekeningen' (1788-9) in Godee Molsbergen, IV, pp. 92-3.

54. Haupt, III, pp. 310-11.



on an equal basis.

Relations between Xhosa and San are usually depicted as being of an extremely hostile nature, and there are many recorded incidents of Xhosa cruelty to them.<sup>55</sup> But there are also instances of more cordial relations: San were renowned rainmakers,<sup>57</sup> and useful trading-partners: they exchanged ivory for cattle and, probably, dagga (hemp).<sup>56</sup> ~~San were highly esteemed as rainmakers.~~<sup>57</sup> There was intermarriage between Xhosa and San, and San became tributary to Xhosa chiefs.<sup>58</sup> According to one report there were more San than Gona Khoi living among the amaGcaleka and they made up a proportion of the population elsewhere as well.<sup>59</sup> At least one Xhosa clan, the isiThathu, is partly San in origin.<sup>60</sup> Conversely,

- Note: 55. For examples, see Lichtenstein, I, pp. 340-1; G. Thompson, II, p. 7; Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern, p. 34.
56. See Chapter VI below, pp. 164-5.
57. Anonymous undated manuscript, probably by William Shrewsbury, Wesleyan Missionary Society Archives, MS 15429, Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.
58. Nxele, the great Xhosa diviner, had San Wives. See extract from the diary of C.L. Stretch, copied by G.M. Theal, accession 378c, Cape Archives. For San tributary to Xhosa, see Collins, V, p. 44; J.V.B. Shrewsbury: Memorials of the Reverend William J. Shrewsbury (London, 1869), p. 272.
59. W.R. Thomson - J. Gregory, 30 April 1825, R.C.C. XXI, p. 174.
60. Interview with W. Nkabi, Bulembo Location, King William's Town District, 24 Aug. 1975. Nkabi stated that the isiThathu were incorporated after Rharhabe's victory over Hoho (see Chapter IV), but this statement could be treated with reserve because, contrary to popular belief, Rharhabe was not the first to cross the Kei, and he has a very bad record as far as treating the San is concerned.



Xhosa sometimes joined San bands.<sup>61</sup>

4. Discernable developments from Tshawe to Phalo

The conventional genealogy gives three chiefs-Ncwangu, Sikhomo and Togu - between Tshawe and Ngconde, the grandfather of Phalo. This period of the genealogy, intervening as it does between mythical time (story of Tshawe) and real historical time, is notoriously susceptible to telescoping. Nothing is remembered of these chiefs, except that they led 'migrations', and there is no telling how many names may have been forgotten. The genealogy does, however, contain fewer names than its Mpondo, Mpondomise and Thembu equivalents for the same period,<sup>62</sup> and so the time elapsed may be relatively short. With Ngconde, we are on slightly firmer ground, and we may place his reign as sometimes in the mid-seventeenth century. Mqhayi sees Ngconde' reign as something of a landmark:

During the period which preceded Ngconde, the practice was that the fellow possessing the greatest power became the great chief; but now the law was established on this subject.<sup>63</sup>

It seems unlikely that this is literally true, but the picture of warring chiefdoms succeeded by a single royal lineage is compatible with the picture of historical development suggested above. Round about this time the amaMaya, a branch of the Thembu royal lineage, fled the internal

Note: 61. C O 234 J. Massy - Major Forbes, 24 Aug. 1825.

62. These and other Nguni genealogies, may be found in Soga: SE Bantu; O.H. I, Ch. III. A detailed Xhosa genealogy may be found in Appendix III.

63. Mqhayi: Ityala Lamawele, p. 117.



political disputes of Thembuland and became tributary to the Xhosa.<sup>64</sup> They were accompanied by two attendant clans, one of whom, the amaQocwa, were skilled iron-workers. The period also saw the rise of a new political grouping, the amaNdluntsha, which consisted of commoner clans under the leadership of the amaNkabane clan. They were under the titular headship of a 'queen', Noqazo, who seems to have been a Tshawe delegated for this purpose. The amaNdluntsha seem to have supplied the leading councillors in the time of Phalo and Gcaleka, but subsequently lost their position with the creation of the iNtshinga councillorship, and the revival of the iQawuka councillorship, which had been created in the time of Tshawe.<sup>65</sup> Ngconde may have been involved in a war with his brother

- Note: 64. M. Mzeni (Interview, Nqadu Location, Willowvale District, 19 Nov. 1975) (amaMaya clan) and M. Mbutuma (MS Ibali labaThembu (History of the Thembu), Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown) consider the amaMaya exodus took place at the time of the dispute between Hlanga and Dhlomo, the Thembu equivalent of Cira and Tshawe, and therefore undateable. Soga (Thembu genealogy, facing page 466 of SE Bantu) places it earlier. The amaMaya and the amaHala (Thembu royal house) do not intermarry, which indicates that they are indeed related by blood. amaQocwa interviewed do not remember arriving at the same time as the amaMaya, but seem to regard their sojourn in Thembuland as a waystation on their migration from further east. Interviews D.D.T. Mqhayi, Ngede Location, Kentani District, 28 Oct. 1975; A. Nditla, Ntlokwana Location, Willowvale District, 24 Oct. 1975; M. Kantolo, Kantolo Location, Kentani District, 27 Oct. 1975.
65. Interviews: F. Mbulaleki, Shixini Location, Willowvale District, 20 Nov. 1975; M. Ranayi, Sholora Location, Elliotdale District, 18 Feb. 1976. Ranayi is at present the head councillor of the amaNdluntsha. Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 114-6.



Ziko (praise-name: Gandowentshaba). It is, however, certain that Ziko's daughter was married to Ngconde. This necessitated the demotion of Ziko's lineage to avoid breaching the exogamy rule. The resulting clan was known as the amaKwayi of Ngconde.<sup>66</sup>

In the reign of Tshiwo, Ngconde's son, the amaTshawe were challenged by a new immigrant lineage, the amaNgqosini. Their chief, Gaba, hoisted the elephant's tail at his great place - a sign that he regarded himself as chief.<sup>67</sup> The amaTshawe were hard-pressed but were saved by the assistance of one of Tshiwo's councillors, Khwane. Tradition says that Khwane had been the officer in charge of witchcraft executions, but instead of doing his duty, he had hidden the condemned people in a forest, where they intermarried with the local Khoi. Be that as it may, Khwane was given a signal honour by Tshiwo - he was created a chief equal to the amaTshawe. His people were known as the amaGqunukhwebe, apparently because of the large number of Gona Khoi in their ranks.<sup>68</sup>

Note: 66. The story of Ziko, intermingled with that of Gwali, appears in Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern, pp. 5-11. See Chapter IV, note 2. The author thinks that the marriage was made with the purpose of demoting Ziko, and this seems reasonable. J. Brownlee, II, p. 192, mentions a chief 'Keitshe', whose story is roughly similar to that of Ziko.

67. For the war between the Xhosa and the amaNgqosini, see Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern, p. 36; W.W. Gqoba: 'Umkhondo wamaGqunukhwebe' (The Trail of the amaGqunukhwebe) in Rubusana, abridged ed., p. 15.

68. On the amaGqunukhwebe, see Gqoba op cit; A.Z. Ngani: Ibali lamaGqunukhwebe (History of the amaGqunukhwebe) (Lovedale, 1947). The story of Khwane has often been told in English. See for example, Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 116-9.



### CHAPTER III : THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN THE REIGN OF PHALO

Model-building, the customary activity of anthropologists and sociologists, is justly viewed with suspicion by historians. Extrapolation of isolated pieces of information from a dynamic and changing context into a static model is not strictly historical, and the quantity of ethnographic detail may make the following chapter seem more like anthropology than history. Yet the construction of a model at this point is unavoidable. Oral societies did not have written constitutions and laws, but they did follow rules and precedents and it is important to know what these were. If we are to trace changes, it is necessary to have a baseline against which they may be assessed. The reign of Phalo has been chosen as representative of the time after the ascendancy of the amaTshawe over the commoner clans had been fully established and before the amaTshawe lineage became irrevocably divided within itself.

#### 1. The relationship between Chiefs

The matrix of Xhosa political and social organisation is the homestead (umzi), at the head of which stands the father. The father is drawn into wider relationships through his membership of a patrilineage: his brothers, their father and his brothers, their grandfather and his brothers, and so on up to the earliest ancestor who is remembered by and sacrificed to by all the members of the patrilineage. The patrilineage is therefore simply an extension in space and time of the father and his sons, and its members relate to each other as fathers to sons, uncles to nephews, or elder brothers to younger brothers, as the case may be. The elevation of the amaTshawe to the position



of royal clan governing a number of commoner clans did not significantly alter their existing political concepts, which remained kinship-based. The chiefs referred to each other as 'older brother' (umkhuluwa) or 'younger brother' (umninawa) depending on their genealogical status, and the Paramount was known as the inkosi enkulu, literally 'the chief who is the eldest son'.<sup>1</sup> The Paramount was the head of the lineage, as the chief most closely related to their common ancestor, Tshawe himself. The rights of the other chiefs derive from the Paramount. This is represented in a metaphor which provides a striking illustration of the way in which inter-chiefly relationships are conceptualised in domestic terms: the Paramount 'allocates' (ukulawula, also, to share out portions from the pot at mealtimes) each chief his 'dish' (isitiya), that is to say his chiefship.<sup>2</sup> Each chief viewed his rights and obligations vis-à-vis his fellow chiefs in terms of kinship obligations. The Paramount, as head of the lineage, was responsible for all matters which affected the lineage as a whole, such as the national first-fruits ceremony.<sup>3</sup> The other chiefs, his younger brothers,

- Note:
1. These are the terms in common use today, and it is possible to find them used similarly in the early nineteenth century. For example, Chungwa once referred to Xasa and Habana, chiefs who were inferior to him in power but not even members of the same lineage, as his "young brothers", C O 20592 J. Cuyler - Colonial Secretary, 7 July 1814.
  2. Cf the following passage, an idealised picture of the happiness of Rharhabe's subchiefs: "Those little chiefs lived close together, and were set in a line to get the meat that was taken out of his pot, which they received still piping hot in all its broth!" S.E.K. Mqhayi: 'URarabe' in Bennie, p. 133. (Trans. from the Zhusa.) The pot is a metaphorical representation of Rharhabe's bounty.
  3. Soga: Ama-Xosa, p. 153.



owed him respect and obedience in matters concerning the whole lineage.<sup>4</sup> When two chiefs fell out with each other, the aggrieved party might call on their mutual superior for adjudication, and, if necessary, physical endorsement of the sentence.<sup>5</sup> Faced with a ritual or judicial situation which they felt themselves unable to handle unaided, junior chiefs would refer to their seniors, the Paramount being the ultimate authority. Junior chiefs were supposed to send the Paramount choice portions of any big game they killed.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the Paramount's position as lineage head did not entitle him to make unreasonable demands at the expense of his subordinates, or to interfere unwarrantedly in their domestic affairs. The 'dish' which the junior chiefs received contained the right to wear the royal insignia, to judge cases, and to receive various forms of tribute due to a Great Place, such as first-fruits, eland and hippopotamus breasts, blue-cranes, pythons and death-dues. Moreover, they were entitled to defend these rights by force, if necessary. Tshiwo is supposed to have told Khwane, when he installed him as chief of the amaGqunukhwebe, "You may throw your spears against me

- Note: 4. Dugmore, pp. 31-2. Even Ngqika admitted this. See A. Stockenström: The Autobiography of the Late Sir Andrew Stockenström, Bart., ed. C.W. Hutton, 2 Vols. (Cape Town, 1887), I, p. 44. The Paramount was also theoretically able to mobilise the entire nation for war. See W. Shaw: Journal, p. 138. On the outbreak of the Sixth Frontier War, Maqoma and Tyhali sent to Hintsa to ask formal permission to go to war. See 'Questions put by Colonel Smith to the Magistrate Tyali', 5 May 1836, in Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons. Caffre War: Copies or Extracts of Further Dispatches (London 1837), p. 79.
5. According to tradition, when Ngqika abducted Ndlambe's wife, Thuthula, Ndlambe charged him at Hintsa's court, Hintsa gave the decision in Ndlambe's favour and sent his army to assist Ndlambe in exacting compensation. Interviews with D. Runeyi, Shixini Location, Willowvale District, 25 Nov. 1975, Chief E. Botomane, Ramntswana Location, Kentani District, 27 Oct. 1975.
6. Rharhabe did this even after he escaped from Gcaleka. Mqhayi: 'URarabe', p. 132.



myself, if I wrong you."<sup>7</sup>

Chiefs did not meet on a regular basis, but convened meetings whenever matters of importance were to be discussed. On most occasions, they did not meet personally but communicated by means of trusted councillors. No chief would take an important step without first consulting the opinions of other chiefs, both senior and junior. This was true even of bitter rivals, unless they were engaged in active hostilities.<sup>8</sup> The Paramount himself could not take a decision which would bind his junior chiefs, unless they were present and discussed the matter.<sup>9</sup> Given the imprecise character of these rights and obligations, the successful working of the system depended on two conditions, both of which obtained in the small-scale kinship group, but which became increasingly absent among the amaTshawe with the passage of time. These were, first, constant contact between 'brothers', and, second, the perpetual familiarity of circumstances, so that new contingencies could be judged with reference to old ones. Continuing migration and segmentation led to an increase in geographical and genealogical distance, and this considerably diminished the personal understanding and co-operation which were necessary to make up for structural deficiencies. Faced with new circumstances, like the European presence, the Xhosa political system, with no abstract norms as guidelines, no precedents to follow and no tradition of unconditional obedience to the Paramount,

Note: 7. These rights of the junior chiefs are enumerated in a speech attributed to Tshiwo. W.W. Gqoba: 'Umkhondo wama-Gqunukhwebe' in Rubusana, (abridged ed.), pp. 25-6. (Evidence of John Tzatzoe, Abo. com., I, p. 564) "Although I am subject to the other chiefs, I could fight against the other chiefs".

8. For instance, Ngqika consulted Ndlambe during the Slagter's Nek rebellion and the Kaŋ River Conference. See Chapter IV, n. 8.

9. Evidence of John Tzatzoe, Abo. com., I, p. 567.



was confounded. Some chiefs thought that the newcomers were a threat and should be met by joint action. Others saw personal political advantage, and could claim that their dealings with the Europeans fell within the domestic category, as relations with the Khoi and the San had done.

The coherence of the Xhosa polity was also weakened by political competition between chiefs. Such competition exists in all political systems, and the ascriptive nature of political offices derived through kinship inhibited but did not eliminate it. On the surface, the rules are clear enough: all sons of chiefs are chiefs, and they are ranked according to the rank of their mother. The heir to the chieftainship, known as the Great Son, is the son of the Great Wife, who is usually a Thembu. The bridewealth for the Great Wife is paid by all the people, and her status is publicly proclaimed. The second-ranking wife is known as the Right-Hand Wife, and her son is the Right-Hand son. All the other wives are amagadi - minor wives. The eldest son in each house ranks ahead of his younger full brothers. Yet despite the apparent clarity of the rules, it was possible to circumvent them. This was made easier by the fact that the Great Wife was often married late in life, and that sons often died young, through illness or war. The political situation was at its most fluid after the death of a chief. The superior rank of the Great Wife could be challenged by a subsequent bride.<sup>10</sup> It might be alleged that the chief was not the real father of the Great Son,<sup>11</sup> or that he disowned the

Note: 10. Soga: SE Bantu, p. 290.

11. 'SoGwali kaNtaba' (S.M. Burns-Ndamashe): 'Ukuphala kukaPhalo uyise wamaXhosa' (The emergence of Phalo, father of the Xhosa), Imvo Zabantsundu, 23 Dec. 1961.



heir-apparent's wife before his death.<sup>12</sup> A contender could be eliminated through a witchcraft accusation.<sup>13</sup> The longer a chief remained in office, the more secure his position became. He was at his most vulnerable at his accession, when his legitimacy could be challenged. It was more difficult to depose him once he had been recognised, but even this was possible, and, once accomplished, a reason could always be found. Chiefs have been deposed or superseded for being 'cruel', 'stingy' or even 'stupid'.<sup>14</sup> It is impossible to know to what extent such reasons were simply pretexts. Competition between chiefs could take the relatively peaceful form of enticing away one's rival's vassals,<sup>15</sup> or it could result in open hostilities. Such contests were not part of the 'ideal' of inter-chiefly relationships, and informants stressed that they were simply domestic quarrels, qualitatively different from proper wars.

Note: 12. Dugmore, p. 53.

13. C. Brownlee, pp. 185-6.

14. Bangela, chief of the imiDange, was deposed for 'cruelty' (Interview with B. Nqezo, Peelton Location, King William's Town District, 24 Aug. 1975.); Anonymous: 'Umkhondo kaMdange' (The trial of Mdange) in Rubusana, abridged ed., p. 70, refers to his 'disobedience'; Stinginess was the reason given for the fall of Cira (Chapter II), and of Thole, chief of the amaMbalu, Rubusana, abridged ed., p. 66; 'stupidity' was the fault of Hleke. A. Kropf: Das Volk der Xosa-Kaffern (Berlin, 1889), p. 5.

15. This will be more fully discussed in the following section. See also Appendix ID.



Let me say, the chiefs were never at variance with each other except for a little misunderstanding at home (amakhaya) because they are people who were born chiefs of a single lineage (umnombo). I have never heard of a war where they fought greatly with each other. I have only heard about Ngqika and Ndlambe over Thuthula, and things like that are simply domestic quarrels. They never had wars like when nations (izizwe) differ with each other, because they are chiefs of the same lineage.<sup>16</sup>

In oral societies even more than in literate ones, it is the victors who record the history, particularly if the losers became reconciled to their defeat. Genealogies, for instance are less accurate chronicles of genetic relationships than indexes of relative political standing. Mdange, probably born a minor son, is today remembered as a Right-Hand son. The upstart Mhala is regarded as the Great Son of Ndlambe.<sup>17</sup> Political competition of this nature was by no means entirely negative in its effects. Given the ascribed nature of political office, it permitted the most capable chiefs to rise to the highest positions and reduced the likelihood of highly-born incompetents holding office too long. Moreover, competition between the major chiefs allowed junior chiefs and even ordinary councillors to hold the balance of power,

Note: 16. Interview with W. Nkabi, Bulembo Location, King William's Town District, 24 Aug. 1975. Nkabi is not strictly correct historically, of course, but the point is that ideally chiefs of the same lineage did not fight with each other. See also Shaw: Mission, p. 434.

17. For Mdange, see Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern, p. 5. Although almost all printed sources (e.g. C. Brownlee, pp. 185-6) mention Mhala as a usurper, most oral historians (except among the imiDushane) refer to him simply as the Great Son of Ndlambe. See Chapter VII (1), pp. 190-1.



thus reducing the chances of a Zulu-type despotism. But it endangered the polity as a whole, since it gave rise to the temptation for factions to call in outside help.

The military preponderance of the Paramount was due to the fact that, in addition to those subjects directly under his control, he alone commanded the allegiance of the Great Councillors (iQawuka, amaNdluntsha, and later, iNtshinga) and their armies. But even this was insufficient to guarantee him military superiority over over-mighty junior chiefs, particularly after the rise of the amaRharhabe. In fact, the Paramount rarely chose the path of military confrontation and tended to maintain his position through judicious interference in the quarrels of his subordinates.<sup>18</sup> Every year the junior chiefs reaffirmed their loyalty to the Paramount in the first-fruits ceremony, in which each of them awaited the Paramount's word before tasting the harvest.<sup>19</sup> Junior chiefs were also supposed to send him messengers to keep him informed of important events, to consult him and to ask his permission.<sup>20</sup> He then sent them orders (imiyalelo), although he could not expect them to be obeyed, if too arbitrary.<sup>21</sup> The extent to which a Paramount controlled his subordinates at any given time depended on circumstances and his own personality, but he was constantly a factor in Xhosa politics, and could be defied but

Note: 18. For the interference of the Paramount Khawuta in amaRharhabe affairs, see Chapter IV (2), p. 91, for the interference of the Paramount Hintsa in amaMbede affairs see Chapter IV (4), p. 120.

19. See Soga: Ama-Xosa, pp. 153-4.

20. For instance, Hintsa was soon informed of the shooting of Chief Siku by a commando in 1830. Kay, p. 302.

21. All of my best informants (Qeqe, Bhotomane, Melane) were agreed on this point. It is also evident in the actions of Maqoma, Tyhali, Mhala and Hintsa in the Frontier War of 1834-5. See Chapter VII (3), p. 214.



never ignored. It should be remembered that absolute domination was no part of the Xhosa political ethic. The power of any chief was limited by what his subordinates were prepared to accept. Moreover, the Paramountcy possessed symbolic and emotional associations which transcended its narrow political functions. The Paramount was the "very personification of government"<sup>22</sup> and the symbol of national unity. The shooting and mutilation of the Paramount Hintsa in 1835 was more than a political event, it was a national calamity. Even after the rival Paramountcy of the amaRharhabe was established, emotional loyalty to the Paramount persisted:

How can I sit still when Rhili fights? If Rhili fights and bursts and is overpowered, then I too become nothing. No longer will I be a chief.

Where Rhili dies, there will I die, and where he wakes, there will I wake.<sup>23</sup>

## 2. The Relationship between Chief and Subject

On one level, the relationship between the chief and his people was conceptualised in kinship terms. The chief was the 'father' who took care of his 'children'. In time of scarcity, he saw that they were provided for, and if he could not feed them from his private stock, it was his duty to lead them to a place where they would find food; in time of drought,

Note: 22. S.E.K. Mqhayi: Ityala Lamawele, p. 115.

23. Speech of Sandile, Rharhabe Paramount, in reply to his Great Councillor, Tyala, who was urging him not to enter the last Frontier War. 'Rhili' is the Gcaleka Paramount, Sarhili. Interview with Chief F. Mpangele, Mgwali Location, Stutterheim District, 26 Aug. 1975. No words can convey the emotion with which this speech was repeated, or its effect on the audience. For further evidence on this point, see C. Rose: Four Years in Southern Africa (London, 1829), pp. 178-9; H.H. Dugmore: Reminiscences of an Albany Settler (Grahamstown, 1958), p. 80; J. Chalmers: Tiyo Soga (Edinburgh, 1877), p. 379; F. Brownlee (ed.): The Transkeian Native Territories : Historical Records (Lovedale, 1923), p. 6.



he called in the rainmaker and offered up the necessary sacrifices; in time of war, he was their shield, who saw to their defence. He saw to it that the tasks necessary for the good of all were accomplished and he chastised those who wronged others.

In all of this, the Tshawe chief simply took the place of the old clan head. But in addition, the amaTshawe created what may be called an ideology of royalty, a set of practices that set the amaTshawe apart from the commoners. This is apparent in the very different symbolism applied to chiefs and commoners respectively. Chiefs were commonly identified with elephants. An elephant tail hoisted on a stick was the sign of the Great Place. When an elephant was killed, the tip of its tail and one of its teeth was brought to the chief. He did not participate in the ceremonial feast given by the man who killed the elephant. This would have been tantamount to cannibalism, since chiefs and elephants were regarded as equals.<sup>24</sup> Chiefs were also identified with bulls, on the analogy of the lead bulls who herded the other cattle.<sup>25</sup> Commoners, on the other hand, were known as 'dogs' or 'black people'.<sup>26</sup> A Chief was supposed to have a shadow (isithunzi) which distinguished him from commoners. He never spoke directly to his ordinary subjects but his words were relayed to them through a 'spokesman' (isithethi) who also conveyed the words of the subjects to the chief. The decisions of a chief were regarded as

Note: 24. Kay, p. 137.

25. J.V.B. Shrewsbury: Memorials of the Reverend William J. Shrewsbury (London, 1869), p. 239. Today the lion is commonly associated with the title of Paramount Chiefs, and, in fact, kings of all nations. This does not seem to have been the case previously. The first chief who was associated with a lion was Oba, son of Tyhali, and this was his own particular praise-name,

26. Shrewsbury, p. 175; Rose, p. 179.



infallible, and any mistakes or wrong decisions, on his part would be blamed on the 'bad advice' of his councillors.<sup>27</sup> Each chief was saluted by a special praise-name (isikahlelo) and commoners who accidentally neglected to salute could be beaten for it.<sup>28</sup> There was a distinct feeling of rank solidarity among chiefs. When Chief Ndlambe defeated his nephew, Ngqika, who had just abducted one of his wives, he told his army "That is a chief, and you are black men. Do not chase after him."<sup>29</sup> Certain insignia were regarded as royal. Some were reserved entirely to the chief, such as the leopard skin, while others, such as blue-crane <sup>feathers</sup> and ivory rings, were distributed among followers who had earned marks of distinction. The chief also received tribute of a largely symbolic nature: the breasts of elands, buffaloes and hippopotami, and the forelegs of slaughtered oxen.<sup>30</sup> On the death of a chief, one or more commoners would be executed for killing him by witchcraft.<sup>31</sup> Chiefs, unlike commoners, were buried, and royal grave-watchers appointed. The entire chiefdom went into mourning.

Commoners were also called on to pay their respects in a more material form: apart from a share of the crop at the harvest festival, cattle were demanded at the circumcision of the chief's sons, for the marriage of his Great Wife, and at

- Note: 27. W.D. Hammond-Tooke: 'The 'other' side' of frontier history' in Thompson: African Societies, p. 253. This citation, like most others in this section is offered as documentary confirmation of strong impressions gained during fieldwork.
28. Kay, p. 77.
29. W.K. Ntsikana: 'Imfazwe kaThuthula' (The War of Thuthula) in Rubusana, abridged ed., p. 53.
30. Most of the items on this list are taken from Gqoba: 'Umkhondo wamaGqunukhwebe', in Rubusana, abridged ed., pp. 25-6.
31. Kay, pp. 139, 184-5.



his death. Chiefs went on periodic tours of their country, and they were entitled to support for themselves and their retinue, which meant the slaughter of a beast at the very minimum. Commoners tended to resent these chiefly levies. Men not directly dependent on the chief tended not to live in his immediate neighbourhood, with the result that the area close to the Great Place was usually thinly populated.<sup>32</sup> The sexual requisition of young girls (upundlo) was regarded as especially objectionable, and occasionally provoked local resistance.<sup>33</sup> There was, however, little redress for the ordinary man, since his own headman was often the beneficiary of these practices, and neighbouring chiefs also indulged in them.<sup>34</sup>

The system was sustained through the judicious distribution by the chief of the large revenue which began with inauguration presents and his inheritance from his father, and was later augmented by tribute, fines, levies and death-dues.<sup>35</sup> Generosity was regarded as a good chief's cardinal virtue, and chiefs are reputed to have lost their position through greediness.<sup>36</sup> There were two categories of recipient.

- Note: 32. Kay, pp. 77, 84; Cory Interview, Number 119, Mr. W.R.D. Fynn, Queenstown, April 1913.
33. Anonymous, undated manuscript in Wesleyan Missionary Society Archives, probably by W.J. Shrewsbury. MS 15,429, Cory Library, Grahamstown; Manuscript on Nxele, by Wm. Kekale Kaye, MS 172c, Grey Collection, South African Public Library, Cape Town; Maclean, p. 129.
34. See for instance, Ngqika's enforcement of heavier death duties, Chapter IV (3) below, p. 98.
35. For the sources of the chief's income, see Shaw: Mission, pp. 142-3; Dugmore, pp. 30-1; Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern, p. 171.
36. For the case of Cira and Tshawe, see Chapter I (1) above; for the story of Nqeno and Thole, the sons of Langa, see W.W. Gqoba: 'Imbali yamaXhosa' (History of the Xhosa) in Rubusana, abridged ed., pp. 66-8.



Councillors who were heads of followings received cattle and other gifts periodically, without necessarily asking for them. This placed them under a moral obligation to reciprocate, not by specific counter-gifts or services, but by general loyalty and obedience. The second category of recipients was composed of ordinary subjects, usually young men in search of bridewealth or those whom misfortune had suddenly plunged into poverty. These sent to reside at the Great Place to serve (ukubusa) the chief. They were known as the 'milkers of the Great Place' (abasengi basekomkhulu) and they looked after the cattle and buildings of the Great Place, ran messages and imposed the chief's authority on recalcitrant subjects. In return, they shared in the chief's spoils and tributes, and occasionally received a beast as a mark of favour. But it was every man's ambition to become the head of his own homestead, and he stayed only long enough to accumulate sufficient cattle.<sup>37</sup> Thus the chief did not normally acquire a set of permanent dependents. This would appear to invalidate the theory put forward by Professors Wilson and Hammond-Tooke that political authority among the Xhosa was a development of the busa system, as does the fact that poor men also attached themselves as clients to rich commoners, but did not thereby make chiefs of them.<sup>38</sup>

The chief's council consisted of three categories of councillor. Some councillors belonged to all three categories, others to only one. There were the chief's age-mates, there were exceptional individuals distinguished for oratory, wisdom of valour, and there were the heads of clan-sections and leaders of local followings. The last were the most

Note: 37. Alberti, pp. 77-8; N. Qeqe, Interviewed Shixini Location, Willowvale District, Nov. 1975; Dugmore, p. 29; C. Brownlee, pp. 178-9.

38. See W.D. Hammond-Tooke: Command or Consensus (Cape Town, 1975), pp. 29-30.



important for it was on them that the chief's power rested. They made the chief's wishes known to their followings, collected his tribute from them, and led them in war. It was only very occasionally that the chief replaced one of these councillors, and this had to be for a good reason.<sup>39</sup> Usually, the councillor was succeeded by one of his sons, thus maintaining the political integrity of the clan-section.<sup>40</sup> The political power of the councillors was such that on occasion, they could virtually choose the chief.<sup>41</sup> They might publicly defy one of the chief's unpopular rulings, and force him to back down.<sup>42</sup> A strong councillor might forcibly prevent the chief's men from executing their orders.<sup>43</sup> A less powerful councillor would have to steal away at night with his people and his cattle, for if he was caught by the chief's supporters, his cattle would be impounded and himself ruined. A councillor who abandoned his old chief at the head of a number of men and cattle could become the councillor of a new one by slaughtering an ox in submission. Chiefs usually welcomed such men as accretions to their strength, and were prepared to assist them militarily in making their escape.<sup>44</sup> But a councillor who lost his cattle would thereby lose most of his men too, and would arrive at a new Great Place as a suppliant, entirely without standing. The major reason why governmental decisions were taken by consensus was not therefore the often described Xhosa tradition of holding meetings and legal cases in public and allowing all, even

Note: 39. Alberti, p. 82; Lichtenstein, I, p. 352.

40. Soga: Ama-Xosa, p. 29

41. Dugmore, p. 28. This was the case of Mhala. See Chapter VII (1) below, p. 191.

42. Vanderkemp in Transactions of the L.M.S., I, p. 436.

43. Lichtenstein, I, p. 352; Backhouse, p. 235.

44. For an excellent example of this, and other aspects of court intrigue, see the tradition collected from M. Kantolo, in Appendix I D below.



young boys, to express their opinions,<sup>45</sup> or of the egalitarian effect of the circumcision lodge, but the representative nature of the council. Inasmuch as the councillors also represented their followers, except when this conflicted with their corporate interests as councillors, Xhosa government can be said to have been essentially democratic. A chief was able to manipulate the competition of the councillors for his favour. Certain tasks were conferred as honours such as that of 'spokesman' (isithethi), that of rubbing down the chief's person with fat or ochre, and that of acting as ambassador. Councillors fell in and out of favour and intrigued against each other. If a councillor committed an overt misdeed, his enemies would support the chief in 'eating him up', that is by confiscating all his cattle. Otherwise the more devious medium of the witchcraft accusation could be used.

Diviners ("witchdoctors") did not normally reside at the Great Place and derived their power from a transcendent source.<sup>46</sup> They were thus theoretically political neutrals. They were sent for when needed, and the same diviner could serve several chiefs at once. Their functions included the diagnosis of continued ill fortune or ill health, the interpretation of dreams and omens, and the prescription and administration of medicines for strengthening the chief and destroying his enemies. Those who specialised in making rain were especially respected and feared. The great war-doctors were national rather than sectional figures. Mlanjeni, who doctored the Xhosa in the War of 1850-3 was originally subject to Mqhayi, a pro-Colonial chief. Ngxito, greatly feared by the

Note: 45. This is the burden of Mqhayi's Ityala Lamawe.

46. The detailed discussion of diviners will be found in Chapter V, pp. 129-30.



Paramount Sarhili, was a chief himself. Diviners who attracted the chief's attention were men of proven ability and personal magnetism. The only criterion of continued employment was success. If a diviner failed too often or too conspicuously in bringing rain, victory or relief from illness, he was condemned as a fraud or witch.<sup>47</sup> In fact, the diviner's conduct was circumscribed within the limits of what was acceptable to the chief and his councillors.

One contemporary called the witchcraft accusation the Xhosa "state engine for the removal of the obnoxious".<sup>48</sup> The most likely victims were the stingy rich and the helpless poor - men who had nothing in common but their social isolation. Anthropological research has revealed that witchcraft accusations are indicative of structural tensions within the society, and the spate of witchcraft accusations against the resentful Mfengu immigrants prior to the Frontier War of 1834-5<sup>49</sup> would appear to bear out the proposition in the Xhosa case. When an untoward event occurred, speculation concerning its perpetrator commenced and finally centred on a few individuals who were known to have been at odds with the sufferer. When the sufferer was the chief himself, an opportunity was provided for councillors to accuse their political enemies of pushing their 'disloyalty' to the ultimate extreme. The

Note: 47. Two of Reverend William Shaw's chief adversaries among the amaNdlambe were subsequently killed as witches. Annual Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (1828), p. 61.

48. Dugmore, p. 28. See also Rose, pp. 141-2.

49. J. Ayliff - Grahamstown Journal, 17 Aug. 1835. C.W.D., II, p. 345.



accused usually knew of the accusation in advance,<sup>50</sup> and sometimes fled, thereby 'demonstrating' their 'guilt'. At other times, they were warned by finding a loop made of the ingximba creeping vine attached to their doorpost.<sup>51</sup> Thus the accusation made at the umhlahlo smelling-out ceremony often came as no surprise. The diviners were naturally aware of the suspicions of the community, and acted accordingly.<sup>52</sup> It was also possible for Councillors to suborn a diviner into accusing a rival.<sup>53</sup> The not infrequent success of this stratagem may appear to reflect adversely on Xhosa credulity, but the possibilities were rather more complex. A man faced with the probability of a witchcraft accusation had a number of alternatives. He could flee for his life, leaving his cattle behind him. He could assemble his supporters and cattle and leave, prepared to fight his way out if necessary. Alternatively, he could stay on, face the accusation, and accuse the diviner of fraud. Obviously, his choice of alternatives was governed by the extent of his power, that is the number of men who would follow him. A man who could not persuade even his own kin to join him in flight must have been 'obnoxious' and isolated indeed.<sup>54</sup> At the other end of the spectrum no man who commanded substantial support could be harmed by the diviner.<sup>55</sup>

The witchcraft accusation was also correlated with the generosity ethic. A man who concentrated cattle at his homestead

Note: 50. Kay, p. 128n.

51. J. Solilo: 'Izinto zeKomkhulu' (The things of the Great Place) in Bennie, p. 221.

52. See M. Hunter: Reaction to Conquest (London, 1936, second edition, 1961), pp. 336-7, 348.

53. See Kantolo tradition in Appendix I D; Interview with H.M. Nikani, Kentani, 28 Oct. 1975.

54. There is an example in Kay, p. 128n.

55. For example, see S. Kay-Directors of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, 1 April 1826, W.M.S. Archives, MS 15,429, Cory Library, Grahamstown; Shaw: Journal, p. 109.



for his personal use and prestige would attract attention and jealousy, and as he had few clients, would have few supporters. But a man who distributed his cattle among a number of poorer men hid the full extent of his wealth and at the same time acquired a following of clients who would support him in time of need. Thus the witchcraft accusation was an indicator of social tensions, a forum for political competition and an incentive to the equitable distribution of wealth - a far cry from the mindless orgy of heathenish superstition which it is usually conceived to be.

### 3. The Xhosa and the outside world

Social distance among the Xhosa was a function of kinship distance, geographical distance and political distance.<sup>56</sup> A man would naturally feel closer to someone who was a fellow-clansman, living near him and subject to the same chief, than he would to someone who was none of these things. The relative importance of these factors would probably vary with individuals (for instance there can be no general rule concerning whether a man will feel closer to a neighbouring non-clansman than to a clansman living in another chiefdom), but among the Xhosa there was a reasonably close correlation between them. Social distance is important because it is strongly related to moral community:

Although the rights of private property are regarded with great strictness in reference to the subjects of the same king or captain; yet (the Xhosa) consider

Note: 56. This section is indirectly indebted to all the anthropologists since Mauss who have worked on reciprocity, but especially to M.D. Sahlins: 'On the sociology of primitive exchange' in M. Banton (ed.): The Relevance of Models for Social Anthropology (London, 1965) and reprinted in Sahlins: Stone Age Economics (Chicago, 1972).



themselves under no absolute restraints on the grounds of Justice to act in the same manner towards the subjects of any neighbouring king or captain ... (A Xhosa might say) 'If you need cattle, it is certainly not unfair to take them from the colonists; because they are another tribe of people'.<sup>57</sup>

People who lived entirely outside the range of Xhosa social relations were entirely outside the moral community; hostility was natural, and there was a general expectation that the strongest would prevail. Told of a clash between emigrant Xhosa and the Tswana, Ngqika commented that "it was no harm to murder the Briquas; that they had fought with the Caffres and that the Caffres had got the better of them."<sup>58</sup>

This stage of natural hostility towards strangers was neither inevitable nor indefinite since it was possible to reduce social distance. For the Xhosa, this was most satisfactorily done by the incorporation of the alien group into the Xhosa nation where it would become bound and protected by Xhosa law and customs. Nations that were not incorporated could, however, establish kinship links through marriage.

The chiefs of the amaGcaleka married the daughters of the Sotho and the daughters of the Thembu and the daughters of the Mpondo, and sent our own daughters there. You ask why we do that? We do that so

Note: 57. C O 2645 W. Shaw - H. Rivers, 23 Aug. 1822.

58. C O 2575 W. Nel - J. Cuyler, 7 Feb. 1811. Ngqika also defended the killing of shipwreck survivors because "they, being strangers, had nothing to do in the country any more than the wolves". Vanderkemp in Transactions of the L.M.S., I, p. 467.



that we should not quarrel, that we should not fight. Those great chiefs of nations would say, this is my nephew, the son of our girl, and they would not kill him. That was the way they ended the fighting between them.<sup>59</sup>

In most recorded Xhosa royal marriages, the Great Wife was a Thembu, from the nation with which the Xhosa were most often in contact. Deviations from the rule are therefore significant. In Phalo's time, the Mpondo ranked above the Thembu.<sup>60</sup> The Paramount Hintsa, who was at odds with both Thembu and Mpondo Paramounts, took the daughter of his Bomvana ally for his Great Wife.

The most effective manner of establishing friendly relations, apart from marriage, was through the exchange of gifts. Chiefs expected gifts from Colonial officials, and slaughtered oxen and gave them elephant tusks as presents. These were not considered as commercial transactions, but as signs of respect and friendship. Ngqika was offended by the first gifts he received from the British authorities at the Cape, because he considered them "trifles" and an insult to his dignity.<sup>61</sup>

Colonel Henry Somerset's lavishness with presents and hospitality was greatly appreciated and remembered long afterwards.<sup>62</sup> Gift exchange was complicated by its implications with regard to rank. Xhosa commoners offered Colonists counter-gifts and labour in return for 'presents'. Chiefs expected tribute.

Note: 59. Interview with N. Qeque, Shixini Location, Willowvale District, Nov. 1975. The question in the middle of the passage is rhetorical: no question was asked by the interviewer at that point.

60. See Chapter IV (1), p. 87. Some sources say Gcaleka's mother was a Mpondomise, not a Mpondo.

61. Lichtenstein, I, p. 402n.

62. Cory interview no 69, Tini Maqoma, Alice District.



Chief Mdushane, on visiting Grahamstown, refused to give a shopkeeper anything in return for his gifts, although he made it quite clear that he would not have refused his equal, the Landdrost. "I have left my country," he said, "not to give but to receive presents."<sup>63</sup> Exchanges of brides and goods were not in themselves sufficient to establish good relations, and in addition to affecting social relations, they reflected them. Thus bride-exchange between Xhosa and Thembu could not always outweigh the other factors creating tension between the two polities. When the Thembu withheld a promised dowry, or when the Thembu Paramount illtreated his Xhosa bride,<sup>64</sup> these were indications that the Thembu were challenging the power of the Xhosa to avenge these insults. Similarly, exchange of goods did not in itself produce goodwill, and it was not only the exchange, but the spirit of the exchange which mattered. When a climate of distrust and profiteering on both sides dominated trade, hard bargaining was the order of the day, and cheating and theft permissible. Milk and food which were dispensed freely to travellers were sold to professional traders.<sup>65</sup>

The Xhosa succeeded in drawing most of their neighbours into a network of reciprocal social relations. They were least successful with the Colonial Government, which prompted and enforced to the best of its ability a system of non-intercourse, mitigated only by calculated exchanges of goods that were closer to profiteering and bribery than goodwill exchanges. Small wonder therefore that it was regarded by the Xhosa as standing outside the moral community.

Note: 63. Rose, p. 51. See also Collins, V, P. 51, for a similar attitude on the part of Ndlambe.

64. See Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 131-2, 248-9.

65. For example see A.G. Bain: Journals of Andrew Geddes Bain, p. 92, and Chapter VI below, p. 176.



CHAPTER IV : FROM THE REIGN OF PHALO TO THE TRIUMPH OF NGQIKA

1. The Reign of Phalo (c 1715-1775)<sup>1</sup>

The reign of Tshiwo, father of Phalo, seems to have been a successful one, marked by the subjection of the amaNgqosini clan and the creation of the amaGqunukhwebe chiefdom. He died on a hunting trip in middle age and was survived by his brother, Mdange, and his son, Gwali, among others.<sup>2</sup> Tshiwo's acknowledged Great Wife had not yet borne him a son, and was

- Note: 1. G.M. Theal gives 1702 as Phalo's date of birth through assuming that the Xhosa encountered by a party of European adventurers in that year were the amaGwali. (South Africa under the D.E.I.C. I, pp. 391-2, II, p. 124). But the fullest available account of this expedition gives no clear indication of who these "Caffres" were, or where they were found. See H.C.V. Leibbrandt: Precis of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope: The Defence of William Adriaan van der Stel (Cape Town, 1897), pp. 133-149.
2. There are three important sources for the story of Gwali. That recounted by Chief F. Mpangele of Mgwali, given in Appendix I D, is the most straightforward. That given by S.M. Burns-Ncamashe, the amaGwali chief of the Ciskei, is distorted by the fact that the amaGwali have accepted the overrule of the line of Phalo since the late eighteenth century but nevertheless contains two features which seem to have descended from Gwali's claim to the Paramountcy: Phalo is not the son of an umTshawe, but of an umNtakwenda commoner delegated by Mdange. Second, Phalo's mother was put into the house of Gwali's mother, thereby indicating that she was not really the Great Wife. See 'Sogwali ka Ntaba': 'Ukuphala kukaPhalo uyise wama Xhosa' (The emergence (untranslatable pun) of Phalo, father of the Xhosa) Imvo Zabantsundu, 23 Dec. 1961. The third source is a tradition related by J.K. Bokwe, which appears in A. Kropf: Das Volk der Xhosa-Kaffern (Berlin, 1889), p. 5-11, summarised in English by Harinck, pp. 155-7. This is confused by the fact that the setting has been transposed (see Chapter I(1)). In Bokwe's version Gwali becomes Gandowentshaba and Phalo becomes Tshiwo, a transposition of one generation. Gandowentshaba may be the same as 'Keitshe' to whom J. Brownlee refers. See J. Brownlee, II, p. 192. In addition to Burns-Ncamashe and Mpangele, both Theal: South Africa under the D.E.I.C. II, p. 124, and J.H. Soga: 'Uphalo' in Bennie, pp. 110-114, have Gwali and Phalo as the chief characters. The other characters, Mdange, Hinsati, Hleke and Ntinde appear in both versions. Bokwe does not know what to do with Gwali in his version. None of the descendants of Gandowentshaba (the amaKwayi clan) to whom I spoke had heard the story. It should be noted that on at least one subsequent occasion, a posthumous child was dismissed as a bastard. See Lichtenstein, I, p. 360.



sent back to her people. After Gwali had been ruling for some time, Mdange produced a child whom he said was the son of Tshiwo. Gwali rejected the claim but was defeated by Mdange, and fled to the mountains of Nojoli (present day Somerset East), where he was given land by the Khoi chief Hinsati. Mdange's army followed him and defeated Hinsati, destroying his chiefdom and incorporating his people into the Xhosa as the Sukwini, Gqwashu and Nqarwane clans.<sup>3</sup> When Phalo came of age, Mdange yielded the chiefship to him, and went to live west of the Kei, where his descendants remained on good terms with the Paramount.

Phalo remains a shadowy figure about whom almost nothing is known, except that he too crossed the Kei and settled on the Izeli, a tributary of the Buffalo River. In his own lifetime, he came to be overshadowed by his sons, Gcaleka and Rharhabe.<sup>4</sup> One of the most widely spread

Note: 3. Sogwali kaNtaba: 'EzobuRarabe Jikelele', Imvo Zabantsundu, 16 Sept. 1961. It is not clear who accompanied Gwali into exile. The amaNtinde certainly did, and they were joined by the amaHleke according to Mpangele, but not according to Kropf, p. 5. According to Kropf, p. 110, the amaGwali and amaNtinde joined Mdange against Hinsati, but according to Soga: 'UPhalo', p. 113, they fled from him.

4. Phalo is best remembered in Colonial historiography as chief ruling at the time of the 1736 massacre of Hermanus Hubner, an ivory trader, and his party. The fullest account of this incident is H. de Vries and H. Scheffer: 'Relaas ... wegens het voorgevallens op de Togt naar it land der Caffers', Cape Archives, C354, 10 July 1737, pp. 313-324. Phalo was not personally involved in this, but it may account for his subsequent reluctance to meet European travellers.



and best-known traditions in Xhosaland relates how Phalo was one day embarrassed by the simultaneous arrival at his Great Place of two bridal parties, one from the Mpondo Paramount and one from the Thembu Paramount. By choosing one girl as his Great Wife, he would offend the father of the other. A wise old man named Majeke solved the problem by saying "What is greater than the head of the chief? And what is stronger than his right hand? Let the one girl be the head wife, and the other the wife of the right hand". Thus, according to tradition, was the division between Great House and Right-Hand House created.<sup>5</sup> The first commentators on Xhosa history correctly pointed out that so deeply ingrained an institution as the house system could hardly be an overnight innovation, but they then proceeded to dismiss the tradition altogether.<sup>6</sup> However, the tradition has an important function among Xhosa today: it explains how the amaXhosa came to be divided between the amaGcaleka of the Transkei and the ama-Rharhabe of the Ciskei. This split may be regarded as the most significant feature of Xhosa internal politics in the second half of the eighteenth century.

After Gcaleka had been circumcised, he and his retainers went to live in the Komgha district. It is said that one day he disappeared into the Ngxingxolo river. A beast was sacrificed to the river and Gcaleka eventually emerged. This mystical experience, known as thwasa, qualified Gcaleka as a diviner.<sup>7</sup>

Note: 5. Almost all my informants told me this story. An English version, may be found in W.T. Brownlee: The Progress of the Bantu (Lovedale, 1925), pp. 5-6. For the Right-Hand House tradition, see my 'Rise of the Right-Hand-House'.

6. Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 36-7. Hammond-Tooke: 'Segmentation', p. 159,

7. The best account of this is in Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 142-4.



Another tradition refers to his incessant witchhunting. He was sickly, and "was always killing people in the hope of improving his own health."<sup>8</sup> Leaving aside the question of the literal truth of these tales, it is clear that Gcaleka assumed greater magical powers than were usual for a Xhosa chief. This may have alarmed many of the people, but its political implications are perhaps more important. By increasing the scope of his power, Gcaleka endangered the autonomy of junior chiefs. Rharhabe, Gcaleka's brother and possibly already his rival, is believed to have said "It is all right if ordinary black people thwasa - they are afraid to smell out a chief. But now that a chief has thwasa'd, who will escape being smelt out?"<sup>9</sup>

Rharhabe fought Gcaleka, but the latter with the help of the amaNdluntsha clan, defeated and captured him. Eventually he was released and crossed the Kei, settling at Amabele near Stutterheim.<sup>10</sup> Near the drift where he crossed, he killed a buffalo, and sent the breast and foreleg to the Great Place as tribute.<sup>11</sup> On the other side, he fought a great battle

Note: 8. Cory interview number 113. Mdandala (umNgqika) 26 Jan. 1910, Kentani.

9. S.E.K. Mqhayi: 'URarabe' in Bennie, p. 132. See also W.F. Xatasi: 'Inkosi zamaXhosa' (the chiefs of the Xhosa) Izwi Labantu, 31 Dec. 1901.

10. This incident is very obscure and appears to be forgotten today. The only account of it is in Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern, pp. 35-7. It is also referred to by W.W. Gqoba: 'UNxele' in Bennie, p. 196, but unfortunately, he does not expand. It is not clear when it happened, but since only three years intervened between the deaths of Phalo and Gcaleka, I have assumed it took place before Phalo's death. At one time, Rharhabe also lived between the Tsomo and the White Kei, Collins, V, p. 9.

11. Mqhayi: 'URarabe', p. 132.



with the Khoi under the chieftainness Hoho. Eventually, she ceded her land in exchange for tobacco, dagga and dogs.<sup>12</sup> Rharhabe was also the terror of the San, killing even their small children and burning their dwellings.<sup>13</sup> His advance was, however, opposed by the imiDange, who regarded themselves as Phalo's leading lieutenants in the west.

Mdange refused to be under Rharhabe, saying, 'I don't know this man. This is not my chief. My chief is Phalo, because Phalo is born of Tshiwo, my elder brother, so I don't know this man, and I am not going to be under him'.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, his superiority was recognised by the amaGwali, old enemies of the imiDange.<sup>15</sup> The amaNtinde, formerly allies of the amaGwali and still on bad terms with Phalo in 1752,<sup>16</sup> probably recognised him too. The other important chiefs in the west of Phalo's kingdom were the amaGqunukhwebe (the followers of Khwane, whom Tshiwo had appointed a chief) and the amaMbalu (the followers of Langa, brother of Gcaleka and Rharhabe). Neither of them were subject to Rharhabe.

- Note: 12. Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern, p. 31; Soga: SE Bantu, p. 130  
13. Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern, p. 34; Mqhayi: 'Ukarabe' pp. 34-5. C. Brownlee: Reminiscences of Kaffer Life and History (2nd ed: Lovedale, 1916), p. 182.  
14. Interview with B. Nqezo, Peelton Location, King William's Town District, 24 Aug. 1975. Translated from the Xhosa. See also Collins, V, p. 9, Soga: SE Bantu, p. 130.  
15. 'Vervolg van het Dagverhaal van de landreise daar den weleden Gestrengen Heer Mr. Joachim Baron van Plettenburg' in E.C. Godee Molsbergen: Reizen in Zuid-Afrika in de Hollandse Tijd. Vol IV, (Gravenhagen, 1932), p. 47.  
16. C.A. Haupt: 'Journaal ... op de togt daar den Vaardrig August Frederik Beutler' (1752) in Godee Molsbergen: op cit, Vol. III, ('s - Gravenhagen, 1922), pp. 297, 299.



2. The Rise of the amaRharhabe under Ndlambe and Ngqika (1775-1800)

Phalo died in 1775 and Gcaleka survived him by only three years.<sup>17</sup> Rharhabe took advantage of this to attack Gcaleka's successor, Khawuta, but after one successful raid was beaten off and driven north into the mountains. So feared was he that a reported five to six hundred Xhosa stood guard over the new Paramount every night.<sup>18</sup> But Rharhabe's restless energies were diverted into a matrimonial squabble with the Thembu, and both he and his Great Son, Mlawu, died in battle against them (c 1782).<sup>19</sup> Rharhabe's reputation stands high among his people,<sup>20</sup> and it is therefore worth noting that

- Note: 17. A. Sparrman: A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope (London, 1786), II, pp. 10-11; for Gcaleka's death, see R.J. Gordon - G. Fagel, Aug. 1779. Cape Archives VC 595, p. 130.
18. R.J. Gordon op cit; W. Paterson: A Narrative of Four Journeys into the Country of the Hottentots and Caffraria (London, 1789), pp. 92-3.
19. The fullest version of this well-known story is Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern, pp. 38-40. For an English one, see Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 131-2. By Jan. 1783 Ndlambe was the chief of the amaRharhabe. H. Muller and J.A. Holtshausen: 'Rapport' in P.R. Kirby: A Source Book on the Wreck of the Grosvenor East Indiaman (Cape Town, 1953), p. 170.
20. Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 128-9 makes out that Rharhabe was victorious in his war with Gcaleka and that he was loyal to Phalo and that he migrated willingly. This is contradicted by the contemporary evidence of Haupt, Gordon and Paterson, and Ngqika, Rharhabe's grandson admitted on at least one occasion that the amaRharhabe had been defeated. See Stockenstrom, I, p. 45; Collins, V, p. 9; Mqhayi: 'URarabe' pp. 130-1, depicts Rharhabe as the leader of a great migration. On the notorious unreliability of migration myths see J. Vansina: Kingdoms of the Savannah (Madison, 1966), pp. 17-18. Both Soga and Mqhayi were of course amaRharhabe.



great and ferocious warrior as he appears to have been, he achieved relatively little. It was his son, Ndlambe, who was the real architect of amaRharhabe greatness.

Since the deceased Mlawu was the undisputed heir of his father, it was necessary to nominate one of his sons as chief. There were two candidates, both young boys: Ntimbo, supported by the majority of the councillors, and Ngqika, supported by Ndlambe and his party. A strange legend surrounds the origin of Yese, the mother of Ngqika:<sup>21</sup> it is quite possible that she was not highly born, or that Ngqika was not really Mlawu's son. Both factions sought the support of the Paramount, Khawuta. Ndlambe secured it, and ruled thereafter as regent for the young Ngqika.<sup>22</sup> Ndlambe never betrayed Khawuta's trust, but the Paramount, who was described by one of his retainers as "only a shadow of his predecessor",<sup>23</sup> was unable to control his other relatives. One of his minor brothers, Nqoko, "grew out of Gcaleka's back" to overshadow both Khawuta

Note: 21. Interviews S.M. Burns-Ncamashe, Zwelitsha, 17 Sept. 1975, H.M. Nkani, Kentani, 28 Oct. 1975. She is supposed to have appeared in a cloud of mist, while Mlawu was wandering on a mountain.

22. N.C. Mhala: 'Ukuvela kwama Ndlambe' (the origin of the amaNdlambe) in Bennie, pp. 146-9. N.C. Mhala was Ndlambe's grandson. According to J.H. Soga: Ama-Xhosa, p. 31, Langa, chief of the amaMbalu also assisted in installing Ngqika. The story is related by Sir George Cory: The Rise of South Africa, Vol. I (London 1910), p. 26n but the decision seems purely arbitrary since Sir George was apparently not informed that the councillors and Ndlambe solicited Khawuta's recognition for their respective candidates.

23. This was the opinion of 'Macholla' one of Khawuta's subordinates. F. von Winkelmann: 'Reisaantekeningen' in Godee-Molsbergen: Reizen, Vol IV, p. 90.



and his next-ranking brother, Velelo.<sup>24</sup> He founded the powerful amaMbede chiefdom. Khawuta's uncle, Nxito, was a diviner,<sup>25</sup> and also a dissident. In the west, the amaGqunukhwebe quarrelled with one of his loyal brothers.<sup>26</sup> Khawuta appears to have attempted to meet the challenge by appointing commoners, who would be dependent on him, to positions of authority usually held by amaTshawe. His appointees were, however, "less widely respected among the people than the very children of other women."<sup>27</sup> His greatest success was the absorption of a large Khoi clan, the amaGiqwa, who may well have been the Hoengiqua, formerly under Ruiter (Kohla).<sup>28</sup> Nqwiliso, the chief of the amaGiqwa, was not subordinated to a Tshawe, but was given his own ox, iNtshinga, and "a large part of the country to

Note: 24. Interview with Chief J.M. Dinizulu Sigidi, Taleni Location, Idutywa District, 29 Oct. 1975.

25. Interview with P. Solinjane, Mahlahlane Location, Willowvale District, 10 Jan. 1975. For the dispute between Nxito and Khawuta's son, Bhurhu, see below pp. 119-20.

26. Winkelman, p. 94.

27. Winkelman, p. 92.

28. The fullest description of Ruiter's career is given by Sparman, II, pp. 155-8. This appears to correspond to other references, although R.J. Gordon labelled it "a chain of stupid lies", V C 595, p. 85.



control."<sup>29</sup> This may have been to counterbalance the power of the iQawuka (amaNgwevu clan) which had been given special status by Tshawe himself.<sup>30</sup> The heads of the iNtshinga and

- Note: 29. Cory interview no. 114. Sijaxo (head of iNtshinga and Chief Councillor of Paramount Chief Gwebinkumbi), Willowvale, Jan. 1910. Sijaxo confuses Hintsa with Khawuta. The story of the elevation of the amaGiqwa is given in Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 145-6. However, whereas Soga's version says Nqwiliso was already Khawuta's pipe-bearer at the time of his elevation, Giqwa informants say that Khawuta had met him while hunting. This latter version would suit the incorporation hypothesis better than the former. Interview with M. Maki, Shixini Location, Willowvale District, 26 Nov. 1975. The possibility that the amaGiqwa were the Hoengiqua is strengthened by the fact that Ruiter was allied with the anti-Ndlambe faction which fled to Khawuta during the 1793 war. See P.J. van der Merwe: Die Kafferoorlog van 1793 (Cape Town, 1940), p. 57.
30. For the creation of the iQawuka, see Chapter II, note 5. Soga's accounts of the division between iNtshinga and iQawuka (SE Bantu, pp. 145-7; AmaXosa, pp. 22, 101-4) are misleading. His main informant must have been iNtshinga, since he refers to them as the 'royal' division, and accepts the iQawuka as the 'commoner' division, and accepts the iNtshinga version of iQawuka origin. Another source of confusion has been his inability to differentiate between 'clan' and 'chiefdom'. (See Appendix IIA). His version is the only one previously published, as far as I am aware. My own version is derived from interviews with N. Qeqe, the religious head of the iQawuka division (Shixini Location, Willowvale District, 1975), Mbhodleha Maki, descendant of Maki, the Giqwa circumcised with Sarhili (Shixini Location, Willowvale District, 26 Nov. 1975) and P. Mqikela (umMaya), who was a councillor of Ngangomhlaba, the last chief in whose reign (1924-33), this division had practical significance. (Nqadu Location, Willowvale District, 24 Nov. 1975) (Notebook only).



iQawuka became deadly rivals, each claiming to be the chief councillor of the Paramount. As commoners, they could have no dynastic ambitions of their own, and competed in loyalty to the Paramount. Part of their regiments were stationed at the Great Place, and were the Paramount's most dependable soldiers in time of war. The heads of factions also stayed at the Great Place and accumulated knowledge and skills which were passed down to their sons. This may therefore be seen as the beginning of a specialised bureaucracy. Because they opposed each other almost as a matter of policy, they became the rallying-point for the formation of internal factions. Competition between these factions cross-cut the natural opposition between junior chief and Paramount and thus eventually stabilised politics in the east. The ingenious nature of the compromises arrived at may be illustrated by the arrangements at circumcision, whereby the boy who was circumcised immediately before the chief and slept in the self-same circumcision lodge was always an umGiqwa,<sup>31</sup> whereas the master of the circumcision lodge (ikankatha), who instructed the boys in the arts of manhood, was always an umNgwevu. However, Khawuta himself did not reap any of these benefits and during his reign the power of the Paramountcy descended to its lowest level, leaving the amaRharhabe free to build up their power in the west.

Meanwhile the power of Ndlambe was rising in the west at the expense of the other Xhosa chiefdoms. The imiDange were the first to go. Ndlambe drove them across the Fish, killing their chief, Mahote. In their retreat, they intruded on the territory

Note: 31. Interview with M. Ranayi, Sholora Location, Elliotdale District, 18 Feb. 1976. (Notebook only).



of the Boers of Agter Bruintjes Hoogte, who attacked them, together with the amaGwali and the amaNtinde who also happened to be west of the Fish, in what came to be known as the First Frontier War. Mahote's son, Jalamba, fell by a stratagem: he and some followers were shot picking up pieces of tobacco which had been strewn before them, apparently as a present. Jalamba's son, 'Dlqdlu', was killed two years later, and the chiefship of the imiDange fell on the feckless Bangela, who submitted to the amaRharhabe and under whose rule the imiDange disintegrated.<sup>32</sup> Langa, chief of the amaMbalu pursued an independent course, but fought more often with Ndlambe than against him.<sup>33</sup> Ndlambe's chief rivals were the amaGqunukhwebe under Tshaka and his son, Chungwa. Ndlambe defeated them three times, driving them deeper and deeper into his Colony, but the largely Khoi composition of the amaGqunukhwebe enabled them to recover from every defeat by recruiting Khoi from west of

Note: 32. 'Commandant A. Van Jaarsveld's Report of the Expulsion of the Kafirs', in D. Moodie, III, pp. 110-2; Collins, V, pp. 9-10, 14; J. Brownlee, p. 193; Nqezo interview (see Note 14 above). Contemporary reports placed the blame on Gona Khoi, employed by Boers whom the Xhosa claimed stole their cattle. See D. Moodie, III, pp. 91-2. But it appears quite clearly from the deposition of J.H. Potgieter (ibid, p. 92) that not all the Xhosa chiefdoms were equally responsible, and that the Gona Khoi in question were refugees from Xhosaland.

33. Marais, p. 18; P.J. van der Merwe: Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie (Cape Town, 1938), p. 306.



the Fish.<sup>34</sup> Ndlambe needed allies, and following the example of his father, sought them among the Boers of the Cape Colony.

In 1780, Rharhabe had proposed an alliance between himself and the Colony. In return for Boer assistance against the imi-Dange, whom he represented as rebel subjects, Rharhabe offered "friendship and peace upon a permanent footing." Boer Field-Sergeant and local strongman Adriaan van Jaarsveld responded positively, but for an unknown reason, Rharhabe was unable to keep the appointment.<sup>35</sup> After at least two years soliciting, Ndlambe finally found a Boer ally in Barend Lindeque, a lieutenant in the Boer militia. They conducted a joint raid, but then the small Boer party lost their nerve and withdrew. Provoked by Boer participation in internal politics, the Xhosa west of the Fish decided to teach them a lesson and drove them back beyond the Zwartkops river. This forced the Colonial authorities into action, and they sent out a strong commando. The hostile Xhosa attempted to retreat to Khawuta and safety, but Ndlambe cut them off at the 'Krokema' (Tshalumna?) river and defeated them crushingly, killing Tshaka and capturing Langa. Ndlambe offered to surrender Langa to the Landdrost of Graaff-Reinet who declined the offer, leaving the old chief to die in captivity. Chungwa, Tshaka's son, reached Khawuta, but shortly

Note: 34. Marais, p. 22; Collins, V, p. 12; J. van Renen: 'Journal', p. 152.

35. Van der Merwe: Trekboer, pp. 280-282; D. Moodie, III, p. 96.



therefore returned to 'his' country west of the Fish.<sup>36</sup>

As a result of this success, Ndlambe had become far and away the most powerful Xhosa chief in the west, but he was unable to build upon his triumph for shortly thereafter (1795), Ngqika, who owed him his chiefship, unexpectedly rebelled. According to the amaNgqika, Ndlambe refused to surrender the regency. According to the amaNdlambe, Ngqika had been installed as chief but after Ndlambe had reprimanded him for his childish behaviour at a feast, he launched an unjustified attack.<sup>37</sup> The two versions are not incompatible. Ndlambe seems to have installed Ngqika as chief, but continued to exercise the real power himself. Ngqika chafed at this restraint and decided to put his uncle in his place. Ndlambe appealed in vain to the Thembu and to his old allies, the Colony, but obtained help from the regent Paramount (Khawuta had died in c 1794). Once again Ngqika was successful. The amaGcaleka were chased right across the Kei to the Jujura River in the present district of Willowvale, where peace was made.<sup>38</sup> From this time on, the Paramountcy was based in the Transkei. The

Note: 36. This account of the Second Frontier War is based on Marais, Chapter IV; P.J. van der Merwe: Kafferoorlog; A.S. Faure: 'Dagregister, gehouden den ondergetekende Landdrost op desselfs rheis naar 't Cafferland' (10 Dec. 1793), V C 68, pp. 483-532; H.D. Champagne: 'Berigt nopens den oorsprong, voortgang en ruptures der Kaffers' V C 76, pp. 205-285.

37. N.C. Mhala: 'Ukuvela kwamaNdlambe' in Bennie.

38. For accounts of the war itself, see Mhala, op cit; J. Brownlee, II, pp. 294-5; Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 158-60; Collins V, pp. 11-13; Barrow, I, pp. 146-7. Some confusion surrounds the question of whether Ngqika's defeat of Ndlambe and of Hintsa were separate events. The evidence of Barrow, who visited Ngqika shortly after the war would seem to be conclusive. Some authorities give the commencement of the war as 1797, but it was reported to the Colonial authorities as early as 7 May 1795. G R 1/2.



exact terms of the peace are unknown, but shortly thereafter Ngqika began to represent himself as king of all the Xhosa. He made a costly slip, however, when the boy Paramount, Hintsa, succeeded in escaping from captivity. Ndlambe was taken prisoner, and remained at Ngqika's Great Place, allowed his wives and some cattle, but stripped of his power. Mjalusa, Ndlambe's brother and chief lieutenant, crossed the Fish where he plagued Boer and Xhosa impartially.

Ngqika was only seventeen or eighteen. Gifted with considerable intelligence and with the imposing presence that bespoke a great chief, he was ambitious and seems to have aimed at centralising the Xhosa under his leadership. But his early elevation and outstanding successes seem to have been ultimately detrimental, for to the end of his life he bore the character of a spoilt and greedy child. In his golden years, he pursued a policy calculated to concentrate power in his hands. He succeeded in reserving to himself the power of passing the death sentence. However, instead of using it he often substituted a fine in cattle, a measure that was far more profitable in building up a following. Private revenge for adultery was forbidden, which similarly added to chiefly jurisdiction and revenue.<sup>39</sup> Ngqika also extended the custom of isizi (death dues), so that instead of receiving one beast as tribute on a commoner's death, he received their entire estate. This measure was at first violently resisted but as other chiefs adopted it too, the commoners were left with no choice but to comply.<sup>40</sup> When the opportunity presented itself, Ngqika

Note: 39. Lichtenstein, I, pp. 352-3, 355; J. Campbell: Travels in South Africa (3rd ed., London 1815), p. 368. Collins, V, p. 13 reports that Ngqika's punishments were very cruel, but it should be remembered that he had spoken to many of the latter's enemies.

40. C O 142 J. Brownlee - Bird, 19 Jan. 1821; Collins, V, pp. 16, 47.



deposed councillors and brought their people directly under himself as well as taking over homesteads whose headships had fallen vacant.<sup>41</sup> He is also credited with the introduction of the ixhiba ('grandfather house'). Ndlambe had placed the councillors of Mlawu (Ngqika's father) under his son, Mxhamli, in order to build up his power, as well as placing the councillors of his deceased Right-Hand brother, Cebo, under another son, Mdushane. Ngqika removed Mxhamli from office, and created a new institution, the ixhiba by delegating the task of looking after one of his sons to the corporate body of councillors. This allowed them to express their ambitions through boosting their charge at the expense of his brothers, thereby assisting rather than obstructing the ruling chief. This institution was widely adopted by other chiefs since it resolved the structural conflict between the chief and his father's generation.<sup>42</sup>

Note: 41. J.T. van der Kemp 'An account of ... Caffraria', Transactions of the London Missionary Society, Vol. 1 (London 1804), p. 436.

42. W.F. Xatasi: 'Ubukosi basexhibeni kwaNgqika' (The ixhiba chiefship among the amaNgqika) Izwi laBantu, 27 May 1902; H.H. Dugmore: 'Papers' (1846-7) reprinted in J. Maclean: A Compendium of Kafir Laws and Customs (Cape Town, 1866; reprinted Grahamstown 1906), pp. 12-14, 20. The imiNgxalasi of Peelton Location, King William's Town District used to lay claim to being descended from Mlawu's councillors. See W.D. Hammond-Tooke: The Tribes of King William's Town District (Pretoria 1958), pp. 110-111. Yet another tradition states that Ntsusa, the daughter of Rharhabe, was appointed chief in place of Mlawu. See Kay, p. 152.



Ngqika's quarrel with Ndlambe drew the support of the imiDange who were thus enabled to recognise the indisputable superiority of the amaRharhabe while revenging themselves on the man who had succeeded in bringing it about. He also appears to have successfully supported Nqeno, Langa's most capable son, against Thole, the legitimate heir, thus obtaining the allegiance of the amaMbalu.<sup>43</sup> The amaGqunukhwebe paid him tribute.<sup>44</sup> Other supporters included a number of autonomous Khoi,<sup>45</sup> and a band of Boer adventurers led by Coenraad de Buys, known to the Xhosa as Khula ('the big one') because of his great height. Buys was living with Ngqika's mother and had promised him his fifteen year old daughter. A more substantial reason for his influence was his access to Colonial gunpowder.<sup>46</sup> Ngqika was nobody's puppet however: he had defeated Ndlambe well before Buys's arrival, and he resisted the wilder anti-British schemes of the Boer refugees, such as the invasion of the Colony to install Buys as king, and the murder of the missionary van der Kemp and the British representatives Maynier and Somerville.<sup>47</sup> In this, he followed the advice of the more

Note: 43. This is deduced from the fact that Nqeno was a Ngqika supporter in 1803, whereas Thole was a Ndlambe supporter, (Lichtenstein, I, pp. 376, 392). Thole and his descendants are not heard of after 1809 (Collins, V, p. 50). There is also a tradition which ascribes the change in fortunes to the superior generosity of Nqeno's mother. See Rubusana (abridged ed.), pp. 65-7. The two explanations are by no means incompatible.

44. B O 68 T. Lyndon-Major MacNab, 7 Oct. 1799.

45. Collins, V, p. 12; J.T. van der Kemp: 'Transactions ... in the year 1800', Transactions, I, pp. 415-7.

46. B O 68 T. Lyndon - Major MacNab, 7 Oct. 1799. For Buys generally, see A.E. Schoeman: Coenraad de Buys (Pretoria, 1938).

47. Van der Kemp, p. 408; Lichtenstein, I, pp. 312, 356; Marais, pp. 115-6.



experienced Ndlambe who knew Maynier from the fruitful days of their co-operation in 1793.

But Ngqika was not as strong as he thought he was, and in February 1800 Ndlambe and his brothers Siku and 'T'Zlaatlá broke out of Ngqika's dominions to join Mjálusa and the rest of his earlier supporters west of the Fish.<sup>48</sup> This was a turning point in that it drew the Cape Colony into the mainstream of Xhosa politics.

### 3. The Xhosa and the Colonists (1775-1812)

Friction is endemic in frontier situations,<sup>49</sup> and traditional historiography tended to see it as the cause of the periodic frontier wars, differing only on the question of which side was more to blame. In fact, neither side was wholly culpable or wholly innocent. The Boers feared the overwhelming weight of Xhosa numbers and resented being pestered for presents and seeing their favourite pastures occupied by Xhosa herds.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, the Xhosa had reason to complain of Boers who abducted their children to be servants,<sup>51</sup> forced them to barter cattle for goods they did not want,<sup>52</sup> and at times severely manhandled them and even their chiefs.<sup>53</sup> But on the whole, the authorities exerted themselves to keep the peace. Chiefs returned stolen cattle<sup>54</sup> and Boer field-cornets tried to repress the excesses of their more unruly countrymen.<sup>55</sup> Gifts were exchanged, and local understandings developed.

Note: 48. Van der Kemp, p. 415.

49. W.K. Hancock, q. H.B. Giliomee: 'The Cape Eastern Frontier 1775-1812' (paper presented to the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, 6 Dec. 1973).

50. Van der Merwe: Trekboer, pp. 265-6, 269.

51. Lichtenstein, I, pp. 385, 409; H.F. Fynn: The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn (eds. J. Stuart and D.M. Malcolm, Pietermaritzburg, 1950), p. 180; G. Thompson, II, p. 7.

52. F. Dundas - G. Yonge, 20 Feb. 1800, R.C.C., III, p. 55; T. Pringle: Narrative of Residence in South Africa (London, 1835; Reprinted Cape Town, 1966), p. 285; Marais, p. 24.

53. Marais, pp. 24, 28.

54. Van der Merwe: Trekboer, p. 282; D. Moodie, III, p. 98  
See also note 82 below.

55. Marais, p. 23.



Even a man like Buys who provoked disturbances on some occasions prevented them on others.<sup>56</sup>

The question therefore arises whether the early frontier wars were simply a result of frayed patience finally snapping, or whether "the number (of frontier wars) depends at what point raiding and retaliation may be termed war".<sup>57</sup> This viewpoint is grounded in a misconception concerning the nature of cattle-raiding. Theal and Cory thought that since the Xhosa were inveterate thieves the scale of 'depredations' depended entirely on the weakness or steadfastness of the Colonial authorities. Cattle-reiving was not, however, the object of war, but a means of making it. A certain level of stock-theft on both sides was inevitable in a frontier situation; a sharp increase denoted some special circumstance, whether drought or Xhosa aggression or Xhosa reprisal.<sup>58</sup> The scale also indicated the participants. The limited depredations of peace-time were carried out by petty chiefs and individuals - men whose lack of responsibility was commensurate with their lack of importance. Large-scale depredations were by order or permission of the important chiefs, and these were men who did not take such decisions without reason or without thought for the consequences. They were also men who strove to check cattle-stealing in

Note: 56. Lichtenstein, I, p. 364.

57. M. Wilson in O.H., I, p. 240.

58. For example, the sudden increase in cattle-raiding in the middle of 1808 is thus explained by a Boer on good terms with the Xhosa "The Caffers of the Zuurveld talk of a Commando which you have promised Gaika as an assistance to attack them; and this appears to me to be the reason why that people is not as quiet as formerly". C O 2563 T. Botha - J. Cuyler, 30 May 1808.



peace-time.<sup>59</sup> The inevitable friction of the frontier cannot therefore be regarded as sufficient explanation for any particular frontier war, although it did supply the tensions, fears, resentments and specific grievances which war converts from passive to active hostility.

The economic factors which Neumark asserted underlay Boer cattle-raiding in the guise of commandos do not concern us here.<sup>60</sup> It is sufficient to point out that this motivation, inasfar as it may have existed, remained constant and cannot therefore be considered a cause of the various wars.

The land question was a more basic source of conflict. Ndlambe and other chiefs such as Habana of the amaGwali would have been far more acceptable to the Colonial authorities had they been prepared to reside near the coast instead of coming further inland where the Boers lived.<sup>61</sup> They assumed that the Xhosa wanted to be near the Boers in order to steal their stock but a consideration of the ecology of the area makes it quite clear why both peoples want to live further inland. Nevertheless competition for land is not the whole answer. It does not explain why Habana, Chungwa and Ndlambe were competing for land west of the Fish when their ecological requirements could have been satisfied east of it.<sup>62</sup> Nor does it explain why the wars broke out when they did and not at some other time.

Note: 59. See notes 54 above and 82 below, and Pringle, p. 286.

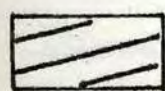
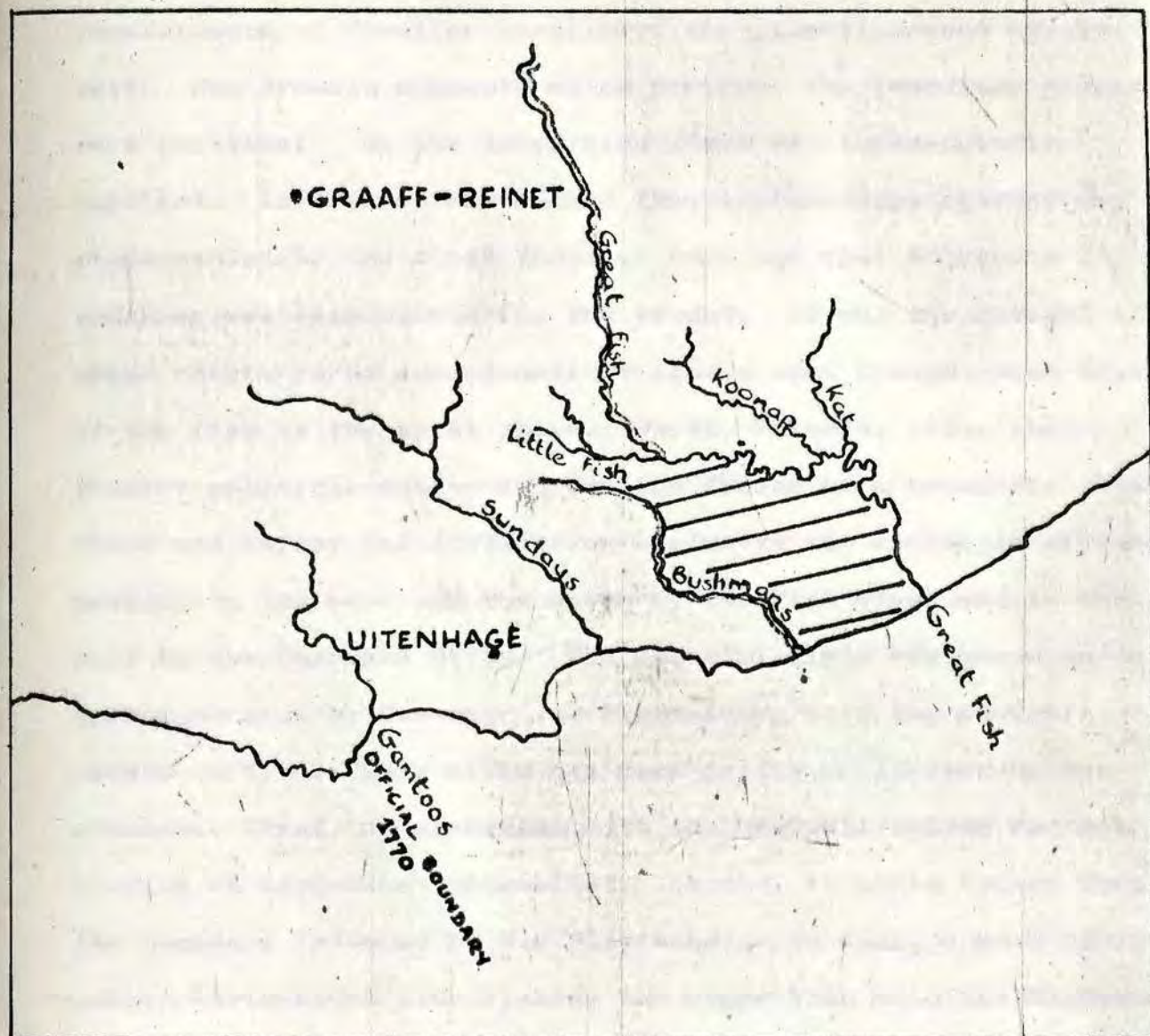
60. S.D. Neumark: Economic Influences on the South African Frontier (Stanford, 1957), pp. 102-4; M. Legassick: 'The Frontier in South African Historiography', Collected Seminar Papers on the Societies of Southern Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London), II, p. 17.

61. C O 2563 Transcript of a conversation between Ndlambe and J. Cuyler, 25 Feb. 1808.

62. See Collins, V, p. 19; 'Message from Lieutenant Colonel Graham to Ngqika (undated)', R.C.C., XXI, p. 349



# VAN PLETTENBERG'S BOUNDARY



Part of Zuurveld excluded from colony  
by van Plettenberg's treaties.



Boundary of colony according to  
van Plettenberg's treaties.



Frontier friction and competition for land were constant constituents of frontier hostility, the general causes of the wars. The dynamic elements which provided the immediate causes were political. On the Xhosa side there was inter-chiefly conflict. It will be remembered that the imiDange retreat was responsible for the first frontier war, and that Ndlambe's scheming was responsible for the second. It was the refusal of these chiefs to be subordinate to others that brought them west of the Fish in the first place. On the Colonial side, the primary political motivation was the fixing of a boundary. Both Xhosa and Colony had conflicting claims to the rectangle of land bounded in the east and the north by the Fish River and in the west by the Bushmans River. The Colonial claim was based on an agreement made by Governor van Plettenberg with the amaGwali chiefs in 1778. This claim has been justly criticised on two grounds. First, an agreement with the amaGwali chiefs was not binding on anyone but themselves. Second, it would appear that the boundary intended by van Plettenberg ran along a more or less direct north-south line linking the upper Fish with the Bushmans and excluding the area between the Bushmans and the Fish, which does not seem to have been inhabited by Colonists.<sup>63</sup> Successive Governors never shook off the idea that the Fish was the original boundary between the Colony and the Xhosa, and, consequently, that any Xhosa west of the Fish were by definition intruders who

Note: 63. Marais, pp. 5-6. Even Adriaan van Jaarsveld, who led the Boers in the first frontier war maintained that the area rightfully belonged to the Xhosa. Furthermore, the amaGwali chiefs who made the agreement believed that they were about to be attacked by the Governor's party. R.J. Gordon - G. Fagel (1779) V C 595, p. 107. See Map II.



had no right to be there. Contrarily, the amaGqunukhwebe and the amaMbalu claimed prior occupation of the land west of the Fish up to the Sundays. The amaMbalu were certainly in the area by 1780.<sup>64</sup> The Gqunukhwebe are first heard of between the Fish and the Kowie in 1789, and claimed subsequently that they had purchased the whole area from Kohla (Ruiter), chief of the Hoengiqua Khoi and acknowledged prior resident.<sup>65</sup> The only reasonably certain deductions that emerge from the conflicting evidence is that Boer and Xhosa occupied different parts of the disputed territory at roughly the same time, and that each side believed sincerely in the moral rectitude of its claim to the whole. But it was the Colonial authorities who insisted on fixing the boundary, which they hoped would bring about the complete cessation of cattle-thieving. It was an attempt to expel the Xhosa which caused the third frontier war (1799) and the actual expulsion is known as the fourth frontier war (1811-12).

Behind the specifics of Xhosa politics and Colonial policy lay a more profound opposition. The Xhosa saw no reason why Xhosa and Colony should not merge into a single society after the pattern of Xhosa and Khoi. They sought to include the Colony within their economic, political and social relationships. They traded luxury goods and cattle with the Boers as they did with other nations. Poor Xhosa wishing to acquire cattle worked for rich Boers as they did for rich Xhosa.<sup>66</sup> Politically, they saw them as potential allies or enemies, and they tried to present themselves as allies (not only against each other,

Note: 64. Van der Merwe: Trekboer, p. 282.

65. Marais, pp. 6, 15. There was a general belief, even among Xhosa not directly involved, that their boundary reached to the Sundays. Van der Kemp: 'Account', I, pp. 466-7.

66. For example, see Marais, p. 24; Van der Merwe: Kafferoorlog, pp. 7, 11.



but also against the English and the San),<sup>67</sup> Their chiefs assiduously cultivated Colonial officials by sending them presents and visiting them regularly. Ngqika contemplated intermarriage with Buys's daughter to cement the alliance between himself and the Dutch.<sup>68</sup> Xhosa were prepared to conform with reasonable Colonial usages (renting grazing land)<sup>69</sup> and expected the Colonists to conform to some of theirs (giving tribute to chiefs).<sup>70</sup> Even Xhosa begging, the bane of the fearful Colonists, was no more than the repetition among the Colonists of a process well-known among the Xhosa themselves. Xhosa travelling in Xhosaland relied on the hospitality of perfect strangers, and due to the prevailing ethic of generosity, were seldom disappointed. European travellers, who commented approvingly on Xhosa hospitality, probably never reflected that when the roles were reversed, the hospitality was seldom willingly offered. Gifts were exchanged on these visits; travelling Xhosa willingly gave their hosts handwoven baskets and other curiosities and had more Colonists been more receptive to the social implications of what they viewed as a material transaction, cross-cutting social networks might have developed.

The Colonial authorities wanted the two societies to keep their distance and their separate identities. They wanted the frontier closed.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, despite the greater attention so far paid to those Colonists who wanted the frontier open, it seems likely that the majority of Colonists agreed with them, except where labour was concerned. To a considerable extent these attitudes were the result of Xhosa strength and Colonial

Note: 67. See notes 76 and 111 below.

68. B O 68 T. Lyndon - Major MacNab, 7 Oct. 1799. Ngqika must have had a vastly exaggerated idea of Buys's importance.

69. See note 75 below.

70. Collins, V, p. 51.

71. The convenient terms 'open' and 'closed' frontier have been taken from Dr. H. Giliomee, who develops these concepts in his forthcoming book.



weakness. It was apparent to both sides who the dominant element in such a merger would be. Much later, when the relative strength of the parties had altered, it was the Xhosa who needed protective segregation.

There were, however, a considerable number of Boers, and later of British, who wanted the frontier open. Many of these were adventurers like Buys, whose particular skills and temperaments enabled them to attain among the Xhosa position and wealth which they could not achieve in Colonial society. The traders were a subsequent development of the same category. There were also Boers who attempted to use the Xhosa as tools against the English. This includes not only Buys and the Slagters Nek rebels (whose efforts to rouse the Xhosa against the English were dismissed as ludicrous),<sup>72</sup> but men such as Louis Trigardt, who advised Hintsa during the 1834-5 war.<sup>73</sup> Very few Europeans became full Xhosa and subjects of Xhosa chiefs.<sup>74</sup>

Most of the factors that shaped frontier relationships manifested themselves in the life of Chungwa, chief of the amaGqunukhwebe from 1793 to 1812. About 1789 he and his father Tshaka retreated across the Fish, causing panic among some Boers who felt that this was an invasion directed against them. The amaGqunukhwebe felt that it would be possible to establish a

Note: 72. C O 1603 J. Read - Cuyler, 18 May 1816. The Xhosa "seemed to laugh at the idea of the Boers attempting to fight with the English and at them expecting them to assist them". For more information on Xhosa 'participation' in the Slagters Nek Rebellion, see H.C.V. Leibbrandt: The Rebellion of 1815, generally known as Slachter's Nek (Cape Town, 1902), p. 745.

73. H.G. Smith - B. D'Urban, 30 Aug. 1835. G.M. Theal (ed.): Documents relating to the Kaffir War of 1835 (London, 1912), p. 3.

74. Collins, V, p. 41. For a good description of the life-style of Nicholas Lochenberg, the most famous of these see C.E. Boniface: Relation du Naufrage du Navire Francais L'Eole (Cape Town, 1829), p. 48.



modus vivendi with the Colony, and offered to purchase the land they occupied, or to rent it on the same terms as the Boers did. Certain Colonial officials appear to have pocketed cattle without, of course, being able to give them more than a temporary respite.<sup>75</sup> They also offered to help the Boers against the San in the north, a function which Xhosa also performed for Khoi. Because Ndlambe and his ally, Langa, had taken so many Gqunukhwebe cattle, many abaGqunukhwebe became herdsmen for the Boers.<sup>76</sup> Others took the easier path of stealing cattle. Xhosa cattle trampled Boer pastures and hungry Xhosa trapped 'Colonial' game for meat and skins. Being largely Khoi in composition, the amaGqunukhwebe attracted slaves and Khoi servants. As Ndlambe and Langa forced them further west, the incidence of these annoyances must have been increased. On the other hand, Boers were shooting abaGqunukhwebe, and Chungwa himself was locked in a treadmill and forced to turn it.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, periodic meetings between Colonial officials and Tshaka and Chungwa prevented a general outbreak until Lindeque's commando of 1793 provoked the amaGqunukhwebe and amaMbalu to settle old scores with the Colonists. The rise of the amaNdlambe to his east cut off Chungwa's link

Note: 75. Stockenstrom, I, p. 58; Collins, V, p. 10; Van der Kemp, I, pp. 4-6, 7; Stretch: 'Diary', MS 14,588, Cory Library; Philipps, 1820 Settler, ed. A. Keppel-Jones (Pietermaritzburg, 1960), p. 158.

76. All these points are covered in G R 1/9 Diary of N. Hurter, p. 14-29, Feb. 1792. For Xhosa assistance of Khoi against the San, see Haupt, p. 288.

77. Marais, pp. 28-9.



with the Xhosa Paramount where he knew he could expect a welcome and all the land he required.<sup>78</sup> Since he could not pass through the amaRharhabe without severe losses of cattle and, consequently, of supporters, he was forced to defy the Colony. When requested to cross the Fish, he refused, adding that "No landdrost knows how to make peace among the Caffers, and it is none of his business".<sup>79</sup> To sustain his autonomy he forced the amaMbalu chiefs Nqeno and Thole to stay with him by seizing their cattle.<sup>80</sup> War broke out in 1799, when the British general Vandeleur attempted to drive Chungwa across the Fish (Third Frontier War).<sup>81</sup> Chungwa was joined by rebel Khoi who feared that the British might deliver them to the Boers, their former master. The combined forces were startlingly successful, one group of 150 men defeating a British force twice their strength in a night attack near the Sundays River. In October 1799, Chungwa made a peace with Acting Governor Dundas, which allowed him to remain between the Bushmans and the Sundays Rivers, provided he did not molest the Colonists. Such an arrangement was what he had always been

Note: 78. Marais, p. 18n; Collins, V, pp. 19, 42.

79. Marais, p. 98.

80. B O 72 Deposition of H.J. van Rensburg, 3 Dec. 1797.

81. Marais, pp. 106-7, thought that Chungwa was mistaken when he apprehended a British attack. Giliomee, who has examined additional evidence feels that the attempt was indeed made. Kaap, pp. 283-5. The evidence does not permit a definite conclusion to be drawn.



seeking, and he took care to maintain the peace, turning back a rebel Boer attack on the Colony.<sup>82</sup> When hostilities between Boer and Khoi flared up again<sup>in</sup> 1801, Chungwa did not join the opportunist Mjalusa and imiDange in their attacks on the Boers, but gave shelter to the Khoi neutral, Klaas Stuurman.<sup>83</sup> This did not save him from being attacked by a commando, or from being grouped together with other guiltier chiefs at the ensuing peace conference, and being ordered to cross the Fish with them.<sup>84</sup> Ngqika's treatment of Habana, who had heeded the Governor's injunction, reinforced his desire not to cross,<sup>85</sup> and the presence of Ndlambe pushed him yet deeper into the Colony. He clashed with Ndlambe not only because the latter made sarcastic remarks about his "large belly" and tried to force him to join in his war against Ngqika, but also because Ndlambe had taken over his old grazing land along the Bushmans

Note: 82. Examination of C. Botha, 15 Aug 1800, R.C.C., III, p. 213.

83. Transactions of the London Missionary Society, II, pp. 83-5; J. van der Kemp - A. Barnard 3 Aug. 1802, quoted in S. Bannister: Humane Policy (London, 1829), p. clxxiv. Giliomee: Kaap, p. 322, doubts Chungwa's innocence. The chief grounds for this appears to be that Chungwa led the Xhosa in the 1799 war. But it was precisely because Chungwa was successful then that he wished to keep the peace. Giliomee also cites a statement of Collins, V, p. 13. But Collins mixed up the confusion of 1786 with the war of 1793 (Collins, V, p. 10) and probably confused 1799 and 1801. In addition to the citation already given in this and the preceding note, the following also indicate Chungwa's innocence before he was attacked by the commando: Marais, pp. 106n, 132; G. Yonge - F. Dundas, 5 Jan. 1801, R.C.C., III, pp. 370-1; 'Questions proposed to Mr. Maynier' 27 Aug. 1801, R.C.C., IV, p. 61.

84. Lichtenstein, I, pp. 383-6.

85. Collins, V, p. 46.



River.<sup>86</sup> Chungwa's people were a familiar sight to the Colonists - who ascribed their 'roving', 'rambling' and 'strolling' to a desire to steal Colonial cattle - driving their herds from their winter pastures near the Bushmans to their summer pastures on the Sundays or even west of it.<sup>87</sup>

Chungwa did his best to stay on good terms with Major Cuyler, the Landdrost of Uitenhage, assuring him that he wished to "live peaceably with the Dutchmen and the English".<sup>88</sup> For Cuyler 'peace' meant Chungwa's withdrawal over the Fish, which the latter did not contemplate since it meant forfeiting his autonomy and, in his view, his birthright. He told Ndlambe that he was in this part of the country before the Christians and as proof asked me if I do not see as many of the remains of old Cafree's kraals as the walls of old houses.<sup>89</sup>

He therefore continued his seasonal migrations, and after one indignant visit from Cuyler sent the Landdrost an ox.<sup>90</sup> The latter rejected it as a bribe, which, of course, it was not. It was a "payment for grass" as Chungwa understood the Boers paid, it was a recognition of Cuyler's authority, and it was a sign of peace. Cuyler's rejection was thus an insult, and the angry Chungwa declared his intention to stay on anyway. The

Note: 86. C O 2561 Cuyler - A. Barnard, 26 Sept. 1807; Collins, V, p. 54; J. van der Kemp and J. Read 'Annual Report of the London Missionary Society' in Transactions of the L.M.S., II, p. 241.

87. See Table I.

88. C O 2561 J. Cuyler - A. Barnard, 26 Sept. 1807.

89. C O 2563 Transcript of a conversation between Cuyler and Ndlambe, 25 Feb. 1808.

90. C O 2566 J. Cuyler - Colonial Secretary, 9 Dec. 1809.



health of his cattle demanded that transhumance should continue, and he and his people returned the following summer with the excuse that he wanted to be near the doctor.<sup>91</sup> The summer after that (1811), he made a pretence of moving early, but soon sent a message saying that he wanted to return as the 'wolves' (hyenas) were destroying his cattle further east.<sup>92</sup> It was his last excuse, for the following summer he was shot dead on his sick-bed by British troops expelling his people over the Fish.<sup>93</sup>

Chungwa cannot be regarded simply as an exceptional individual since his career was paralleled in its earlier stages by Langa and its later ones, by Ndlambe. His behaviour was the product of motivation common to all chiefs: the desire to preserve his autonomy and maintain his herds. He felt that this could be done more easily under the Colony than under Ngqika and did his best to remain on a friendly footing with it. The Colonial authorities were not however prepared to accept the inevitable inconveniences of coexistence, and finally closed the frontier by the expulsion of 1812.

#### 4. The triumph of Ngqika (1800-1819)

At the beginning of 1800 Ngqika was at the height of his power. The Paramountcy, now in retreat across the Kei, was weak and not yet fully in control of even the eastern chiefdoms. Ndlambe was under his jurisdiction. The power of the imiDange and the amaMbalu was broken, and many of their chiefs had

Note: 91. C O 2572 J. Cuyler - C. Bird, 4 Oct. 1810.

92. C O 2575 J. Cuyler - Colonial Secretary, 8 Jan. 1811.

93. This is not, of course, to suggest that only the British committed atrocities. Cf the murder of Landdrost Stockenstrom: Stockenstrom, I, pp. 59-60, 67.



submitted to him. Chungwa kept his distance, but sent in tribute. He even dabbled in Thembu politics.<sup>94</sup> Strong as he was internally, he could afford to consider Buyi's plans for the invasion of the Colony. But as his power seeped from him and the number and strength of his enemies grew, he was increasingly drawn into an alliance with the Colony. He soon realised what it was they wanted to hear, and insisted on his abhorrence of cattle-thieving and his willingness to forgive his revolted subjects.<sup>95</sup> His main object was to secure concrete military assistance as Ndlambe had done earlier.<sup>96</sup>

The chiefs west of the Fish, headed by Ndlambe, Mjalusa and Chungwa, were in a weaker position both numerically and strategically. They knew quite well that the Colony regarded the Fish as its boundary,<sup>97</sup> and many of them had taken advantage of the recent Khoi irruption to make up their herds at Boer expense. They were therefore quite ready to believe that the Colony was ready to help Ngqika against them, a fact which Ngqika exploited.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, they were divided among themselves. They therefore desired to remain at peace with the Colony. Ndlambe and Chungwa exerted themselves to repress cattle-raiding, and even returned some deserted slaves and Khoi servants.<sup>99</sup> They also wished to barter with the Boers and to exchange their labour for cattle.<sup>100</sup> In 1805, Ngqika poised himself for a

Note: 94. Lichtenstein, I, p. 365.

95. Ibid, I, pp. 397-404.

96. Ibid, I, pp. 376 -7, 381, 399, 426.

97. Ibid, I, pp. 384-6.

98. Ibid, I, pp. 384, 438-9. See also note 58 above.

99. Ibid, I, pp. 405, 407-8.

100. Ibid, I, p. 386.



decisive attack on Ndlambe, calling on the Colony and some Thembu for assistance. The Batavian Commissioner - General De Mist had set out to pay him a visit, and he attempted to inveigle him into assistance, at the same time giving his enemies the impression that such assistance was already promised. Mjalusa and Habana deserted Ndlambe, while Chungwa got safely out of the way. But De Mist turned back as soon as he realised what was happening, and the attack never came off.<sup>101</sup> Ngqika did indeed pursue his plans, but, ironically, Ndlambe was saved by the Landdrost Alberti who did not want a Xhosa war west of the Fish.<sup>102</sup> At this point Ngqika made an error, which even today his descendants consider reprehensible; he secured the abduction of the beautiful Thuthula, one of his uncle's wives.<sup>103</sup> To what extent this was a

Note: 101. Ibid, I, Chapter XXIV.

102. C O 2559 'Information received from Captain Alberti' Enclosure in J. Cuyler - Captain Gordon, 6 March 1806; W.M. Freund: 'The Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony during the Batavian Period 1803-1806', Journal of African History, XIII, (1972), p. 637.

103. Most Xhosa see this as the origin of the quarrel between Ngqika and Ndlambe, which has had a very destructive effect on the oral history of the period. There is a good account by W.K. Ntsikana: 'Imfazwe kaThuthula' (The war of Thuthula) in Rubusana. The date of the incident is clear from Collins, V, pp. 15-16 and is confirmed by the fact that even the best of the earlier sources (Van der Kemp, Alberti, Lichtenstein) fail to mention so dramatic an incident. Since the abduction occurred in 1807, it cannot have been the cause of hostilities commencing in 1795.



calculated insult designed to draw Ndlambe from his refuge and to what extent it was a matter of his personal gratification, will probably never be known, but it provoked a rebellion and Ndlambe seized the opportunity to inflict a crushing defeat on Ngqika and Mjalusa, who were personally ruined. However, in the middle of the conflict, some important chiefs crossed back to Ngqika, thus denying Ndlambe a conclusive victory. Collins thought that this was because they shared Ngqika's ideas about death-duties, but it also seems likely that they feared Ndlambe as much as they did Ngqika, and that having taught the latter a lesson they were prepared to return to their old allegiance. They stood to gain more from a situation where they held the balance of power than from the destruction of the one chief and the domination of the other. Hostilities were ended by an agreement whereby Ndlambe agreed to recognise Ngqika as his senior,<sup>104</sup> but Ndlambe and Chungwa remained west of the Fish, trying to maintain peace with the Colonists inasfar as it was compatible with their pasturage requirements. In the same year that Chungwa attempted to present Cuyler with an ox, Ndlambe requested the Landdrost to be allowed to graze his cattle at Swartwater (further inland and much nearer the Boers) for three months so that they could get fat.<sup>105</sup> Cuyler turned down the request and when troops landed at Algoa Bay, Ndlambe withdrew his herds. The result was that many of his supporters left him and went over to Ngqika.<sup>106</sup>

Note: 104. C O 2561 J. Cuyler - A. Barnard, 26 Sept. 1807.

105. C O 2572 J. Cuyler - Governor Caledon, 25 Dec. 1809.

106. C O 2572 J. Cuyler - Colonial Secretary, 18 Feb. 1810.



Another problem for Ndlambe was that just as he wanted autonomy from Ngqika, some of his subordinates wanted autonomy from him. Prominent among these were Habana and his brother, Galata, and Xasa, an imiDange chief. These migrated to the good grazing around the Zuurberg, near present-day Leeu-Gamka, where they raided the Colonists. After initially defying Ndlambe's orders to move, Habana came to appreciate the danger from the Colonists and attempted to move north over the Orange River as the only means of retaining his autonomy.<sup>107</sup> The most important chief to take this escape route from the closing frontier was Ndlambe's brother Nozi, who, under the name Danster, went on to become one of the greatest freebooters of the interior.<sup>108</sup> Most of the raids on the Colony occurred in the Bruinjes-Hoogte area where Xasa operated, and Ndlambe tried several times to bring this source of discord to heel but Xasa was able to evade him by hiding in the woods. Eventually, Xasa and Galata were forced to retreat across the Fish where they joined Ngqika (August 1811).<sup>109</sup> But Ndlambe was given no further opportunities of showing his good faith because the decision to expel him and Chungwa had already been taken. In December 1811, the Colonial Government displayed its full military strength for the first time (Fourth Frontier War). British regular troops, backed by Boer militia, systematically and ruthlessly drove the Xhosa beyond the Fish. In order to maximise the punishment for

Note: 107. C O 2572 Lieut. Evatt - J. Cuyler, 23 June 1810.

108. Collins, V, p. 16. For more information on Nozi, see appendix IV.

109. C O 2577. See depredations reports for the first and third quarters; C O 2566 Memorial of P.J. du Toit. Enclosure in J. Cuyler - Colonial Secretary, 4 July 1809; C O 2575 J.A. van Niekerk - J. Cuyler, 13 Feb. 1811; C O 2576 A. Stockenstrom - C. Bird, 26 July 1811.



their 'intrusion', the time of the year when the Xhosa standing crops would be destroyed was deliberately chosen.<sup>110</sup>

The position of Ngqika had changed. In the period of his greatness, he had treated with the Dutch authorities as an equal, offering to help them against the British in return for their help against Ndlambe.<sup>111</sup> Gifts were exchanged on a formal basis, and Ngqika was perfectly ready to return them when he felt that his honour demanded it.<sup>112</sup> He drank "wine with pleasure, but drank little".<sup>113</sup> After the Thuthula debacle, he became a mendicant both politically and materially, begging the Colony for revenge on Ndlambe, and for clothes, cattle and brandy. In 1800, he had declared himself king of all the Xhosa; now he received with anxious satisfaction the Colony's assurance that they regarded him as the greatest chief.<sup>114</sup> His support was not drawn entirely from the Colony, but the chiefs whom he attracted were predators and political opportunists, men who were not satisfied to be loyal subordinates but not powerful enough to compete with the likes of Ndlambe, Chungwa, Hintsa and Ngqika himself. Their names read like a roll-call of the great plunderers of the day: Mjalusa, Nqeno, Funa, Xasa. Inevitably therefore, the interests of Ngqika's two allies, the Colony and minor chiefs, were incompatible.

It was the Colonial authorities' search for the chimera of a frontier at perfect peace that brought matters to a head. Not surprisingly, the expulsion of the Xhosa caused an increase in

Note: 110. Message from Lieutenant Colonel Graham to Gaika (undated) R.C.C., XXI, p. 349; Mrs. J. Fairbairn - Mrs. Christie, 9 March 1838, in U. Long: Index to Unofficial Manuscripts relating to South Africa 1812-1920 (London, 1947), p. 131.

111. Lichtenstein, I, p. 426.

112. Lichtenstein, I, p. 402n; Alberti, p. 116; H. Maynier and A. Somerville - G. Yonge, 14 Aug. 1800, R.C.C., p. 212.

113. Lichtenstein, I, p. 395.

114. 'Message from Lieutenant Colonel Graham to Gaika' (undated) R.C.C., p. 349.



cattle-raiding instead of eliminating it, except for a short period in 1814 when the Xhosa attempted to win readmission through good behaviour.<sup>115</sup> Governor Lord Charles Somerset conferred with old frontier hands like Uitenhage Landdrost Cuyler and came up with what seemed a promising package. Well aware of Ngqika's weakness at home, they offered him active military assistance in enforcing his will on his subordinates in return for his assistance in suppressing cattle-raiding. The Xhosa remember this offer as a succinct "You protect me, and I'll protect you".<sup>116</sup> The deal was proposed to Ngqika at the Kat River Conference (1817). Ngqika, who seems to have immediately appreciated the implications of the proposal attempted to evade it. According to an eyewitness:

Gaika said to the governor, "There is my uncle and there are the other chiefs". The governor then said, "No, you must be responsible for all the cattle and the horses that are stolen". The other chiefs then said to Gaika, "Say yes, that you will be responsible, for we see the man is getting angry," for we had the cannon and artillerymen and soldiers and boors with loaded muskets standing about us.<sup>117</sup>

Ngqika was now put in the awkward position of being forced to chastise his Xhosa allies in order to satisfy the Colony. He temporised by sending back horses and making exaggerated professions of his loyalty. Meanwhile, he attempted to derive the

Note: 115. C O 2592 Deposition of Fedge Guada. Enclosure in J. Cuyler-Colonial Secretary, 7 July 1814. There is a detailed narrative history of the period 1817-9 in my 'Causes and Development of the Frontier War of 1818-9' (B.A. (Honours) extended essay, U.C.T. 1971) Part II, Chapter 1, and Part III, Chapter 1-3.

116. "Uzugcine mna wena nam ndikugcine". S.E.K. Mqhayi: 'Idabi lamaLinde' (The battle of Amalinde) in Bennie, p. 194.

117. Evidence of John Tzatzoe (Jan Tshatshu), Abo. Com., I, p. 569. Tshatshu was, of course, giving the sense of the exchange rather than the actual words used.



maximum benefit out of his association with the Colony in terms of presents and by taking a share of stolen cattle, while blaming continuing deficiencies on Ndlambe.<sup>118</sup> Ndlambe did his best to make a separate peace with the Colony, three times sending emissaries and returning cattle, firearms, and even a British deserter.<sup>119</sup> Somerset and Cuyler, obstinately adhering to their preconceived notions of good Ngqika and bad Ndlambe, turned a deaf ear. Well might the amaNdlambe complain:

We lived in peace. Some bad people stole, perhaps;

but the nation was quiet - the chiefs were quiet.

Gaika stole - his chiefs stole - his people stole.

You sent him copper; you sent him beads; you sent

him horses - on which he rode to steal more. To

us you sent only commandoes!<sup>120</sup>

Ndlambe's hand was strengthened by reconciliation with his son, Mdushane,<sup>121</sup> the rise of the prophet, Nxele,<sup>122</sup> and the resurgence of the Paramountcy. The house of Gcaleka had been gradually recovering from its internal divisions, from Khawuta's weakness, and from its defeat by Ngqika in 1795. This had commenced c 1805 with Khawuta's Right-Hand son, Bhurhu. "Let the people of different customs come together," he said, "and the houses of the Great Place stand close together." The

Note: 118. For Ngqika's participation in the proceeds of cattle-raiding, C O 2613 G. Fraser - C. Bird, 31 July, 1818.

119. Stockenstrom, I, p. 158; C O 2608. Letters from Capt. Gethin - G. Fraser, 31 Oct. 1817, 3 Nov. 1817, 13 Nov. 1817. For the Colonial response, see C O 4839 C. Bird - J. Cuyler, 4 Dec. 1817.

120. Speech of Nxele's councillors, according to notes taken by Stockenstrom and reproduced in Pringle, p. 284. Even if Pringle 'doctored' this speech stylistically, there is no reason to believe that the sense differs from what was actually said. Stockenstrom approved of the version given. Stockenstrom, I, p. 120.

121. Ndlambe had quarreled with Mdushane's mother. See Soga: SE Bantu, p. 150.

122. See Chapter V below.



resistance of dissidents led by chief Nxito of the amaTshayelo was overcome.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, Bhurhu was prepared to throw his weight behind Khawuta's Great Son, Hintsa rather than attempt to assert his own autonomy. Further progress was made when Nqoko, chief of the amaMbede died, and Hintsa was able to back one of his sons, Mguntu, against the other, Kalashe.<sup>124</sup> The autonomy of the powerful Ngqosini clan was destroyed by the massacre of seventeen unsuspecting Ngqosini councillors on a hunting expedition, and the degradation of their chief to the position of headman under Hintsa's Right-Hand son, Ncaphayi.<sup>125</sup> Thus by degrees the Paramountcy re-established its control over the Xhosa chiefdoms east of the Kei, and Bhurhu reoccupied Gcaleka's old territory west of the Kei.<sup>126</sup> Hintsa now began to consider extending his authority over the westernmost chiefdoms, and the troubles of the amaRharhabe seemed to invite intervention. Nor was he hard put to choose between Ndlambe, his father's old

Note: 123. Interview with Chief E. Bhotomane, Ramntswana Location, Kentani District, 16 Dec. 1975.

124. Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 288-90, places the incident in the time of Sarhili, which is very unlikely, since the quarrel must have taken place shortly after Nqoko's death. Chief J.M. Dinizulu Sigidi (descendant of Mguntu) places the incident in the time of Hintsa, when the amaMbede were still living in the Ciskei. He says Mguntu and Kalashe (whom he calls Mahote) were twins, but "the councillors preferred Mguntu". (Interview, Taleni Location, Idutywa District, 29 Oct. 1975).

125. Interview with S. Ndamase, Shixini Location, Willowvale District, 20 Nov. 1975. Mr. Ndamase is the "chief" of the amaNgqosini, being descended from the chief mentioned in the tradition. It is impossible to date this and the preceding incident. They may well have occurred after 1819. But there can be no doubt that the Paramountcy was recovering.

126. C O 163 J. Brownlee - C. Bird, 26 Aug. 1822.



ally, and Ngqika, whom he had good reason to believe had nearly murdered him. Ndlambe was recognised as chief of the amaRharhabe ("He was Hintsa's eyes") whereas Ngqika was not recognised at all ("He was there but he never reigned").<sup>127</sup> Hintsa is reported to have led the allied armies against Ngqika in person at the battle of Ndlambe as Ngqika's chief opponent in the war.<sup>128</sup>

Events soon precipitated a crisis. A Colonial commando seized the cattle of the minor chiefs, under the impression that they were supporters of Ndlambe.<sup>129</sup> They demanded that Ngqika join in an attack to recover them. He attempted to get them back by negotiation, but in the meantime many of the imiDange joined Nxele.<sup>130</sup> Ngqika demanded that Ndlambe hand Nxele over to him. Ndlambe refused, saying that Hintsa alone was king and that Ngqika was just a chief like himself (and therefore could not give him orders). Ngqika answered 'haughtily', "I too am a king!"<sup>131</sup> But he knew too well the basis on which his kingship now rested and sent urgent appeals to the Colony for its promised aid. Ndlambe forced the issue by seizing the cattle of one of Ngqika's sub-chiefs, and Ngqika's councillors compelled the reluctant chief to attack. At the great battle of Amalinde (October, 1818), Ngqika's forces were overwhelmed. Ndlambe and his followers sent an urgent message to the Colony "declaring they were anxious to remain at peace with the Colony, but at the same time refusing to submit to Gaika, whom they had conquered."<sup>132</sup> The appeal was ignored by the

Note: 127. Interview with D. Runeyi, Shixini Location, Willowvale District, 25 Nov. 1975.

128. Stockenstrom, I, p. 115. W. Shrewsbury - W.M.S. Directors, 31 Mar. 1827, Wesleyan Missionary Society Archives MS 15,429, Cory Library, Grahamstown.

129. This was Fraser's commando of Jan. 1818. See C O 2613 G. Fraser - C. Bird, 31 July 1818.

130. C O 2613 J. Williams - G. Fraser, 1 May 1818.

131. Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern, p. 49.

132. Pringle, p. 278.



Colonial authorities who believed that Ngqika was being punished because he had tried to repress cattle-raiding. The Fifth Frontier War commenced when Colonel Brereton attacked Ndlambe (December 1818), and took 23,000 cattle. The Xhosa swept into the Colony, attacking Grahamstown in broad daylight (22 April 1819).<sup>133</sup> Inevitably, British firepower was victorious, and by October the Xhosa were defeated. Ngqika's ascendancy over Ndlambe and Hintsa was now established - but at a cost to himself that he could hardly have anticipated.

Note: 133. For an eyewitness account of the battle of Grahamstown, see C.L. Stretch 'Makanda and the attack of Graham's Town' Cape Monthly Magazine, XII, (May 1876).



CHAPTER V : XHOSA TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND THE IMPACT OF  
CHRISTIANITY

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A great deal has been written about the traditional religion of the Nguni,<sup>1</sup> but the general impression persists that it was a mixture of curious customs and dangerous superstitions. Yet Xhosa religion was logical enough, given the assumption that the unseen world was active in this world and was an important causative influence.<sup>2</sup> Health and fertility were assumed as given, and any deficiency was attributed to dereliction of duty or to the influence of malevolent persons. For instance, Ndlambe's fatal illness - even at a reputed age of ninety years - was attributed to witchcraft, and droughts were attributed by rainmakers to their enemies, the missionaries.<sup>3</sup> Another common cause of misfortune or disaster was failure to propitiate ancestral or river spirits. It

- Note:
1. The only full account on the Xhosa specifically is J.H. Soga: Ama-Xosa, but most of the early travellers and missionaries have full and reasonably accurate descriptions. Alberti, Lichtenstein, Shaw: Story and Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern are probably the best. On other Nguni, Hunter, Chapters V-VII, which deals with the very similar Mpondo, is outstanding and should be read by anyone seriously interested in the subject. See also H. Callaway: The Religious System of the Amazulu (Reprinted Cape Town 1970) and W.D. Hammond-Tooke: Bhaca Society (Cape Town, 1962). Hammond-Tooke and others have also written a number of specialised articles, which cannot all be cited here.
  2. This concept was pioneered by E.E. Evans - Pritchard: Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande (Oxford, 1937), and has subsequently been adopted and developed by others including R. Horton, whose 'African Traditional Thought and Western Science' Africa, XXXVII (1967) has influenced my thinking considerably.
  3. For Ndlambe's death, see Chapter VII(1). For blaming drought on the missionaries, see D. Williams 'The Missionaries on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony, 1799-1853' (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1959) p. 91.



was further assumed that the unseen world was comprehensible, that its forces behaved according to set patterns, and that it was therefore open to manipulation and control. This made religious practice inseparable from everyday living. On one level, it was a technical means of getting things done, and its practitioners, the diviners, were not philosophers but technicians who performed necessary tasks and corrected breakdowns. Rain magic and field magic were as essential to a good harvest as sowing and weeding. Similarly, correct observance of rituals was essential for successful living. Failure or misfortune proceeded from a specific cause, which could be diagnosed and remedied by a qualified person, namely the diviner.

It is important to note that this world-view did not rule out experimentation and hypothesis. For instance, in their persistent attempts to procure a secure supply of rain the Xhosa turned at different times to the Khoi and the missionaries to see if their cosmologies were more effective. Later, there was also a school of thought that favoured the San and the Mfengu, because they came from the 'north', where the rains came from.<sup>4</sup> However, speculation was necessarily limited by the bounds of the world-view itself. For instance, Gcaleka was described as a sickly man, who was always killing people in the hope of making himself better.<sup>5</sup> The fact that his health did not improve did not show that disease is not caused by witches: It simply showed that the witch had not yet been caught. It is worth noting, however, that the tendency

Note: 4. Anonymous, undated manuscript, probably by William Shrewsbury. Wesleyan Missionary Society Archives, MS 15,429. Cory Library, Grahamstown.

5. Cory interview No. 113. Mdandala (Ngqika), 26 Jan. 1910, Kentani.



to explain everything in terms of accepted hypotheses without questioning the hypotheses themselves exists in Western science also.<sup>6</sup>

#### 1. Pre-Christian influence on Xhosa Religion

It is impossible to trace the purely endogenous evolution of Xhosa religion. This is partly because oral traditions are notorious for their assertion of the immutability of custom<sup>7</sup> and partly because of the absence among the Xhosa of the type of elaborate religious ritual found elsewhere in Africa in which historical elements have been embedded.<sup>8</sup> The one exception to this was an annual sacrifice to the Ngxingxolo river, in celebration of Gcaleka's initiation, but this has now been discontinued. However, it seems probable that most of the important features of Xhosa religion are extensions of household worship, relating as they do to ancestor veneration or the life-cycle. Each household head was a religious practitioner in that he made the offerings and performed the beneficent magic which accompanied the daily business of living. With the political enlargement of scale, certain tasks which affected the whole area and all of its resident kinship groups became the responsibility of the chief, the only father shared by all the people. These included responsibility for a successful harvest (first-fruits ceremony), the bringing of rain and the national defence (the ithola, or wardoctor, was attached specifically to the chief).

Note: 6. T.S. Kuhn: The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (2nd ed. Chicago, 1970).

7. For a good example of this among a South African people see E.J. Krige, quoted in I.M. Lewis: History and Social Anthropology (London, 1968), pp. xviii-xix.

8. On the possibility of inferring history from ritual, see T.O. Ranger: 'Report on the Conference for the Historical Study of East African Religion, Limuru, June 1974', African Religious Research, IV (1974), pp. 26-33.



Khoisan religious beliefs influenced Xhosa religion to a limited extent, but the central premises of the two religious complexes remained very different.<sup>9</sup> Whereas the Xhosa had only a very hazy conception of a High God and perceived good and evil forces in the relatively mundane terms of ancestors and witches,<sup>10</sup> the Khoi worshipped an anthropomorphised deity named Tsui//Goab, associated with the moon, and attributed evil to a rival being, associated with black sky and whirlwinds, known as //Gaunab. The existence of witches on earth was recognised, and it was believed that when they died they became evil spirits. Ancestors were respected but they were largely disregarded in ritual and as active agents. Unlike the Xhosa, the Khoi and the San buried their dead.

Since the basic ideas of Khoisan religion were not adopted by the Xhosa, its influence cannot be said to have been very profound despite the widespread borrowing of religious loanwords.<sup>11</sup> This is all the more remarkable considering the substantial proportion of Xhosa who are of Khoi origin. The only practices definitely borrowed from the Khoisan are those of cutting off the tip of the little finger (ingqiti) and of throwing stones on wayside cairns (izivivane). These, however, were only charms to bring strength and good luck, and were devoid of deeper religious or social significance. Harinck's attractive hypothesis, that the Khoi enjoyed high religious status among the Xhosa because they were the original occupants of the land is untenable in the absence of supporting evidence.<sup>12</sup> Harinck apparently based it on the fact

Note: 9. The best short discussion of Khoisan religion is in I. Schapera: The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa (London, 1930), Chapters VII, XIII.

10. The word 'witches' as used in this thesis includes sorcerers.

11. For a full list of these, see L.F. Maingard: 'The Linguistic Approach to South African Prehistory and Ethnology' South African Journal of Science, XXXI, (1934), p. 135.

12. Harinck, p. 153.



that most rainmakers around 1805 were Khoi, but they were later superseded by the Mfengu who had even less title to the land than the Xhosa. On the other hand the indirect influence of Khoisan religion in preparing the way for Christianity through familiarising the Xhosa with analogues of God and the Devil must have been considerable.

## 2. The Impact of the Europeans

The impact of Christianity on traditional thought threw up two of the most remarkable figures in Xhosa history. Many are familiar with the more dramatic aspects of the story of Nxele - (Makanda) - the attack on Grahamstown and the promise that the white bullets would turn to water.<sup>13</sup> He has been seen as a noble enemy, a greedy charlatan and a nationalist hero.<sup>14</sup> But

- Note: 13. The best accounts of Nxele are those by 'A Native Minister' (Isaac Wauchope): The Natives and their Missionaries (Lovedale, 1908) (Wauchope's grandfather fought at Amalinde on the Ndlambe side); an untitled undated manuscript by William Kekale Kaye, "A Native Interpreter", Number 172c in the Grey Collection, South African Public Library, Cape Town; and J.L. Dohne: Das Kafferland und seine Bewohner (Berlin, 1862), which is the basis for the account of Nxele by A. Kropf: Der Lugenprofeten Kafferlands (2nd ed.; Berlin, 1891); and J. Read: 'Narrative of the Journey of Mr. Read and others to Caffraria', Transactions of the London Missionary Society, IV, (1818). Other accounts include J. Brownlee: 'On the origins and rise of the prophet Nxele', also 172c Grey Collection, South African Public Library, Cape Town; extract from the diary of C.L. Stretch, copied by G.M. Theal, Accession 378c, Cape Archives; T. Pringle: Narrative of a Residence in South Africa (London, 1835; reprinted Cape Town, 1966) which leans heavily on Stretch; and W.K.N. (William Kobe Ntsikana): 'Imbali kaMakhanda (abathi nguNxele)' in Rubusana.
14. Pringle and Stretch see him as a noble enemy; Brownlee and Anonymous (W.W. Gqoba): 'UNxele' in Bennie see him as a charlatan; H. Reyburn: 'Studies in Cape Frontier History', The Critic (1935) and E. Roux: Time Longer than Rope (London, 1948) see him as a nationalist.



whichever view is adopted, a sense of dissatisfaction, of something not yet understood, remains. In terms of explanation, we have not yet got beyond 'Nxele prophesied and the people believed him because they were superstitious.' Ntsikana, the Christian prophet who was Nxele's contemporary, is not so widely known to non-Xhosa.<sup>15</sup> He too requires some explanation, although more readers today would probably accept that he was divinely called than would accept the same of Nxele. What was the place of such men in Xhosa society, and why did people believe them?

By 1815 legitimate authority among the Xhosa, with a very few long-standing exceptions, was vested in the amaTshawe. This legitimacy was sanctioned by tradition and could not be challenged on rational grounds. The amaTshawe competed with each other for power on the national scale, while the commoners competed for the ear of the Tshawe to whom they were subject. As commoners, Nxele and Ntsikana could not have attained the positions they did had they not had access to a source of authority which transcended the normal - the commission of God. This should not be misunderstood to mean that they consciously chose religious vocations because it was their only route to power. But if they had not possessed the religious impulse, they would have been unremarkable. Many shared their respective political views. It was the combination of strong political and religious conviction that raised them to prominence.

Note: 15. For Ntsikana, see Z. Soga, M.N. Balfour and W.K. Ntsikana: 'UNtsikana' in Bennie, Most of this is available in English in J.K. Bokwe: Ntsikana (Lovedale, 1914). However the hagiographical bias causes these to omit the crucial circumstances of Ntsikana's visit to Ndlambe which is dealt with in Kaye and Dohne op cit.



Nxele and Ntsikana commenced their careers as diviners ('witchdoctors'). All diviners were (and still are) called to their office through a mystical experience, characterised by what many Western psychologists would call hysterical symptoms, but which Xhosa, with their very different world views, regarded as a mark of divine attention.<sup>16</sup> The signs of possession varied but might have included nervous paroxysms, dreams, visions, associations with familiars, and so on. Sometimes the initiate saw a certain animal and demanded that it be killed as an offering to the ancestors. Often the signs were ambivalent, and a qualified diviner was called in to decide what type of possession it was, and what should be done about it. If the symptoms were socially acceptable and if the initiate could keep them under sufficient control, he would probably become a diviner. The percentage of initiated persons who actually practised as diviners was low. It is also highly probable that successful diviners were those who told their clients what they wanted to hear.<sup>17</sup> The implication is that it was not spiritual experience but public acceptability which qualified a person as a diviner. The process of divination was not a one-way street, where the charismatic (and perhaps self-seeking) diviner led his innocent flock by the nose, but a dialogue between the diviner and clients in which the course of action prescribed by the former was circumscribed by what the latter were prepared to accept.<sup>18</sup> A good

Note: 16. A good review of the psychological debate concerning the question of whether possessed persons (such as diviners) should be regarded as insane may be found in I.M. Lewis: Ecstatic Religion (Harmondsworth, 1971), Chapter VII.

17. Hunter, pp. 336, 346. I paid particular attention during my fieldwork to the question of whether the same obtained among the Xhosa, and I am convinced it did.

18. This paragraph and what follows owes much to P.M. Worsley's discussion of Weber's concept of charisma in The Trumpet Shall Sound (2nd ed: London, 1968).



example is that of the witchhunt: a person in good social standing had nothing to fear from the witchfinder.<sup>19</sup> Ordinary Xhosa deferred to and even feared a diviner with much 'power'. This does not mean that they expected him to be good in the moral sense. They knew that diviners were greedy for cattle and women, and could misuse their powers. But this was insignificant compared with the inescapable fact that they did have the 'power'. For the Xhosa, as many other African people, holiness and morality were not necessarily combined.<sup>20</sup> However, there was a check on the diviner: if his verdicts were continually unpopular or his promises persistently unfulfilled, he was bound to be exposed as a witch or a fraud.

It may readily be seen that the exact nature of the mystical visitation received by a particular person would depend on his personal inclinations, fears, experiences, knowledge, and so on. They depended to a certain extent on the external world - new forms of possession have developed in the twentieth century as a response to industrialisation and large-scale migrant labour.<sup>21</sup> The precise psychological variables in the personal makeup of Nxele and Ntsikana which made them respond to these stimuli in such a unique manner will probably never be known. But these are not as important as the fact that their conclusions made sense to thousands of Xhosa, and were accepted by them as the truth. We must turn therefore to the common assumptions on which the prophets based their assertions and the Xhosa their response.

Note: 19. See above, ch. III(1); Shaw: Journal, p. 109; S. Kay - W.M.S., 1 Apr. 1826, MS 15,429, Cory Library, Grahamstown.

20. See E.E. Evans - Pritchard: Nuer Religion (Oxford, 1956; Citation from the American Edition, New York and Oxford, 1974) p. 307.

21. See H. Sibisi 'The Place of Spirit Possession in Zulu Cosmology' in M.G. Whisson and M. West: Religion and Social Change in Southern Africa (Cape Town, 1975).



Some emphasis has already been laid on the fact that the religion was an instrument of explanation and control. By 1812 the western Xhosa, but more especially the amaNdlambe and amaGqunukhwebe, who had been expelled from the Zuurveld, were suffering from what may be called a condition of national stress.<sup>22</sup> They had, after all, succeeded in coping with the Boers. Like, them, the Boers were cattlemen, whose material culture, except for firearms, was in many cases probably not beyond the reach of the Xhosa, had they wanted it. Thirty years of reasonably close contact had made the Boers a known quantity and enabled the Xhosa to establish a modus vivendi with them. This was facilitated by the fact that social and political decision-making within both parties was highly personalised, thus allowing groups in each area to reach some sort of accommodation with their neighbours and to settle their difficulties as they arose. Mutual acculturation - many Boers even adopted Xhosa religious beliefs<sup>23</sup> - reduced the difference between the two cultures.

Above all, the Boers posed no military threat to the Xhosa, and the Xhosa were not afraid of them. Before 1807, Ndlambe and Chungwa were apprehensive of the combined strength of Ngqika and the Colony, but after they had crushed the former, they felt they could handle the latter. The style of warfare - cattle-raiding, with occasional house and crop destruction - was the same, and the Xhosa had proved themselves superior. The arrival of the English was an unexpected event, the Xhosa

Note: 22. For stress, see L. Festinger: A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Stanford, 1957); when specifically applied to prophetism see A.F.C. Wallace: 'Revitalisation Movements', American Anthropologist, LVIII, (1956).

23. S. Kay, Annual Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 1829, p. 32.



having known no white people but the Boers. Buys did not help matters by representing them as the "Bushmen of the sea".<sup>24</sup> But they had brought no immediate change, and the frontier landdrosts, Cuyler and Stockenstrom, continued to be Dutch-speakers.

The clearing of the Zuurveld in 1812 must have come as a great shock. Not only did it reveal for the first time the full power of the Colony's immense technical and material resources; not only was it their first experience of total war - the systematic and relentless elimination of the entire Xhosa presence in the Zuurveld, expelling the people and deliberately and completely destroying the homes and crops; but the very concept of such an expulsion was alien to them. Instead of being subjected to the victors and incorporated into their society - a distressing but familiar process - they were rejected and expelled, the already blurring division between the two cultures was revived, and their alienness and separateness was reinforced. Old fears must have been reawakened, the whites were not people like other people, they were abantu abasemazini, the people from the water, associated with all the mystical power of the sea. Moreover, the situation was not regarded as stable. Now that this foreign entity had crystallised as a threat, there was no telling where it would all end, a feeling well demonstrated in one of Nxele's harangues:

Note: 24. Lichtenstein, I, p. 403.



There they come! They have crossed the Qagqiwa (Zwartkops) and they have crossed the Nqweba (Sundays); only one river more, the Nxuba (Fish), and then they will be in our land. What will become of you then?<sup>25</sup>

The Xhosa knew what had happened to the Khoi and feared a similar fate.

Obviously, traditional religion could neither explain nor control this alarming new phenomenon, which was inexplicable and uncontrollable within the limits of traditional theories about the way the world worked. If an explanation was to be obtained, it was surely to be found in the new stock of concepts introduced by the Europeans. The Christian ideas most readily absorbed by the Xhosa were those concerning God, the Devil, the creation and the resurrection. Of these, the first two were familiar from Khoi religion. The third had a Xhosa equivalent, which had man created in a bed of reeds and proceeding from a hole in the ground. The fourth was a completely new idea to the Xhosa but an extremely appealing one, since it filled a gap in traditional belief. There had been no satisfactory explanation for death: it was regarded as the product of witchcraft, and the ultimate impurity. So great was the horror of death among the Xhosa that the fatally ill were not allowed to die in their homes but chased out into the bush, and the relatives of the deceased had to undergo elaborate purificatory rites before re-entering the community.<sup>26</sup> The missionary

Note: 25. Wauchope, p. 34.

26. Alberti, pp. 93-6. Cf. D. Williams: Where Races Meet (Johannesburg, 1967) pp. 78-80, who feels that the Xhosa did not fear death because they felt they were going to their ancestors.



message that the dead did not really die but would rise up again was received with joyful misunderstanding:

When (the missionary, James Read) told them that woman, and all mankind, would rise again from the dead, it caused uncommon joy among the Caffres. They said, they should like to see their grandfathers, and others whom they mentioned. Congo inquired when it would happen, and if it would be soon, but Mr.

Read could not gratify his wishes on that point.<sup>27</sup> Some sort of synthesis was needed: a synthesis which was firmly rooted in the traditional world-view (which was still seen to work in day-to-day existence), but which was capable of explaining the presence of these strange people and of suggesting a means of controlling them.

### 3. Nxele - towards a Xhosa-Christian synthesis

Nxele was the first man to attempt to provide this. He was a commoner originally subject to the Mbalu chief, whose father had worked for a Dutch farmer and had died while Nxele was still young. From his Colonial childhood he knew Dutch and must have picked up some knowledge of the Europeans along with it. This he later added to by visits to the barracks in Grahamstown, and conversations with missionaries on religious and other topics. While still a young man, he began to exhibit the hysterical symptoms associated with the initial calling of a diviner, but to an exaggerated degree. He lived in the woods and fields, refusing to eat his mother's food because it was impure. After his circumcision, he began to

Note: 27. John Campbell: Travels in South Africa (London, 1815; reprinted Cape Town, 1974), p. 366.



preach, telling the Xhosa that they were sinful people who should forsake blood and witchcraft. This was abnormal behaviour, even for a diviner, and he was taken to be mad. But it was recognised that this was no ordinary madness.<sup>28</sup>

"A Man named Qalanga said: take that rope off his neck and say 'Camagu'.<sup>29</sup> He subsequently seems to have ascribed his deliverance to Tayi (Christ).<sup>30</sup> He was taken to Ndlambe.

Whether that chief was genuinely impressed by his claim or whether he decided he could use him is difficult to say, but he allowed him to set himself up as a chief, also offering him gifts, which he refused.<sup>31</sup>

Nxele's views at this time were fairly orthodox. He preached against witchcraft, polygamy, adultery, incest, warfare and even the racing of oxen. He spoke of God (Mdalidiphu - creator of the deep) and his son, Tayi (Christ), the Creation, the Fall of Man, the Flood, the Passion of Christ, and the Resurrection. At this phase of his career his following was fairly limited and he complained to Read that the Xhosa were not listening. He was continuing to preach, he said, because he felt it was his duty and in the hope that Tayi would inspire the people.<sup>32</sup> The emphasis on impurity throughout Nxele's early teaching is interesting, especially when taken in conjunction with a similar emphasis by Ntsikana. It seem to have the elements of a possible theodicy in it. This could also be seen as related to the Western impact.

Note: 28. Dohne, p. 59.

29. Kaye. Camagu means "Be appeased or pacified" usually addressed to an ancestor or diviner, Kropf and Godfrey, p. 55.

30. Read, p. 284.

31. Dohne, p. 61.

32. Read, pp. 283-6.



It was but a short step from proclaiming divine truth to associating himself with the divinity, particularly since Nxele knew how unique he was among the Xhosa. Already by 1816 he was calling himself the younger brother of Christ.<sup>33</sup> His career took an even more distinctly heretical turn when he announced the resurrection of the dead and the damnation of the witches at Gompo rock near East London. Although it did not materialise, his reputation was not substantially damaged.<sup>34</sup>

Nxele now began to move away from conventional Christian teaching with increasing rapidity. One reason for this was the impending clash with Ngqika and his prophet, Ntsikana, a more orthodox Christian, who mocked "You only to wash yourselves with salt water at Gompo", and challenged his divinity. He began to use red ochre and dance (xhentsa) as diviners did. He married two young wives, probably San. Although he had previously rejected gifts he now began to demand (ruma) cattle. Whereas he had previously welcomed the missionaries Read and Williams, he now seized on an eye-affliction of Ngqika's as evidence that praying in the

Note: 33. Ibid.

34. The most satisfactory account of how Nxele extricated himself from this difficulty is in Shaw: Journal, p. 103. "Makanna ordered them all to enter the water and wash, with which the people complied, but as they entered the water en masse they could not refrain from bellowing forth, the usual war yell. Makanna now informed them they ought not to have done so, and since they had thought proper to follow their own headstrong will, and not listened to his directions, all was now over, and every man might return to his own home."



European manner made one sick.<sup>35</sup> His theology changed too. The world was now seen as a battleground between Thixo, God of the whites, and Mdalidiphu or uHlanga, the God of the blacks. The whites had killed the son of their God, who had punished them by expelling them from their own land into the sea from which they had now emerged in search of land. But Mdalidiphu was more powerful and would push them back.<sup>36</sup> As Nxele moved away from Christianity towards a more satisfying doctrine and a more comprehensible pattern of behaviour, his popularity among the Xhosa grew apace. Whereas previously he had defied categorisation, he was now understood to be a wardactor of exceptional powers. The action of Brereton's commando in depriving the Xhosa of 23,000 head of cattle was the final push that sent them into the arms of Nxele. From January to May 1819 he led the amaNdlambe armies in ravaging the Colony, culminating in the attack on Grahamstown. After the failure of the attack he gave himself up, partly to end the war and partly to escape the anger of his disillusioned followers.<sup>37</sup> He drowned in 1820, attempting to escape from the prison on Robben Island.

Nxele's promise to turn bullets to water has been made much of by European historians. The implication is that had this extraordinary man with his amazing promises not appeared and removed the fear of the bullets, Grahamstown would not have been attacked. This is to miss the point. The war of 1818-19 was fought for specific political reasons, and would have been fought with or without Nxele. Nxele's power lay not in his promise to turn bullets into water but in his ability to resolve the cosmological problems posed by the presence of the whites and to

Note: 35. Kaye Ms; A similar story is told of Van der Kemp, so there may be conflation. But the important thing to be noticed here is Nxele's change of attitude.

36. Wauchope, p. 34.

37. C. Somerset-Bathurst, 24 Sept. 1819, R.C.C. XII, p. 319.



provide a credible and concrete means for its control, namely himself as the instrument of Mdalidiphu. The promise to turn the bullets to water is unremarkable, given the view of religion as a technology discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Every warddoctor was credited with the power to 'tie up' the enemy and render his weapons harmless. Once one accepts the possibility of spears being rendered harmless, it is not difficult to accept the same for bullets. The nature of the power is the same, it is only the degree which differs. What needs to be explained is why the Xhosa were prepared to believe in Mdalidiphu - after that leap of faith, everything else follows logically.

Nxele, in his mature phase, sought to find an answer to the Western challenge within the framework of Xhosa traditional thought, modified by compatible Western elements. In this he prefigures Mlanjeni and Nongqawuse. It is true that the line of thinking he initiated led inevitably to a dead end, but to consider him, his teaching and his following as absurd, superstitious or illogical is to do him less than justice, and to miss his significance.

It was commonly believed that he would return, and the occasional imposter claiming to be Nxele did appear, but none won wide acceptance. His chiefdom survived him for some time, but has since disappeared. One of his sons, Mjuza, was a well-known diviner, but others joined the Church. One of the rituals also survived some time: on passing a river, the believer was to shout "A Tayi! A Mdalidiphu!"<sup>38</sup>

Note: 38. W.K. Ntsikana: 'Imbali kaNxele' in Rubusana, abridged ed., p. 51.



From Nxele's death to the rise of Mlanjeni, the chief proponents of traditional religion were the rainmakers, perhaps the Xhosa institution most closely approximating to a national priesthood. The greatest of these was Ngqatsi, who was active from 1832 to 1839. He deliberately held rainmaking ceremonies on Sundays near the mission stations in order to distract the congregation, and, at one point, forbade his followers to sell produce to the missionaries at Pirie. Mission adherents were threatened with lightning.<sup>39</sup> Throughout Xhosaland, the rainmakers accused the missionaries of driving the rain away and agitated for their expulsion. This resistance was limited in scale, attacking only one aspect of the Western presence, though the rainmakers fought and died bravely in the Frontier Wars.<sup>40</sup> It was not until 1850 that another determined attempt was made to use traditional religion as a weapon for the complete elimination of the Europeans.

#### 4. Ntsikana, the Christian Prophet

The story of Ntsikana can be understood within the same framework as that of Nxele.<sup>41</sup> Like Nxele, he used religious experience as a liberating medium which allowed him to cut through the weight of traditional thinking. But <sup>the</sup> result arrived at was rather different. This can be partly explained by the fact that Ntsikana was reacting not only to the West but to Nxele's reaction to it.

Ntsikana was not brought up in the Colony as Nxele was. He seems to have led a fairly normal life until his religious visitation. Like Nxele, his thinking seems to have developed with time, but it developed in the reverse direction. Whereas

Note: 39. Williams: Where Races Meet, pp. 84-5; Mrs. J. Ross - Mrs. Blackwood, 2 Aug. 1832, Long, p. 236.

40. H.A. Reyburn: 'The Missionary as Rainmaker', The Critic, (1933); Shaw: Story, p. 466.

41. For the sources on Ntsikana see note 15 above.



Nxele moved away from Christianity, Ntsikana appears to have moved towards it. His initial experience was a hallucination at the gate of his cattle kraal, when he saw a strange ray of light proceeding from his favourite ox, an animal with which he appears to have had a mystical and quite unChristian relationship.<sup>42</sup> Shortly thereafter he attended a dance, and a whirlwind is supposed to have sprung up whenever he tried to join in. Be that as it may, he certainly seems to have experienced revulsion at traditional dancing. His next act was to plunge into a stream and wash off his red ochre. He heard an insistent voice within: "This thing which has entered me, it says 'Let it be prayed! Let every thing bow the knee'".<sup>43</sup> It should be noted that there was nothing specifically Christian in all this: just a mystical vision, and an urge to rid himself of impurity. Ntsikana took himself and his vision to his chief, Ndlambe, but the latter politely declined his services in favour of the already established Nxele. Rejected, Ntsikana turned to Ngqika and, with his backing, set himself up as Nxele's rival. Tradition remembers "Nxele has turned thing upside down! Why does he mislead the people?"<sup>44</sup> as his constant cry, and he capitalised on the latter's failure at Gompo. Ntsikana must have known of Joseph Williams the missionary at Ngqika's place, and this gave him the conceptual ammunition to counter his enemy:

Note: 42. See the strange goings-on at his death, Bokwe p. 29. This appears to be a traditional myth, given a Christian colouring.

43. "Le nto indingeneyo, ithi makuthandazwe, makuguqe yonke into", W.K. Ntsikana in Bennie, p. 10. The crucial verb here is "-guqa" "To stoop, bend on or upon; to bend the <sup>knee</sup> <sub>to</sub> <sup>knee</sup> down" (Kropf and Godfrey, p. 137.)

44. Bokwe p. 12. I prefer my own translation.



Nxele is wrong in saying that God is on the earth: God is in the heavens. He is right in saying that there are two Gods, but they are not Tayi and Mdalidiphu, but Thixo and his son ... He lies in saying the people must put away witchcraft, for what is witchcraft but (the badness of) the heart of man? He even went so far as to deny the impurity of incest (of which Ngqika was clearly guilty through his liaison with Thuthula). Equally intriguing is his appeal to chiefly solidarity by pointing out the dangers of extending recognition to an ambitious commoner:

I am only like a candle. Those who are chiefs will remain chiefs because they were given (the chiefship) by Him and only He can take it away; I have not added anything to myself; I am just as I was (before I began to preach). Nxele is wrong in saying he should be saluted; he is not a chief.<sup>45</sup>

Ntsikana's theology was thus partly a counter-theology. But he should not be dismissed as a reverse image of Nxele or as a mere political opportunist. The basic idea expressed in his original vision "Let every thing submit!" is also the central idea of his magnificent hymn, which is still sung today. The idea of God as a shield of defence is repeated three times in the original version, and the hymn continues:

Note: 45. Both quotations are from Kaye. See also A. Kropf: Ntsikana (Berlin, 1891), p. 9.



He is the one who brings together the herds which  
oppose each other,

He is the leader who has led us.

He is the great blanket which we put on.<sup>46</sup>

The essence of Ntsikana's message, his answer to the problem of stress, was complete submission to the will of God, where alone peace and protection are to be found. Peace was a part of Ntsikana's politics too. Just before Amalinde, when the amaNgqika were anxious for war, he warned them that it would end in disaster. This was in direct contrast to Nxele who threatened that the amaNgqika would become 'firewood and ants'. Nxele was a wardocor and his cosmology was one of a battle between good and evil. Ntsikana was a man of peace, and his cosmology was one of peace.

Amalinde dates Ntsikana's emergence to before 1818. Thereafter he preached and composed hymns at home. Tradition has it that when he felt death approaching, he forced his family to bury him by starting to dig his grave. This was in 1821. Unlike Nxele, who, in some wilder estimates, is supposed to have led 10,000 warriors on Grahamstown, Ntsikana's immediate influence was confined to very few men. But these few converts were to be influential in the planting of Christianity in Southern Africa. They included his son, William Kobe Ntsikana, preacher and historian; Robert Noyi Balfour and Charles Matshaya Henry, the first African catechists; and Soga, father of Tiyo Soga, the first ordained African minister. As traditional thinking became

Note: 46. The official version from which this is taken is printed in Bokwe, p. 26. Once more I prefer my own translation. The earliest printed version I have seen is that of C. Rose: Four Years in Southern Africa (London, 1829), pp. 136-7. It is noteworthy that the specifically Christian lines of the official version do not appear in Rose's version, and are attributed (in another context) by Wauchope (whose grandmother was one of Van der Kemp's converts) to Van der Kemp himself, Wauchope, p. 21.



increasingly unable to provide an answer to increasing Western pressure, so Ntsikana's vision of submission to the goodness of the Christian God (and everything else associated with him) became more appropriate. Today nothing is remembered of Nxele but his name, whereas the story of Ntsikana is well-known and Ntsikana Day is celebrated every year.

Since the missionaries conceptualised Christianity in terms of uplifting a barbarous people to civilisation through teaching them 'useful arts' and correct doctrine, it should be pointed out that Ntsikana's ideal of Christianity never did prevail. Nevertheless he has an enduring significance. In a time of rising nationalism, Xhosa Christianity needs Ntsikana as much as it ever did. When one very knowledgeable old man was asked how Christianity came to the Xhosa, he was positive that it had come through Ntsikana.<sup>47</sup> The figurative truth in this assertion far outweighs its factual inaccuracy. It is Ntsikana's achievement to have made Christianity an African religion. Nxele and Ntsikana have been called 'prophets', but although they do represent something new, they should be seen as a natural development of Xhosa religion rather than as a complete novelty.<sup>48</sup>

Note: 47. Interview Gideon Vitsha, Debe M<sup>a</sup>ele Location, Middel-drift District, 15 Aug. 1975.

48. The Xhosa accept that prophecy is possible, but I have found no example of a genuine prophecy, as opposed to interpretation of omens. A prophecy often attributed to Ntsikana (and Hintsa and Tshaka) is that he foretold the coming of the whites. This is clearly apocryphal. Nxele's prediction that the amaNgqika would become firewood and ants, and Ntsikana's that he saw the bones of the amaNgqika lying on the Amalinde flats, whether or not apocryphal, are, at best, only threats and warnings dressed up as prophecies.



Their behaviour - visions, exhortations and Nxele's demands for cattle and assertions of magical power - was entirely normal in terms of the usual behaviour of Xhosa diviners. It was what they said, their respective messages, that was important. These messages were not prophecies or in any way magical. They were serious attempts to understand a world that had suddenly become incomprehensible. They succeeded according to the extent to which they reflected their countrymen's worries and their assumptions of what was and was not feasible. They are giants because they transcend specifics to symbolise the opposite poles of Xhosa response to christianity and the West, Ntsikana representing total acceptance and Nxele radical rejection. So exactly does their rivalry foreshadow the struggle for the Xhosa mind in the nineteenth century that the contest between them would surely be taken for a myth if it were not known to be a reality.

##### 5. The Xhosa and the Missionaries

The cases of Nxele and Ntsikana show that some form of Christianity was not lacking in appeal for the Xhosa. It remains to consider the impact of the formal Christianity brought by the missionaries. The period before 1835 was one in which the initial optimism of the early days gave way to the pessimism and lack of apparent success that caused the missionary Bryce Ross to refer to the years 1838-46 as "the dreariest in the history of the Caffre missions".<sup>49</sup> The early failure was due to the fact that the traditional Xhosa world-view was still viable and offered a satisfactory formula for daily living. A new religion could appeal only to those

Note: 49. Quoted Williams: 'Missionaries', p. 331.



whose old world was irrevocably shattered and who wanted new tools to build a new world. This was true of the Mfengu, who supplied the missionaries with their first mass conversions, and it was to be true of many Xhosa after 1857, but it was not true of the Xhosa before 1835. Thus it was largely in vain that the missionaries, most of whom equated Christianity with European civilisation and behaviour, attempted to persuade the Xhosa to abandon trusted practices which they regarded as essential to their earthly prosperity and well-being in favour of a doctrine which was abstract and explicitly devoid of material benefits. The contrast appears clearly in the reaction of one old man who warned his neighbours that such useless speculation would ruin the Xhosa because "their children would neglect the cattle."<sup>50</sup> Another old man indicated the essential irrelevance of Christian doctrine to the Xhosa when he said that:

He had gone once or twice (to hear the missionaries) but that he could not understand what they said, and he had therefore discontinued his visits, though he believed them to be a good kind of people who did him no harm.<sup>51</sup>

The missionaries' primary targets were some of the Xhosa's most treasured social institutions, and they met with a resounding snub. Their attack on 'witchcraft' was in fact an attack on witchfinding; for the Xhosa, this was like denying the existence of disease and suggesting the elimination of the medical profession. Nor was there much prospect of persuading the

Note: 50. Shaw: Story, p. 471.

51. J.W.D. Moodie, II, p. 279.



Xhosa to abandon polygamy and bridewealth, the cement of all social relationships. Lacking a concept of 'sin', they could hardly share the missionaries' objections to dancing and nudity. Only on the question of rainmaking did the missionaries take up a comprehensible position: accused by the rainmakers of holding back the rain, they retaliated by laying the blame on the sins of the people, or on the rainmakers themselves.<sup>52</sup> Christianity could not hope to entirely replace traditional religion, intimately bound up as the latter was with the family and with the life cycle of birth, maturity and death. This association with the irreducible social unit and the inevitable daily round transcended any possible political, social or economic vicissitude. Moreover, the Xhosa could see no reason why they should believe the new dispensation. "How did those words get in the book you tell us about?" they asked, "How did the first man who wrote them know them?"<sup>53</sup> Much of it seemed impossibly far-fetched. A favourite remark of Xhosa sceptics was that if God was all-powerful and the Devil the author of all sin, God should simply convert the Devil and save everyone trouble.<sup>54</sup>

The chiefs agreed to receive the missionaries for a number of reasons, all of them secular. Political prestige, the provision of a regular channel of communication with the Colony, and the fear of the consequences of a possible refusal, all played their

Note: 52. Shrewsbury, pp. 273-4; Shaw: Story, p. 464. Missionary Young once told some Xhosa who were reluctant to leave their ploughing for his preaching that God would send a crop failure. (S. Young - W.M.S., 5 Jan. 1830, MS 15,429, Cory Library, Grahamstown). The threat succeeded.

53. Shrewsbury, p. 383.

54. Steedman, I, p. 27; Shaw: Story, p. 331; J.W.D. Moodie, II, pp. 255-6.



part.<sup>55</sup> But these benefits were offset by suspicions of the missionaries' secular motives. Some were viewed as spies (which, in a sense they were) or, even worse, as part of a plot to destroy the Xhosa by drought and disease. Bhotomane once asked the missionary Kay:

Can you tell me why it is that the Amakosae chiefs are dying so fast? S'Lhambi is dead; Dushani is dead; and now Gaika is dead. Enno is very ill, and I am also not well. Pray, what is it that is killing us all?<sup>56</sup>

More concretely, the mission stations were seen as an invasion of the sovereignty of the chiefs. The mission people considered themselves burghers and under the protection of the British Government. Since most of the people attracted to Christianity in the early years were misfits and refugees from Xhosa justice, it would not be surprising if the chiefs, like their Colonial counterparts, regarded the missions as resorts for criminals and good-for-nothings. The aggrieved Ngqika "talked much upon the natural right which he had to do with his own people, and in his own country, according to his pleasure, without the interference of a foreign power,"<sup>57</sup> and occasionally used the missions as a whipping boy for the frustrations of his dealings with the Colonial government.

Note: 55. For a very full discussion of this aspect, see Williams: 'Missionaries', ch. 3.

56. Kay, pp. 183, 272. For further examples of the missionaries being blamed for drought and disease, Shrewsbury, Journal entry for 23 June 1827, MS 15,429 Cory Library, Grahamstown; C O 291 W.R. Thomson - R. Plasket, 13 April 1826; Fynn, p. 196.

57. W.R. Thomson - Colonial Secretary 23 Feb. 1822, R.C.C. XIV, p. 299; C O 366 H. Somerset - J. Bell, 15 Jan. 1829.



It is hard to pin down the reasons why certain missionaries were more successful than others. Their political stance was naturally important. The extremely liberal Read was "loved"<sup>58</sup> by the Xhosa, whereas the political activities of Thomson, official Government Agent among the amaNgqika, and Ayliff, who supported the Mfengu against the Xhosa, made them hated. But personal politics alone is insufficient as an explanation. Among the Wesleyans, for example, Shaw and Shepstone were far more successful than the more liberal Kay. Perhaps it was hard-headedness in secular matters which was the crucial asset. Maqoma wanted a missionary, but "not a fool or a child" nor one who "prayed more than one day in seven", which suggests that he knew missionaries who did not meet these requirements.<sup>59</sup> Shaw's popularity with the amaGqunukhwebe is not surprising when one considers the fact that it was he who normalised their relations with the Colony after the 1818-19 War, won them grazing-rights in the Ceded Territory and started a trading store. His correspondence with the Wesleyan Missionary Society indicates that he was far less given to effusive sentiment than Kay or Shrewsbury.

The success of individual missionaries depended to a large extent on a political situation which was beyond their control. Shaw, whose people were not raided by commandos, did not have to face the same problems as the capable and liberal Ross, whose assistant was once asked: "How many are these gospels that you preach? ... We ask that because Somerset came and said 'Stop doing evil', and yet he kills people every day."<sup>60</sup> When the troops expelled Maqoma from the Kat River, the most Ross could do was ask them not to burn huts on the Sabbath, and even this was disregarded once his back was turned.<sup>61</sup> Dyani

Note: 58. Deposition of W.G. Atherstone, quoted in evidence of T.F. Wade, Aba com., I, p. 393.

59. Macmillan pp. 101n, 150.

60. Quoted Williams, 'Missionaries', p. 165.

61. Mrs. J. Ross-(sister), 13 Oct. 1829, q. Long, p. 231.



Tshatshu, the Christian chief, may be excused for asking "Why do not the missionaries first go to their own countrymen and convert them first?"<sup>62</sup>

The first missionary, J.T. Van der Kemp, was in a class of his own. His impact was due to his imposing presence, combined with the eccentricity that marked him out as no ordinary man. Dyani Tshatshu remembered that the first time he had seen Van der Kemp, the latter had been "on foot, without a hat, shoes or stockings."<sup>63</sup> He ate Xhosa food and lived in Xhosa huts,<sup>64</sup> unlike the other missionaries who generally strove to combine personal comfort with beneficial example and live as European a life as possible. Van der Kemp's influence extended beyond his short stay in Xhosaland itself, for many Xhosa, including Ndlambe himself, came to visit him at his Khoi mission at Bethelsdorp.<sup>65</sup> His Christianity was mystical, based like Ntsikana's on a spiritual experience, and he attempted to communicate faith rather than doctrine or 'civilisation'. In this too, he differed from those who succeeded him as missionaries.

The converts were mainly people who lived in Xhosaland, but were out of place there.<sup>66</sup> There were large numbers of women rejecting various oppressions, such as unwanted husbands, the levirate and upundlo. Some were accused witches and others were disfigured - blind, albino, leprous or just too old. Many were there because they had been overcome by the fear of death. A disproportionate number were Gona Khoi who had picked up the elements of Christianity as a living religion while servants in

Note: 62. Evidence of John Tzatzoe, Abo. com., I, p. 572.

63. Read, p. 283.

64. J. Philip, q Macmillan, p. 97.

65. C O 2559, J.T. Van der Kemp - (?), 3 Dec. 1806.

66. There is a very full discussion in Williams: 'Missionaries', Ch. VII.



the Colony.<sup>67</sup> All of these were peripheral to Xhosa society, and their loss in no way endangered its cultural integrity. It was quite different in the case of more highly placed converts. Great pressure was applied to chiefs who inclined towards Christianity, and except for Khama and Dyani Tshatshu, they were successfully kept away from Christianity. The Christianity of these two chiefs did not extend to their own families much less to their followers.<sup>68</sup> Other mainstream converts, of whom the most important was Soga, associated Christianity with the material aspects of Western culture, but they were few in number. The missionaries tried hard to introduce 'trade for useful articles' and increased productivity (by which they meant male cultivation), but, in the period with which we are concerned, these never caught on beyond the boundaries of the stations, and it may be doubted that they were primary objects attracting those that did join.

Attitudes towards Christianity must have been linked<sup>k</sup> to attitudes towards Western culture as a whole, a subject about which little evidence has survived. Attitudes did vary, however, from the nonchalance observed by Campbell:

Note: 67. Williams (Ch. VII) lays some stress on the 'ethnic' factor to the extent of suggesting that the amaGqunukhwebe were more attentive to Christianity because they had so much Khoi 'admixture'. This proposition appears quite illogical. More Khoi converted because more Khoi were uprooted. Their ethnic origins had nothing to do with it.

68. Backhouse, p. 239; Warner, q Williams: Missionaries p. 334.



When any of them have visited Cape Town, on their return they used to describe how the people dressed, how they washed their mouths, their houses etc. but never imitated or attempted to introduce any of their customs. They expressed surprise at many of the things which they saw, but never think the white men are more wise or skillful than themselves, for they suppose they could do all the white men do if they chose. They consider reading and writing as insignificant things of no use,<sup>69</sup>

to Ngqika's impassioned outburst to the missionary Williams:

You have your manner to wash and decorate yourselves on the lord's day and I have mine the same in which I was born and that I shall follow. I have given over for a little to listen to your word but now I have done, for if I adopt your law I must surely overturn all my own and that I shall not do. I shall now begin to dance and praise my beast as much as I please, and I shall let all see who is the lord of this land.<sup>70</sup>

The most common attitude however was probably one of selective acceptance. As William Shaw remarked, when asking the secretary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society to perform the delicate task of requesting the "benevolent ladies" of the society not to sew dresses for the poor savages, but just to send the cloth:

The natives do not always admire the pattern of the made up articles ... strange as it may seem to you, they are not very easy to please.<sup>71</sup>

Note: 69. Campbell, p. 367. See also Macmillan, p. 97.

70. J. Williams - G. Burder, 14 Apr. 1818, q B. Holt: Joseph Williams and the Pioneer Mission on the South-eastern Bantu (Lovedale, 1954) p. 80. Punctuation supplied.

71. Shaw - G. Marley, 3 Dec. 1827, MS ~~1827~~, Cory Library, Grahamstown.

151429



With Christianity, as with the rest of Western culture, the Xhosa were not passive recipients, but chose what they wanted and discarded the rest. They were prepared to accept certain Christian concepts and rituals - God, the Devil, the Creation and the Resurrection, Sunday services and the singing of hymns. But they were not happy with the pattern that the missionaries had made up for them.



CHAPTER VI : ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO 1835

1. The Indigenous Economy<sup>1</sup>

The basic unit of the Xhosa economy was the homestead - parents and unmarried children, with the possible addition of clients and dependent older relatives. Not only did each homestead produce most of its consumption requirements,<sup>2</sup> but each allocated its labour resources and took its

Note: 1. 'Indigenous' is used here simply to denote the economy as it functioned independent of direct European participation. This chapter is analytic rather than descriptive. For a fuller descriptive account, see M. Wilson, O.H., I, pp. 107-116.

2. This has led a generation of anthropologists to use the misleading term 'subsistence economies', and to draw fallacious distinctions between 'subsistence' and 'market' economies, 'subsistence-orientated activities' and 'market-orientated activities' and so on. It is unfortunate that B. Sansom's 'Traditional Economic Systems' in W.D. Hammond-Tooke: The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa (London and Boston 1974) perpetuates this kind of approach. He fails to consider the work done on African economies since W. Allen's seminal The African Husbandman (London, 1965), and does not inform the reader that there is a debate on the subject. It is surprising that a scholar to whom Wilson's chapters in the Oxford History and Harinck's article on Xhosa-Khoi trade were available could write "In dealing with the past, I am able to discuss subsistence economics pure and simple" or that he could speak of "the gulf that separated one mode of economic thinking from another" (p. 135). Empirical studies of individual peoples such as W. Beinart: 'Economic change in Pondoland in the nineteenth century' (Paper presented to Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 13 Nov. 1975) which are now beginning to appear to show that the market principle was by no means absent from African economies in South Africa. This was demonstrated for the rest of Africa some time ago in collections such as R. Gray and D. Birmingham: Pre-Colonial African Trade (London, 1970). A readable alternative to the Sansom approach may be found in A.G. Hopkins: An Economic History of West Africa (London, 1973), Chapters I and II.



economic decisions independently. Within the homestead, the men saw to cattle, hunting and erecting the permanent structures, and the women cultivated the ground, performed domestic duties and maintained the huts. Within the division of labour according to sex, there was a sub-division according to age. Young boys herded cattle at the remoter outstations, and young girls fetched water and firewood. The head of the homestead made the economic decisions. He decided what and when to plant; what to do in case of cattle disease; whether to hunt, trade or stay home. He engaged busa<sup>3</sup> clients if he was rich enough, or became the busa client of another if he was poor. Even marriage involved economic considerations: the acquisition of the wife's labour had to be measured against the loss of the bridewealth cattle.

In theory, the chief owned the land and, according to one account,<sup>4</sup> the cattle too. But this ownership was political rather than economic, and the chief did not thereby control the means of production.<sup>5</sup> It was the homestead-head (umninimzi) not the chief who determined from day to day how land and cattle should be employed and what should be done with the produce. Once the chief had accepted the homestead-head as his subject, he could not impede his access to the land, and he could not, except in special circumstances, appropriate his property. These entrenched rights of the domestic group were supported in the precolonial period by the relative abundance of land and the

Note: 3. See Chapter III(2) for the political implications of this arrangement.

4. Shaw: Story, p. 437.

5. On this point, see M. Sahlins: Stone Age Economics (Chicago, 1972), p. 92. The following discussion owes much to Sahlins' analysis of the 'Domestic Mode of Production', but this does not entail the acceptance of all of it.



political dependence of the chief on his subjects.<sup>6</sup> The role of the chief in the indigenous economy was essentially a redistributive one. He had greater wealth than his subjects, but this did not accrue to him personally since it was redistributed among the people, partly to support the chief's power but ideally as rewards for service to the community and relief in times of distress. The chief collected not only cattle, but also millet and maize<sup>7</sup> to provide subsistence for distressed subjects. Even if the chief did not redistribute all that he received, he performed an essential service to the community by acting as a sort of emergency bank. The chief was in a strong position to mobilise his subjects economically. He had the greatest wealth, the most clients, a share (though not a monopoly) in some of the most important trade goods, and his status gave him the social authority to command. But the chiefs were more interested in political power than wealth and used their economic means to promote their political ends rather than vice versa.<sup>8</sup>

The Xhosa economy was mixed, with agricultural, pastoral, manufacturing, hunting and commercial sectors. Each of these will be considered in turn.

Agricultural cultivation was entirely homestead-based. Before the introduction of the plough, the only implement was the wooden digging-stick, the acquisition and use of which certainly did not require inter-homestead co-operation. Irrigation

Note: 6. See Chapter III(2).

7. Soga: Ama-Xosa, p. 153.

8. See Chapter III(2).



works, which would have required co-operation, were not undertaken. When they were eventually initiated by the missionaries, the Xhosa were dubious because the work required seemed out of proportion to the benefits received.<sup>9</sup> Moreover they had not realised that it was only the roots of the plants that had to be moistened.<sup>10</sup> Crops cultivated included millet, maize, pumpkins, melons<sup>11</sup> (a famine food), tobacco and dagga (hemp). These were all consumed in the homestead but they were also suitable as trade goods, particularly in time of famine or drought. There was no sharp distinction between subsistence-orientated and market-orientated production. Agricultural labour was performed almost exclusively by women, since there was a cultural stigma attached to male cultivation. This does not, of course, mean that the men were indifferent to agriculture or the progress of the crops.<sup>12</sup> Both interest and aversion are indicated in a Xhosa simile comparing hypocrisy with a man who dresses up in his wife's clothes to tend the garden.<sup>13</sup> Xhosa men consciously appreciated the labour value of the women.<sup>14</sup> This sphere of production could be expanded by acquiring more wives and daughters.<sup>15</sup> Male clients were exempt from this kind of labour. However, ~~one~~ male Christian abandoned the convention by working the mission gardens, the chiefs took advantage of it to force them to work in their gardens too.<sup>16</sup>

Note: 9. Backhouse, p. 223.

10. Backhouse, p. 216.

11. Citrullus vulgaris.

12. See, for example, Stockenstrom, I, p. 163.

13. Rose, p. 134.

14. Rose, p. 185.

15. According to Alberti, p. 74, women could also be hired as agricultural labourers, domestic workers and nursemaids in return for their subsistence.

16. Report of the Glasgow Missionary Society for 1826  
p. 15.



Apart from their political and prestige value,<sup>17</sup> cattle performed several economic functions. They had an immediate use-value in direct consumption as a source of food and clothing. They served some functions of money as a store of wealth and a means of payment. They were also a capital good inasmuch as they gave their owner command over labour. In most homesteads, the male members of the homestead-head's lineage looked after the cattle themselves. Richer homesteads could afford to hire clients. Clients were economically valuable in that they increased the efficiency of production by replacing young boys and older men whom shortage of labour had forced to undertake tasks better performed by adults.<sup>18</sup> More important, they enabled the homesteads to participate in a wider range of economic activities, either by freeing members of the home lineage from their domestic tasks or by participating directly as agents for their employers.<sup>19</sup> Clients were only temporary members of the homestead and left immediately they had earned enough

Note: 17. See Chapter III(2).

18. Sahlins: Stone Age, pp. 102-123, suggests that the effect of increasing the labour supply in the 'domestic Mode of Production' is to reduce the amount of labour performed by each individual member (Chayanov's rule). This is probably true of the Xhosa, who must have spent part of the time they were freed from labour on political and other non-economic activities. But although the average labour-time of individual household members may have been reduced, the total labour-time of the household must have increased.

19. Ngqika sent his client to trade with the Thembu on his behalf (Collins, V, p. 39); Thembu sent Mfengu clients to trade at Fort Willshire fairs on their behalf (T. Philipps: Philipps, 1820 Settler (ed. A. Keppel-Jones, Pietermaritzburg, 1960, p. 294).



cattle to set up a homestead of their own.<sup>20</sup> Their supply of client labour was therefore constantly fluctuating, partially maintained by the continual entrance into the labour market of young men seeking bridewealth, but supplemented by the economically distressed. Given the unreliability of the latter source, it is probable that the demand usually exceeded the supply, and the welcome given to the Mfengu bears this out. Like agricultural production, pastoral production was homestead-based. The chief's homestead was usually larger and wealthier than those of his subjects, but this was a difference of degree rather than kind.

There was virtually no full-time manufacturing specialisation among the Xhosa. Basketwork, pottery and matting were practised by the women in addition to their other duties, as leatherworking and woodcarving were practised by the men.<sup>21</sup> Particularly adept individuals exchanged their services for cattle, or, more usually, some smaller payment such as spears, but this did not form their entire livelihood.<sup>22</sup> The most notable exception was ironworking. The Xhosa had known ironworking since the arrival of the amaQocwa, which would appear

Note: 20. See Chapter III(2).

21. For full descriptions of these activities, see E.M. Shaw and N.J. van Warmelo: 'The Material Culture of the Cape Nguni' Annals of the South African Museum LVIII (May 1972, August 1974); V.Z. Gitywa: 'The Arts and Crafts of the Xhosa in the Ciskei: Past and Present', Fort Hare Papers, V, (1971). Leatherworking could have formed the basis for co-operative activity, as it did among the Tswana. See Wilson in O.H., I, pp. 147-8. Philipps remarked on the superiority of Sotho leatherwork (pp. 179, 182).

22. Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern, p. 90, writing the late nineteenth century said that these services were paid for in hides or European goods. Informants agreed that craftsmen were paid but were unsure of what was the nature of payment. Cattle and spears were the usual means of paying diviners, and were probably also used to pay craftsmen.



to be well before 1700, or perhaps even earlier. It is not clear whether they knew smelting as well as smithing, but it seems probable.<sup>23</sup> Ironstone was fairly common between the Tyhume and Buffalo Rivers, and along the Gonubie and the Kei, and these were worked.<sup>24</sup> Iron-workers were specialist professionals and earned their livelihood through their skill.<sup>26</sup> Iron was not however sufficiently common to provide for the use of iron hoes, and even spears were sometimes made of sneezewood. Iron was imported from the interior, and iron from shipwrecks was traded inland.<sup>27</sup> The Mfengu, accustomed to working the

- Note: 23. For the amaQocwa arrival, see Chapter I(4). Qocwa informants were unsure whether their forefathers smelted as well as smithed, but the Stavenisse survivors (1686) and W.B.C. Paravicini di Capelli: (Reize in de Binnelanden van Zuid-Afrika (1803; ed. W.J. de Kock, Cape Town 1965) pp. 139-40 mentioned smelting. Van der Kemp observed what appear to be deposits from smelting in 1801 (Transactions of the L.M.S., I, p. 459). Smelting was also observed shortly before the arrival of the more skilled Mfengu iron-workers by J. Brownlee (C O 163 J. Brownlee - C. Bird 26 Aug. 1822) and J.W.D. Moodie: Ten Years in South Africa 2 Vols. (London 1835), II, pp. 259-60, 267; Shaw and Van Warmelo seem to be mistaken in asserting that "the Xhosa and Thembu were dependent for their metals on outside supplies, which they received in a malleable state," (pp. 122-3).
24. See the sources quoted above; C O 2692 W. Dundas - R. Plasket, 3 April 1827, quoted in Shaw and Van Warmelo, p. 112.
25. Interviews with Qocwa informants. See Chapter II, note 64.
26. Alberti, p. 73.
27. The trade network is described below.



richer iron desposits of Natal, subsequently took over this specialisation. They kept their techniques secret.<sup>28</sup>

Hunting was an important part of the domestic economy. The men of the homestead went out to hunt in order to supplement the meat supply and to get skins to make clothing and shoes for the rest of the homestead. Occasionally, the men would join in an extended hunting party organised by the chiefs.<sup>29</sup> This was the most important joint economic enterprise undertaken by the Xhosa. The principal object were leopards, elephants and bluebuck. The hunting of the game was a co-operative effort - animals would either be encircled or driven towards prepared snares - but the rewards were individual. Part would go to the chief and part to the successful individual but nothing to the group as a whole. The hunt did not therefore give rise to new social or political institutions, such as the hunting guilds of the Western Sudan.<sup>30</sup>

The distinctive feature of early Xhosa trade was that it was directed not towards supplying subsistence deficiencies but towards the acquisition of greater wealth. The major items sought by the Xhosa in trade were cattle, copper, beads and iron. All of these functioned in the Xhosa economy as money equivalents, that is to say they were exchangeable for each other and for other goods and services. Copper and beads had no use-value, but were worn as ladies in modern European society wear precious stones. The acquisition of cattle in trade should be seen in terms of wealth and prestige rather than subsistence, since the Xhosa were never so short of cattle

Note: 28. Dundas quoted in Shaw and Van Warmelo, p. 112.

29. Among descriptions of hunting, see I. Stocker: "Report upon Kaffraria", R.C.C., XIII, pp. 54-5; Kay pp. 135-6; Alberti, pp. 74-6; J. Brownlee, II, pp. 209-212.

30. See for example N. Levtzion: Ancient Ghana and Mali (London, 1973), pp. 56-8.



that they were unable to lead their preferred way of life.<sup>31</sup> Iron had a use-value, but it was also used as a currency in the form of spears.<sup>32</sup> Though not abundant, it was available throughout Xhosaland and sneezewood was an acceptable though inferior substitute. It is significant that when trade with the Europeans began, iron goods were not much in demand. On the other hand, its use-value gave it a stability which the other currencies lacked.<sup>33</sup> A further indicator of the lack of interest shown in subsistence commodities was the fact that no trade in salt developed despite its uneven distribution in the area.<sup>34</sup> Since trading cattle for beads or copper was trading one form of currency for another, Xhosa trade was not primarily the exchange of one use-value for another use-value but a form of financial speculation. Individual transactions are comprehensible only as part of a series. A would sell cattle to B in exchange for beads and then make a profit by selling the beads to C for more cattle than the beads initially

Note: 31. Examples of pastoral peoples who did trade for cattle because their supply was below subsistence level are the Mpondo (see Beinart op cit) and the Kamba (see J. Lamphear in Gray and Birmingham op cit, p. 79).

32. Alberti, p. 71; Lichtenstein, p. 340; Kay, p. 120.

33. Alberti, p. 71.

34. There was a large salt-pan on the Zwartkops river, in addition to that obtainable from the sea. Van der Kemp found that the inland Xhosa did not use salt (Transactions of the L.M.S., I, p. 438). Informants were also unanimous on this point.



cost him. C would attempt to make a profit by selling the beads to D for more cattle than he had paid B. In this way, it was possible for a string of beads to move from Delagoa Bay to Xhosaland, or from Xhosaland to Natal.<sup>35</sup> Theoretically, there should be no losers in such a series of transactions as the value of the beads depended not on their intrinsic value, but on their value in terms of cattle, which in turn depended on their rarity. The great danger to which speculation of this kind was liable was the possibility that there might be a glut in supply which would cause the value of the trade-item to fall and to be replaced by a scarcer equivalent. A traveller who has visited both the Xhosa and the Tswana commented how much greater the trade of the latter (consisting primarily of use-values)<sup>36</sup> was than the former.<sup>37</sup> Paradoxically, the success of the trade depended on the low level being maintained.

In the eastern trade, the Xhosa received iron from the Thembu which probably originated among the Zizi and Hlubi, who are known to have supplied to Tlokwa with iron goods.<sup>38</sup> Beads of Portuguese origin circulated in Xhosaland, although there

Note: 35. Lichtenstein, I, p. 338; Shrewsbury, p. 262. It might be objected that beads cannot be used as an example of indigenous trade. The Xhosa did not however know that the beads were of European origin, and they performed the same functions as copper, which was an indigenous product.

36. Wilson, in O.H., I, pp. 142-53.

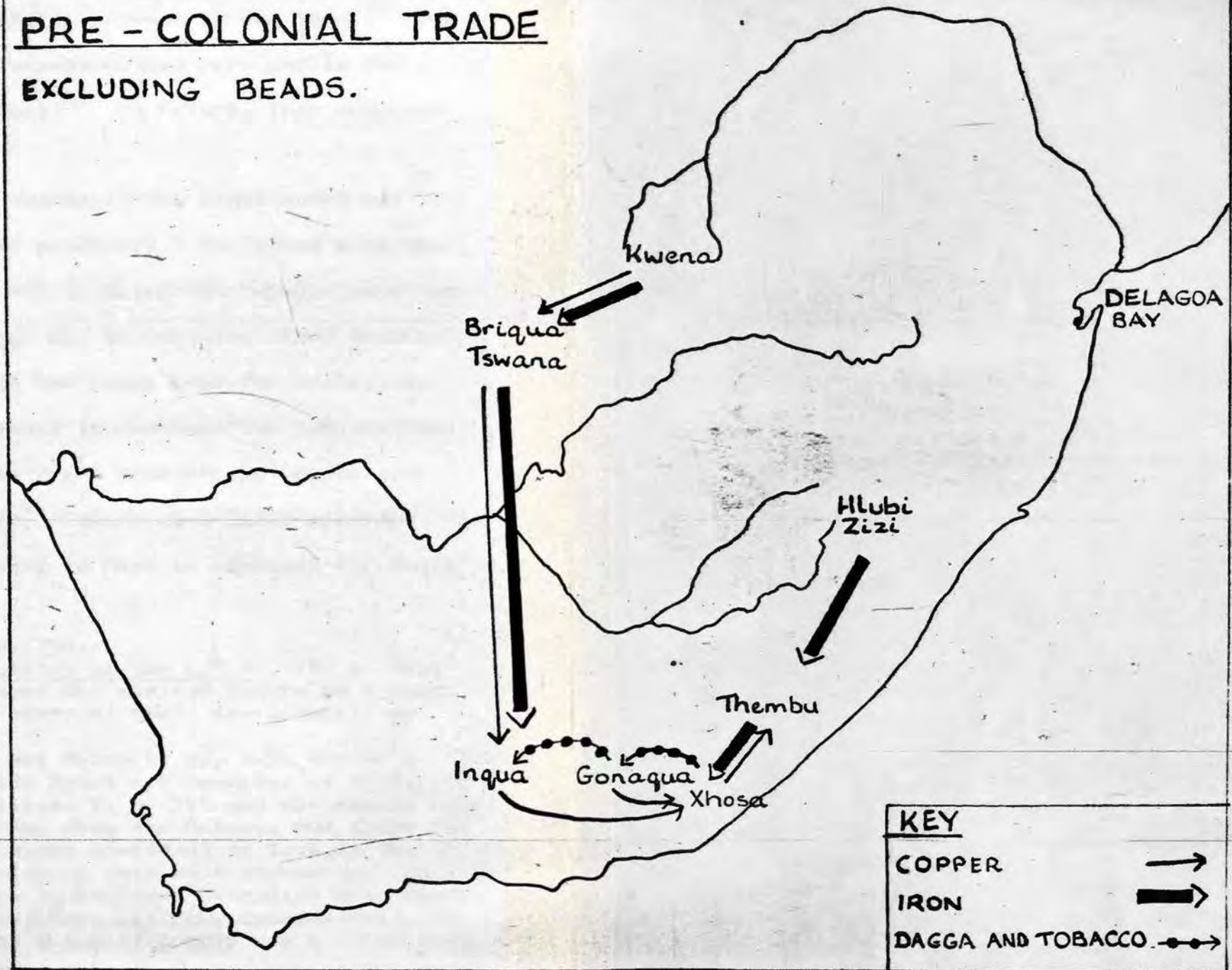
37. Lichtenstein, p. 369.

38. Wilson in O.H., I, pp. 145, 152.



# PRE - COLONIAL TRADE

EXCLUDING BEADS.





was no idea of their true origin and they were conceived to be the natural produce of 'Imbo' country.<sup>39</sup> By 1816 they had a tolerably clear picture of Delagoa Bay without knowing the names of all the peoples which lay between it and them.<sup>40</sup> From the Mpondo, they received bluebuck-skins, rare shells and shark-skin (for field medicine).<sup>41</sup> In return, they supplied cattle and copper.<sup>42</sup>

In the trade with the northwest, the Xhosa acted not only as middlemen but also as producers. The Xhosa were the southern end of a trade network in which the Bakwena supplied the Briqua (Tlaping) with iron and copper, and other Tswana traded the iron and copper to the Inqua Khoi for cattle, and the Inqua traded it to the Xhosa in exchange for tobacco and hemp.<sup>43</sup> The Xhosa would then trade some of the copper east to the Thembu and the Mpondo.<sup>44</sup> There is a later recorded instance of Xhosa trading honey to Khoi in exchange for small

Note: 39. Lichtenstein, I, p. 338.

40. J. Read in Transactions of the L.M.S., IV, p. 285; Africans from Delagoa Bay visited Ngqika on a tour of exploration as early as 1805. See Alberti, pp. 7-12.

41. For Mpondo trade, see Beinart, pp. 2-3; Hunter p. 134.

42. The copper which the Xhosa are reported as supplying to the Thembu (Collins, V, p. 39) and the Mpondo (Kay, p. 374) may have come from the Colony. But since the trade in African copper continued as late as the 1820's (W. Shepstone, quoted in Anonymous manuscript, probably by W.J. Shrewsbury, in Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Archives, MS 15,429, Cory Library, Grahamstown), we may assume that the Colonial copper was a supplement to an earlier trade.

43. Elphick: 'Cape Khoi', pp. 109-20; Harinck, pp. 160-5; Journal of Isaq Schryver in Moodie, I, p. 437; Lichtenstein, I, pp. 367-8, II, p. 409.

44. See note 42 above.



stock; this may also have been an earlier trade commodity.<sup>45</sup> One report states that parties of Khoi would travel to the Xhosa every year and trade at a designated time and market-place.<sup>46</sup> Subsequent trade did not follow this pattern. One possible explanation is that the trade in crops was seasonal, whereas trade in cattle and durable goods could be carried on throughout the year. Another reason may have been that in the speculative branch of trade regular markets would have driven the artificially high prices down. The presence of markets may in turn explain another reported aspect of the early trade which does not fit in with later practices: the statement that all barter with strangers required the consent of the 'king'.<sup>47</sup>

Xhosa tobacco was an imported crop which had to be specially cultivated.<sup>48</sup> It must have acquired a substantial reputation since in 1823, some Transvaal Sotho visited Xhosa-land with the intention of opening a trade in it.<sup>49</sup> Xhosa trade with the San cannot be directly documented. The case rests on documented trade between San and the similar Mpondo,<sup>50</sup> and on coincidence of economic wants. The San desired Xhosa cattle and hemp; the Xhosa desired San ivory.<sup>51</sup> The San used poison arrows

Note: 45. C O 357 H. Somerset - J. Bell, 27 March 1828. Enclosure by W. Macdonald.

46. A.J.K. van Maaslandsluys in Godee Molsbergen, III, p. 61. The same account is repeated in Grevenbroek, p. 225, but since Grevenbroek was the official who took Van Maaslandsluys's deposition, he cannot be regarded as an independent source.

47. Moodie, I, p. 428.

48. Paterson, p. 93.

49. Philipps, pp. 179-82. Xhosa tobacco may even have reached as far north as the Kwená, see Livingstone, quoted Wilson, O.H., I, p. 148.

50. A. Steedman: Wanderings and Adventures in the Interior of Southern Africa 2 Vols., (London, 1835), II, p. 280, quoting W.B. Boyce.

51. For San desire for Xhosa hemp, see Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern, pp. 32-3.



and killed elephants for meat, which made them technically superior to the Xhosa.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, they had no use for the tusks. There is some evidence for an internal Xhosa ivory trade. Ivory was used as an ornament, being fashioned into armrings which were worn on the left arm. Van der Kemp reported a going trade of five arm rings to a young heifer, and Coenraad de Buys commenced his career in Xhosaland by shooting elephants and selling the ivory to the Xhosa.<sup>53</sup> Xhosa used to accompany Boers on shooting expeditions, bring their cattle in the hope of buying ivory from them.<sup>54</sup> The only oral tradition recorded on the subject stated that the chief sold part of his ivory tribute to members of neighbouring chiefdoms, although they were never sold within the chiefdom, but awarded as marks of distinction.<sup>55</sup>

The Xhosa economy was neither static nor subsistence-orientated. That there was no lack of innovation is demonstrated by the import of new crops such as maize and tobacco, production for the market and trade with other peoples. The basic unit of production, the homestead, was not permanently limited by the size of the biological family, but was capable of expansion by the addition of wives and clients. This does not however mean that on the eve of the European arrival the Xhosa were on the brink of major economic development. There were two major internal constraints on development: the uncertainty of the market and the nature of the pastoral economy itself.

Note: 52. For San consumption of elephant meat, see Sparrman, I, p. 313; for hunting elephants with poison arrows see J.B. Wright: Bushman Raiders of the Drakensberg (Pietermaritzberg, 1971), p. 34.

53. Transactions of the L.M.S., I, p. 439; Marais, p.31.

54. Transactions of the L.M.S., I, p. 472.

55. Interview with N.C. Melane, Qwaninga Location, Willowvale District, 17 Feb. 1976.



The Xhosa could not be certain that the goods they wanted would be available. This was particularly the case with the north-western trade. The Brika Tswana were reported to be cannibals,<sup>56</sup> which at the very least suggests political instability, and the route was threatened further south by predatory bands of San with Khoi allies, who were at odds with the Inqua and who attacked their trading-partners.<sup>57</sup> This was especially unfortunate inasmuch as it was here that the Xhosa, who were supplying tobacco and hemp, could have increased their production. But it would have been foolish to increase production unless there was a reasonable certainty that there would be an equivalent increase in supply from their trading-partners.

The second reason, and perhaps the more important of the two, was the nature of pastoral production. The production of cattle is not susceptible to technological innovation, aside from the introduction of artificial feeds, which were, in any case, unnecessary, given the abundance of pasturage which was one of the assumptions of the indigenous economy. Pastoral production encouraged population dispersion which reinforced the small-scale nature of homestead production.

Furthermore, cattle could not be used as a capital good to produce anything except more cattle. Pastoralism was thus a technological and economic dead end. In order to increase their wealth, the Xhosa by-passed the sphere of production and entered into a trade which was largely speculative. The goods obtained in these exchanges were utilised not as consumption or capital goods, but as cattle equivalents or as a direct means for the acquisition of more cattle. Thus it was that exchange did not lead to the internal diversification of the economy.

Note: 56. Schryver in Moodie, I, p. 437.

57. Ibid, pp. 437-8.



The nature of pastoral production also had its effect on social relations which might otherwise have been utilised to mobilise the forces of production in a different way. In the field of master-client relations, the small amount of capital (in cattle) necessary for a poor man to set himself up as an independent homestead-head prevented the emergence of a permanent male labour force.<sup>58</sup> Women formed the equivalent of a permanent labour force but for cultural reasons, they were confined to the agricultural sector. In the field of chief-subject relations, it should be noted that pastoral production does not require an ascribed chiefship.<sup>59</sup> The most important of the chief's economic functions - that of emergency banker - could have been performed by rich men not of the royal clan. Nevertheless, the chief's political power made him the richest man in the community since he was able to extract wealth by non-economic means such as tribute, fines and levies. His possession of this accumulated surplus placed him in a better position to undertake economic enterprises than any other member of the community. But instead of doing so, he used the cattle to 'buy' political support. Unable to bind his subjects to him through production, he sought to bind them through redistribution of the surplus. Thus the potential economic benefits of accumulated wealth were dissipated in the chief's efforts to give economic support to the uneconomic institution of ascribed chiefship.

Note: 58. The example of Rwanda proves that it is not impossible for a pastoral economy to have a permanent labour force. In this case, it was made possible by the existence of an endogamous military aristocracy. See J. Maquet: The Premise of Inequality in Rwanda (Oxford, 1961).

59. The contrast here is between authority which is ascribed (in this case on a hereditary basis) and authority which is achieved (for instance, on the basis of merit). The 'Big Man' system in Melanesia is an example of a system in which authority is achieved on the basis of economic merit. See Sahlins: Stone Age, pp. 135-40.



## 2. Economic relations between Xhosa and Colonist

Trade between the Boers and the Xhosa began in the early eighteenth century. Since this was illegal as far as the Colonial Government was concerned we have little written record of it. The first known trading party recorded its presence only by virtue of the fact that some of its men were killed by Xhosa who wanted to take the iron from their waggons.<sup>60</sup> Significantly, the survivors met another trading-party heading east while they were returning.<sup>61</sup> If the asking price of ivory is anything to go by, there was already a substantial trade by 1752,<sup>62</sup> and by 1770 there was a well-beaten waggon-road going into Xhosaland.<sup>63</sup> Copper, iron and beads from the Colony were exchanged for cattle and ivory from Xhosaland. Though the evidence does not permit us to be certain it seems that the Boers were elephant hunters rather than ivory traders. In all probability, the pattern reported by Sparrman in 1779 was typical. A Boer gave a chief a present in exchange for permission to hunt in his country, and the chief gave him guides to show him where the elephants were to be found.<sup>64</sup> Xhosa were keen to buy ivory from Boer hunters who were better equipped technically.<sup>65</sup> The cattle trade was of far greater interest

Note: 60. This is the Hubner massacre of 1736. See Chapter IV, Note 4.

61. V.S. Forbes: Pioneer Travellers in South Africa (Cape Town, 1965), p. 13.

62. Haupt, III, p. 299.

63. D. Moodie, III, p. 5. References to early Boer-Xhosa trade may be found in D. Moodie, III, pp. 2-6, 20-2, 24, 34, 39, 73, 76n. Harinck's statement that these expeditions were regulated by Xhosa chiefs (p. 165) is not supported by his references.

64. Sparrman, II, p. 155.

65. See Note 54 above.



to the Xhosa chiefs, who were desirous of monopolising any potential trading partner from the Colony.<sup>66</sup> Certain Boers kept trade goods, and were visited by Xhosa wishing to trade cattle.<sup>67</sup> Naturally, disputes arose, and Xhosa who trusted themselves to the Boers were sometimes forced to trade cattle for less than their value in beads.<sup>68</sup> It is unlikely that similar things did not happen when Boers entrusted themselves to the Xhosa. Individual injustices did not constitute 'unequal exchanges' as some writers have suggested,<sup>69</sup> although they did cause friction, and the trade was profitable to both sides. Certainly the Xhosa were neither dupes nor unwilling participants. Beads were a source of profit to the Xhosa, and at least one Boer turned back "from the want of articles suited to barter."<sup>70</sup> Ndlambe, Chungwa and others explicitly stated that with all its disadvantages they approved of the trade and wanted it to continue.<sup>71</sup> The Dutch East India Company government at the Cape feared that trade quarrels might result in war, and therefore tried to prohibit trade at some times, but must have winked at it at others since the Xhosa were regarded as one of the two chief emergency sources of meat in times of shortfall at Cape Town.<sup>72</sup>

Note: 66. See Hallema, *passim*.

67. D. Moodie, III, p. 76n.

68. Marais, p. 24.

69. Neumark, p. 102; Legassick, p. 17. It may be possible to prove that trade was unequal by an examination of the terms of trade or by assessing it in terms of the labour theory of value. Neither of these writers have attempted such an analysis.

70. D. Moodie, III, p. 73. In this case, the trader wanted to barter runaway slaves. Since he was experienced in the illicit trade (*ibid* p. 2) there is room for the suspicion that he was using the trip to conduct a trade of his own on the side. The point, however, is that 'want of suitable articles for barter' was regarded as a credible reason for the breakdown of a transaction.

71. Lichtenstein, I, pp. 326-7.

72. 'Minutes of the proceedings of a special and supreme Commission', 27 Feb. 1801, R.C.C., IV, p. 199.



Apart from cattle and ivory, the Xhosa could also sell the Boers their labour, and Boers with Xhosa servants are reported as early as 1777.<sup>73</sup> Xhosa children were kidnapped and integrated with Khoi and San 'apprentices' to form the future Cape Coloured people.<sup>74</sup> Men were employed as herdsmen and women as domestic servants and garden workers. They usually served a year at a time, and were paid in beads, brass wire and brass plates. These were preferred to direct payment in cattle because they enabled the Xhosa to buy greater numbers of cattle in Xhosaland. Labour relations were regulated by the ease with which Xhosa could desert, carrying off cattle with them. The Xhosa chiefs got a share of the returned servants' wages, and objected to proposals to stop the labour exchanges.<sup>75</sup> Some employees returned to their former masters after temporary residences in Xhosaland, and others stayed permanently in Boer employ. Here we see the beginnings of a permanent class of wage labourers. There is no evidence as to why some Xhosa chose to treat the Boers as temporary busa employers, and why some chose to remain with them. The most likely explanation is that the latter had become dependent on certain European commodities not readily available in Xhosaland. European liquor - the 'tot

Note: 73. The best sources on Xhosa labour in this period are the statements of Mrs. Gardner, 13 Jan. 1825 in Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Papers relative to the Conditions and Treatment of the Native Inhabitants of Southern Africa, 2 Vols. (London 1835), I, p. 174, and W.R. Thomson - T. Gregory, 30 Apr. 1825, R.C.C., XXI, pp. 174-9. See also D. Moodie, III, p. 73; Collins, V, p. 10; Winkelman, IV, p. 98; Maynier - Commissioners of Enquiry 25 Apr. 1825 in R.C.C., XXI, p. 387; B O 71 Bresler - McCartney 12 Oct. 1797; Theal: SA under the D.E.I.C., II, p. 220.

74. See Chapter IV, note 51. For some evidence of labour obtained under duress, see J. Brownlee, q Macmillan, p. 79n.

75. W.R. Thomson - T. Gregory, 30 Apr. 1825, R.C.C., XXI, p. 176; Lichtenstein, I, p. 386. But see <sup>60336</sup> A. Stockenström - J. Bell, 24 Nov. 1828 according to which the chiefs objected to Colonists coming into Xhosaland and 'enticing' the Xhosa away as servants.



system' - was apparently functioning in the eastern Cape by 1809<sup>76</sup> - is one obvious possibility.

The British take-over of the Cape in 1806 produced no immediate major changes.<sup>77</sup> There were concerted efforts to expel Xhosa and Gona Khoi servants in 1807 and 1809, and Governor Cradock meant his Zuurveld clearance of 1812 to be the beginning of a strict system of non-intercourse.<sup>78</sup> This broke down on the economic as well as the political front, and there was even a slave trade in embryo.<sup>79</sup> The arrival of the British settlers of 1820 caused a reiteration of official policy, but the settlers soon proved that the lack of a national stock-farming tradition was no barrier to undertaking the economic enterprises for which the country was most obviously suited. The illegal cattle and ivory trade were soon in full swing. Contracts were made between soldiers

Note: 76. Collins, V, p. 22.

77. The lack of any analytical account of settler trade with the Xhosa is a glaring hiatus in settler historiography. The best contemporary accounts are S. Bannister: Humane Policy (London 1829), Chapter IV; R. Godlonton: Introductory Remarks to a Narrative of the Irruption of the Kafir Hordes (Grahamstown, 1835-6; reprinted Cape Town, 1965), Part II; Letter from 'An Emigrant of 1820' in Grahamstown Journal, 6 Apr. 1832.

78. H.B. Giliomee: 'Die Administrasietydperk van Lord Caledon 1807-1811', Archives Year Book for South African History (1966, Part II), p. 326; Statement of Mrs. Gardner (see note 72 above).

79. For employment of Xhosa labour between 1812 and 1820, see C O 2626 T. Willshire - J. Cuyler, 6 Jan. 1820; C O 2626 J. Cuyler - C. Bird, 13 May 1820. For trade between Xhosa and Colony, see C. Bird - J. Brownlee, 30 Dec. 1818, which includes 'slave trade'; Bannister, p. 114.

<sup>^</sup>R.C.C. XII, p. 111



and Xhosa during the 1818-9 Frontier War, and these were kept up by discharged soldiers turned settlers, especially those at the short-lived quasi-military settlement of Fredricksburg.<sup>80</sup> Warned by their settler trading partners of the movements of military patrols, Xhosa slipped across the river. One settler entertained his Xhosa guests with sugared beer and sent his English servant to dig red ochre for them. They were accommodated for days at a time, and hidden from the Landdrost's men. The settlers were hesitant about trusting themselves to the Xhosa but after the initial risk was taken, regular visits followed. They were received with honour by the chiefs themselves, and traded ivory and cattle for beads, buttons and probably liquor.<sup>81</sup> The Gqunukhwebe chief Kobe built a special hut for their accommodation. But because the trade was not friendly exchange but directed towards profit,<sup>82</sup> suspicion

Note: 80. R. Aitcheson - Commissioners of Enquiry, 19 March 1824, R.C.C. XIV, p. 153; M.J. Sparks - Colonial Secretary, 27 Jan. 1822, R.C.C. XIV, p. 275; C O 2645 H. Rivers - C. Bird, 13 Feb. 1822. The remainder of the paragraph is taken from C O 234 H. Somerset - R. Plasket, 1 Nov. 1825; C O 2653 Trial of J. Stubbs Jnr. and T. Hood, enclosed in H. Rivers - C. Bird, 26 June 1823; C O 233 Deposition of Peter Kettlehouse, 18 Feb. 1825. See also J. Stubbs 'The Reminiscences of Thomas Stubbs, 1820-1877' in R.T. McGeoch "The Reminiscences of Thomas Stubbs, 1820-1877" (Unpub. M.A. Thesis Rhodes University 1965), pp. 26-43 (Stubbs's pagination).

81. McGeogh, p. 5.

82. See Chapter III(3); Sahlins: Stone Age, p. 195.



remained on both sides. In at least three cases, the partners fell out and the settlers were killed by distrustful Xhosa.<sup>83</sup> Settlers also faced danger from their competitors. One unfortunate party was betrayed to the authorities by a Khoi who was in the illicit ivory trade on the Landdrost's behalf.<sup>84</sup> Ngqika, who benefited from a monopoly of the official trade tried to kill another settler who was trading with his chief political and economic rival, Mdushane.<sup>85</sup>

Meanwhile the Colonial Government, faced with its inability to stop illegal trade and with the impending economic collapse of the British settlement at Albany, attempted to cure both evils by instituting an official fair. The idea of fairs had been well received by Xhosa chiefs on previous occasions,<sup>86</sup> but no concrete action had been taken until it was decided to have a trial run at certain clay-pits on the Fish River, which had been the prime source of red ochre, an essential element of Xhosa dress, until the expulsion of the Xhosa over the Keiskamma in 1819.<sup>87</sup> The Xhosa chiefs Nqeno and Bhotomane responded enthusiastically, but were greatly disappointed to find that only red ochre was available for barter. As a result, only

- Note: 83. These were J. Stubbs, T. Mahony and J. Brown. C O 2653 G. Pigot - R. Wilmot 20 June 1823; Theal: S.A. since 1795, I, p. 384; C O 233 Forbes-Plasket, 29 Aug. 1825, with enclosures by W. Shaw; C O 2671 W. Dundas-(?), 9 Aug. 1825.
84. C O 2653 Trial of Stubbs and Hood, enclosed in Rivers - Bird 26 June 1823; Khoi intermediaries were active in the illegal trade. See C O 2662 Rivers - Bird, 3 May 1824. Stubbs, p. 32.
85. Rose, pp. 211-2.
86. See 'Minutes .. of a conference .. at the Kat River' R.C.C. XI, p. 313.
87. For official accounts of these fairs, see C O 2645 T. Onkruid - H. Rivers, 22 July 1822; C O 2653 Onkruid - Rivers, 7 May 1823; C O 2653 Onkruid - Rivers, 7 July 1823. 'After' (pseudonym) 'The Caffre Frontier', 3 Parts, Oriental Herald, XII-XIII (1827), XII, p. 227, XIII, p. 14, claims that the purpose of holding these fairs was to enable the officials to reap all the benefits.



two small tusks of ivory were said to be available, and more barter was done illegally on the side with settlers than at the official fair itself. When beads and buttons were allowed at the next clay-pits fair, the response was staggering: the same people who had previously managed two small tusks now produced 434 pounds of ivory. This insistence on beads and the lack of interest in red ochre shows that the Xhosa were not motivated by a simple desire to decorate themselves but by the intention of profiting on the initial transaction. One missionary pointed out that the Xhosa "were unwilling to give anything in exchange for ornaments, even of a more durable nature" and that they were "not easily captivated with shew and glitter".<sup>88</sup> Beads and buttons were insisted on because they were convertible into the only form of wealth that interested the Xhosa - cattle. For the beads received for a single hide they could get a living beast further inland.<sup>89</sup> For the Xhosa, this was no barter, but a money exchange. They were selling their cattle dear, and replacing them with cattle bought cheaply elsewhere. Another reason why beads and buttons were demanded was that they enabled profit to be shared among several participants in the enterprise, as for instance the several men who killed an elephant,<sup>90</sup>

Note: 88. W.R. Thomson - C. Bird, 16 Aug. 1822, R.C.C. XV, p. 17.

89. Evidence of G. Dundas, Abo. com. I, p. 132. See also evidence of W. Shaw, Abo. com. I, p. 127; 'Report of Mr. Whitworth', 12 Feb. 1825, Annual Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (1825); Kay, p. 120; J.W.D. Moodie, ibid. p. 238.

90. W.R. Thompson - J. Gregory, 30 April 1825, R.C.C. XXI, p. 178.



In 1824, the Colonial government opened the trade to the Colonists at a regular fair held at Fort Willshire near Ngqika's country. Strict regulations were proclaimed to provide for the orderly conduct of the fair.<sup>91</sup> There was also regulation of the goods to be offered for sale. Liquor and firearms were naturally forbidden, and although beads and buttons were perforce allowed, each transaction also had to contain a useful item according to a list which included iron axes, pots, tinder boxes, blankets and cloth. It is perhaps not too cynical to suggest that part of the righteous indignation against beads derived from the fact that whereas the useful items were manufactured in Sheffield or Manchester, the most highly prized beads had to be imported from Italy.<sup>92</sup> The fairs were an immediate success and the first seven months drew 50,441 pounds of ivory, 16,800 pounds of gum, about 15,000 hides and 137 trading licences.<sup>93</sup> Xhosa from as far as the Transkei and even some Thembu attended the fairs, which seem to have attracted some two to three thousand at a time.<sup>94</sup> So great did competition between the settler traders become that the cost of trade goods went up at the wholesale end while the selling-price went down. "The Xhosa," wrote one observer, "are now become so knowing and the competition among the Buyers so great that the full value is obtained by them".<sup>95</sup> The settlers

Note: 91. For these regulations, see the Proclamation of 23 July 1824, R.C.C. XVIII, pp. 179-81.

92. Evidence of Captain Spiller, Abq. com. I, p. 71.

93. J. Bigge and W. Colebrooke- Earl Bathurst, 25 May 1825, R.C.C. XXI, p. 320.

94. Eyewitness accounts of the fairs include Lieut. Rutherford Commissioners of Enquiry, 14 Dec. 1824 R.C.C. XIX, pp 315-6; Steedman, I, pp. 5-10; Philipps, pp. 293-4; H.H. Dugmore: The Reminiscences of an Albany Settler (Grahamstown, 1958) pp. 34-6. A good description of the trade from a wholesale merchant's viewpoint is W. Fleming-Commissioners of Enquiry 24 May 1825, R.C.C. XXI, pp. 394-6. For number of licences see C O 2671.

95. Philipps, p. 293.



attempted to remedy the situation by manipulating the market regulations, according to which the Xhosa were allowed to cross the Keiskamma River at 10 o'clock and to stay until 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Transactions were arranged by the Xhosa placing the sale goods in front of them and the settlers passing among them making them offers which were accepted or refused. Given a large number of buyers and sufficient time for business, the Xhosa were able to utilise competition between buyers to get the best price for their produce. But with the passage of time, a compact of big traders came to dominate the settler end of the market. They shortened the time available for trading by refusing to commence at the official opening time.<sup>96</sup> They also took steps to have the number of fairs per week reduced.<sup>97</sup>

Xhosa traders were affected in two ways. First, it was difficult and at times dangerous for them to cross the river with their produce, and this must have been an incentive to get their business completed on the same day. Second, they had to pay for their food and accommodation,<sup>98</sup> and the price of foodstuffs is known to have more than tripled on the Xhosa side in the neighbourhood of the fairs.<sup>99</sup> Every day spent at the fair thus diminished the profit of the transaction. Nor was this the only disadvantage of the fair. Ngqika was present at every fair and used to exact tribute on all sales of ivory: he used his own power and his status as a friend of the British to manhandle and tax subjects of other chiefs, including those of

Note: 96. C O 287 H.S. Ormond - H. Somerset, 28 April 1826.

97. For these attempts see C O 287 H. Somerset - R. Plasket, 6 Jan. 1826 and 31 Jan. 1826. The fairs were held twice a week. The traders wanted them held four times a month.

98. C O 287 H.S. Ormond - H. Somerset, 28 Apr. 1826.

99. Mrs. J. Ross - Mrs. Blackwood, n.d. (late 1824 or early 1825) quoted in Long, p. 218.



Hintsa.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, local stocks of ivory were becoming exhausted and the ivory had to come from a greater distance. Thus, on the Xhosa side, costs were rising at the same time that prices were falling. A further factor was that the bead market on the Xhosa side was constantly fluctuating. Settler traders who were unloading beads onto the market much faster than Xhosa traders could disperse them blamed the Xhosa for the fickleness of their taste without realising that they themselves were responsible for it. Since settler traders were sometimes reduced to bankruptcy by sudden changes in the bead market, it is probable that this also occurred among the more under-capitalised Xhosa traders.

It is therefore not surprising that the Fort Willshire fairs suddenly began to decline.<sup>101</sup> The Colonial authorities realised that Ngqika was partly to blame, and tried the experiment of opening another fair at the Ngqushwa ('Clusie') River near the amaGqunukhwebe territory.<sup>102</sup> This also failed after a brief initial success. It was not in elephant country<sup>103</sup> and since it was never held on a regular basis, it was impossible for the more distant peoples, who were now the chief suppliers of ivory to attend.

The Xhosa trade had become a pillar not only of Albany but of the Colonial economy as a whole. In order to save the trade, the Colonial government abandoned the fairs and allowed the traders to penetrate into the interior. They soon spread as far as

Note: 100. See sources quoted in note 94 above, and C O 287 H. Somerset-R. Bourke 29 Aug. 1826; C O 2682 W. Dundas - R. Plasket, 4 April 1826.

101. C O 2682 W. Dundas-R. Plasket, 14 Nov. 1826.

102. C O 287 H. Somerset-R. Plasket, 20 June 1826; C O 333 H. Somerset-R. Plasket, 23 Jan. 1827; Godlonton: Introductory Remarks, pp. 142-3.

103. The statement that the coastal belt east of the Fish River bush was not elephant country is based on the absence of euphorbia and spekboom trees, which attract elephants.



Mpondoland, not itinerating but establishing regular stations at which they resided for months at a time. This process was accelerated by the way in which big traders capitalised poorer settlers and set them up in business as their servants. The settler trader soon put the Xhosa trader out of business by virtue of his more efficient transport (wagons) and his direct access to the supply of trade goods. Above all, by making the supply of beads general throughout the southern Nguni territory, the resale value of the beads was destroyed. The traders, like all groups of men, were a mixed bunch in character, but presumably many of them were misfits in Colonial society.<sup>104</sup> Most of them never learned more of the Xhosa language than a few words of command. Whereas the more capable were careful to keep on good terms with the local chief, some did not even bother to ask his permission.<sup>105</sup> They were accustomed to rely for their personal safety on their firearms and threatening the Xhosa that Colonel Somerset, the widely-feared Commandant of the Frontier, would punish any wrong-doing with a commando.<sup>106</sup> Not unnaturally, this conduct was resented by the chiefs, who regarded it as an invasion of their sovereignty. Hintsa ostentatiously helped himself to the traders' goods in order to show that he in no way considered them more exempt from exactions than his other subjects. "Tell them (the traders) that I took (these goods)," he said on one occasion, "you need not hide it, for they have taken my country from me".<sup>107</sup> Maqoma complained that traders -

- Note: 104. For criticism of traders, see S. Young-W.M.S., 18 Aug. 1831 MS 15,429 Cory Library Grahamstown; C. Stretch "Diary" MS 14,558 Cory Library Grahamstown; Backhouse, pp. 212, 219; 'Emigrant of 1820' Grahamstown Journal, 6 Apr. 1832; Evidence of T. Philipps, Abo. com. I, p. 30.
105. Hintsa once asked "Who gave that man permission to go about my country showing the people his goods?" Grahamstown Journal 16 May 1833.
106. C O 2728 D. Campbell-J. Bell 28 Jan. 1831; C O 3947 Memorial of E. Hanger 17 Dec. 1830.
107. R. Rawlins - Grahamstown Journal, 24 July 1834.



common people - moved in and out of his territory at will where-  
as he, a chief, had to request permission to enter the Colony.<sup>108</sup>

On the labour front, the Colonial government continued to oppose the introduction of Xhosa labour on the grounds that Xhosa labourers were a potential fifth column and that disputes with labourers might draw their chiefs into hostilities. Nevertheless, the Colony was chronically short of labour, and the liberal Acting Governor Bourke prefaced his Ordinance 50, which removed the legal chains binding the Khoi to compulsory labour, with Ordinance 49 which permitted the Xhosa to enter the Colony as labourers. This was officially repealed under pressure from the military authorities but it seems to have remained in partial operation.<sup>109</sup> However, the number of Xhosa employed by the Colonists does not appear to have been proportionately very great. The Colonists preferred the Tswana, Mfengu and Bhaca who had been brought onto the market by the Mfecane disturbance in the interior, and who, being more uprooted and more distant from their kin, were less likely to desert or to steal their employer's cattle.<sup>110</sup> The Xhosa, on the other hand, did not as yet find it necessary to seek labour for the sake of subsistence.

The missionaries were another source of economic innovation. They irrigated the land, introduced ploughs, iron hoes and new crops, and emphasised the 'civilising value' of labour which meant in practice that the men should concentrate on agriculture rather

Note: 108. Evidence of C. Bradford, Abo. com. I, p. 160.

109. See Macmillan, pp. 87-8; Evidence of J. Read, Jnr. Abo. com. I, p. 597; Evidence of J. Read, Snr. Abo. com. I, p. 604; C.F.J. Muller: Die Oorsprong van die Groot Trek (Cape Town, 1974), p. 110.

110. It appears that wages were being paid in cattle and not in beads. Muller, pp. 120-1. This would have suited the Tswana and the Mfengu, who had no cattle better than the Xhosa who wanted to add to their stock.



than pastoralism. They also encouraged their converts to adopt European standards, which meant buying European goods.<sup>111</sup> They were reasonably successful as far as the converts were concerned, but as these were generally considered beyond the pale by other Xhosa, their influence was limited. Nevertheless in asserting a cultural and economic ethic which ran counter to the traditional pastoral ethic, they were sowing a seed that was to bear fruit from the 1830's onward, mainly among the Mfengu, but also among some Xhosa. Outstanding among the Xhosa was Soga, who had been converted by Ntsikana but who was never a mission resident and remained a councillor of Ngqika and later of Tyhali.<sup>112</sup>

### 3. The Impact of the West on the Xhosa Economy

Trade with the Europeans enriched the frontier Xhosa. Their herds were greatly increased,<sup>113</sup> and the trading network initiated by them reached as far as Port Natal.<sup>114</sup> The Xhosa demonstrated their economic capacity in a number of ways. They were aware of market trends. One European ivory trader had his bid rejected in Hintsa's country because his trading partner knew that he could get a better price elsewhere.<sup>115</sup> The Xhosa refused to buy goods that they did not want. They drove the prices up at the Willshire fairs, and when the prices dropped they retaliated in the most economically effective way, by

Note: 111. C O 291 W.R. Thomson - R. Plasket, 13 Apr. 1826; C O 323 W.R. Thomson & R. Plasket, 8 Feb. 1827 and enclosures; Evidence of H.P. Hallbeck, Abo com. I, p. 339.

112. There is a fascinating description of Soga and his family in Backhouse, p. 211.

113. See for example Evidence of W. Shaw, Abo. com. I, p. 127.

114. Shrewsbury, p. 262.

115. Bain, p. 92.



refusing to trade. Auxiliary economic activities also responded to market demand, as may be seen by the increased price of consumption goods in the neighbourhood of the fair. There also appears to have been an increase in ivory-hunting. Nqeno began to hunt ivory specifically for the market, and there is some evidence to suggest that individual Xhosa were assembling to hunt ivory independently of the chiefs.<sup>116</sup> The indigenous trade network continued to operate, although it was greatly reduced in importance. Copper was still imported and honey and dagga was traded to Colonial Khoi.<sup>117</sup> The addition of the Mfengu to the labour supply at the time of greatest market expansion was potentially very beneficial.

It is unclear how far the trade could have contributed to economic diversification. The problem of markets was removed, but the products demanded by the Europeans were not likely to lead to a diversification of production, except in the case of ivory which was a wasting asset. The old constraints - the homestead base of production and the amassing of cattle as the chief economic goal - remained, for the moment. But in the event, the Xhosa economy was destroyed before it had developed its full potential. Development was hampered by the restriction of trade to Fort Willshire, where it was susceptible to exploitation by trader combinations on one hand, and by Ngqika on the other. The inability of traders to restrict the flow of beads repeatedly destroyed the usefulness of particular varieties.

Note: 116. C O 2692 W. Dundas - R. Plasket, 3 Apr. 1827, W.R. Thomson - J. Gregory 30 Apr. 1825, R.C.C. XXI, p. 177. There was also a decrease in the amount of ivory used for making arm-rings. Kay, p. 120.

117. For copper, see W. Shepstone, quoted in Note 41 above, and W. Shaw - W.M.S. Directors, 17 Aug. 1825, MS 15,429 Cory Library Grahamstown. For honey see note 45 above. For hemp see C O 233: List of articles taken from Xhosa arrested on patrol 13 Dec. 1824.



But the coup de grace was when Colonial traders flooded into Xhosaland, thus rendering superfluous the Xhosa traders' middleman role. In comparable situations in West Africa, Africans had been able to protect their trade by military means, but this was not possible on the Cape Frontier.

In some ways the Xhosa economy was better off than it had been before. Precolonial trade and traditional manufactures had fallen off, but whatever their importance to individuals, the economy as a whole was more than recompensed by the availability of a whole new range of goods and market opportunities. A little labour had been siphoned off to the Colony, but the economic independence of each homestead meant that this did not affect any Xhosa except those directly concerned. The fact that the Xhosa had lost their economic independence was neither apparent, nor for the period under discussion, significant. The Xhosa still possessed enough land to provide for the means of subsistence, and they were still capable of producing most of the goods they felt they required. In time, the Xhosa were to lose their land and already Europeans were discussing the creation of artificial wants. But this lay in the future.



CHAPTER VII : FROM NGQIKA'S PEACE TO MAQOMA'S WAR

1. The Supremacy of Ngqika in the West (1819-1829)

After Nxele's defeat at Grahamstown, the Colonial authorities launched follow-up operations against Ndlambe. Hintsa's territory between the Buffalo and the Kei was combed and Hintsa fled to <sup>the</sup> Mbashe, fearful that the Colonial authorities would punish him for Ngqika's defeat at Amalinde.<sup>1</sup> Ngqika urged the Colony to attack Hintsa, and would probably have succeeded but for the intervention of Landdrost Stockenstrom.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Ngqika and Maqoma, his eldest son, drank, danced and showed off their martial skills for the amusement of their officer 'friends'.<sup>3</sup>

But Ngqika's victory was to prove hollow indeed, for at this next meeting with his friend and ally Governor Somerset, the latter told him that he was appropriating Ngqika's own lands between the Kat and Keiskamma, "as fine a portion of ground as is to be found in any part of the world",<sup>4</sup> for the purpose of establishing a neutral belt of territory to act as a buffer

Note: 1. Stockenstrom, I, pp. 157-8.

2. Ibid, I, p. 155.

3. Stretch: 'Makana', p. 302.

4. C. Somerset - Bathurst, 15 Oct. 1819, R.C.C. XII, p. 339.



zone between the Xhosa and the Colony.<sup>5</sup> The thunderstruck Ngqika protested that it was his birthplace, only to be told that this was not so.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless it was agreed that Ngqika had been brought up in the affected region and as an act of special clemency he was told that his people would be allowed to occupy the area between the Tyhume and the Keiskamma. Many Xhosa today believe that Ngqika sold the land in exchange for Colonial assistance and a bottle of brandy, but in fact Ngqika was as helpless before his terrible allies as Ndlambe and

- Note: 5. Somerset's plan was never a neutral belt, pure and simple, although this is what he told Ngqika. See Williams: Where Races Meet, p. 26, n 45; cf Macmillan, p. 79, A.K. Millar: Plantagenet in South Africa (Cape Town, 1965) pp. 117-8, 125. Millar's comment that Somerset did "so much to procure" peace on the frontier seems singularly inappropriate. Somerset was well aware of the agricultural potential of the territory (see note 4 above) and intended to settle a party of Highlanders in it, but they never arrived. (see H. E. Hockly: The Story of the British Settlers of 1820 in South Africa (Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1949), p. 85.) Another reason often urged was the military unsuitability of the Fish as a line of defence. See Lord Glenelg's crushing rejoinder to such arguments in Glenelg - B. D'Urban, 2 Aug. 1836, C.W.D., II, p. 19. No record was made of the agreement, and the whites present at the time disagree as to what was actually said. C. Somerset - Bathurst, 15 Oct. 1819, R.C.C. XII, pp. 337-345; C. Bird - Commissioners of Enquiry, 27 Dec. 1824, R.C.C. XIX, p. 357; C. O<sup>34</sup>H. Somerset - Commissioners of Enquiry, 24 Oct. 1825; Evidence of A. Stockenstrom, Abo. com. I, pp. 46-9.
6. The Colonial assertion was made on the extremely dubious grounds that there were no Xhosa west of the Keiskamma at the time of Ngqika's birth. (Evidence of Stockenstrom, Abo. com. I, p. 46).



Hintsa had been. He is said to have remarked "that though indebted to the English for his existence as a chief, yet when he looked upon the fine country taken from him, he could not but think his benefactors oppressive".<sup>7</sup> The incident has given birth to a proverb: omasiza obubulala (they who came to help came to kill).<sup>8</sup> Ngqika denied making the concession,<sup>9</sup> but the Colonial authorities held the agreement to be morally binding on the Xhosa. Moreover, they used it against chiefs such as Kobe of the amaGqunukhwebe, who had never been subject to Ngqika and who were not present at the Conference. Having effectively subdued the hostile Xhosa chiefs, Somerset sowed the seeds of the next war by making enemies out of his former allies. The amaNdlambe and the amaGqunukhwebe had been expelled from their territory in 1812. They had tried to recover it in 1819, and had been driven back still further. This effectively discouraged them from further military adventures and the chiefs who had taken leading parts in the 1818-19 war were conciliatory, receiving missionaries well and checking the depredations of their subjects.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, amaNgqika had no first-hand knowledge of what it was like to be defeated by the British. The sons of Ngqika, now grown to maturity, were not compromised by their father's double-dealing and far from being under an obligation to the Colony they had a betrayal to avenge.

Note: 7. Rose, p. 75.

8. Soga: Ama-Xosa, p. 345.

9. 'Deposition of Ganya', C.W.D. II, p. 74; 'Questions put by Colonel Smith to the Magistrate Tyalie', 5 May 1836, C.W.D. II, p. 75; Evidence of J. Philip, Abo. com. I, p. 679; Kay, p. 495.

10. S. Kay - W.M.S. 18 Feb. 1826; S. Young - W.M.S. 28 Mar. 1828, S. Young - W.M.S. 1 Jan. 1829; all in W.M.S. archives MS 15,429 Cory Library Grahamstown; W. Shaw: Story, pp. 470-4; C O 2653 W. Shaw - H. Rivers, 8 Aug. 1823; C O 283 W. Shaw - Officer Commanding Caffre Drift Post, 12 Aug. 1825.



Not only did the Colony take Ngqika's land, it demanded that he perform the impossible by eliminating cattle-stealing. Ngqika had already experienced difficulties before 1819 because the principal cattle-raiders, the amaMbalu and the imiDange,<sup>11</sup> were the basis of his political support. Naturally enough, the confiscation of the 'Ceded Territory' caused cattle-raiding to increase. Somerset found that after all his exertions depredations had actually increased, and he could no longer ignore the evidence of Ngqika's complicity. An attempt was made to force Ngqika to commit himself by making him execute a suspected thief in public. Ngqika's behaviour on this occasion shows something of the way in which he viewed his collaboration with the Colony. He had not scrupled to call in Colonial assistance, but he had always thought of the Colony as an equal and an ally and not as a superior whom he served. When asked to execute a Xhosa for stealing from a white - an act that was perhaps injudicious, but not morally reprehensible - Ngqika repeatedly refused "saying that the (thief) had never done him, or any other of his People injury, and he did not see why he should execute him!"<sup>12</sup> He was quite prepared to allow the Commandant of the Frontier to do what he wanted with the thief but he had never envisaged himself as the Colony's instrument among his own people. Eventually the Commandant got his way at gunpoint. Ngqika viewed the Chumie mission station, under the Reverend W.R. Thomson who was

Note 11. See Chapter IV(4), p. 117.

12. This account of the incident is taken from the account of it given by the Commandant of the Frontier. H.M. Scott - Commissioners of Enquiry, 25 Jan. 1825, R.C.C. XIX, pp. 476-8.



soon known ~~to be~~ the Government Agent, as a further encroachment on his sovereignty. The return of some stolen horses by mission Xhosa confirmed his view that they were there as spies, and 274 head of cattle were swept off in reprisal. Maqoma, busy establishing himself as an autonomous chief crossed to west of the Tyhume and troubled the Boers on the Baviaans River.<sup>13</sup> Somerset beset by criticism in other quarters decided to take a hard line and order the Commandant of the Frontier to detain Ngqika if certain stolen cattle were not restored.<sup>14</sup> The operation was bungled and Ngqika escaped dressed as a woman (March 1822). For a short time, Ngqika hovered on the brink of playing a new role, that of Xhosa national leader. Raids on the Colony were stepped up, and he held meetings with other chiefs to plan revenge.<sup>15</sup>

But Ngqika was not the sort of man who was capable of saving his honour at the expense of his material and political well-being. Ndlambe, Mdushane and Kobe have proved at Amalinde that they were stronger than he was, and his allies Nqeno, Bhotomane and Ntsusa<sup>16</sup> being equally aggressive and self-seeking, were by no means reliable. Maqoma's ability gave him such power and influence that he was more a threat than a support to his father, who was rather afraid of him.<sup>17</sup> The Colony may have betrayed him, but they were the only friends he had, and he used

Note: 13. See, for example, C O 2649 C. van der Nest - W. Harding, 7 Sept. 1823.

14. Somerset later denied that he had given any such order. But see C. Somerset - H.M. Scott, 14 Feb. 1822 and 22 Feb. 1822, R.C.C. XIV, pp. 291, 295.

15. Philipps, pp. 149-50; H.M. Scott - Commissioners of Enquiry, 29 June 1824, R.C.C. XVIII, pp. 37-43.

16. After the death of Xasa and the flight of Funa in the 1818-9 Frontier War, Bhotomane had emerged as the leader of the imiDange on the frontier. Ntsusa was the daughter of Rharhabe. She was assisted in her administration by Nukwa, a full brother of Ndlambe. See Appendix IV for biographies.

17. C O 165 W.R. Thomson - H.M. Scott, 10 June 1822.



his reputed influence with them to its fullest extent. Although he did not dare appropriate Ndlambe's old territory, many of Ndlambe's former supporters came over to him.<sup>18</sup> He tried to impose his authority on the Gqunukhwebe.<sup>19</sup> He interfered in the politics of the small Hleke chiefdom.<sup>20</sup> All of his major supporters gave him trouble, and the way in which he dealt with the amaNtsusa may be taken as illustrative of his tactics. A military patrol was sent out after a group of Xhosa who had stolen some horses. Tyhali, Ngqika's son and right-hand man, was called in and 'traced' the spoor till it was lost. He then pointed out the amaNtsusa as the culprits, complaining that they were the "terror of the country" and the resort of all Xhosa "who fell under the displeasure of their chiefs" (that is, Ngqika and his subordinates). As a result a commando was sent out against the amaNtsusa.<sup>21</sup> The device of accusing his enemies of depredations in order to instigate the Colony to send a commando against them was also tried against Nqeno.<sup>22</sup> When Maqoma roused Colonial anger by raiding certain Thembu, Ngqika urged the Colony to allow him no opportunity to make amends:

Gaika has strongly urged to go at once to MacComo, without waiting to see whether he returns the Tambookie cattle and attack him, fire upon him and his people, and take his cattle, and then after that to reason with him.<sup>23</sup>

Note: 18. The Colonial authorities had had a vague idea that Ngqika would be able to recompense himself for the loss of the Ceded Territory by taking land from Ndlambe. Stockenstrom, I, p. 159; J. Jones-Rogers, 13 Oct. 1821, R.C.C. XIV, p. 143; Evidence of J.H. Rutherford, R.C.E. I, pp. 205-6.

19. C O 2637 C. Trappes-C. Bird, 25 June 1821: L G 1 J. Bell - A. Stockenstrom, 9 Apr. 1829; Shaw: Journal, p. 152.  
20. Mrs. J. Ross - (father), 22 Dec. 1829 in Long, p. 235.  
21. C O 287 H. Somerset-R. Plasket, 31 Jan. 1826. For more details on this commando see Note 90 below.  
22. C O 357 H. Somerset-J. Bell, 3 Apr. 1828 and enclosures.  
23. C O 366 H. Somerset- J. Bell, 6 Mar. 1829.



Ngqika was even able to use his status as friend of the English to threaten Hintsa with commandos.<sup>24</sup>

The opening of Fort Willshire fairs increased his power and his dependence on the Colony. The traveller Steedman has described his conduct on these occasions.

When a bargain of any magnitude is concluded, the Chief is generally at hand to substantiate his claim, considering himself entitled to a certain portion of the profits as his tribute, in consequence of his territory having been made the scene of traffic. His retainers are therefore dispersed throughout the fair, to watch the various negotiations, and summon their chief at the close of any considerable bargain ... Every look and movement of this ~~arbitrary~~ ~~arbitrary~~ chieftan was narrowly scrutinised by the desponding group ... their features clearly bespoke their secret rage, the loud expression of which was alone restrained by fear of the Chief.<sup>25</sup>

Part of Ngqika's income went into attracting talented young men to his Great Place. Their function was military rather than economic, and they were termed not abasengi basekomkhulu but amasoldati, after the Dutch word for soldier.<sup>26</sup> Whatever was not distributed to his followers was spent on brandy. He purchased it,<sup>27</sup> danced for it,<sup>28</sup> 'sold' his wives for it,<sup>29</sup> begged for it,<sup>30</sup> and ultimately died of it.<sup>31</sup> He would do nothing unless he was paid for it, and he even took to receiving his presents

Note: 24. C O 287 H. Somerset - R. Bourke, 29 Aug. 1826.

25. Steedman, I, pp. 8-10.

26. C O 2645 W. Shaw - H. Rivers, 23 Aug. 1822.

27. Mrs. J. Ross - (father), 22 Dec. 1829 in Long p. 235.

28. Steedman, I, pp. 5-6.

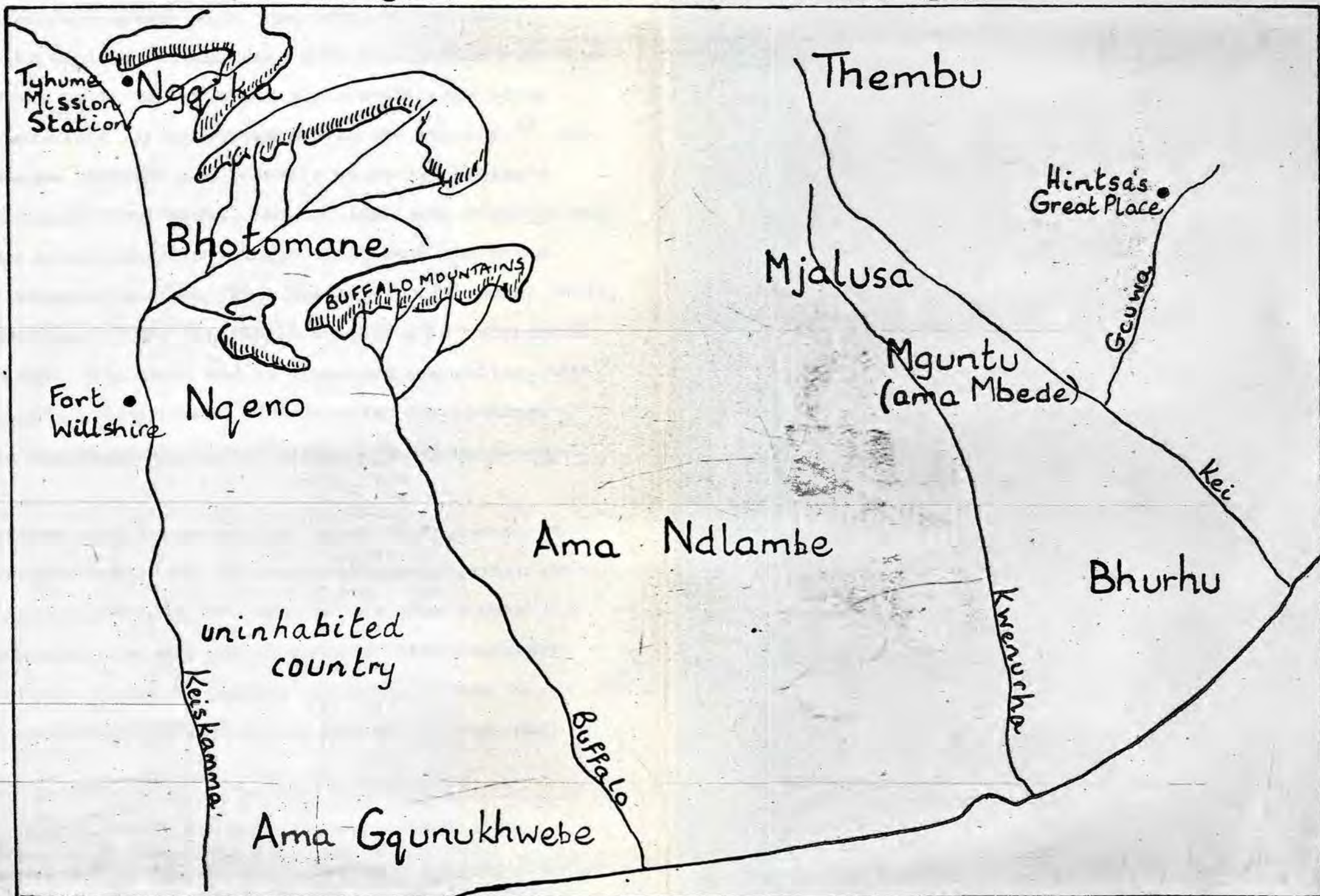
29. Rose, p. 97; J.W.D. Moodie, II, p. 263.

30. Ibid.

31. Mrs. J. Ross - (father), 22 Dec. 1829 in Long p. 235.



# XHOSA SETTLEMENT AFTER 1819.



AFTER A MAP BY JOHN BROWNLEE, C.O. 163 26 AUGUST 1822, WITH SOME ADDITIONS.



in private in order to avoid sharing them with his councillors.<sup>32</sup> His great good looks had not deserted him, and at fifty he still looked thirty<sup>33</sup> but in the last years of his life he was a despised drunkard who had lost the love and respect of his people.

The de facto ruler of Ngqika's people in his last degraded years was Tyhali, the son of a concubine. Described as a man who combined great shrewdness with "the look of the utmost simplicity",<sup>34</sup> he aspired through his close association with his father to attain a position far above that to which his birth entitled him, and was a strong contender for the regency.<sup>35</sup> His rivalry with Maqoma obscured and probably protected Ngqika's disliked Thembu great wife, Suthu, and her lame son, Sandile, who resided together with two other younger sons, Anta and Matwa, near Burnshill mission station. When Ngqika died (November 1829), Tyhali took advantage of the inevitable suspicion of witchcraft to strangle Thuthula and smell out an important councillor, who presumably opposed his ambitions.<sup>36</sup> It availed him nothing: popular support for Maqoma was overwhelming and Maqoma became regent.

The amaNdlambe were deeply divided among themselves. It appears that Ndlambe's heir was killed in his wars against the Colony.<sup>37</sup> In the chief's old age, many of his powers were exercised by Mdushane, who was now reconciled with his father. Mdushane kept Ngqika in check, running an illegal trade to circumvent the latter's hold on the Fort Willshire fairs and

Note: 32. Kay, pp. 45-6.

33. Philipps, p. 286.

34. C O 165 W.R. Thomson - H.M. Scott, 10 June 1822.

35. Evidence of J. Read snr. Abo. com. I, p. 603.

36. Kay, pp. 184-5; C O 362 W.R. Thomson - J. Bell (?)

37. The sons of Ndlambe mentioned most often in early Colonial records are 'Guishee', 'Koetze', 'Maveechee' and Mxhamli. Three sons of Ndlambe are reported to have died in the battle of Grahamstown, Cory, I, p. 390.



shielding the amaGqunukhwebe from Ngqika's ambitions.<sup>38</sup> But when Mdushane died (May 1829) shortly after Ndlambe (February 1828), the amaNdlambe disintegrated. Mdushane had quarrelled with his Great Wife for giving him the venereal disease that was killing him, and with her son.<sup>39</sup> An assembly of the amaNdlambe was held which proclaimed Mdushane's son, Qasana, chief of all the amaNdlambe.<sup>40</sup> Qasana was placed under Mdushane's brother Mqhayi, a staunch supporter of peace with the Colony and of the Wesleyan mission at nearby Mount Coke. However, Mhala, another son of Ndlambe, had secured the support of the eastern amaNdlambe, after disposing of yet another contender, Dyani, through the medium of a witchcraft accusation.<sup>41</sup> The situation was further complicated by a split between Mqhayi and Qasana, when the latter chose the belligerent side in the 1834-5 war. Thus Ndlambe's people became divided among the amaNdlambe of Mhala, the imiQhayi (those western amaNdlambe who followed Mqhayi in supporting the Colony), and Qasana's imiDushane (which subsequently divided yet again).<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, the Ndlambe

Note: 38. L G 1 J. Bell - A. Stockenstrom, 9 Apr. 1829; Rose, pp. 211-2. The amaNdlambe and the amaGqunukhwebe were themselves at odds, since the amaGqunukhwebe were by their own admission, occupying Ndlambe territory. See evidence of W. Shaw, Abo. com. I, pp. 92-3; W. Shaw - R. Bourke, 6 Apr. 1826, R.C.C. XXVI, p. 368; C O J. Brownlee - C. 184 Bird, 1 May 1823.

39. Kay, p. 191. Kay did not unfortunately give the name of the son, but it was probably not Siwani, the eventual successor, who was still a minor in 1835. See also Dugmore, p. 33.

40. S. Young - W.M.S., 26 June 1829, MS 15,429 Cory Library Grahamstown.

41. Shrewsbury, p. 244; W. Shrewsbury - W.M.S., 31 Dec. 1826, MS 15,429, Cory Library Grahamstown; C. Brownlee, pp. 185-6; Maclean, p. 132.

42. After the war of 1835, the imiDushane divided into 3 sections: that under Qasana, that under Siyolo (also hostile in the war) and that under Siwani. Siwani's mother, Nonibe, was made much of by Governor D'Urban, and this may be the reason why Siwani eventually emerged as Mdushane's heir.



faction was strengthened by the accession of the amaNtsusa, now led by Gasela, son of Nukwa. These abandoned Ngqika and took up residence along the Kwelerha in alliance with Mhala, and with the approval of Hintsa.<sup>43</sup>

## 2. Xhosa relations with the east

The Xhosa's nearest eastern neighbours were the Thembu. Like the Xhosa, the Thembu were composed of a number of clans which had accepted the leadership of a royal clan. The Thembu royal clan, the amaHala, had not however succeeded in imposing their control on the local level to anything approaching the extent attained by the amaTshawe among the Xhosa. Some clans were entirely subordinate to the amaHala, but others such as the amaVundle, amaGcina, amaQwati and others maintained their chiefship and their territorial integrity. Little is known of early Thembu history,<sup>44</sup> but there are suggestions that the Xhosa fished in the troubled waters of the Hala polity. Rharhabe, whose mother was a Thembu, was especially active, interfering directly in Thembu succession disputes.<sup>45</sup> Winkelman, one of the few

- Note: 43. Interview with W.M. Nkabi, Mbulxembo Location, King Williamstown District, 24 Aug. 1975; Hammond-Tooke: King William's Town District, pp. 83-4. Gasela's action may have been irregular, since his father Nukwa was still alive over twenty years later. Maclean p. 134.
44. The best history of the Thembu available to me was an unpublished Xhosa manuscript by M. Mbutuma: 'Ibali laba-Tembu' (The history of the Thembu), which has been deposited in the Cory Library, Grahamstown, thanks to the enterprise of Professor J. Opland. Other sources are Soga: SE Bantu, Ch. XXIV and W.D. Cingo: Ibali laba Thembu (Emfundisweni?, 1927). The latter is not very helpful. Because of the continuing political importance of clans among the Thembu and because there is relatively little documentary information about their early history, Thembuland seems a particularly promising and important area for historical fieldwork. One can only hope that it will be undertaken as soon as possible.
45. Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 473, 131.



early travellers to visit the Thembu (1788), reports that the Xhosa "devastated (Thembu) homes, robbed their cattle, dragged them away with them and forced them to do heavy duty in their homesteads."<sup>46</sup> Thembu chiefs were reluctant to marry Xhosa brides,<sup>47</sup> presumably because the Xhosa used the relationship as an excuse for intervening in Thembu affairs.<sup>48</sup> Ngqika's mother was a daughter of the amaNdungwana,<sup>49</sup> a Thembu clan so autonomous that Coenraad de Buys who lived among them considered them independent.<sup>50</sup> Ngqika seems to have had ideas of acquiring authority over Thembu, presumably through these Ndungwana connections.<sup>51</sup> Hintsa claimed some influence in Thembu affairs, and enticed the amaNtshilibe clan of Sotho immigrants away from the Thembu.<sup>52</sup> The amaNqabe, an autonomous clan in Thembu territory also seems to have maintained some sort of tributary relationship with the Xhosa.<sup>53</sup> Both Xhosa chiefs supported the amaTshatshu, a Hala lineage which stood roughly in the same position vis-a-vis the Thembu Paramount as the amaRharhabe stood vis-a-vis the Xhosa Paramount. The Thembu survived these pressures through the shrewdness of the Paramount Ngubencuka and the liberal treatment accorded to the chiefs or subordinate clans which resulted in the adhesion of strong new immigrant clans such as the amaGcina and amaQwati.

Note: 46. Winkelman, IV, pp. 92-3.

47. Collins, V, p. 46; Kay, pp. 151-2.

48. Rharhabe met his death in attempting to extort large numbers of cattle from the Thembu on the pretext that it was bridewealth for his daughter. Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern, pp. 38-40; Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 131-2.

49. Interview with S.M. Burns-Ncamashe, Zwelitsha, 17 Sept. 1975.

50. Lichtenstein, I, p. 367; Collins, V, p. 43.

51. Lichtenstein, I, p. 365.

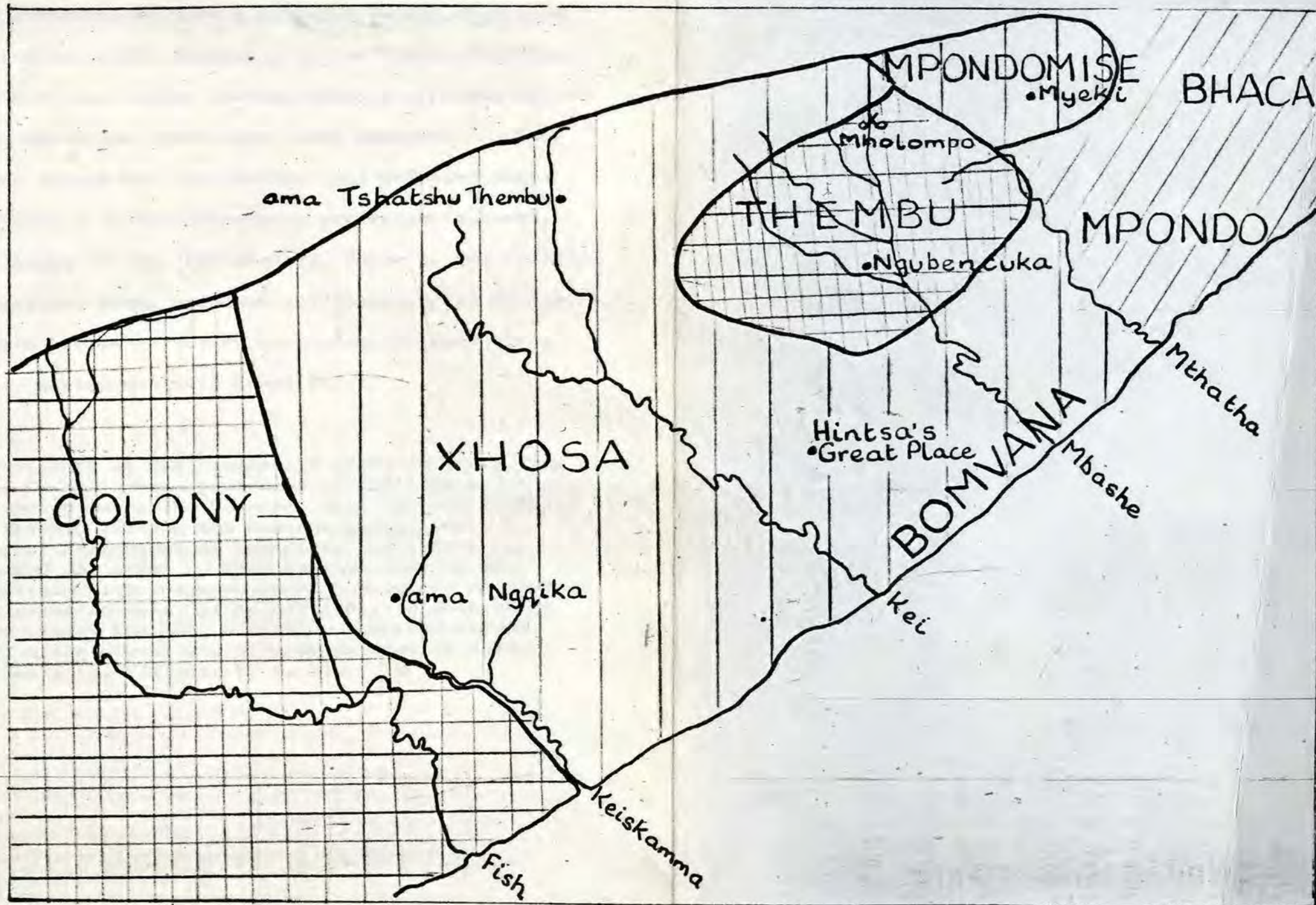
52. Mbutuma MS: Collins, V, p. 43; Stockenstrom, I, p. 44.

53. Soga: SE Bantu, p. 286. The <sup>present</sup> writer did not visit the Nqabe Great Place but met several abaNqabe all of whom considered the clan as a Thembu clan.

54. This may be seen from its independent foreign policy, which allied it with the Xhosa against the Paramount's lineage.



# POLITICAL ALLIANCES AROUND 1832.





To the east of the Thembu were the Mpondo. The ama-Nyawuza, royal clan of the Mpondo, were continually engaged in attempting to establish their domination over powerful local clans such as the amaTshezi and the amaKhonjwayo, who had themselves succeeded in subordinating a number of smaller clans. Shortly after 1800, Ngqungqushe, the Mpondo Paramount allied himself with one Tshezi faction against a second known as the Bomvana, which was led by the chief Gambushe.<sup>55</sup> Gambushe proved too strong for the alliance and defeated them, killing Ngqungqushe. In the succession war which followed, Gambushe's candidate for the Paramountcy, Phakani, was defeated by Phakani's brother, Faku. Gambushe and Phakani fled to Hintsa. Gambushe's people became tributary to Hintsa and Gambushe's daughter, Nomsa, became Hintsa's Great Wife.

Note: 55. This history of the Bomvana is taken entirely from Soga, Ch. XX. Soga spent most of his life as missionary among the Bomvana. Soga appears to have had trouble fitting the Bomvana amabali into a coherent chronological sequence, and I have rearranged the order so that Bomvana history is compatible with information on the period derived from other sources. It is difficult to date these occurrences, but they must have occurred before 1809, since Hintsa was already married to Nomsa at that date. Collins, V, p. 41.



This is how matters stood when the Mfecane - the great migrations set in motion by Tshaka Zulu - struck the southern Nguni. The first invading group with whom the Xhosa had to contend were the Bhaca under Mad(z)ikane.<sup>56</sup> After many vicissitudes, the Bhaca moved down into Thembuland where they attacked the amaTshatshu and amaGcina Thembu, causing the amaTshatshu to flee to Maqoma for safety. The Xhosa, Thembu and Mpondomise combined forces and crushed the Bhaca, killing Madikane (1823-5). The Bhaca and the Mpondo entered into an uneasy alliance and launched a joint attack on the Bomvana, but this was repulsed by Hintsa and Gambushe.

In 1827, the amaNgwane of Matiwane, fearful of Mzilikazi and restless under Moshoeshoe, moved south over the Orange.<sup>57</sup>

Note: 56. The best account of Bhaca history available to me was an unpublished typescript by W. Power Leary, Resident Magistrate at Mt. Frere, dated 22 May, 1906, N A 623, Cape Archives. I am indebted to Mr. R. Moorsom for this reference. The Bhaca are referred to in contemporary documents as 'Ghoes' or 'Kans'. Other accounts of their history may be found in Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 435-446; W.D. Hammond-Tooke: The Tribes of Mount Frere District (Pretoria, 1955-6); A.T. Bryant: Olden Times in Natal and Zululand (London, 1929), passim see index. See also Cory interview no. 119, W.R.D. Fynn, Queenstown, April 1913.

57. For excellent Ngwane accounts of these events, see D.F. Ellenberger and J.C. MacGregor History of the Basuto (London, 1912), pp. 186-8; Msebenzi: History of Matiwane and the amaNgwane Tribe (ed. N.J. van Warmelo; Pretoria, 1938) Ch. 5 and pp. 261, 262, 264. For extracts from various contemporary works, see Evidence of T.F. Wade, Abo. com. I, pp. 409-12. In addition to works there cited, see Philipps, pp. 350-3.



They raided cattle and tried to force the Thembu chiefs to pay them tribute, but intended to settle down and therefore started to cultivate the ground. Their intentions were not fully understood at the time, for Tshaka was at the height of his power and was believed to have sent threatening messages to Ngubencuka and Hintsa, demanding their submission. They refused, mobilised their forces and asked the Colony for help. The Colonial authorities, alarmed at the prospect of thousands of Xhosa and Thembu refugees aggravating the frontier situation, decided that Tshaka had to be turned back by persuasion or force. W.B. Dundas, the Landdrost of Albany, was sent ahead with a small detachment to try persuasion, while Henry Somerset, the Commandant of the Frontier, followed with an army. As he proceeded, Dundas observed the destruction caused by the war between the Mpondo-Bhaca and Xhosa-Bomvana alliances, and the ravages caused by a Zulu attack on the Mpondo. When he arrived at Ngubencuka's Great Place and found the amaNgwane in the neighbourhood, he mistakenly concluded that these were Zulu regiments and that they had caused the damage he had witnessed. His small party attacked an unsuspecting Ngwane division and drove them back with their firearms.<sup>58</sup> He then returned, thinking he had repulsed the Zulu. When the amaNgwane attacked the Thembu to recover the cattle lost through Dundas, Ngubencuka sent a message to the Colonial army saying the Zulu had returned. Hintsa had been kept informed of proceedings by a party of councillors whom he had sent with Dundas, and, probably scenting a good booty, joined

Note: 58. It is not clear to what extent Dundas was deliberately misled by Ngubencuka. For his own account of events, see W. Dundas-H. Somerset, 1 Aug. 1828 and his report dated 15 Aug. 1828, quoted in Msebenzi, pp. 239-249.



up with Somerset to fight the amaNgwane. At a pre-battle conference, Somerset introduced Hintsa and Ngubencuka, who were rivals of long standing and had never seen each other before. He told them to treat the enemy mercifully, and not to take revenge. The two chiefs hedged, probably feeling that there was no point in fighting the amaNgwane unless they could benefit materially from their anticipated victory.<sup>59</sup> The Colonial army attacked the amaNgwane at dawn and routed them with their cannon (Battle of Mbholompo, 27 Aug. 1828). The Xhosa, Thembu and Mpondo gathered a good booty of women, children and cattle, much to the disgust of the British who failed to appreciate that they had joined the attack for this very purpose. The battle was subsequently represented to the Xhosa as disinterested Colonial assistance in their time of need, and Hintsa's refusal to help the Colony against Maqoma was considered to be rank ingratitude.<sup>60</sup> In actual fact, they had little call on Hintsa's gratitude. He had not taken the initiative in attacking the amaNgwane and certainly had had no reason to feel threatened by them.

Shortly after Mbholompo, Hintsa and Ngubencuka fell out. They were rivals of long standing and there seems to have been an argument about the division of the spoils.<sup>61</sup> Hintsa's Bomvana allies attacked two of Ngubencuka's subordinates,<sup>62</sup> and the

Note: 59. See H. Somerset-R. Bourke, 26 Aug. 1828, quoted in Msebenzi, pp. 250-2.

60. For example, B. D'Urban-Hintsa, 29 Apr. 1835, C.W.D. I, p. 33.

61. The only contemporary report of these hostilities is S. Kay's journal in S. Kay-W.M.S. 29 Apr. 1830. See also journal entry for 1 June 1830 in S. Kay-W.M.S. (date illegible); W. Boyce-W.M.S. 11 May 1830; W. Shaw-W.M.S. 18 May 1830 (all references MS 15,429, Cory Library Grahamstown); Kay, p. 299; 'Thembu History per chief Falo Mgudlwa at Qumanco, 18 June (19)35' in McLaughlin papers, Cory Library Grahamstown.

62. Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 365-6.



Thembu moved further north virtually abandoning the coast. War was prevented by the missionaries and the veiled threat of Colonial intervention. Ngubencuka died about 1833, leaving Vandana regent for Ngubencuka's minor heir, Mtirara. There were then three main political groupings among the southern Nguni. In the west were the Xhosa, who were allied with the Bomvana and close to the Tshatshu Thembu and Myeki's Mpondomise.<sup>63</sup> In the east were the Mpondo allied with the Bhaca. In the middle were the weak and isolated Thembu, increasingly looking towards the Colony as their only salvation. (See Map IV).

Matiwane's prestige, strained by previous defeats, did not survive Mbholompo, and many of his followers stayed among the Thembu and the Xhosa. They swelled the ranks of other refugees to form the people known collectively as Mfengu (from the verb ukumfenguza, 'to wander about, seeking service'). The most important of these peoples were the Bhele, the Hlubi, the Zizi and the Ntlangwini. Their subsequent relationship with the Xhosa has inevitably coloured accounts of their initial reception, but the Xhosa tradition relating to it seems to sum up the situation. According to the tradition, the Xhosa gave the Mfengu food, but the food was on the Xhosa side of the fire and the Mfengu had to pass their hands through the flames in order to reach it.<sup>64</sup> Like the Gona and the Thembu, the Mfengu had

Note: 63. J. Orpen-W. Stanford, 11 June 1907, Cory accessions no. 1242.

64. This is one of the twelve or so amabali that almost all informants knew.



to pass through a period of servitude and social inferiority in order to lose their previous identity and emerge full Xhosa. The Mfengu were initially well received by the Xhosa chiefs who always welcomed the accession of new followers.<sup>65</sup> Those Mfengu who arrived in large parties with cattle and recognised chiefs were allocated land on which to settle. The amaZizi hid their chief Njokweni for fear the Xhosa would kill him, but when he was discovered, Hintsa recognised his authority and allocated him and his people lands.<sup>66</sup> Mfengu chiefs sat on chief's

Note: 65. Journal of W. Shrewsbury 10 Dec. 1826 in Shrewsbury - W.M.S. 31 Dec. 1826, MS 15,429 Cory Library, Grahams-town. The original is fuller than the version in Shrewsbury, p. 236, and is worth quoting in full since it was written before views of Xhosa-Mfengu relations were coloured by the political bias of the observer. "The several Kaffer chiefs, ever anxious to augment their power and influence by an increase of dependents, gave them a favourable reception. To some parties, they made grants of land and enriched them with cattle, permitting them to live by themselves, under a subordinate chief of their own country, while others were so distributed and mingled amongst the Kaffers, that in another generation they will be one people." The standard histories of the Mfengu are J. Ayliff and J. Whiteside History of the Abambo generally known as Fingos (Butterworth 1912; reprinted Cape Town 1962) and R.T. Kawa I-Bali lama Mfengu (Lovedale 1929). It is worth noting that Kawa assisted Whiteside, and his book is therefore less derivative than has sometimes been supposed although it did suffer from his understandable desire to write 'scientific' rather than oral history. R.A. Moyer's forthcoming doctoral dissertation on Mfengu history was unavailable to me.

66. Personal communications from Mr. C. Manona, of the Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.



councils as councillors, and participated in important consultations.<sup>67</sup> Mfengu who arrived destitute and without cattle were distributed among Hintsa's people as herdsmen in the usual manner of busa clients.

The Mfengu were not as isolated and leaderless as the Khoi had been, and were not prepared to forgo their national identity. The availability of iron hoes in their homeland had accustomed them to agriculture, and they became assiduous cultivators. They cultivated tobacco for sale, and went into the Colony-interior trade on their own account.<sup>68</sup> They acquired cattle over and above the natural increase which was normal for busa clients, and they hid them in forests and gulleys, out of sight of their employers. Meanwhile, ordinary Xhosa, suddenly elevated in status by their acquisition of clients, indulged in the ~~pr~~erogatives of the rich and extracted what they could from the Mfengu. The Mfengu were less willing to bear tributes and exactions such as upundlo from these aliens than they had been from their own chiefs. They turned towards the only alternative source of power available to them - the Cape Colony, represented in Hintsa's country by the mission station at Butterworth. The missionary Ayliff refused to hand over a Mfengu who had roused Hintsa's anger, although he was demanded by the Paramount in person. This incident was widely reported among the amaMfengu.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, the 'Great Word' offered more than material salvation to the Mfengu. The old ways had led them to a life of wandering and misery; the new one offered them peace and prosperity.

Note: 67. A.B. Armstrong - H.G. Smith, 6 Mar. 1835, C.W.D. II, p. 220.

68. Ayliff and Whiteside, p. 19.

69. 'The Fingoes', undated anonymous manuscript in N A 623 Cape Archives. This manuscript contains an extremely interesting account of the spontaneous uprising of Mfengu busa clients at the time of the 1834-5 war.



3. The road to war (1829-1835)

The drought of 1829 scorched the country from the Baviaans river well within the Colony to the Kei and beyond. One of the few areas to be spared was the well-watered basin of the upper Fish river, drained by the Kat, Mankazana and other tributaries. Although this formed part of the Ceded Territory which neither were supposed to occupy, both Boers and Xhosa drove their herds into it. "There is not a blade of grass anywhere else, and the distress ... is beyond anything I can possibly express," wrote Colonel Somerset, "The portion of land allocated to the several Caffre tribes is already very confined."<sup>70</sup> In the middle of the drought (May 1829), the Colonial authorities saw fit to expel Maqoma on the grounds that he had unjustifiably attacked certain chiefs of the Tshatshu Thembu.

At the time of the Bhaca incursions, the amaTshatshu under the chief Bawana had entered Maqoma's territory as refugees and had been allotted land. Subsequently, one of <sup>a</sup>Bwana's sub-chiefs Galela, had rebelled against him. Maqoma attacked certain other sub-chiefs, with the result that a number of Thembu fled into the Colony. The Colonial authorities were alarmed by the prospect of refugees, and angry with Maqoma for attacking people who had never done the Colony any harm. In addition, it is possible that they had long wanted to get rid of Maqoma and

Note: 70. C O 366 H. Somerset - J. Bell, 27 Feb. 1829.



were only looking for an excuse.<sup>71</sup> Maqoma maintained at the time that he was only supporting the legitimate chief Bawana against rebel Galela.<sup>72</sup> In justice to the Colonial authorities, the position was somewhat more complicated. What convinced them that Maqoma was a dishonest disturber of the peace was that it was not Galela who complained to the Colonial authorities but Bawana, who appears to have been playing some sort of double game.<sup>73</sup> Maqoma's real ally among the

Note: 71. It was widely suspected at the time that Maqoma was being removed to make way for the Khoi settlement which followed him. See, for example, Evidence of R. Aitchison, Abo. com. I, p. 8. D. Campbell, the Civil Commissioner of Grahamstown, seems to have had a personal dislike of Maqoma. See D. Campbell - J. Bell, 27 Mar. 1829. Stockenstrom was also a strong proponent of expulsion. See Stockenstrom, I, pp. 305-11. Maqoma was a particular favourite of Colonel Henry Somerset and this may have prejudiced Somerset's many enemies against him.

72. Evidence of J. Philip, Abo. com. I, p. 631. Maqoma told the missionary Ross, with whom he was on excellent terms, that he was intervening at Bawana's request. Mrs. J. Ross - (sister), 13 Oct. 1829, q Long, p. 231.

73. C O 2712 D. Campbell - J. Bell 27 Mar, 1829. Campbell's interviews with Bawana and Galela left him (and the reader) puzzled. The deliberate confusion concerning which sub-chiefs belonged to Bawana and which to Galela is reminiscent of Ngqika's manoeuvrings between 1817 and 1819. See Peires: 'Frontier War of 1818-9' pp. 89-90.



Thembu was not Bawana, but Bawana's son and eventual heir, Mapassa.<sup>74</sup> Thus Maqoma could attack supporters of both Bawana and Galela and still maintain that he was supporting the legitimate authority. Behind the personalities of the affair lay a more important principle. In the words of one informant, "Maqoma wanted to make those Thembu Xhosa."<sup>75</sup> The Thembu had settled on Maqoma's land, and Maqoma wanted to reduce them to political obedience. He could have had no reason to anticipate that the Colonial authorities would penalise him for what he did to his own people on his own territory. Since he had foregone opportunities to increase his prestige at the expense of the Colony, it was not unreasonable that he should find an outlet for his political and military skills elsewhere.

Nevertheless, he was expelled and his old territories given to Khoi and 'Bastards', who formed what became known as the Kat River Settlement. This was followed by a meeting of the chiefs with Governor Cole, who pointed out to each the location he was permitted to occupy at his Majesty's pleasure. Cole's account of the meeting relates only what he told the chiefs; presumably he ignored whatever they told him.<sup>76</sup> The missionary Ross "met with nothing but abuse" when he tried to present the Xhosa case.<sup>77</sup> There was a general belief among the Colonists

Note: 74. C O 2712 D. Campbell - J. Bell, 1 May 1829.

75. Interview with Chief Gladstone Maqoma, Ngqungqe Location, Kentani District, 19 Dec. 1975.

76. G.L. Cole - G. Murray, 2 Jan. 1830, R.C.E. II, pp. 52-4. See also evidence of T.F. Wade, Abo. com. I, pp. 372-3; K.S. Hunt: Sir Lowry Cole (Durban, 1974), pp. 100-2).

77. Mrs. J. Ross - (parents), 17 Apr. 1830, q Long, p. 233.



that cattle-raiding could be stopped altogether, if the authorities used enough gun. Cole believed this and was harsher than his liberal predecessor, Bourke. His military secretary, Colonel Wade, believed it too, and when he became acting Governor he was even harsher than Cole had been. During his short term of office, Maqoma and Tyhali were expelled from their last grazing grounds beyond the Tyhume, at the time of another terrible drought to land where "there was not a morsel of grass ..., it was as bare as a parade."<sup>78</sup> Commandant Somerset, who understood the importance of the land question,<sup>79</sup> allowed Maqoma back only to see his permission overridden and the Xhosa expelled once more. He was not even permitted to delay the expulsion till after the harvest. The Xhosa thought that the Europeans were making fun of them, and, in sheer frustration, drove their cattle into the green corn.<sup>80</sup>

The Xhosa drew their own conclusions from these policies. Colonial policy was justified to them on two grounds: Ngqika's cession in 1819 and the continuance of cattle-raiding. Neither reason appeared particularly sound. This was their birthplace, and Ngqika had never fought against the Colony.

The time when Gaika assisted the English, then we put our assegais away from the English, and T'Slambie's people had weapons, and were the enemies of the English; but we were friends of the English; that was a most difficult thing.

Note: 78. Evidence of R. Aitchison, Abo. com. I, p. 9. For a detailed description of the effects of the drought on the Xhosa, see letter from 'A Subscriber', Grahamstown Journal, 18 July 1833.

79. See A. Stockenstrom - Government Secretary, 12 May 1830, quoted in Abo. com. I, p. 105.

80. W. Chalmers - C.L. Stretch, 21 Nov. 1835 in Long, p. 83.



Gaika was a great friend of the white people, and they murder his children after he is dead.<sup>81</sup>

There can also be little doubt that the chiefs exerted themselves to the utmost to repress thefts, considering the ease with which two or three individuals could steal the loosely guarded Colonial cattle. Maqoma even kept the receipts for the Colonial cattle he sent back.<sup>82</sup> He pointed out that magistrates were not punished when Colonial wrong doers

Note: 81. 'Statement of the Frontier Caffres to Colonel Somerset and Governor Sir. B. D'Urban, C.W.D. II, p. 49. This was dictated to the missionary Chalmers by Tyhali and his councillors on 31 Dec. 1834, at the time of the greatest Xhosa successes, and sets out the causes of the war as perceived by them. The second quotation is from the evidence of T.F. Wade, Abo. com. I, p. 391.

82. Evidence of C. Bradford, Abo. com. I, p. 160. It is hard to demonstrate with any amount of certainty whether or not Maqoma was partly responsible for thefts of stock from the Colony. Official reports are unreliable. Compare for instance, letters from the Commandant of the Frontier and the Landdrost of Grahamstown, written in the same months, but giving diametrically opposed versions of the scale of cattle-raiding. (C O 233 Forbes-Colonial Secretary, 2 Aug. 1825; C O 2671 W. Dundas-Colonial Secretary 9 Aug. 1825). See also notes 14 and 94. Missing cattle were often reported as stolen. (For verified reports of this contention from sources favourable to the commando system see C O 234 Forbes-R. Plasket, 19 Sept. 1825; C O 333 H. Somerset-R. Plasket, 5 Nov. 1827; C O 357 H. Somerset-J. Bell, 3 Oct. 1828). A prejudice against Maqoma resulted in a tendency to blame thefts on him. (See C O 2721 D. Campbell-Colonial Secretary, 31 Dec. 1830 with enclosures for a case where Field Cornet Andries Pretorius unjustly accused Maqoma of driving off 444 head of cattle). The general impression obtained from reading routine reports sent in by the Landdrosts of Albany and Graaff-Reinet is that there were several incidents involving Maqoma up to and including 1823, but that between 1824 and 1829 he was not complained of. The most troublesome chiefs appear to have been Nqeno, Tyhali and Ngqika himself. They in turn blamed the ama-Ndlambe and the amaNtsusa, and occasionally each other. (See, for example C O 357 H. Somerset-J. Bell, 3 Apr. 1828 and 24 Apr. 1828). Maqoma's change of policy may have been due to the commandos sent against him in 1823, or the result of the influence of Commandant Somerset and missionary John Ross. In 1828 Maqoma complained that he had been punished for allowing his people to steal "at a former time", whereas Ngqika and Nqeno were going unpunished (C O 357 H. Somerset - J. Bell, 8 May 1828). In my view the weight of the evidence inclines to the conclusion that Maqoma strove to repress stock-theft to the best of his ability.



escaped.<sup>83</sup> On the occasion of the first 1833 expulsion:

He absolutely stated "I will allow you to inquire at Fort Willshire whether or not I have not sent in horses and cattle re-captured from other Caffres, which had been stolen from the Colony."<sup>84</sup>

The reasons for his removal were not explained to Maqoma.

According to the officer who delivered the news:

He distinctly said, which we found out afterwards to be the case, that he could not make out the cause of his removal, and asked me if I would tell him; and I really could not; I had heard nothing; no cause was ever assigned to me for the removal.<sup>85</sup>

The ordinary Xhosa were as puzzled and angry as their chiefs.

One Xhosa called out to the military force conducting the 1829 expulsion

and asked us, why were we burning his house? and it seemed to be difficult to make a reply: there was a general silence.<sup>86</sup>

Feeling that the cattle<sup>question</sup> was a mere pretext, the Xhosa concluded that the real object of the Colony was the appropriation of their land. After his first expulsion, Maqoma visited the other chiefs saying that this was but the "prelude to other measures, which would not only endanger their independence, but

Note: 83. Quoted Macmillan, p. 91. See also evidence of C. Bradford, Abo. com. I, p. 160.

84. Evidence of R. Aitchison, Abo. com. I, p. 9.

85. Ibid p. 8.

86. Evidence of W. Gisborne, Abo. com. I, p. 357.



lead to a complete subjugation of their country."<sup>87</sup> Other chiefs, including Hintsa, often raised the question with sympathetic whites 'apparently thinking it was part of a general system of taking their country away from them'<sup>88</sup>

According to chief Bhotomane:

Macomo's heart was very sore about the land; the subject always set him on fire; he fought in hopes of getting it back.<sup>89</sup>

Although the land question was the primary cause of Xhosa discontent, there were others too. One of these was the reprisal system enforced by military patrols, known as commandos.<sup>90</sup> The reprisal system permitted the commando to follow the spoor of stolen cattle to the nearest homestead, to demand restitution there, and to take Xhosa cattle in lieu of missing Colonial cattle. The system was open to numerous abuses. Farmers whose cattle had strayed through negligence or who simply wanted more cattle could 'trace' a spoor to the nearest homestead and secure cattle out of all proportion to their losses. At best, the system made the innocent suffer for the guilty. These aspects have been strongly criticised, but there were others

Note: 87. Letter to South African Commercial Advertiser, quoted Bannister, p. 98. See also Evidence of W. Shaw, Abo. com. I, pp. 54-5; Fynn, p. 196. The Boers did want the Ceded Territory and the Xhosa must have been aware of this. See 'After' Oriental Herald, XIII, pp. 11-13; Evidence of W. Cox, Abo. com. I, p. 432; W. Chalmers - C.L. Stretch, 21 Nov. 1835, q Long, p. 83.

88. Evidence of W. Gisborne, Abo. com. I, p. 357.

89. 'Deposition of Chief Botma (Bhotomane)' C.W.D. II, p. 77.

90. At the time some emphasis was laid on the distinction between patrols and commandos. Patrols were composed of soldiers only and performed routine functions; commandos were far larger, included civilians, and were summoned for major punitive operations or when resistance was expected. The difference was one of degree rather than of kind, and 'commando' is used here to include patrols as well. See Evidence of T. Philipps and evidence of W. Dundas, Abo. com. I, pp. 26, 134.



that alarmed the Xhosa even more.<sup>91</sup> As far as they were concerned, commando raids were random and unpredictable. Since commandos were anxious that 'thieves' should not be forewarned in time to flee but should be caught with their spoil, they marched at night and attacked at dawn by charging the suspected homestead and firing at random.<sup>92</sup> Innocent homesteads were not given the opportunity to prove their innocence, or guilty ones to give up the stolen property. One of Nqeno's sons was killed as he came out of his hut to see what the matter was.<sup>93</sup> The most famous mistake of all was the 'blundering commando' of 1825, which twice attacked the

Note: 91. The commando system was severely criticised at the time, particularly by Stockenstrom. See Stockenstrom, I, pp. 100-5; Evidence of A. Stockenstrom, Abo. com. I, pp. 82-8. For more recent criticism see Macmillan, pp. 77-9; H.A. Reyburn 'Studies in Frontier History : V : Reprisals' The Critic (Cape Town, Oct. 1935).

92. That this was the usual procedure is evident from the report of a commando which was never accused of any impropriety. See C O 287 H. Somerset-Plasket, 17 Jan. 1826. See also C O 287 R. Armstrong-H. Somerset, 6 Feb. 1826; H. Somerset-T.F. Wade, 12 Aug. 1831 quoted Abo. com. I, p. 114; Evidence of W. Gisborne, Abo. com. I, p. 358.

93. 'Statement of the Frontier Caffres' C.W.D. II, p.49; W. Chalmers-B. D'Urban, 6. Feb. 1835, C.W.D. II, p. 82; Evidence of A. Stockenstrom, Abo. com. I, p. 114; Rose, pp. 92-3.



wrong homestead, while allowing the suspects to escape.<sup>94</sup>  
Small wonder that the Xhosa fled at the passage of a commando,  
even one not meant for them.<sup>95</sup> The coming and going of  
patrols intended for purely defensive purposes kept the  
Xhosa in a perpetual state of alarm. Tyhali asked "Shall I

Note: 94. C O 234 H. Somerset - R. Plasket, 26 Dec. 1825 gave the initial report. C O 287 H. Somerset - R. Plasket was a fuller report, since it was written in response to criticism. It is interesting for the light it sheds on the trustworthiness of official reports. According to the account, a patrol followed the spoor of a marauding party of Xhosa, which included a wounded man "and the blood of the wounded Kaffer was traced along the whole road! The party traced these Kaffers day and night through the Kaffer kraals to the kraal of Nouka! Within a few yards of which lay the dead body of the Kaffer who had been shot!" C O 287 Armstrong - Somerset was written by the officer commanding the patrol in question. It reveals that the patrol set out after some stolen horses on the day after they were missed, that it was guided by Nukwa's enemy, Tyhali, that the spoor was completely lost among Ngqika's people and that they had only Tyhali's word that it led on towards Nukwa. When Armstrong suggested that they approach Nukwa, Tyhali dissuaded him. There is no mention anywhere of a wounded Xhosa, and the bloody spoor and the dead body appear to be complete fabrications. In his third letter on the incident (H.S. Somerset - Commissioners of Enquiry, 6 Feb. 1826) Somerset does not repeat the story. It was on the evidence of Armstrong's report that the two homesteads were mistakenly attacked. But even had they attacked Nukwa's homestead as intended, they would have had no justification except Tyhali's word. Finally it should be pointed out that although it was the alleged theft of horses that led to the commando it was cattle that were captured in compensation. For a hostile account of the commando, see Philipps, pp. 292-3, 297-8.

95. The commando which visited the amaNtsusa passed through Ngqika's country, but Xhosa as far away as the amaNdlambe fled to Mt. Coke mission station to avoid it. Kay, p. 87.



never have peace in my own country? Am I to be teased this way, day after day?"<sup>96</sup>

The Xhosa knew that the whites despised them and they resented it. They acknowledged that European technology was superior to their own, but felt that as individuals they were equal to any Colonist they had met.<sup>97</sup> This resentment was particularly acute in the case of the chiefs. They were conscious of the difference between themselves and the common 'black people' and set great store by it.<sup>98</sup> They expected the whites to respect these differences too. Ngqika once broke off a negotiation because a group of Boers asked him to return some cattle, and told Landdrost Alberti that he was prepared to deal with him as an equal but would not allow himself to be messed on by dogs.<sup>99</sup> Ndlambe and Mdushane expected tribute from the Colonists.<sup>100</sup> In practice, the chiefs were prepared to accept leading Colonial officials as their equals, but Ngqika probably expressed a general feeling when he told the Landdrost of Graaff-Reinet that the latter was his inferior because he was not born a chief.<sup>101</sup> On their side, the Colonists felt that all whites were superior to Xhosa, and Philipps, one of the more liberal of the settlers, thought Ngqika's remark about the landdrost of Graaff-Reinet was a piece of "impudence".<sup>102</sup> Consequently, the chiefs were persistently subjected to what they conceived to be indignities. When they went to Fort Willshire, they were often kept waiting, subjected to insults by junior officers, or lodged in premises which they felt

Note: 96. 'Tyali-Editor', Grahamstown Journal, 10 Apr. 1834. See also Mqhayi: Ityala, p. 102; 'Questions put by Col. Smith to the Magistrate Tyalie', C.W.D. II, p. 75; C O 381 J. Ross - J. Bell, 17 Aug. 1830; 'A Kaffer' - Editor Grahamstown Journal, 17 Apr. 1834; Evidence of John Tzatzoe, Abo. com. I, p. 572.

97. J. Philip quoted Macmillan, p. 97.

98. See Chapter III(2) above, p. 73.

99. Alberti, pp. 116-7.

100. Collins, V, p. 51; Rose, p. 56.

101. Campbell, p. 371.

102. Philipps, p. 175.



suitable only for commoners.<sup>103</sup> They liked Colonel Somerset because he "always treated them like chiefs",<sup>104</sup> gave them presents, accommodated them in his house and invited them to his balls.<sup>105</sup> None of them was ever able to marry a white woman.<sup>106</sup> They also resented the fact that they were not trusted to come and go as they pleased. Maqoma once told a meeting of Kat River Khoi

I see no Englishman in the Kat River, there are none in Grahamstown, and where are they? I have got them all in Caffreland, with their wives and children, living in safety and enjoying every protection; and yet I am accounted a rascal and a vagabond, and am obliged to come here by stealth.<sup>107</sup>

Hours later he was removed from a tea-party with the Reverend Read, by a sergeant who added the crowning humiliation of offering him liquor in front of the missionary.<sup>108</sup>

Not only the dignity of the chiefs, but their very lives were endangered. In traditional warfare, the life of a chief was regarded as sacrosanct.<sup>109</sup> The Colonists had no such inhibitions. Chungwa was shot dead while sick.<sup>110</sup> Ndlambe was hunted, as he bitterly remarked, like a springbok.<sup>111</sup> An

Note: 103. Evidence of T. Philipps, Abo. com. I, p. 34; LG 2 W.R. Thomson - H. Somerset, 29 June 1830.

104. Evidence of T. Philipps, Abo. com. I, p. 34.

105. C O 434 H. Somerset-Government Secretary, 24 Apr. 1834; Evidence of T. Philipps, Abo. com. I, p. 28.

106. At least three chiefs tried. For Ngqika see Collins, V, p. 48; for Tyhali, J.E. Alexander: Narrative of a voyage of observation among the colonies of western Africa ... and of a campaign in Kaffir-land, 2 Vols. (London 1837), I, p. 400; for Sandile Cory interview no. 125, Mrs. Waldek, Alice, 20 Jan. 1916.

107. Grahamstown Journal, 17 Oct. 1833.

108. Evidence of J. Read, snr. Abo. com. I, pp. 593-4.

109. See above, Chapt. III(2). This also applied to chiefs of other nations. According to Thembu tradition the Thembu who killed a Bhaca chief expired on the spot. 'Thembu History per chief Falo Mgudlwas at Qumanco, 18 June (19)35' in McLaughlin papers, Cory Library, Grahamstown.

110. See Chapter IV(4) above, p. 112.

111. Evidence of W. Shaw, Abo. com. I, p. 92.



attempt was made to seize Ngqika's person. Nqeno's son was shot around 1825. In 1830, a commando shot Siku, Ndlambe's brother, and seized 'Magugu', another chief.<sup>112</sup> The news caused great indignation through Xhosaland:

At this distance (eighty or ninety miles) from the scene of action, the most exaggerated and romantic stories obtain full credence ... The King himself (Hintsa), upon whom reports of an inflammable nature are daily pouring, is of course greatly unhinged; and moves about with suspicious caution ... The circumstance of a chief having been taken captive seemed to arouse the ire of the nation, and everyone became enraged while speaking about it.<sup>113</sup>

Note: 112. The exact circumstances surrounding the death of Siku was the subject of a heated debate between Wade and Stockenstrom at the Aborigines Committee. This is critically analysed by J.M. Urie 'A Critical Study of the Evidence of Andries Stockenstrom before the Aborigines Committee in 1835, viewed in the light of his previous statements and policies', unpublished M.A. Thesis (Rhodes, 1953), Ch. IV. The consequences of the incident were, however, determined by what the Xhosa believed had happened, namely that the commando had told Siku "to come near and lay down his assegais; he did so, and the commando shot him dead." 'Statement of the Frontier Caffres', C.W.D. II, p. 49.

113. Kay, pp. 302-3. Emphases in the original.



Compensation, which might have made all the difference to Xhosa feelings, was never paid. Thus it was that the wounding of Tyhali's brother, Xoxo, who was defiantly pasturing the chief's cattle in forbidden territory, provoked the War of 1834-5. Pro-Colonial writers have made much of the slightness of the wound, and taken it as evidence that the attack on the Colony was premeditated but there can be little doubt that the indignation was genuine. Xoxo was wounded in the head; in intention, he was dead.<sup>114</sup> The reaction of the people was spontaneous:

Every Caffre who saw Xoxo's wound went back to his hut, took his assegay and shield, and set out to fight, and said "It is better that we die than be treated thus ... Life is no use to us if they shoot our chiefs".<sup>115</sup>

The chiefs themselves were more conciliatory, and Tyhali sent a curious letter to Commandant Somerset, saying "you must to-day use your power, and cause me to pay for my people's folly", implying that he could no longer restrain his followers and that only a strong show of force by the Colony could prevent a full-scale war.<sup>116</sup> The Xhosa rushed into the Colony to avenge their chiefs, their lands, their losses at the hands of the Commandos. Their initial successes forced the initially reluctant chiefs to throw themselves wholeheartedly into the fray. The Sixth Frontier War had begun.

Note: 114. J. Ross-J. Philip, 31 Jan. 1836, quoted Abo. com. I, p. 718.

115. Evidence of John Tzatsoe, Abo. com. I, pp. 564, 567.

116. W. Chalmers-H. Somerset, 20 Dec. 1834, R.C.E. II, p. 123. For further evidence on the initial hesitation of the chiefs see D. Campbell-Government Secretary, 23 Dec. 1834, R.C.E. II, p. 124; F. Kayser - South African Commercial Advertiser quoted Abo. com. I, p. 720.



The Frontier War was primarily a Ngqika war, but it involved all the Xhosa. Hintsa was consulted and approved.<sup>117</sup> He was in touch with the frontier Xhosa and aware of their difficulties. Chiefs were being shot, their cattle seized, their lands appropriated. He must have felt that he was next in line.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, these chiefs were his relations members of the clan of which he was the head.

Several of Hintsa's chiefs stood up, as if by one accord and declared it to be their duty to stand by Gaika's children to the last; that they were orphans of the Caffre nation, and under the protection of Hintsa.<sup>119</sup>

He was urged on by Mjalusa, the old frontier warrior who had fled to him in 1819.<sup>120</sup> Lochenberg, an old Graaff-Reinet rebel, had been his trusted adviser until his death in 1829.<sup>121</sup> In 1833, more anti-British Boers under Louis Trichardt had settled in his country. They supplied him with firearms, and became close advisers.<sup>122</sup> More concretely, the presence of traders and missionaries in his country had undermined his

Note: 117. J. Ayliff-B. D'Urban, 19 June 1835, C.W.D. II, p. 229; 'Deposition of a great Chief (Name concealed)', 23 Apr. 1836, C.W.D. II, p. 229.

118. Even the Basotho felt that the fate of the Xhosa prefigured their own. Evidence of J. Philip, Abo. com. I, p. 629. See also notes 87 and 88 above.

119. A.B. Armstrong-H.G. Smith, 6 Mar. 1835, C.W.D. II, p. 220. See also Deposition of R. Walker 9 Feb. 1835 C.W.D. II, p. 214. J. Ayliff-B. D'Urban 18 June 1835. C.W.D. II, p. 220; Cory interview no. 116, Manxiwa, Willowvale, 29 Jan. 1910.

120. H.G. Smith-B. D'Urban, 29 Apr. 1835 and 31 Aug. 1835, G.M. Theal (ed.): Documents relating to the Kaffir War of 1835 (London, 1912), pp. 138, 361; H.G. Smith - B. D'Urban, 17 Apr. 1836 C.W.D. II, pp. 31, 34.

121. Kay, p. 304.

122. 'Deposition of Tyalie', 4 May 1836, C.W.D. II, p. 234; H.G. Smith-B. D'Urban, 30 Aug. 1835, Theal: War of 1835 p. 360; 'Deposition of Macomo', 28 Apr. 1836, C.W.D. II, p. 232; Hintsa attempted to make a separate peace with the Boers saying they "should have restitution for their cattle in three days". A.B. Armstrong-(?) H.G. Smith 21 Feb. 1835, C.W.D. II, pp. 216-7.



authority and encouraged the Mfengu. He himself remained inactive, but many of his men entered the Colony, and his country became a refuge for captured cattle.<sup>123</sup>

There were also a few chiefs who refused to enter the war. Mqhayi and Dyani Tshatshu did so out of conviction, and were deserted by all but their immediate associates. The amaGqunukhwebe chiefs were more successful in retaining their followers. They were motivated partly by their belief that the Colony was militarily invincible,<sup>124</sup> and partly through the influence of their missionaries, who, since the time of William Shaw (1823-1830), had been instrumental in winning them minor concessions. They did however turn a blind eye to those of their subjects who entered the Colony, and even shared in the spoils. They also accepted Nqeno's stock for safe-keeping.<sup>125</sup> But in behaving this way, the amaGqunukhwebe were betraying the norm of lineage co-operation. Indeed Dyani Tshatshu justified his conduct on the grounds that Hintsa had given him permission to remain inactive.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless they based their behaviour on their assessment of the relative military strength of the Colony and the Xhosa, and relied on the Colony to protect them from the wrath of their betrayed brother chiefs in the years following the war.<sup>127</sup>

Note: 123. Enclosure 12 in B. D'Urban-Lord Glenelg, 9 June 1836, 'Constituting a chain of proofs ... concerning the Conduct of Hintsa', C.W.D. II, pp. 210-244, proved this point conclusively. See for example pp. 214, 216, 235.

124. Evidence of S. Young, Abo. com. I, p. 659.

125. L G 9 Statement of Jonas, 14 June 1835.

126. Evidence of John Tzatzoe, Abo. com. I, p. 564. See also 'Free and Voluntary Statement made by the Chiefs Pato, Kama and Cobus Congo' C.W.D. II, p. 76.

127. W.B. Boyce-H.G. Smith, 23 July 1836 and J.M. Bowker-H.G. Smith, 23 July 1836, C.W.D. II, pp. 267-8.



The immediate occasion of the war, the wounding of Xoxo reflected one of its underlying causes: Colonial disregard for Xhosa customs and opinions. Historians have singled out some other factors as 'causes' of the war,<sup>128</sup> but these do not appear to have been particularly significant. One of these was the discontent of the Khoi with the proposed Vagrancy laws and with their treatment by the whites and by the Kat River Bastards.<sup>129</sup> Maqoma and Tyhali were led to believe that Khoi members of the Fort Willshire garrison would rise in alliance with them. Yet this was hardly a decisive factor: if the Xhosa had not wished to wage war, Khoi attitudes would have remained a matter of indifference. The role of 'political missionaries' has also been stressed. Not only Read and Philip, but also the Presbyterian missionaries, were blamed by the Colonial authorities, who contrasted the behaviour of the chiefs in their neighbourhood to those in the neighbourhood of the Wesleyans. No account was taken of the fact that the amaNgqika felt betrayed and deceived, whereas the amaGqunukhwebe had already received some concessions with regard to grazing-rights and were hoping for more. Dr. Philip's visit of 1834 in which the issue of the Ceded Territory was discussed was regarded as especially reprehensible. But the Xhosa remembered that the essence of his message was that a good

Note: 128. See for example Cory, III, pp. 47-9.

129. See for example C.W.D. II, pp. 76, 79, 81, 85.



Govenor was coming and that until then they should "shed no blood".<sup>130</sup> Since Govenor D'Urban failed to arrive when expected, the chiefs thought that the promise of redress was only a temporisation.<sup>131</sup> If Philip's visit had any influence at all, it was to delay rather than promote the outbreak of war. The missionaries had been placed in an extremely awkward situation. The Colonial authorities expected them to defend patently indefensible Colonial actions. Eventually they could not but agree with the Xhosa complaints. The missionary Read who had abandoned the European community for that of the Khoi was quite outspoken.<sup>132</sup> Yet to argue that the Xhosa viewed with equanimity their expulsion from their land and the shooting of their chiefs, and were only roused to indignation by the malevolent exertions of their missionaries,<sup>133</sup> is to accuse them of a stupidity and a supineness that is belied by their entire history.

Note: 130. For Xhosa accounts of the Philip visit, see Evidence of John Tzatzoe, Abo. com. I, p. 571 and depositions of Tyhali, Ganya, Bhotomane, 'Humanus', and the journal of J. Bennie in C.W.D. II, pp. 74-80. Philip aroused Colonial indignation by discussing the question of the Ceded Territory with the chiefs, agreeing with their claims and promising that Govenor D'Urban would set matters right. But it was not generally known until Professor W. Macmillan examined the Philip papers that Philip was under the impression that he was acting on behalf of D'Urban. See Macmillan, Ch. VIII.

131. For Xhosa eagerness to see Governor see Evidence of C. Bradford, Evidence of A. Stoffel and undated letter from F. Kayser - S.A. Commercial Advertiser all in Abo. com. I, pp. 159, 586, 720.

132. Deposition of W.G. Atherstone quoted in Evidence of T.F. Wade Abo. com. I, p. 393.

133. See the penetrating questioning of Wade by T.F. Buxton ("Now do you think really that the Caffres forgot the real oppressions to which they were subjected, that they were tranquil under those, but that they were excited and tumultuous because an individual seemed to sympathise with them?") Questions 3503-3512 Abo. com. I, pp. 374-6.



CONCLUSION : AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE HAMMOND-TOOKE HYPOTHESIS

The most influential analysis of the Xhosa political history up till now has been that proposed by W.D. Hammond-Tooke in 'Segmentation and Fission in Cape Nguni Political Units'.<sup>1</sup> This stimulating and wide-ranging article dealt with both historical and theoretical matters. These will be discussed in turn.

Hammond-Tooke rejected the possibility that 'Cape Nguni'<sup>2</sup>

- Note: 1. Africa, XXXV, (1965). Hammond-Tooke has restated these views unchanged in subsequent publications. See 'The 'other side' of frontier history: a model of Cape Nguni political progress' in Thompson: African Societies and Command or Consensus (Cape Town 1975). This article has been extremely influential. See for example Wilson in O.H. I, p. 119n4; Harinck in Thompson: African Societies, pp. 147-9; J.D. Omer-Cooper: The Zulu Aftermath (London, 1969) pp. 19-20; R. Derricourt: 'Settlement in the Transkei and Ciskei before the Mfecane' and W.M. Freund: 'Thoughts on the Study of the History of the Cape Eastern Frontier Zone' in Saunders and Derricourt, pp. 39-82, 92-3.
2. The word 'Nguni' is under fire as being unhistorical. See S. Marks and A. Atmore: 'The problem of the Nguni' in D. Dalby (ed.) Language and History in Africa (London 1970). It is, however, probably too firmly established to be changed. The term 'Cape Nguni' is too misleading to be used, even as a shorthand for Nguni nations of the present Cape Province. The 'Cape Nguni' lack common characteristics which differentiate them as a group from the 'Natal Nguni'. The Mpondo share certain cultural affinities with the Zulu but not the Xhosa, such as the fact that they no longer circumcise. The distinction is an administrative rather than an ethnographic one. If Natal had annexed Mpondoland, as it nearly did, the Mpondo would probably be referred to today as Natal Nguni. In any case it is surely flying in the face of ethnographic evidence to classify the Bhaca (who only arrived in the Cape in the 1820's) as 'Cape Nguni'. (Hammond-Tooke: 'Segmentation' pp. 161-2). If a distinction must be drawn, in terms 'northern' and 'southern' Nguni seem far more appropriate.



polities originated through conquest, on the grounds that "Southern Bantu ruling houses always go back to time immemorial, as far as the knowledge of tribal historians is concerned",<sup>3</sup> and suggested that political authority originated through a development of the busa system.<sup>4</sup> The polities were inherently unstable and showed "a strong tendency to split into two independent contraposed groups of co-ordinate status."<sup>5</sup> This fission was bilateral, each Right-Hand Son having a "Pre-emptive right to establish his own independent chiefdom."<sup>6</sup> This was the result of the dualistic structure of the polygynous family among the Cape Nguni.<sup>7</sup> Hammond-Tooke supported his hypothesis with case histories, and a statistical table of "cases of splitting investigated in detail by the author".<sup>8</sup> On such a view of Xhosa political dynamics, Xhosa history should be seen as one of fragmentation as the original polity sub-divided almost every generation.

This view was challenged by the present writer in an article entitled 'The Rise of the 'Right-Hand House' in the History and Historiography of the Xhosa', and a preliminary paper entitled 'Xhosa expansion before 1800'.<sup>9</sup> It was argued that Hammond-Tooke's source material had a built-in bias in

- Note:
3. Hammond-Tooke: 'Segmentation', p. 147.
  4. For a critique of this viewpoint see Ch. VI(1) above.
  5. Hammond-Tooke: 'Segmentation', p. 149.
  6. Ibid p. 152.
  7. Ibid p. 157.
  8. Ibid p. 154.
  9. 'The Rise of the "Right-Hand House" in the History and Historiography of the Xhosa', History in Africa II (1975); 'Xhosa Expansion before 1800', paper presented to the Postgraduate Seminar, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 30 Jan. 1975. The latter paper is entirely superseded by the present thesis.



favour of the amaNgqika. The defeat of Ngqika's attempt to attain the Paramountcy resulted in an anomalous situation where the Ngqika chief was weaker than the Paramount but stronger than any other subordinate chief. It was necessary to define his position in the body politic, and this was done by exaggerating the autonomy of the Right-Hand House. Hammond-Tooke also failed to take sufficient account of the fact that the positions of 'Great Son', 'Right-Hand Son', 'ixhiba Son' and so forth were not purely dependent on the accident of birth, but were, to a considerable extent, political offices. This enabled men like Mdange, Mhala and Tyhali to achieve places on the genealogical tree to which they were not entitled by birth.<sup>10</sup> Hammond-Tooke has allowed his interpretation of the past to be overly influenced by present circumstances. The Xhosa case seems to bear out one of Southall's hypotheses, namely:

In a lineage system, a large segment does not necessarily have to treat a small segment on terms of equality because their ancestors were brothers: rather the small segment has to seek alliance and claim fraternal ancestry with another small segment, or even accept subordinate structural status within the large segment, by reinterpreting the relationship as filial, instead of fraternal, so that not activity itself but the interpretation of it can be brought into conformity with the central organizational ideas ... In other words, the organisational ideas do not directly control action, but only the interpretation of action. The primary interpretations of action .. are the tenuous threads which link and reconcile action and

Note: 10. For discussion of this general point, see Ch. III(1) above. For Mdange see Ch. IV(1); For Mhala and Tyhali see Ch. VII(1).



ideas.<sup>11</sup>

The 'House System' is the central organisational idea among the Xhosa but it does not dictate their political behaviour. It is moreover clear that there was no simple Great House-Right-Hand House duality. All sons of chiefs became chiefs, and a powerful chief (Rharhabe, Ngqika, Ndlambe, Mdushane, Hintsa) would usually leave three or four sons who founded important lineages, while a weak chief (Mqhayi, amaNtinde chiefs) would leave only one heir.<sup>12</sup> Hammond-Tooke's case studies and statistical table can be called into question on empirical grounds.<sup>13</sup>

Note: 11. A. Southall: 'A Critique of the Typology of States and political systems' in M. Banton (ed.): Political Systems and the Distribution of Power, ASA Monographs 2 (London 1965) pp. 115-6. My emphasis.

12. See Genealogies, Appendix III.

13. Hammond-Tooke's first table (p. 154) gives a figure of 15 Right-Hand house secessions to 3 minor house secessions. These are never fully explained for his second table (p. 163) gives only 12 Right-Hand House secessions to 3 minor house secessions. Of these cases, it turns out that 6 (5 Right-Hand House and 1 minor house secession) are not Xhosa, and should be removed from the table because since there are not more than two cases per polity, it cannot be maintained that they indicate a process which is continuously repeated. This leaves a score of 6 Right-Hand House secessions to 2 minor house secessions. To the list of minor house secessions one should add the secessions of Ndlambe and Langa, since both were known to Hammond-Tooke and, in fact, he mentions the secession of Ndlambe in his text (p. 161). Examining the remaining six cases cited by Hammond-Tooke one cannot avoid concluding that he based his opinion that 'fission' was part of the normal course of events on inadequate historical information. Of the six cases, (1) Mdange was not a Right-Hand Son (see Appendix IV), (2) Gwali was, in all probability, the heir to the Paramountcy, dethroned by the machinations of Mdange (3) Gasela was the successor to the amaNtsusa chieftainship, deriving from a daughter of Rharhabe (see Chapter VII(1)). Hammond-Tooke goes so far as to deny that Nukwa was a chief (See his Tribes of KWT District p. 83). (4) Mdushane was Ndlambe's heir, and was only deprived of his 'Great Son' position retrospectively through Mhala's claim to the chiefship. (See Ch. VII(1)). (5) Mqhayi only rose to prominence through the death of his brothers (see Ch. VII(1)). (6) Rharhabe was indeed a Right-Hand Son and it is probably because of this fact that the position of Right-Hand Son was emphasised to such an extent. For more details, see Peires: 'Right-Hand House'.



The present writer sees the early history of the Xhosa as one of expansion and incorporation rather than increasing fragmentation. The dispersion of members of the royal clan increased the territory and the population under its control. Inevitably this led to internal disputes between members of the royal clan and the weakening of the central authority. The appearance of a more powerful external factor - the Cape Colony - eventually led to a complete breakdown of Tshawe solidarity.

In his theoretical discussion of the nature of the Xhosa polity, Hammond-Tooke based his argument on "Nadel's criteria of territorial authority, centralised government, specialised administrative staff, and the monopoly of the use of legitimate force. The crucial point is that of territorial authority."<sup>14</sup> In terms of these criteria, the Xhosa polity was not a unitary state but a "tribal cluster".<sup>15</sup> The authority of the Paramount over the junior chiefs in his cluster was "not political, but rather social and ritual."<sup>16</sup> Proceeding from these definitions, Hammond-Tooke refers to the splitting of the royal lineages every generation as "fission".<sup>17</sup>

Hammond-Tooke almost certainly underrates the political importance of the Paramountcy. It is surely misleading to imply that ritual and social authority is devoid of political implications. The first-fruits ceremony was an annual affirmation of the loyalty of his subordinates to the Paramount.<sup>18</sup>

Matrimonial and succession disputes were usually political

Note: 14. Hammond-Tooke: 'Segmentation', p. 156.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid, p. 152.

18. Soga: Ama-Xosa, p. 153.



in origin,<sup>19</sup> and the right of the Paramount to judge them as an invitation to throw his political weight into the balance. The junior chiefs owed whatever rights they possessed to the Paramount who had given each his 'dish' or his 'stick of authority' (intonga).<sup>20</sup> In accepting the stick, the recipient received authority, but recognized his subordination to the man who gave it.<sup>21</sup> Hammond-Tooke states that no tribute was paid, but tradition has recorded two instances on which junior chiefs were required to provide tribute for their superiors.<sup>22</sup> Finally it is impossible to ignore the emotional and symbolic function of the Paramount as the focus of national feeling.<sup>23</sup>

- Note: 19. For cases in which the Paramount's judgement seems to have been based on political rather than strictly legal consideration see the judgement of Khawuta on Ngqika versus Ntimbo (Ch. IV(2)) or the judgement of Hintsa on Mguntu versus Kalashe (Ch. IV(4)).
20. For the metaphor of the dish, see Ch. III(1). For the 'stick' see Mqhayi's praises of Chief Archibald Velile Sandile in J. Opland "Two Unpublished Poems by S.E.K. Mqhayi" to be published in Research in African Literature VIII (1977). Opland translates 'intonga' as 'mace'.
21. Chief Justice Mabandla of the Bhele caused an uproar in The Ciskei about 5 years ago when he refused to accept the 'stick' from Rharhabe Paramount Velile Sandile. Vansina considers delegation of authority in the following manner to be a common characteristic of "most of the States in Central, South and East Africa": "The delegation of authority is generally a total delegation and comprises legislative, administrative, judicial, military and even religious authority. Chiefs hold authority because they receive it from the king ... In their provinces they will give justice, raise tribute, issue laws, sometimes even wage war and be considered generally as 'owners' of their subjects, their labour, their goods and their land all through the one act of delegation." J. Vansina: "A Comparison of African Kingdoms", Africa, XXXII, (1962), pp. 324-5.
22. The instances are the demand of Cira for Tshawe's blue-buck (see Ch. II(1)) and the buffalo breast and foreleg which Rharhabe sent Gcaleka (see Ch. IV(1)). The fact that these are myths enhances their importance, for it is within myths that oral societies articulate codes of behaviour.
23. See Chapter III note 23.



Hammond-Tooke is correct in stating that chiefs often fought each other, but he ignores the qualitative difference between internal quarrels and national wars.<sup>24</sup> It is incorrect to state that there was "no obligation for chiefdoms in the cluster to unite in defence of one another."<sup>25</sup> The most important chiefs to stay out of the 1834-5 War acknowledged their obligation to assist the Paramount in 1828.<sup>26</sup> Afterwards they relied on Colonial power to protect them against their betrayed brother-chiefs. There is every reason to believe that those chiefs who stood aside in the 1834-5 War were defying the ethic of lineage solidarity, rather than acting in accordance with an ethic of chiefdom independence. On the other hand, the participation of Hintsa in the War was partly due to his recognition of national and kinship obligations.<sup>27</sup>

Hammond-Tooke's conception of each chiefdom as an independent unit, leads him to speak of the creation of new chiefdoms as "fission". Although his title refers to "segmentation and fission", he appears to use the terms interchangeably and does not differentiate between them. There is, however, a significant difference, as the following commonly-accepted definition shows:

By segmentation we mean the process by which any social group becomes sub-divided internally while maintaining its own unity and cohesion. By fission we mean the process by which a social group divides into two or more distinct groups, so that the original group disappears as a social entity.<sup>28</sup>

Note: 24. See Chapter III(1), pp. 69-70.

25. Hammond-Tooke 'Segmentation' p. 156. Hunter (pp. 378-9) states that there was such an obligation among the Mpondo. In taking this position, Hammond-Tooke contradicts his own previous statement in The Tribes of Willowvale District (retoria, 1956-7), p. 12.

26. The reference is to the Gqunukhwebe chiefs. See W. Shaw: Journal p. 138 and Ch. VII note 126.

27. See Ch. VII(3) and note 119.

1967)p 57

28. J.A.Barnes: Politics in a Changing Society (2nd ed Manchester, 1967)



Xhosa political authority, like the Xhosa royal clan, segmented every generation. This did result in an effective shift in the distribution of political power and in an increase in spatial differentiation. However, the process did not reach the stage of fission, which would have dissolved the political unit entirely. Even after the War of 1818-9, the Xhosa were still a single polity under a single, universally recognised - albeit relatively powerless - Paramount. This cannot be said in the cases of the Yoruba, the Alur and the Ngoni, where conquering lineages broke up into entirely separate polities with no commonly recognised head. Such a division may justly be termed fission, and such a group of related polities may justly be termed a cluster.<sup>29</sup> But among the Xhosa, segmentation never developed into fission.

It seems therefore misleading to refer to the Xhosa polity as a "tribal cluster". On the other hand, it can certainly not be termed a unitary state. The Xhosa polity, as it existed in the period 1700-1835, belonged to a category of polities, very common in Africa, which are neither unitary states nor stateless societies. Lloyd calls these 'royal aristocracies', Vansina calls them 'regal kingdoms' and Southall calls them 'segmentary societies'.<sup>30</sup> Southall's ideal-type of segmentary state reads at times as if it had been framed with the Xhosa in mind.

Note: 29. Roberts (p. 296) defines a cluster as a group of "states each ruled by members of the same clan and perhaps uniting against enemies outside the cluster, but acknowledging no one head over all the cluster."

30. P.C. Lloyd: 'The Political Structure of African Kingdoms: An Exploratory Model' in M. Banton (ed.): Political Systems and the Distribution of Power, ASA Monographs 2, (London 1965), pp. 115-6; Vansina: 'Comparison'; Southall: 'Critique' pp. 115-128; A. Southall: Alur Society (Cambridge, 1956, reprinted Nairobi, 1970), pp. 241-263.



Here are some of its defining characteristics:

- (2) There is a centralised government, yet there are also peripheral foci of administration over which the centre exercises only limited control.
- (4) Monopoly of the use of force is successfully claimed to a limited extent and within a limited range by the central authority but legitimate force of a more restricted order inheres at all the peripheral foci.
- (6) The more peripheral a subordinate authority is the more chance it has to change its allegiance from one power pyramid to another.<sup>31</sup>

But to classify the Xhosa as a segmentary state and leave it at that would be to overlook the dynamic and changing aspects of its political development. The Xhosa polity was itself superimposed on an earlier, more egalitarian political system, that of clan-ship. Even without the Colonial intervention, a political system that depended for its viability on the availability of unlimited land could not have survived indefinitely. Moreover, there were individuals working for change from within. Certain chiefs sought to centralise power through religious (Gcaleka) or secular (Ngqika) means. Nxele, a commoner, might have destroyed the entire ascriptive basis of authority through his appointment as a chief. On the other hand the polity might have become even more decentralised and broken up into a cluster. In politics, as in religion and economics, the Xhosa demonstrated a high degree of initiative and adaptability.

Note: 31. Southall: Alur, pp. 248-9.



## APPENDIX I A

### FIELDWORK METHODS

Fieldwork lasted about five months, spread over a seven-month period from August 1975 to March 1976. Two months were spent in the Ciskei, and three in the Transkei, primarily in Kentani and Willowvale districts. Every known Xhosa chiefdom, including those not officially recognised, was visited, and information concerning it was obtained from the persons the chief judged best qualified to give it. This was the only practical method of covering such a large area within the limited time available. Not only was it the only way in which many informants could have been located, but the knowledge that the occasion was official diminished their very natural fears and suspicions. Informants who demonstrated considerable knowledge at these official meetings were visited privately in their homes afterwards. This in a large measure, compensated for the deficiencies inherent in group testimonies. It may be urged that my time would have been better spent in fewer chiefdoms, acquiring knowledge in greater depth. However, the poor time depth of the traditions and the paucity of really good informants considerably limited the amount of information available in any one place. I am satisfied on this point as the result of weeks spent in each of two chiefdoms in Willowvale district, in one of which I was getting good information and in the other I was not. My constant presence in Willowvale and Kentani villages also contributed substantially to the development of local recognition and to the reduction of distrust and suspicion. Moreover, relatively few traditions deal with Xhosa history as such; most deal with the histories of individual chiefs and chiefdoms, and to have omitted any of these would have been to invite rather lop-sided history. Although it is virtually certain that I did not collect all the available information, I am convinced that what remains is not of a nature or a quality to substantially affect the conclusions of what is, after all, a general history. It is my sincere hope that eventually local histories will be written, preferably by the people themselves, which will supplement and correct this one.

Names of informants were also solicited from government officials, teachers, clergymen, traders and passers-by. I found the same names recurring over and over again, and it was indeed these men who supplied me with the bulk of my information.

Clan histories, the importance of which cannot be over-emphasised, were harder to locate than chiefly histories, though informants spoke more readily about their clans than on any other subject. The method adopted was to ask good informants who had been contacted for the purpose of giving a chiefly history to give the history of their clan. Towards the end of the fieldwork period, an attempt was made to seek out representatives of clans concerning which I had not yet found any information. It is in the field of clan histories that new information is <sup>most</sup> likely to turn up. Local histories were few and far between, because of the large-scale movements of population



in the nineteenth century resulting from the rewarding of 'loyal' Xhosa and the displacement of 'rebellious' ones. I visited the scenes of several notable events, such as the battle of Amalinde and Nongqawuse's vision, only to find that the forefathers of the local people had come into the area after the event had taken place. Enquiries were also made on economic, social and religious topics, but although these were useful for the elucidation of present practices, some of which also operated in the past, they were fairly unsuccessful as regards past practices now discontinued.

I can read Xhosa, and speak and understand it to a limited extent, but found it necessary to employ an assistant to interpret and to set informants at ease. I was, however, able to check on the accuracy of the interpretation and to follow the drift of the conversation without interrupting it. My apparent inability to speak Xhosa was useful inasmuch as the people would speak freely when my assistant left the room, thus enabling me to gauge the nature of my reception. I would speak Xhosa to informants whom I knew well, and found that their attempts to assist me did much to improve personal relationships.

I recorded most of my interviews but found that even informants who trusted me were relieved to see the tape recorder switch off. I got some of my best information in casual conversation over tea when the 'official interview' was over. Most of this was written up later in notebooks kept for the purpose, and copies of these and the tapes will be deposited in the Cory Library for Historical Research, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.



## APPENDIX I B

LIST OF PRINCIPAL INFORMANTS

All the men listed below have received some formal education, and all have spent three or more years at work in the urban areas. Except for Burns-Ncomashe and Sangotsha, none are, or have been, regular newspaper readers and, except where indicated, none has more than a passing knowledge of a European language. 'Well read' refers to vernacular reading. This list excludes those whose competence was limited to their own chief or clan. It is in conversation with the following men that my own ideas on Xhosa political organisation (Chapters II and III) were developed and clarified. Birth dates were given to me in some cases, and in others were deduced from important events (such as the Rinderpest Epidemic of 1897) which occurred at the time of their birth.

1. Chief England Bhotomane (b. 1892)(Clan: Tshawe). Universally considered as the greatest oral authority. His father was a diplomatic representative of Sarhili. When I met him, his powers were rapidly failing - between my first and second visits, he lost his eyesight and was relieved of his administrative duties. Residence: Ramntswana Location, Kentani District.
2. Chief S.M. Burns-Ncamashe (b. ?)(Tshawe). See Chapter I(3). Residences: Zwelitsha and Victoria East.
3. James Kepe (b. 1892)(Ntlane). Councillor to the iTsomyana chiefdom, and local expert on ritual and history. Very little education and no knowledge of English or written sources. Still very mentally alert. Friend of Chief Bhotomane, who lives fairly close. Residence: Thuthura Location, Kentani District.
4. Mbodhlele Maki (b. 1922)(Giqwa). Descendant of Feni, son of Maki. See Soga: SE Bantu, p. 147. Residence: Shixini Location, Willowvale District.
5. Frank Matanga (b. 1917)(?). Councillor of Chief Phato (amaGqunukhwebe). Brought up on a farm in Aberdeen District. Heard the traditions from his father. Good understanding of English. Residence: Mdantsane.
6. Nonho Cyril Melane (b. 1903)(Ngqosini). Holds no official position. His grandfather was a warrior of Sarhili. He says he became interested in history at a very early age, and deliberately sought out old men who could give him information. Well read. He is the most widely respected oral historian, after Bhotomane and Burns-Ndamashe. Residence: Qwaninga Location, Willowvale District.
7. Chief Ford Mpangele (b. ?)(Tshawe). Descendant of Sandile. Guardian of the late Rharhabe Paramount Mxolisi's heir, and chief of the amaZibula, Mgwali Location, Stutterheim District.



## APPENDIX I B (Contd.)

8. Stanford Ndamase (b. 1918)(Ngqosini). Claims to be heir of the last Ngqosini chief, reduced to headman by Hintsa. Ndamase is not really a historian in that he does not recite traditions, but has considerable knowledge and gives perceptive answers to questions. Residence: Shixini Location, Willowvale District.
9. Hugh Mason Nikani (b. 1920)(Tshawe). His father was head of the amaNtinde in Kentani District, and a close associate of the late Paramount Velile Sandile. (See Opland, 'Two unpublished poems'). This position has now lapsed. Nikani qualified (thwasa) as a diviner, but is now an ordained minister of the Order of Ethiopia. Well educated and speaks extremely good English, but not well read, even in vernacular history. Residence: Thamarha Location, King William's Town District, and Kentani.
10. Wilson Nkabi (b. ?)(isiThathu). Councillor and Secretary to the Gasela chiefdom for many years. Speaks some English. Residence: Bulembo Location, King William's Town District.
11. Ndawongqola Qeqe (b. 1912)(Ngwevu). Ritual head of all Iqawuka (amaNgwevu). His father was circumcision guardian of the late Gcaleka Paramount, Ngangomhlaba. None of his considerable body of information came from written sources, and he knew no dates. Was carefully instructed by his father, so that he could fill the position of chief councillor to the Paramount. This position has now lapsed. Residence: Shixini Location, Willowvale District.
12. Daniel Runeyi (b. 1912)(Ngwevu). Relation of Qeqe. Educated and understands English. Runeyi was the only informant whose amabali were biassed towards a political understanding of events. For instance, he gave a fairly long and detailed account of the origins of the War of 1834-5. There was not, however, anything that was not better recorded in the documents. Residence: Shixini Location, Willowvale District.
13. Isaac Sangotsha (b. ?)(Mpinga). Long-time Councillor and Secretary to the late Rharhabe Paramounts, Velile and Mxolisi Sandile. See Chapter I(2). Residence: Ntsikizini Location, King Williams Town District.



APPENDIX I CLIST OF BASIC AMABALI

Every well-informed Xhosa knows eight or more of the following amabali. These satisfy his need to know about the past of his people. In addition, each will probably know a story or two about his chiefs and his clan.

1. The battle between Cira and Tshawe.
2. The arrival of the two bridal parties, which result in the formation of the Right-Hand House.
3. The thwasa of Gcaleka in the Ngxingxolo river.
4. The quarrel between Ngqika and Ndlambe:
  - a. the abduction of Thuthula.
  - b. Ngqika seeks help from the whites.
5. Ntsikana:
  - a. his conversion.
  - b. Ntsikana prophesies the arrival of the whites and the Mfengu.
6. The origin of the amaGqunukhwebe.
7. The death of Hintsa and the mutilation of his body.
8. The arrival of the Mfengu (the story about the food and the fire).
9. The origin of the War of the Axe.
10. The cattle-killing.
11. The War of Nongxakazelo (1875) between the Xhosa and the Thembu because of the Thembu Paramount's ill-treatment of his wife, Sarhili's daughter.
12. The War of Ngayechibi (Ninth Frontier War):
  - a. The fight at the beer-drink.
  - b. The flight of Sarhili across the Mbashe river.



## APPENDIX I D

TWO SAMPLE TRADITIONS

These traditions are given as recited, without interruption. Interpolations are indicated by brackets.

1. A Chiefly Tradition: Interview with Chief Ford Mpangele, Mgwali Location, Stutterheim District, 26 August 1975.

Tshiwo was the Great Son of Ngconde. While he was dying, Tshiwo left the affairs of the kingdom in the hands of Mdange. There were four men: there were Tshiwo, who was the chief, followed by Gwali, followed by Hleke, followed by Mdange. These last two were twins. So when Tshiwo died, he left three younger brothers Hleke, Mdange and Gwali; and he left the affairs of the kingdom in charge of Mdange, so that he should be chief and guard the nation. Tshiwo had already married the mother of Phalo, but she was a young woman, and the nation did not know that she was pregnant. It is the custom among the Xhosa that if a man dies and his wife has not yet had a child, she should be taken to her parents' home, since she is still small and it is not necessary that she should wear skins and put on black and mourn the husband. For this reason, that woman was taken home to her people, even though she was already pregnant with Phalo. When she arrived at her people this was reported to Mdange. Mdange was often troubled by Hleke and Gwali because they were older; apparently they were jealous. He often used to say to them: "Just wait, and I will get you the 'phalo' of Tshiwo." Among the Xhosa it is said that when a man has pains in the stomach, that it is called a 'phalo'.

One day, Mdange returned and said "People of our home, that queen who went away, it appears that she already had a child in her stomach; it is now born, it is a girl!" And so the councillors carried on as usual, thinking it was a girl. But he (Mdange) knew that it was not a girl - he hid that child so that he should not be killed by jealous people. And so this 'girl' grew up, time passed, and eventually the time arrived for the 'girl' to come to the court for the intonjane (female initiation ceremony). Gwali said: "Bring her, so we can see her." And so, my friend, the 'girl' came to the court. When she arrived, Gwali looked at her and he saw that this did not look like a girl. He took his ikrwane (a type of small spear) and lifted up the skirt - and a man not a woman appeared! Then Gwali said "Mdange! Why have you tricked me? You told me that it was a girl but it is a boy!" Then, says the history, fighting began among the Xhosa, it was fought, there on the other side of the Mthatha river. As a result of that war, the Xhosa came to Gcuwa (Butterworth), there where the site of Phalo's homestead is. On that account, many nations crossed - the amaHleke, amaNtinde, amaGqunukhwebe and amaGwali - they were chased out by Mdange, fighting because they had been cheated by Mdange who had hidden the fact that their older brother had given birth to a male. That was the first war among the Xhosa.



## APPENDIX I D (Contd.)

2. A Clan Tradition: Interview with M. Kantolo, Kantolo Location, Kentani District, 27 October 1975.

What is the origin of the amaQocwa? They started off in Swaziland. They came from there and travelled until they arrived here among the Xhosa. When they came out from Swaziland, the chief here was Ndlambe, and they were under the Chief Ndlambe. They served him well and it seems they were great councillors. The majority of councillors became jealous of this thing that the Qocwa was the foremost councillor at the Great Place, and very many of these councillors made a plot. They concocted a plan to drive away this Qocwa, he who was already the head of the councillors of the Great Place. It happened that there was a cattle disease and the cattle were dying. Now, there was a well-known diviner at another place. Those councillors chose a young man, and told him to go to the diviner and explain the whole thing, that the cattle were dying at the Great Place, and that when we come for a divination, the diviner must smell out the bald-headed man of the amaQocwa for killing the cattle of the Great Place. Because it is just as if he is killing those cattle, for he is attempting to kill the chief so that he may be chief here. The diviner agreed because he was bribed. When the young man returned he said "Well, we have reached an agreement with the diviner." "Well then, everything's in order." The councillors spoke to the chief: "Chief, you are losing all of your cattle from dying. The cause of it should be divined." The chief: "Well, councillors, it's up to you." Then that diviner divined, and, indeed, he spoke according to the wishes of the councillors. He smelt out the bald man who was the great councillor at (Ndlambe's) home. (The councillors) saw that (the Qocwa) should be surrounded, and killed, and his cattle captured because he was very rich. A certain man gave away the secret to that man of the amaQocwa: "You are plotted against, and on such-and-such a day you will be harmed." He said that Chief Ndlambe had already agreed that the thing should be done and said "These cattle of mine are dying on account of this man." This man who was plotted against sent a young man to Ngqika's place: "Here I am surrounded. I am going to be done to death." And this was Ngqika's reply: "Bring all of your belongings here. We will meet on the road with the army that I shall bring out to meet you." The Qocwa left Ndlambe's place by night, in order to reach Ngqika's place. In the morning, it was said: "Tyhini! In that homestead, the doors are not open, nothing is coming out, nothing is happening, there are no cattle, there is nothing at all!" They followed the tracks of the cattle's hoofmarks. There, they were seen, going out, and the Ndlambe army, already armed on their trail. By the blessing of God, when Ndlambe's army appeared, he could already be seen with all his family, driving all his livestock, and there, suddenly, the Ngqika army in front of him. Ndlambe saw them: "Tyhini! That army is big. There is nothing we can do to catch up with that man." Ndlambe returned and went back. That Qocwa was taken to the amaNgqika, and thrown in among them. That is how we became amaNgqika.



## APPENDIX II A

## CLANS IN XHOSA HISTORY

Monica Wilson is surely correct in pointing out that "it is improbable that exclusive occupation of large areas by men of a single clan ever existed."<sup>1</sup> This does not however rule out the possibility of the clan having been the dominant mode of political organisation in the period prior to the rise of the chiefly polities.<sup>2</sup> There are two main indications that this was indeed the case. First, there is the existence of clan histories in which the clan-head is called inkosi (chief) and in which the clans behave as corporate political units, migrating, fighting with each other, conquering or accepting subordination.<sup>3</sup> The second indication is the continued concentration of certain clans within particular areas. This is most marked among the Thembu, where some clan-heads still retain their original chieftainship. There is thus a Nqabe chief in Mqanduli District, a Ndungwana chief in Cofimvaba District and a Gcina chief in St. Marks District. Their subjects are mostly members of their clan. A similar situation exists with regard to the Ngwevu clan of the Xhosa, the original chiefs of which became councillors of the amaTshawe. There is a large concentration of Ngwevu clansmen in the Gcaleka Tribal Authority, Cofimvaba District, which is governed not by a Tshawe but by a Ngwevu headman.<sup>4</sup> There is another large concentration of amaNgwevu in Qawuka Ward, Shixini Location, Willowvale District. Their headman can trace the history of his forebears from independent councillorship to subjection to the local Tshawe chief.<sup>5</sup>

It is suggested that these concentrations are survivals of a system of government which was universal before the rise of the chiefly polities. It is unclear to what extent clans expanded by virtue of biological increase and to what extent they incorporated aliens, who adopted their clan names. Provision is made in ritual for conversion from one clan to another, and there are two known cases of clans or large lineages merging with clans of greater prestige.<sup>6</sup> The isiThathu clan trades descend from three

- Note:
1. O.H. I, p. 118. Author's emphasis.
  2. This was the contention of A.T. Bryant: Olden Times in Zululand and Natal (London 1929), p. 15. It is accepted by Hammond-Tooke. See 'Segmentation' p. 143.
  3. See Chapter II(1), and Appendix II D.
  4. Interview with R. Fibi, Esidutyeni Location, Cofimvaba District, 28 Nov. 1975.
  5. Interviews with N. Qeqe, Shixini Location, Willowvale District, Nov. 1975.
  6. The descendants of Khwane, the first Gqunukhwebe chief, are today regarded as amaTshawe. In the 1820's they were clearly not regarded as amaTshawe, since they intermarried with them. Mqhayi: Ityala p. 108. The Maya lineage of the Thembu royal clan arrived in Xhosa territory with the Gqubulashe commoner clan in attendance. Today the amaGqubulashe call themselves amaMaya, do not intermarry with amaMaya, and also do not intermarry with the amaHala, who are related to the amaMaya. Interview with M. Mzeni (Maya) Nqadu Location Willowvale District, 22 Nov. 1975; P. Mqikela (Gqubulashe) Nqadu Location, Willowvale District, 24 Nov. 1975. (Both interviews, notebook only).



## APPENDIX II A (Contd.)

men.<sup>7</sup> Incorporation of aliens would account for the fact that some clans appear to be far more numerous than others.

Because of population growth, loss of land, and the forced migration of the nineteenth century,<sup>8</sup> it is impossible to indicate where individual clans were located prior to the rise of chiefly polities. With the expansion and dispersion of the amaTshawe, clans split up into clan-sections and lost their political unity. Nevertheless, clan-affiliation continues to be politically significant within the chiefdom. The amaTshawe display great sensitivity on this point and tend to deny that particular clans dominate particular wards of their chiefdom. "They do not care what clan they are because they know that only a Tshawe can become a chief."<sup>9</sup> Yet most commoners engaged in casual conversation do identify particular wards or sub-wards as residences of a particular clan or clans.<sup>10</sup> The continuing political vitality of commoner clan-sections is sustained by the fact that headmanship/councillorship, like chieftainship, has continued to descend in the hereditary line. Where they can, the amaTshawe replace commoner headman with junior abaTshawe,<sup>11</sup> apparently to compensate them for the fact that they are no longer able to become chiefs. There have even been attempts to replace chiefs from older lineages of the royal clan.<sup>12</sup> Many junior abaTshawe have found a niche as Urban Representatives of their chief, but even this avenue is rapidly filling up. Sometimes, commoners have successfully resisted the ama-

Note: 7. Interview with W. Nkabi, Bulembo Location, King Williams Town District, 24 Aug. 1976.

8. For example, during the chiefship of Bhurhu's son, Mapassa, the iTsomyana chiefdom moved from Tsomo District to King Williams Town District, and then finally to their present location in Kentani District.

9. Interview with Chief E. Bhotomane, Ramntswana Location, Kentani District, 27 Oct. 1975.

10. This is compatible with the results obtained by W.D. Hammond-Tooke: 'Descent Group Scatter in a Mpondomise Ward', African Studies, XXVII, (1968), pp. 86-7.

11. This is no more than an impression, and cannot be empirically demonstrated. A number of formerly independent headmen have been brought under chiefs, for instance the Ngwevu headman, Qeqe, and the Giqwa headman, Maki, in Shixini Location, Willowvale District. But this appears to be partly due to moves by the Central Government to rationalise 'Native' Administration. One case where this reservation does not appear to apply is the takeover of the authority of the Ntshilibe headman by the recently formed Mali lineage of the amaTshawe in Jujura Location, Willowvale District. Interview with P.R. Billy (Ntshilibe), Jujura Location, Willowvale District, 5 Nov. 1975. Hunter noted a similar tendency among the Mpondo. See Hunter p. 380.

12. This was apparently the reason for the murder of Chief Salakuphatawa in Kentani District during the early 1960's. (Information in confidence).



## APPENDIX II A (Contd.)

Tshawe.13

Considerable difficulty attends the analysis of clan histories. The first problem is to disentangle clan from chiefdom. The Xhosa language does not differentiate between the two. Both chiefdom (e.g. amaMbalu) and clan (e.g. amaNgqosini) are referred to as isizwe (sometimes translated as nation),<sup>14</sup> a fact which reflects the early political function of the clan. This has misled some secondary authorities into confusing clan and chiefdom.<sup>15</sup> The second and more intractable problem is to distinguish which relationships on the genealogical table are genuine biological relationships, and which are spurious. It is certain that alien clans have attempted to attach themselves to the genealogy of the royal clan through claiming descent from a distant ancestor. This is definitely the case with the Bamba, Ngqosini and Nqabe clans and the amaTshawe, and the Ndungwana clan among the Thembu.<sup>16</sup>

- Note: 13. The Ngwevu headman of the Gcaleka Tribal Authority has resisted the attempt of an ~~ama~~Tshawe to assume chieftainship. Interview with R. Fibi, Esidutyeni Location, Cofimvaba District, 28 Nov. 1975. On the other hand, the imiNgqalasi, a small group who appear to have had a commoner chief on a similar basis to the amaGqunukhwebe, appear to have introduced a Tshawe chief because they felt that they were incapable of withstanding their local rivals, the imiDange without one. Compare W.D. Hammond-Tooke: King William's Town District, pp. 110-1, with my own interview with ImiNgqalasi Tribal Authority, Peelton Location, King Williams Town District, 5 Sept. 1975.
14. Hunter is wrong in translating isiduko as 'clan' (p. 52). Isiduko means clanname. (See A. Kropf and R. Godfrey: A Kafir-English Dictionary (2nd ed: Lovedale, 1915)p. 86)) Hammond-Tooke states that there is no Xhosa word for clan, which is correct inasmuch as there is no word distinguishing clan from chiefdom, but he is surely wrong in adding that "it does not seem that the Mpondomise conceptualize ('clan') as a discrete group." (W.D. Hammond-Tooke: 'The Morphology of Mpondomise Descent Groups', Africa, VIII, (1968), p. 32. All my informants agreed that one could use the word isizwe for both clan and chiefdom.
15. See Soga: Ama-Xosa, pp. 18-9.
16. For the amaBamba and amaNgqosini, see Chapter II, note 2. For the amaNqabe and amaNdungwana, see Chapter VII, notes 49 and 53, and the genealogical table in Soga: SE Bantu, facing p. 466.



## APPENDIX II A (Contd.)

The Gqunukhwebe chiefs, who were definitely regarded as commoners little more than a century ago, are today regarded as amaTshawe.<sup>17</sup> Spurious affiliation is assisted by the Nguni tendency to conceptualise all relationships in genealogical terms.<sup>18</sup> Even when a clan splits into two, the related clans should not intermarry.<sup>19</sup> There is one exception to this rule among the Xhosa, and it is well-known as such.<sup>20</sup> But there can be no certainty on this score. According to Soga, the amaCira and amaKwemnta clans are related and do not intermarry,<sup>21</sup> but none of the abaCira or abaKwemnta that I spoke to had ever heard of this. It is impossible to tell whether Soga was mistaken or whether the prohibition has been forgotten.

It seems highly improbable that the lengthy genealogies of the Mpondo and Mpondomise chiefdoms reflect biological descent pure and simple.<sup>22</sup> Hunter does provide some evidence that a least some of the Mpondo clans are offshoots of the royal Nyawuza clan, which split off in order to permit intermarriage.<sup>23</sup> However, there can be little doubt that our knowledge of early Mpondo and Mpondomise history would be considerably enhanced if clan histories were collected and analysed by a historian with a thorough understanding of the problems involved.

Two more possible uses of clan histories may be suggested here in the hope that future researchers may be able to overcome practical problems which the present writer found insurmountable. If the area in which each particular clan was concentrated were charted and due allowance was made for recent dispersion of clan-sections, it might be possible to suggest some hypotheses regarding the settlement pattern prior to the Tshawe conquest. For instance, it is suggestive that the amaNgqosini are very numerous among the amaGcaleka and relatively rare among the amaRharhabe, and that the converse is true for the amaNtakwenda. In both cases, oral tradition ties in with geographical location. Both such a project would require a vast amount of fieldwork, and would probably be beyond the scope of a single unaided researcher. It would also be desirable to trace the historical interaction between clan-sections and chiefs within a particular chiefdom. The practical difficulty in this case would be the sensitive nature of the subject in terms of local politics.

Note: 17. See note 6 above.

18. There are a number of genealogical tables which attempt to relate the various Nguni nations to each other. For a good example of a spurious genealogy of this sort, see Interview with A.M.S. Sityana, Alice, 11 Sept. 1975.

19. Certain clans still observe this rule despite a considerable lapse in time, for example, the amaGqwashu and the amaSukwini, and the amaHala and the amaMaya.

20. The clans in question are the amaKwayi and the amaTshawe. See Harinck, p. 157.

21. Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 282-3.

22. Hunter, pp. 398-9; Hammond-Tooke: 'Morphology' p. 33.

23. Hunter, pp. 57-8.



## APPENDIX II B

## CLAN HISTORIES

The praises of most of these clans may be found in D.D.T. Jabavu: Imbumba YamaNyama ('Unity is Strength'), (Lovedale, 1952).

1. amaBAMBA: The only Bamba tradition of origin that I was able to trace was the spurious one of K. Billie (Interviewed Mdantsane, 3 July 1975), which sought to link the amaBamba to Tshiwo. Billie was a friend of the late S.T. Bokwe, son of J.K. Bokwe, who was an umBamba, and may have got the story from him. The amaBamba formed part of the amaNdluntsha (Soga: SE Bantu, p. 115; Billie interview).
2. amaCETE: Possibly Khoi or Sotho in origin. See Jabavu, pp. 19-20; 'Sogwali kaNtaba': 'EzobuRarabe Jikelele', Imvo Zabantsundu, 16 September 1961.
3. amaCIRA: Dominant clan among the Xhosa until the rise of the amaTshawe. See Chapter II(1).
4. amaGIQWA: Khoi, possibly the 'Hoengiqua' of the early travellers. Became important councillors of the Gcaleka Paramounts, under the title of iNTSHINGA. See Chapter IV, note 29.
5. amaQWASHU: Khoi. Related to the amaSukwini, with whom they do not intermarry.
6. amaQUBULASHE: Thembu. See under amaMAYA.
7. amaJWARHA: According to Soga and Wm. Kekale Kaye (MS 172c, Grey Collection, South African Public Library, Cape Town), the amaJwarha were present at the time of the war between Cira and Tshawe. There are two important Jwarha councillors/headmen among the amaRharhabe (Soga and Somana), but there are very few (if any) abaJwarha among the amaGcaleka. See Chapter II(1).
8. amaKWAYI: Originally, a lineage of the amaTshawe, descended from Chief Ngconde, they were established in order to permit intermarriage between Tshiwo and the daughter of Ziko, founder of the lineage. This appears to have had political connotations. See Chapter II(4).
9. amaKWEMNTA: A Xhosa clan, supposedly present at the time of the battle between Cira and Tshawe. According to Soga, they do not intermarry with the amaCira, but none of my informants confirmed this. See Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 283-4.
10. amaMAYA: The amaMaya were originally a rebellious lineage of the amaHala, the royal clan of the Thembu. They do not intermarry with the amaHala. They were accompanied in their flight to the Xhosa by the amaQUBULASHE, who are now incorporated with them, and the amaQOCWA, who are now established as a fully independent clan. See Chapter II, note 64.



## APPENDIX II B (Contd.)

11. amaMFENE: Some amaMfene consider that the clan was always Xhosa in origin (Interview with G. Vitsha, Debe Marhele Location, Middledrift District, 15 August 1975). Others think that they are Thembu (M. Damoyi, interviewed Ncikizele Location, Kentani District, 16 January 1976, said that there were many amaMfene among the Thembu) but non-Mfene authorities consider them to be Sotho because of their totemic clan-name ('Mfene' means 'baboon') (Jabavu, p. 22; Soga: Ama-Xosa p. 19).
12. amaNDLUNTSHA: See amaANKABANE.
13. amaNGQOSINI: The amaNgqosini at one time challenged the amaTshawe for domination in the area. (Chapter II(4)). They appear to have alternated between joining the Xhosa and joining the Thembu (Chapter II, n. 24). Eventually, Hintsa caught them by surprise, and made their chief headman under his Right-Hand Son Ncaphayi (Chapter IV(4)). The Ngqosini claim to be Sotho in origin, but their name is not totemic, and there is a click in it. (This is the argument of R. Cakata (umTipha), Xobo Location, Idutywa District, interviewed 5 December 1975). They are therefore perhaps Khoi. The Ngqosini are also identified as Khoi in Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern, p. 4.
14. amaNGWEVU: Of Mpondomise origin, they helped the amaTshawe against the amaCIRA, and were rewarded with high status among the councillors, under the title of iQAWUKA. See Chapter II, note 5.
15. amaANKABANE: The amaNkabane were one of the original Xhosa clans, and became the dominant element in the amaNDLUNTSHA grouping of commoner clans. See Chapter II(4).
16. amaNQARWANE: Khoi clan absorbed with the amaGqwashu and amaSukwini.
17. amaNTAKWENDA: Original Xhosa clan, but not one tracing its links back to the Cira-Tshawe conflict. Apparently, they were incorporated by Rharhabe after he had left Gcaleka and Phalo. The amaNtakwenda seem to have the best claim to be a Bantu-speaking clan living west of the Kei before incorporation into the Xhosa chiefdom. Interview with MacGregor Moya, Kentani Village, 17 December 1975.
18. amaNTSHILIBE: Sotho immigrants, who passed from independent chiefship among the Thembu to councillorship among the Xhosa. See Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 290-4; M. Mbutuma: 'Ibali labaTembu' MS, Cory Library, Grahamstown.
19. amaNZOTHTWA: No information.
20. iQAWUKA: See amaNGWEVU.
21. amaQOCWA: Clan reputed for their skill in ironworking. See amaMaya.



## APPENDIX II B (Contd.)

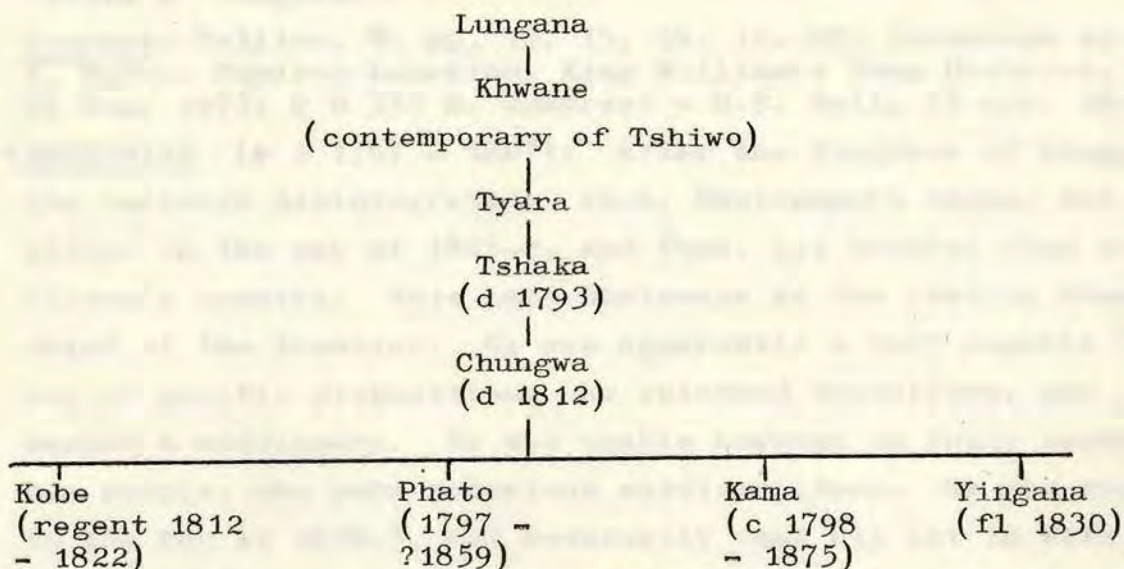
22. amaQWAMBI: Xhosa clan, reputedly present at time of battle between Cira and Tshawe. Soga: SE Bantu, pp. pp. 283-4.
23. amaSUKWINI: Khoi clan. Possibly the royal clan of Hinsati's Khoi kingdom, which was conquered by Mdange. See Chapter IV(1). Sukwini was the general and Great Councillor of Hinsati, and Chwama (now a praise-name of the amaSukwini) was Hinsati's son. Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern, p. 8.
24. isiTHATHU: A mixed Khoi-San clan, descended from three men inhabiting a certain area west of the Kei on the arrival of Rharhabe. Interview with W. Nkabi, Bulembo Location, King Williams Town District, 24 August 1975.
25. amaTIPHA: Apparently an indigenous Xhosa clan. See Chapter II(1). Jabavu, p. 21, classifies them as Thembu.
26. amaTSHAWE: The royal clan of the Xhosa.



## APPENDIX III :

## NOTES ON GENEALOGICAL TABLE

1. Where possible, the houses have been ranked in order of seniority from left to right. However, since this has not always been the case (consider, for instance, the problems of the Ndlambe succession), it is suggested that readers consult the relevant sections of the text.
2. Sources for dates are given in the text or in Hammond-Tooke: Tribes of King William's Town District. See also for the amaGwali genealogy, S.M. Burns-Ncamashe: 'A Synopsis of the History of the AmaGwali Tribe', (cyclostyled, 6 May 1969); for 'Kokatie', son of Rharhabe, see Campagne; for Zethu, son of Ndlambe, see Dugmore: Reminiscences, p. 68.
3. A list of the burial places of the early chiefs may be found in O.H. I, p. 83.
4. The genealogy of the Gqunukhwebe chiefs (who were not originally amaTshawe) is as follows:



(W.W. Gqoba: 'Umkhondo wama Gqunukhwebe' in Rubusana, abridged ed., p. 26)



## APPENDIX IV

## SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF IMPORTANT CHIEFS

\* Before the name indicates entry in the Dictionary of South African Biography.

\*\* Indicates entry scheduled.

Those chiefs dealt with extensively in the text will receive only short notes here.

BANGELA (ruled c 1782 - c 1798): Bangela succeeded 'Dlodloo', his nephew as chief of the imiDange after the First Frontier War. He was deposed with the assistance of Ngqika because of his irresponsible conduct. He spent a few years north of the Orange River with Nozi (q v) but soon returned, and thereafter led a wandering existence with a few followers. He was found wandering about the Colony as late as 1828, and was described as a "very good sort of Kaffer". Known in the documents as 'Olela', 'Pangella'.

Sources: Collins, V, pp. 10, 13, 14, 16, 47; Interview with B. Nqezo, Peelton Location, King William's Town District, 24 Aug. 1975; C O 357 H. Somerset - H.S. Bell, 17 Apr. 1828.

\*\*BHOTOMANE (c 1767 - 1867): After the disgrace of Bangela, the imiDange disintegrated. Xa'a, Bhotomane's uncle, was killed in the war of 1818-8, and Funa, his brother fled to Hints'a's country. This left Bhotomane as the leading Mdange chief of the frontier. He was apparently a very capable man and of pacific disposition. He welcomed travellers, and long wanted a missionary. He was unable however to fully control his people, who were notorious cattle-raiders. He was opposed to the War of 1834-5, but eventually cast his lot in with the other chiefs. He was delegated the task of looking after the Rharhabe cattle on the other side of the Kei.<sup>1</sup>

Sources: Bhotomane is constantly mentioned in dispatches and travellers' accounts. See e.g. Steedman, I, Ch. I. See also C.W.D. II, pp. 76-7, C. Brownlee, p. 166; Dugmore, p. 17.

1. Alexander, II, p. 278.

BHURHU (c 1785 - 1857): Eldest son of Khawuta (q v). Founder of the iTsonyana chiefdom. Played an important part in building up the strength of the Paramountcy after his father's disastrous reign.<sup>1</sup> Occupied the west bank of the Kei, and



## APPENDIX IV (Contd.)

served as channel of communication between Ngqika and Hintsa.<sup>2</sup> After 1819, resided in the district of Tsomo. Opposed Hintsa's treatment of the traders prior to the outbreak of the war.<sup>3</sup> Kept captive in Smith's camp during the war, and despised Hintsa for his fawning attitude to Smith.<sup>4</sup> Died during cattle-killing disaster.

Sources: 1. See Chapter IV(4); 2. Collins, V, p. 40;  
3. J. Ayliff - B. D'Urban, 19 June 1835, C.W.D. II, p. 227;  
4. J. Goldswain: The Chronicle of Jeremiah Goldswain, 2 Vols. (Cape Town, 1940), I, p. 106.

**\*\*CHUNGWA** (reigned 1792-1812): Chungwa was the son and heir of Tshaka, chief of the amaGqunukhwebe. He fought the Colony in 1792 and 1799, but strove to keep the peace in 1801. He attempted to maintain his neutrality between Ngqika and Ndlambe, and to stay on good terms with the Colony. Circumstances drove him into the same position as Ndlambe. He was shot during the Fourth Frontier War. Known in the documents as 'Congo'.

Sources: There is a detailed account of Chungwa's career in Chapter IV(3).

**DYANI NDLAMBE**: Apparently a strong contender for succession to Ndlambe's chiefship. He was smelt out for witchcraft before Ndlambe's death through the scheming of Mhala (q v). He then went to live with his brother Mqhayi. He somewhat surprised the missionary Chalmers by saying that he still believed that witchcraft accusations were necessary.<sup>1</sup>

Sources: 1. Steedman, I, pp. 229-30; Dugmore, p. 21.

**\*DYANI TSHATSHU** (c 1791 - 1868): Second son of Tshatshu, chief of the amaNtinde. Dyani was educated under Van der Kemp and Read at Bethelsdorp and learnt to read and write Dutch and to become a carpenter. He interpreted and preached for many of the missionaries. The death of his elder brother, Soka, his father's heir, was a turning point in his life, as he now had the duties of a chief to perform. He spent an ever-increasing amount of time on these. He gave away the salary he received from the London Missionary Society to his councillors. It is to this rather than to his visit to England to testify before the Aborigines Committee, that the change in his attitude which



## APPENDIX IV (Contd.)

manifested itself in the War of the Axe should be attributed. As was appropriate in one of Van der Kemp's pupils, Dyani was more concerned with the faith of Christianity than with its stress on labour. As early as 1818, Joseph Williams found him unreliable.<sup>1</sup>

Sources: 1. J. Williams - G. Burder, 14 April 1818, quoted in B. Holt: Joseph Williams and the Pioneer Mission to the South-eastern Bantu, (Lovedale, 1954), pp. 81-2. Dyani is mentioned by most of the missionaries. Details about the later part of his life are taken from letters by John Brownlee quoted in B. Holt: Greatheart of the Border (King William's Town, 1976). The entry in the Dictionary falls far short of the objectivity one would expect in such a publication, but the facts cited appear to be correct.

\*GCALEKA (reigned 1775-8): Great Son of Phalo. Was reigning as an autonomous chief in 1752.<sup>1</sup> Qualified as a diviner.

His Great Place was in the present district of Qumra.

Sources: 1. Haupt, p. 316. For the dates see Chapter IV, note 18. The Dictionary entry follows Soga's partisan Rharhabe account of Gcaleka, as well as Soga's unreliable dates.

\*GWALI (reigned c 1700): Gwali is usually considered to have attempted to usurp the throne from Phalo. In fact, consideration of the relevant traditions suggest that he was himself unjustly dethroned by his uncle Mdange (q v). He fled to Hinsati, a Khoi chief.

Sources: See Chapter IV(1) and Appendix I D.

HABANA (reigned c 1795 - c 1822): Habana was the son of Kobe and greatgrandson of Gwali. It is unclear whether he is the 'Mhade' cited by Soga in his SE Bantu genealogy (facing p. 80). He met Van Plettenberg in 1778.<sup>1</sup> He was one of the more troublesome chiefs as far as the Colony was concerned, and together with his brother, Galata ('Kratta') and Xasa took up residence in the present day Leeu-Gamka area. He was pressured to remove by Ndlambe, and sought, unsuccessfully, to join Nozi (q v) north of the Orange River. He is last mentioned in the records in 1822.<sup>2</sup>

Sources: 1. Anon. 'Dagverhaal' p. 43. 2. C O 163 J. Brownlee - C. Bird, 26 August 1822. Other references in Chapter IV.



## APPENDIX IV (Contd.)

\*HINTSA (c 1788 - 1835): Xhosa Paramount. His father died while he was still a child and he narrowly escaped death at the hands of Ngqika. He was very successful in building up the power of the Paramountcy, with the assistance of his elder brother, Bhurhu, (q v). Accepted the missionaries unwillingly. Expanded the polity eastwards, largely at the expense of the Thembu. Allied with the Bomvana against the Mpondo. Supported Ndlambe against Ngqika. Shot while attempting to escape from confinement during the 1834-5 war.

Sources: All in text, Chapters IV, VII.

\*KAMA (c 1798 - 1875): Gqunukhwebe chief. He is best known for his adherence to Christianity as manifested in his steadfast monogamy, although if Rose is to be believed (p. 132) he was not so steadfast as is usually thought. He was devoted to the Colony, and with the encouragement of the missionary W. Shepstone separated himself from his brother, Phato (q v), settling first near the Sotho, but ultimately in Middledrift District.

Sources: A.Z. Ngani: Ibali lamaGqunukhwebe (Lovedale, n d); Interview with G. Vitsha, Debe Marele Location, Middledrift District, 15 August 1975.

\*KHAWUTA (reigned 1778- 1794): Xhosa Paramount. He appears to have been a weak ruler and the authority of the Paramountcy collapsed during his reign.

Sources: See Chapter IV(2).

KOBE (regent 1812 - 1822): Gqunukhwebe chief. Assumed the regency after the death of his father, Chungwa (q v). Led one column in the attack on Grahamstown (1819). Resisted giving up the regency (Rose, pp. 147-8), but afterwards seem to have settled down to co-operation with his brothers, Phato and Kama (q v). Still alive in 1836. Known in the documents as 'Cobus Congo' or 'Congo'.

Sources: Ngani, general histories.

\*LANGA ( d 1793): Born a minor son of Phalo, he took over the chieftainship of the amaMbalu from his uncle, Thiso. He was one of the leading chiefs west of the Fish in the 1780's, usually, but not always supporting Ndlambe against Tshaka, the Gqunukhwebe chief. He was betrayed by Ndlambe in 1793, and was taken prisoner by him in the Frontier War of that year. He apparently died in captivity.



## APPENDIX IV (Contd.)

Sources: Soga: SE Bantu, pp. 125-7; Marais (vide index); Chapter IV(2).

\*MAQOMA (1798-1873): Maqoma was the Right-Hand Son of Ngqika. He led the amaNgqika at the battle of Amalinde. Subsequently, he troubled the Colonists on the Baviaans River, but began to pursue a peaceful course after heavy reprisals in 1824. He came under the influence of the missionary John Ross, and the Commandant of the Frontier, Henry Somerset, and often expressed his intention of adopting a more European mode of life. However, his repeated expulsion from the Ceded Territory embittered him and he played a leading role in the Frontier War of 1834-5. After the war, he endeavoured to hold to the Treaty System and despite the alterations made in the treaties, he refused to participate in the War of the Axe. He was a leading figure in the War of 1850-3 and in the cattle-killing disaster. He died on Robben Island in 1873.

Sources: Chapter VII; G.B. Crankshaw: 'The Diary of C.L. Stretch, a critical edition and appraisal' (Unpub. M.A. Rhodes Univ. 1960); Interview with Chief Gladstone Maqoma, Ngqungqe Location, Kentani District, 19 December 1976; Mqhayi: 'UMaqoma', Ityala Lamawe, Ch. IV.

MATWA (fl 1832-7): Son of Ngqika. Matawa lived near Burnshil, and was the senior chief in a Great Place, which included Ngqika's disliked Great Wife, Suthu, her son, Sandile and the young chiefs Anta, Tente, and Macumbu. Matwa had strong sympathies with Christianity, but was afflicted by ill-health which his councillors attributed to these sympathies. He therefore ceased to attend services. He opposed the War of 1834-5 and helped Suthu protect the mission establishment at Burnshil. Afterwards, he took refuge in Grahamstown. Matwa later lapsed altogether, although Tente his brother was a student at Lovedale until his death in 1844.

Sources: W. Govan: Memorials of the Rev. James Laing, (Glasgow, 1975), pp. 18-78 passim; Rubusana, abridged ed, p. 24.



#### APPENDIX IV (Contd.)

MDANGE (regent c 1710): Mdange was a minor son of Ngconde, and brother of the Paramount, Tshiwo. He produced Phalo as a contender for the throne against Tshiwo's son, Gwali, defeated Gwali and his Khoi ally, Hinsati, and ruled as regent for Phalo. When Phalo succeeded, he established himself west of the Kei.

Sources: Mpangele (See Appendix I D) and Kropf: Xosa-Kaffern p. 5 agree that Mdange was junior to Hleke. For other sources, see Chapter IV(1).

\*MDUSHANE (d 1829): Son of Ndlambe. Described as "a man of large stature of a particularly fierce countenance", Mdushane did not get on well with his father but joined him against Ngqika at Amalinde. He led the attack on Grahamstown in 1819. Mdushane was virtual ruler of the amaNdlambe in the 1820's, during Ndlambe's old age. He continued to pose a threat to Ngqika. He died only a year after his father, apparently from venereal disease. This circumstance caused not only the fragmentation of the amaNdlambe, but the division of the imiDushane between his sons, Siyolb, Siwani and Qasana (q v).

Sources: 1. Shaw: Story p. 472. See Dugmore, pp. 19-20, Ch. VII(1).

\*\*MHALA (reigned 1829-1875): Son of Ndlambe. Apparently not well born, he attained his position through cunning. He disposed of his better-qualified brother Dyani (q v) on a charge of witchcraft and obtained the support of his father's councillors. He also attracted other chiefs, such as Gasela, son of Nukwa (q v) who had formerly been under Ngqika, and Qasana (q v) who had formerly been under Mqhayi (q v). He fought the Colony in 1834-5 and 1846-7, was a hostile 'neutral' in 1850-3, and took a leading part in the cattle-killing. He died on Robben Island.

Sources: Maclean, pp. 21-1, 132-3; Chapter VII.

MJALUSA (reigned 1795-1836): Son of Rharhabe. Mjalusa was at first a close ally of Ndlambe and fought with him against Ngqika in 1795. After Ndlambe's defeat he crossed to west of the Fish where he became one of the more notorious cattle-raiders. He changed over to Ngqika in 1805 and supported him until his defeat at Amalinde. He joined Nxele in the attack on Grahamstown and at the end of the war of 1818-9, he fled to Hintsa, where he



## APPENDIX IV (Contd.)

became one of the latter's closest advisers.<sup>1</sup> He interpreted on Hintsa's behalf before the Battle of Mbholompo.<sup>2</sup> After the War of 1834-5, he fled north where he raided the Sotho. He and his followers were massacred in a night attack by Moshoeshoe and Moroka.<sup>3</sup> It was Mjalusa who encouraged the Slagter's Nek rebels to believe that they could expect help from the Xhosa.<sup>4</sup>

Sources: 1. See Chapter VII note 116. 2. Msebenzi, pp. 251-2. 3. P.B. Sanders: Moshoeshoe: Chief of the Sotho (London and Cape Town, 1975), pp. 51-2. 4. Leibbrandt: Slagters Nek, pp. 660-1.

MQHAYI (died c 1854): Son of Ndlambe. Chief nearest Mt. Coke mission station. He was devoted to the Colony, and thereby lost most of his supporters. On Mdushane's death, his successor, Qasana, was placed under him, but soon broke away. Mqhayi is usually described as being amiable but rather devoid of ability.

Sources: Maclean, p. 133; Chapter VII(1).

MXHAMLI (d 1846): Son of Ndlambe. An able and important chief, who is mentioned in oral tradition but hardly ever appears in the Colonial records. He was a close associate of Mhala, and took part in raids on the Sotho together with Gasela. He died in the War of the Axe.

Sources: Maclean, p. 132; interview with W. Nkabi, Bulembo Location, KWT District, 24 August 1975; W.F. Xatasi: 'Ubukosi basexhibeni kwaNgqika' (The ixhiba chiefship among the ama-Ngqika), Izwi laBantu 27 May 1902.

NDLAMBE (reigned 1782 - 1828): Ndlambe was responsible for building up the power of the amaRharhabe by destroying the power of the amaMbalu, imiDange and amaGqunukhwebe. In 1795, he was attacked by Ngqika, whom he had himself helped to high office. He spent much of the rest of his career trying to avoid being crushed between Ngqika and the Colony. He was the patron of the great wardactor Nxele.

Sources: Chapters IV, VII(1).

\*NGQIKA (1778 - 1829): Son of Mlawu, who predeceased his father, Rharhabe (q v). Ngqika defeated Ndlambe and the Gcalika regent, Nqoko, in 1795 and almost achieved his ambition of becoming the Paramount chief. He suffered his first major setback with defeat by Ndlambe in 1807, after the abduction of Ndlambe's wife, Thuthula. In 1817, his hitherto informal alliance with the Colony was put on a regular footing (Kat River Conference). As a result Ndlambe and Hintsa combined to defeat Ngqika at



#### APPENDIX IV (Contd.)

the battle of Amalinde (1818). Ngqika's allies stepped in to help him but confiscated Ngqika's territory between the Tyhume and the Fish. In the last years of his life, he went completely to pieces.

Sources: Chapters IV, VII(1).

NOZI (?ZONI) ("DANSTER") (fl 1800 - 1835): Nozi was a brother of Ndlambe. He visited Cape Town and obtained work as a servant until he had earned enough to purchase cattle and a gun. He moved north across the Orange, and set up as a freebooter. He was joined by Bangela (q v) and Gola, a petty Xhosa chief, but fell out with them and chased them back to Xhosaland. For a while he worked together with Jonker Afrikaner, the Khoi bandit, but they quarrelled too. Nozi managed to effect the escape of his wives and cattle from Afrikaner's homestead. In 1811, he was captured by the Colonial authorities who wished to hand him over to Ngqika, but he attacked his escort en route, overpowered them and escaped. He is remembered as being the first to show a gun to Moshoeshoe, who gave him some land. More research is required on Nozi, obviously a worthy son to Rharhabe.

Sources: Much of the relevant material is cited in Cory accessions, number 1211. J.M. Orpen - G. Cory, 18 August 1920 - 5 October 1920.

\*NQENO (reigned 1794 - 1846): Nqeno was the son of Langa. He was junior by birth to his brother Thole, but he proved himself more capable. Thole is last mentioned in the records in 1804. Nqeno was one of the most predatory chiefs on the frontier, and consistently an ally of Ngqika. He is sometimes referred to as 'Eno', 'Kyno' or 'Umlao'.

Sources: For a Xhosa version of the succession dispute, see Rubusana, abridged ed, pp. 65-70. For an interesting character-sketch, see Rose, pp. 90-3. See also Chapters IV, VII.

NTSUSA (fl 1788 - 1825): Chieftainness and daughter of Rharhabe. It is probably she whom Winkelman described as follows: "(Ndlambe) has a sister who has terrified whole tribes through her wild bravery. She is of unusual size, very strong and carries a bundle of short spears with which she has recently murdered seven of her nation in cold blood." (pp.90-1). She ruled in conjunction with



#### APPENDIX IV (Contd.)

her brother, Nukwa (q v). Even after her death, the traders maintained that her subjects were the "worst kaffers in Kaffer-land" and never went there (Cory accession, number 951. Diary of T.H. Bowker. Entry for 12 April 1834).

Sources: As cited.

NUKWA (d 1856?): Full brother of Ndlambe and chief of the amaNtsusa. He was a supporter of Ngqika, but on bad terms with him, and his son, Gasela, went over to Mhala. It is not clear what proportion of the amaNtsusa followed him, since Nukwa was reputedly still alive in 1855 (Maclean p 134).

Sources: See Chapter VII, especially note 94.

**\*\*PHALO** (c 1710 - 1775): Xhosa Paramount. Reputedly, the posthumous son of Tshiwo. He was installed with the help of Mdange (q v). During his lifetime, he was overshadowed by his sons Gcaleka and Rharhabe. He died while drinking fermented millet beer.

Sources: Chapter IV(1) and note 17.

**\*\*PHATO** (c 1797 - ?1859) Great Son of Chungwa. Phato had two very capable brothers in Kobe and Kama. Europeans often compared him to them, usually to his disadvantage.<sup>1</sup> Phato was friendly to the Colony but was rewarded for his loyalty by the hiving-off of Kama with the connivance of missionary Shepstone and the settlement of Mfengu on his land at Peddie. It is not therefore surprising that he was the most determined opponent of the Colony in the War of the Axe. He was loyal again in 1850-3.

Sources: Most of the Wesleyan missionaries mention Phato. See also Maclean, p. 131. 1. For example, Shaw: Journal, p. 90.

QASANA (fl 1829-1851): After Mdushane's death, Qasana, his son, was appointed chief of all the amaNdlambe, under the guidance of Mqhayi (q v). Qasana was dissatisfied with Mqhayi and with his pacific attitude to the Colony, and during the war of 1834-5 joined Mhala and remained under his influence. Also known as 'uMfundisi'.

Sources: Personal communications, Chief D.M. Jongilanga, Chapter VII(1).



## APPENDIX IV (Contd.)

\*RHARHABE (d 1782): Rharhabe opposed his brother, Gcaleka especially when the latter adopted magical powers. He was a great warrior but did not leave a well-established chiefdom. He and his Great Son, Mlawu, died in battle against the Thembu. His Great Place was at Amabele, near Stutterheim.

Sources: See Chapter IV(1) and (2).

SOKA (d 1828): Great Son of Tshatshu, chief of the amaNtinde. See DYANI TSHATSHU. There is a confusing reference to Soka's participation in the War of 1834-5 in C. Brownlee, p. 27. Perhaps this refers to Soka's son (cf references to Kobe (q v) as 'Congo', his father's name).

\*TYHALI (d 1842): Tyhali was the son of one of Ngqika's concubines. He rose to prominence through his own ability and through his attention to his father. He contested the regency with Maqoma. Unlike Maqoma, he was not attracted to the European way of life. He was one of the leading figures in the War of 1834-5.

Sources: See Chapter VII.



## APPENDIX V

## A NOTE ON LINGUISTIC HYPOTHESES CONCERNING THE ORIGIN OF CATTLE KEEPING

Professor C. Ehret caused a stir among African historians with his hypotheses that "a single people initiated the spread of cattle through southern East Africa, and partly into southern Africa at a time prior to the expansion of Bantu-speakers into these regions."<sup>1</sup> As far as southern Africa was concerned, Ehret's hypothesis rested on the fact that the common southern Bantu root for 'beast' (head of cattle) *-\*komo*, is not a natural mutation of *-\*gombe*, the common Bantu root for 'beast'. Ehret concluded that the word was borrowed, together with the object it denoted, from a non-Bantu-speaking people. A similar conclusion had been arrived at by Professor L.F. Maingard as early as 1934.<sup>2</sup> He added a list of specific cattle-colour terms from the Xhosa and Korana languages which demonstrated conclusively that the Xhosa were the borrowers, although there was no apparent borrowing of the more simple colour terms. The chief difference between the two hypotheses is that whereas Ehret postulated a vanished tribe of Nilotics as the non-Bantu who introduced cattle, Maingard suggested the Khoi. Westphal, Wilson and Elphick have all given this latter hypothesis their tentative agreement.<sup>3</sup>

The hypothesis rests on extremely flimsy grounds and should be dismissed out of hand. Khoi and southern Bantu cattle are of Zebu (Afrikaner) and Sanga stock respectively, and differ in type. It was reported in 1774 that Gona (Khoi) and Nguni breeds were "very easily to be distinguished".<sup>4</sup> Moreover, cattle-keeping was the fundamental basis of southern Bantu culture and links it with other Bantu cultures further north, but not with the Khoi who do not use cattle to cement marriages and do not observe cattle taboos.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the hypothesis is questionable even on linguistic grounds. Although the southern Bantu have adopted the

- Note: 1. C. Ehret: 'Cattle-keeping and Milking in Eastern and Southern African History: the Linguistic Evidence', Journal of African History, VIII, (1957), p. 17.
2. L.F. Maingard: 'The Linguistic Approach to South African Prehistory and Ethnology', South African Journal of Science, XXXI, (1934), pp. 132-4.
3. Wilson in O.H. I, p. 104; Elphick, pp. 50-1.
4. Quoted in O.H. I, p. 103.
5. J.A. Louw: 'The Nomenclature of Cattle in South-Eastern Bantu Languages', Communications of the University of South Africa, C2, (1957), pp. 4-12. This reference was cited by Harinck, who drew the necessary conclusions from it (pp. 151-2). He goes on to say, for no apparent reason, that the fact that the Xhosa borrowed cattle-terms from the Khoi suggests that the "Khoi were relegated to a socially inferior position in a patron-client relationship."



## APPENDIX V (Contd.)

-\*komo root, they have retained the -\*gombe root and use it in certain circumstances. The evidence permits of only one conclusion: that the Xhosa (and other southern Bantu) borrowed the Khoi root for cattle, without borrowing the cattle, which they already possessed.

The lesson to be learnt here is that historians should not jump to historical conclusions on the basis of linguistic coincidences. The Xhosa word for sheep, igusha, is another case in point. The word itself is undoubtedly Khoi in origin. But van der Kemp reported that the Xhosa also used the word imvu, and this is derived from the common Bantu root.<sup>6</sup> The Xhosa word for 'horse' definitely not an animal indigenous to South Africa, is ihashe. This was long considered to be a direct derivation from English. Yet the word was in existence as early as 1788, seven years before the First British Occupation.<sup>7</sup> My own guess would be that the word was derived from a Khoisan word for 'quagga'.<sup>8</sup> But this is only a linguistic hypothesis, and as such not of great value to historians.

- Note: 6. C. Ehret: 'Sheep and Central Sudanic Peoples in Southern Africa', Journal of African History, IX, (1968); J.T. Van der Kemp: 'Vocabulary of the Caffra Language', Transactions of the L.M.S. I, p. 447; Wilson in O.H. I, p. 104. Common Bantu roots are as cited in M. Guthrie: Comparative Bantu, 4 Vols. (London, 1967-71).
7. G.S. Nienaber: 'Kom die Zoeloe I(li)hashi uit Engels?' African Studies, XII, (1953). Nienaber also showed that a similar word was used for 'horse' in various Khoisan languages.
8. D.F. Bleek: A Bushman Dictionary (New Haven, 1956), p. 281.



## APPENDIX VI

## GLOSSARY

- ibali (plural amabali): tale; the basic unit of historical traditions (pp. 12-13)
- busa: to serve at the Great Place in a menial capacity, as opposed to serving as a councillor (-khonza) (p. 76)
- abasengi basekomkhulu: literally, 'the milkers of the Great Place', that is, the men who have come to busa at the Great Place (p. 76)
- thwasa: to undergo the mystical experience which qualifies one as a diviner (Ch. V)
- ixhiba: 'Grandfather House'. The house composed of a young chief and the councillors of his deceased grandfather (p. 99)
- upundlo: sexual requisitioning of unmarried women by chiefs and councillors (p. 75)



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- C O 2625-2750 Letters received from Landdrosts of Graaff-Reinet, Bathurst, Albany and Somerset, 1820-1834.
- C O 2559-2619 Letters received from Landdrosts of Graaff-Reinet and Uitenhage, 1806-1834.
- G R 1/1-1/9 Graaff-Reinet. Minutes of Meetings of Landdrost and Heemraden, 1786-1795.



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III TAPED INTERVIEWS WITH XHOSA INFORMANTS

These tapes will be edited, translated and deposited in the Cory Library, Grahamstown. They are at present in my personal possession, and are available to researchers. Full reference to tapes referred to in the thesis may be found in the relevant footnotes. A list of the most important informants may be found in Appendix I B. As explained in Appendix I B, a systematic attempt was made to visit important chiefs for the purpose of obtaining histories of their chiefdoms. A list of chiefs approached is given below. The willingness and capacity of the chiefs to assist varied considerably, but none refused altogether.

A CISKEIEast London District

amaNdlambe (Mhala)  
amaGqunukhwebe (Phato)

Hewu District

amaHlubi (Zimema)

King William's Town District

imiDushane (Siwani)  
imiDange  
amaGasela (amaNtsusa)  
amaHleka  
imiNgqalasi  
amaNtinde  
imiQhayi

Middledrift District

amaGqunukhwebe (Kama)

Stutterheim District

amaZibula (Sandile)

Victoria East District

imiNgcangetelo (Oba kaTyali)



B TRANSKEIElliotdale District

amaGcaleka (Dimanda)  
amaVelelo (Mdabuka)

Idutywa

amaMbede (Nqok~~o~~)(two segments)

Kentani

imiDushane (Qasana)  
amaGwali  
amaGwelane (Anta)  
amaJingqi (Maqoma)  
amaKweleshe (Mcotama)  
amaMbalu (Nqeno)  
amaMbombo (Mnyango kaSandile)  
imiNgcangetelo (Feni kaTyali)  
imiNgcangatelo (Oba kaTyali)  
iTsonyana (Bhurhu)

Willowvale District

amaGojela (Manxiwa)(two segments)  
amaJingqi (Ncaphayi kaHintsa)  
amaMali (Xelinkunzi kaSigcawu)  
amaMbede (Mithi)  
amaTshayelo (Lutshaba kaPhalo)  
amaVelelo (two segments)  
Gcaleka Great Place at Nqadu

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