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LEONARD THOMPSON

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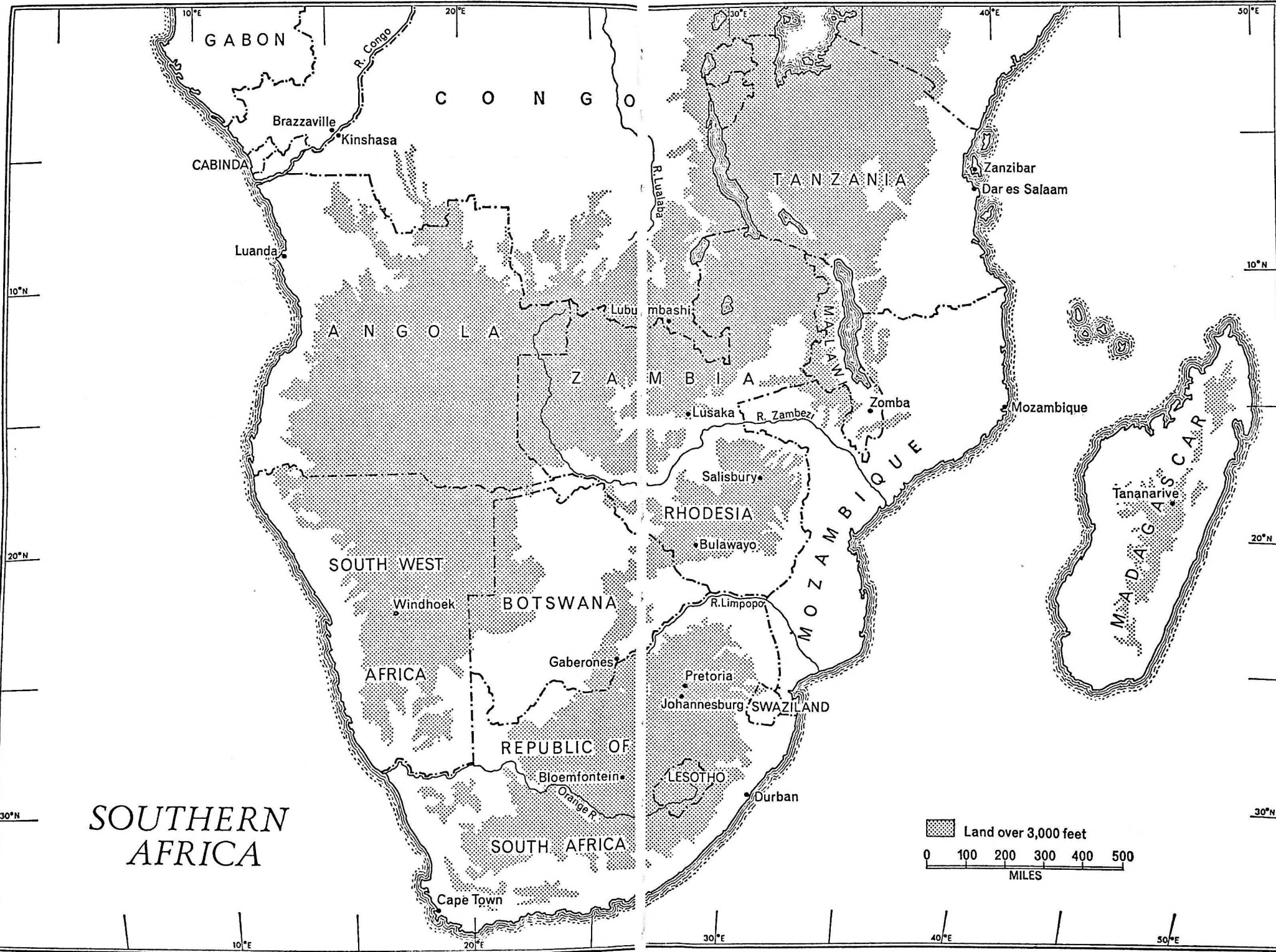
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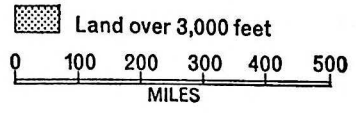
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# SOUTHERN AFRICA





## 6. *The traditions of the Natal 'Nguni': a second look at the work of A. T. Bryant*

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SHULA MARKS

As N. J. Van Warmelo has remarked in his valuable *Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa*:

The term Nguni is used in an entirely arbitrary sense, which has however already received the sanction of several years' usage in scientific literature. . . . The main reason for its adoption lies in the absence of any other name that would be equally suitable. However valid the arguments that might be adduced against its use as a collective term, these will probably have to yield to this necessity.<sup>1</sup>

Certainly the contemporary use of the term to describe the peoples living along the south-east coast of Africa, speaking closely related variants of the same language, and practising the same culture seems inescapable. Nevertheless, as Anthony Atmore and I have recently argued,<sup>2</sup> the present day widespread use of the term 'Nguni' by historians trying to avoid the anachronistic term Zulu for the peoples of the south-east coast in pre-Mfecane times may itself do much to distort the past. This all-inclusive term with its connotation of timeless homogeneity may well be the first obstacle in the way of our understanding the origins of the layers of people that make up the present day Nguni.

As we have suggested, the wide-ranging use of the term is probably 'due to white intervention and invention, not least on the part of [A. T.] Bryant'. Insofar as the term was used by Africans in the nineteenth century, it appears to have either had a very general or a very specific connotation: according to Arbousset, the Tswana generally called the Zulu 'Bakoni', the Sotho equivalent for the term Nguni, and the same term Bakoni appears to have

<sup>1</sup> Department of Native Affairs Ethnological Publications Vol. V Pretoria 1935 Part 3 p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> S. Marks and A. E. Atmore 'The Problem of the Nguni: An Examination of the Ethnic and Linguistic Situation in South Africa before the Mfecane' in D. Dalby (ed.) *Collected Papers of the London Seminar on Language and History in Africa* London 1970.



been applied also to those small groups of non-Sotho in the Transvaal who trace their origin to the south-east.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in the same way as the Sotho call their neighbours Bakoni, the Thonga peoples of Delagoa Bay transform the term into VaNgoni,<sup>4</sup> a term which has received complete recognition for those break-away groups who made their way northward and eastward during the Mfecane.

This, however, may not be the result of the Thonga usage; it could have more specific origins. Both Zwangendaba and the Msane leader, Nxaba, were accompanied on their journeys northward by members of the associated Nzimela clan, who had the address name or *thakazelo* 'Mnguni'.<sup>5</sup> This same address name is found amongst the Qwabe and Cunu of Natal, and amongst the Xhosa, where, according to some authorities, Mnguni is the quasimythical founder figure at the head of a very long and respectable genealogy. J. H. Soga argues from this that the term Nguni should apply only to the Xhosa and their offshoots, amongst whom he includes the Nzimela clan;<sup>6</sup> on the other hand, however, according to Bryant the Nzimela are an offshoot of the Ncwangeni, who in turn broke away from the Ndwandwe people. These latter are classified by Bryant in the later versions of his work as part of the Mbo grouping of the Nguni.<sup>7</sup>

Contracted

If Bryant was the man responsible for 'inventing' the term 'Nguni', no man could have had greater claim to doing so. For any reconstructions of the Nguni past his two major works on tradition, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* and *A History of the Zulu*, form the essential starting-point. They represent almost fifty years of work gathering the oral traditions throughout the length and breadth of Natal from old and knowledgeable African informants who no longer exist. His work is, and must remain, the most important single source of Nguni history before and

<sup>3</sup> T. Arbousset *Relation d'un Voyage d'Exploration* Paris 1842 p. 269; N. J. Van Warmelo *Bakoni ba Maake and Bakoni ba Mametsa* Native Affairs Ethnological Publications 12 and 15 Pretoria 1944.

<sup>4</sup> A. T. Bryant *Zulu-English Dictionary* Natal 1905.

<sup>5</sup> A. T. Bryant *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* London 1929 Struik 1965 pp. 276-81. Henceforth *Olden Times*.

<sup>6</sup> J. H. Soga *The South-Eastern Bantu* Johannesburg 1930 pp. 81-83.

<sup>7</sup> See A. T. Bryant *Olden Times* p. 161. In *A History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Tribes* Bryant gives a different version of Ndwandwe history. See below p. 141. *A History of the Zulu*, published by C. Struik in 1964, first appeared as a series of articles in the Mariannhill periodical *Izindaba Zabata* in 1911 and 1913.

during the Mfecane, and is of very considerable importance to anyone trying to understand the structure of the Zulu state throughout the nineteenth century. This, despite the fact that, as a research student has recently put it:

The nature of Bryant's published work has probably been a barrier to a general understanding of Zulu history. He adopted, in the hope that his books would be financially successful, 'a light and colloquial style . . .' which is at its best quaintly eccentric, but more often leads to ambiguities and confusion. To this must be added the complex nature of the subject, the intricacies of interdependent clan histories, the formidable mass of detail, the unsystematic method of presentation and the annoying value judgements of a social evolutionist.<sup>8</sup>

Clearly Bryant's work is sorely in need of rewriting and reclassification. His cumbersome style and flights of fantasy interpose themselves constantly between the reader and his subject matter. Nevertheless, when one examines the actual traditions which Bryant has recorded amongst the chiefdoms of Natal and Zululand, which he calls tribes and clans, one cannot but be impressed by his scrupulous care. In addition to having gathered every scrap of tradition, he also combed the secondary literature on his subject in a manner that can only occasionally be faulted. Where more than one variant of a tradition existed, they were usually all transcribed. In handling genealogies over seven generations in depth he constantly advises his reader to be on his guard, and on the whole he is probably over-cautious rather than under-cautious in his handling of traditional material. Thus in allowing only eighteen years to an average generation he appears to be out of tune with most other scholars in south-east Africa, who feel that twenty-five to thirty years is probably a fairer average in view of the nature of succession amongst Nguni chiefs. In this case Bryant appears to be arguing from the somewhat false analogy of the nineteenth century, where rules of succession were honoured in the breach rather than the observance.

If this paper does no more than serve as a guide-line to others daunted by the sheer bulk and intricacy as well as by the formid-

<sup>8</sup> J. J. Guy 'An approach to a Study of the Civil War in Zululand during the 1880s'. Unpublished paper presented to the African History seminar on 22 May 1968 Institute of Commonwealth Studies.

doesn't  
it call  
him over?

able style of A. T. Bryant, it will have served its purpose. It claims to be no more than a preliminary attempt to make sense of *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* and *A History of the Zulu*,<sup>9</sup> to sort out Bryant's theories from the traditions he records, and to assess the validity of both.

Before taking a closer look at the traditions of the individual chiefdoms, it is necessary to outline Bryant's general theory of the peopling of south-east Africa, for it is here that fact and fantasy are most closely intermingled. It is not necessary to follow Bryant's Nguni farther afield than the headwaters of the Limpopo, through their meanderings along the Zambezi and from the Great Lakes of East Africa: this aspect of his work is so obviously the result of building on straws (or, as the case may be yams),<sup>10</sup> that it is best ignored for the moment. On the other hand, his views on population movements south of the Limpopo have a certain plausibility which have led to their being widely accepted, even although they do not always tally strictly with, or are not essential to, an interpretation of the local traditions he has recorded.

Like Soga, Bryant sees the migration of peoples into south-eastern Africa in three streams, all of which he regards as Nguni, although with different admixtures of alien blood and culture and speaking different variants of the same language. Bryant's 'wandering Nguni' arrive in the Transvaal via the headwaters of the Limpopo. Here one group remained to give rise to the local *Bakoni*, amongst whom he would include the various Tswana offshoots of the Hurutshe-Kwena chiefdoms. (He cites the somewhat dubious identification of *Bakoni* and *Bakwena* made by Stow and Moffat.<sup>11</sup>) In the north-western Transvaal he believes these

<sup>9</sup> I simplified the operation by tracing all sub-groups back to their parent people where this was known. This eliminated the vast majority of people listed at the back of *Olden Times* and left a residuum of the older groups, likely to have been of importance in the early days of 'Nguni' settlement. Underlining the chiefdoms of different groupings in different colours on Bryant's map of the Nguni before the Mfecane also proved an interesting exercise.

<sup>10</sup> See for example 'Part Seven: The Great Nguni Trek,' in *A History of the Zulu* pp. 113-24.

<sup>11</sup> According to Stow, Moffat called the tributary streams of the Upper Limpopo, stretching from the northern flanks of the Magaliesberg to the streams forming the main sources of the Oliphants River, Bakone country. G. W. Stow *The Intrusion of the Stronger Bantu Races* Unpubl. MSS (South African Library), n.d. The same identification of Kwena and Koni is made by the Rev. E. Solomon *Two Lectures on the Native Tribes of the Interior Cape Town* 1855 II p. 53. He may also have been using Moffat as his source however.

Nguni mixed with Venda-Karanga people to form a new hybrid stock of 'Sutu-Nguni'.<sup>12</sup>

A section of partially fused Sutoïd-Nguni then made their way eastward where they appear to have divided into two groups: Mbo or Dlamini or Swazi-Nguni who moved southward towards the Swaziland-Northern Zululand area and another group who continued eastward, and mixed with the Gwamba Thonga who were also moving along the coast. This third group of 'Tonga Nguni' continued southward once they reached the coast and outflanked the Mbo on the coast. Thus Bryant is able to move the two groups more or less simultaneously from the north, their traditional point of origin, yet avoiding the tsetse fly belt along the east coast.

Finally he suggests that central and southern Zululand and the eastern Cape were populated by the original 'pure' Nguni who had moved into the south-eastern Transvaal prior to the intermixture between the Nguni and the Venda-Karanga. From the south-eastern Transvaal the 'pure' Nguni appear to have moved into Natal-Zululand via the Mzinyati or Buffalo River, where they divided into two (perhaps three) major groups, the Cape Nguni and the Ntungwa Nguni. From this region one group of the Cape Nguni, the Thembu, made their way south-eastward until they reached the coast south of Durban and then moved into the Cape; a second group, the Xhosa, kept inland, close under the Drakensberg, and went into Griqualand East before reaching the coast south of the Thembu. By having his 'pure' Nguni come into the coastal area from the south-east Transvaal, Bryant explains the 'pure' Nguni traditions about an origin 'in the west'.<sup>13</sup>

When considering Bryant's general theories of migration even in the restricted area south of the Limpopo, it is as well to realize that in general there is little record in the traditions of such large movements. In so far as the traditions trace migrations they appear to be of relatively small distances, at least until the Mfecane. Thus although Bryant refers to Malandela, the progenitor of Qwabe and Zulu, as the tribal Moses, who led his people to a new promised land, the total distance this chosen people travelled must have been about twenty miles—from

<sup>12</sup> Where I have cited Bryant's groupings of the Nguni I have followed his spelling: thus 'Sutu Nguni' and 'Tonga Nguni' rather than Sotho and Thonga. Elsewhere I have tried to conform to the current orthography.

<sup>13</sup> This entire section draws very heavily on Marks and Atmore op. cit. and is based on Bryant *Olden Times* pp. 3-15.

more legible?

Babanango Mountain to the Hlatuze River.<sup>14</sup> The wider movements which Bryant talks about are clearly too far back for traditional memories except in the vaguest terms. The proof or disproof of these general theories will have to come ultimately, if it can come at all, from archaeologists and linguists.

From this point of view, indeed, even Bryant's three stream migration may already be the result of an oversimplification of earlier migrations and of spurious claims to relationships; within each of these three major groups there appear to be divisions of people who may not be organically related. The generally accepted maximum span of reliability accredited to oral tradition appears to be in the region of three hundred years, unless there are institutional modes of recollection. The Nguni as a group do not appear to have possessed these, although there are some surprisingly long genealogies which appear to outrun this limit. It must also be remembered that these are the traditions of ruling families, and in this sense also represent an over-simplification.

If one posits the populating of this area by Bantu-speakers over some thousand years, which the archaeological evidence of the neighbouring Transvaal and Rhodesia certainly appears to warrant,<sup>15</sup> it may be that Bryant was only tapping the top layers of Bantu-speaking migration into the area. Thus amongst the thousand or so 'clans' and 'subclans' which Bryant lists at the back of his work as Nguni, some two hundred have no *thakazelo* and no parent clan or grouping in terms of the threefold classification, 'Ntungwa,' 'Mbo' and 'Tonga-Nguni'.<sup>16</sup> Conceivably this is because these chiefdoms and their traditions were wiped out during the Shakan wars. Alternatively these may well represent the earliest peoples of the coastlands, who were unrelated to the later 'parent-clans'.

The Later Stone Age inhabitants of most of southern Africa, including the coastlands and pastoral modes of existence. Traces of the pre-Bantu inhabitants of south-east Africa are found in their shell middens all along the coast,<sup>17</sup> although by the sixteenth

<sup>14</sup> *Olden Times* pp. 17-19.

<sup>15</sup> Indeed the recent Iron Age date of 410 A.D.  $\pm$  60 from Swaziland, if correctly associated with the incoming Bantu-speakers, tends to push this back even farther for the south-east coast. B. Fagan 'Radiocarbon dates for sub-Saharan Africa: V' *J.A.H.* Vol. VIII No. 3 p. 525.

<sup>16</sup> *Olden Times* pp. 681-97.

<sup>17</sup> J. D. Clark *The Prehistory of Southern Africa* London 1955.

century the pastoral Khoikhoi do not appear to have lived beyond the Kei River, and by the nineteenth the San had been driven from most of their original hunting grounds into the fastnesses of the Drakensberg.

In earlier times there was considerable intermarriage between the Khoisan and the incoming Bantu-speakers. The clicks in Nguni are a well-known indication of this, although they pose a number of problems. On the whole linguists tend to think that they came into Zulu and Xhosa from Khoikhoi rather than any of the San languages. Yet while we have ample evidence of intensive contact between the Khoikhoi and the Xhosa in the Eastern Cape, we have no such evidence of contact between the Khoikhoi and the Zulu. Moreover though cognates in Zulu and Xhosa are high (about eighty per cent on two separate test lists), of the 2,400 click words in Xhosa only 375 have cognates in Zulu and there are some notable semantic differences between them, despite the fact that click words account for about one-sixth of the Xhosa vocabulary and one-seventh of Zulu. This suggests that the two languages acquired their click words, or the bulk of them, after their divergence from a common stock.<sup>18</sup> It still leaves open the question of where Zulu acquired them. If the Zulu click words are indeed from Khoikhoi, one has either to posit the presence of these Late Stone Age herders much farther north along the coast than their known distribution and their complete absorption by the incoming Bantu-speakers, or their similar presence in an earlier home of the Natal Nguni, which they could only have shared for a short time, if at all, with the Xhosa.

Contact between the Natal Nguni and the San hunter-gatherers is better documented. Some evidence of this is the custom, called *Ndiki*, of cutting off the final joint of the little finger, which certain Bantu-speaking groups known to have been in close contact with the San, have adopted. It is practised by a section at least of the Thembu in the Cape, and the Bomvu, Lata, Belesi, Tuli and Ncamu people in Natal.<sup>19</sup> Bryant, who tends to think of the San as being confined from time immemorial to the mountains, is somewhat hard put to explain how the Tuli

<sup>18</sup> L. W. Lanham 'The Proliferation and Extension of Bantu Phonemic Systems influenced by Bushman and Hottentot' *Proc. Ninth Int. Congress of Linguistics* Cambridge Mass. 1962 (The Hague 1964) pp. 383-4. I am grateful to Mr Gerrit Harinck for the reference. I am also extremely grateful to Prof. Lanham for written and oral communications since his paper was written, elucidating several additional points.

<sup>19</sup> Bryant *Olden Times* p. 517. G. W. Stow *Native Races of South Africa* London 1905 p. 129.

② *Archaeological evidence could solve doubt*

*The traditions of the Natal 'Nguni'*

133

people, whose traditional migrations have taken them from the coast around the Tugela, to the coast around Durban, could have acquired the habit. At Durban Bluff, however, two types of pottery associated with Bantu-speakers, NC<sub>2</sub> and NC<sub>3</sub>, have been found closely associated with Later Stone Age shell middens, which may help solve the difficulty.<sup>20</sup>

Archaeological evidence tells us most about these Later Stone Age people. Nevertheless in an article in the *South African Archaeological Bulletin* in 1960,<sup>21</sup> Desmond Clark used Portuguese shipwreck material to show that there were still non-Bantu, click-speaking peoples on the south-east African coast between latitudes 28° and 33° south in the late sixteenth century and that it was not unlikely 'that there were still enclaves of pure hybrid groups on the intervening coastline'. As Desmond Clark points out almost all the survivors of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century shipwrecks along the coast were able to purchase fish from the local inhabitants. This is generally taken to mean that they could not have been Bantu-speaking, as the present-day Nguni display, according to Murdock, 'an almost Cushitic aversion to fish'.<sup>22</sup> Further examination of the sources, however, reveals the frequent association of fish with millet and cattle, which suggests that these were not pure Khoisan groups.<sup>23</sup> Nor does Murdock's dictum rule out the possibility that earlier Bantu-speakers were responsible for the fishing practices found in the Portuguese shipwreck material and depicted in San rock-paintings.

Desmond Clark himself quotes Junod on the types of boats made by the Delagoa Bay Thonga, and shows pictures of bark boats made both by the Lala-Lamba peoples of Zambia and the Delagoa Bay Thonga.<sup>24</sup> These boats resemble those in the San paintings of fishing on the Tsoelike River, in the Mponweni Mountains and Kenegha Poort. The human figures in these paintings could depict either San or Bantu fishermen. Certainly in the nineteenth century the Tuli people did not share this 'Cushitic aversion' to fish and the Thonga of Delagoa Bay also do not appear to share it. The Tuli, however, may represent one of the

③ *write or decorat*

*Mixture of San + Bantu*

<sup>20</sup> J. Schoute Vanneck 'Shell middens at Durban Bluff' *S.A.A.B.* Vol. XIII No. 50 p. 1950.

<sup>21</sup> 'A Note on the early river-craft and fishing practises in South-East Africa' Vol. XV No. 58 pp. 77-79.

<sup>22</sup> G. P. Murdock *Africa, Its Peoples and their Culture History* New York 1959 p. 382.

<sup>23</sup> G. M. Theal *Records of South East Africa* London 1898-9 Vols. I, II and VIII.

<sup>24</sup> Clark 'A Note on early river-craft . . .' *op. cit.*

Khoisan-Bantu composite groups which existed well into the nineteenth century, if not the twentieth, all over southern Africa. By the time Bryant came to classify the Tuli, their official designation was 'Lala'.<sup>25</sup>

Clearly this term Lala is used very widely, especially if one follows J. H. Soga's usage. As used by Soga the term has the connotation of 'earlier inhabitant' to it.<sup>26</sup> It is also used by the Tswana in the sense of 'vassal' or 'serf'.<sup>27</sup> Soga further equates the Lala with skilled metal-workers, and it seems mainly for this reason that he suggested a Karanga origin for the Lala.<sup>28</sup> This seems to be arguing by definition.

On the other hand, in view of the association of some of the Thonga groups with the Karanga, Soga's suggestion that the Lala are connected with the Karanga is perhaps not entirely without substance. Bryant too seems to lend some weight to this as he associates the Tonga-Nguni with the Gwamba Thonga who are said to have had a Karanga origin.<sup>29</sup> But the supposed close association of the Lala with iron-working may be misleading. It seems that other groups such as the Cunu (Ntungwa) and the Cube (either Mbó or Ntungwa) were at least as skilled and renowned metal workers as the people listed by Bryant as Lala. Having translated the term Lala as 'skilled iron-worker' Soga tends then to lump all skilled iron-workers into this category (e.g. the Bhele, whom Bryant classifies as Mbo).

Bryant, however, regards the Lala as simply one of his three Tonga-Nguni groups together with the Debe-Nguni and the Mthethwa-Nguni.<sup>30</sup> He suggests that the reason for differentiation between the three Tonga-Nguni groups was the result of their admixture with slightly different groups of Thonga.

In a sense, however, this still begs the question. The term

<sup>25</sup> *Olden Times* pp. 686-96. Bryant thinks they are offshoots of Lutuli people who lived near the Tugela. These in turn were a branch of the 'Lala' Ngcolosi. I am a little dubious about the identification of Tuli/Lutuli which may have been a later invention to explain the similarity of the name.

<sup>26</sup> *The South-Eastern Bantu* pp. 395-417. In general I have preferred Bryant's version to that of J. H. Soga. As Monica Wilson once remarked the 'most that can be said of Soga's work is that he gave the version current amongst the old men in the Transkei in the 1920s'.

<sup>27</sup> S. M. Molema *The Bantu, Past and Present* Edinburgh 1920 p. 35.

<sup>28</sup> *The South-Eastern Bantu* p. 395.

<sup>29</sup> *Olden Times* p. 7; C. E. Fuller 'Ethnohistory in the Study of Culture Change in South East Africa' in *Continuity and Change in African Cultures* ed. W. R. Bascom and M. J. Herskovits Chicago 1959.

<sup>30</sup> *Olden Times* p. 7.

earlier  
types

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LALA  
- iron  
- Soga  
- supports  
u

Note

Cunu (Ntungwa) and the  
Cube (either Mbó or Ntungwa)



Thonga for the people from St Lucia Bay to the Zambezi is as unsatisfactory as the word Nguni for all the people to their south. As Junod has pointed out, it is again simply a convenient label for a group 'made up of populations of various origin which have invaded the country coming from different parts', but who today speak dialects which bear a geographical relationship to one another.<sup>31</sup> Over the past four to five hundred years at least these people have lived in the same geographical relationship to one another, and have formed enough of an amalgam to be categorized together. While, however, some of them, like the Gwamba/Baloyi and the Tembe Thonga, trace their origin to the north and to the Karanga—the *thakazelo* of the Tembe for example is still Nkalanga—others appear to have come from Zululand and Swaziland.<sup>32</sup>

Thonga  
Nguni

Although the present day Thonga groupings have a long history, many groups record the presence of earlier peoples in their area when they arrived: thus the incoming Khosa found Ntimba and Shibambo clans on arrival, while in the Nondwane country Honwana, Mahlangwana and Nkumba were already there when the first Ronga came to the area with superior weapons and superior tactics. These earlier inhabitants were said to have been scattered, few in number and without iron weapons or oxhide shields.<sup>33</sup> In view of the long history of this northerly area, and the absence of any physical barriers to migration southwards, it seems reasonable to suggest a trickle of population making its way farther south from the time of the earliest entry of Bantu-speakers into the Delagoa Bay region. The dearth of archaeological work on the Iron Age in South Moçambique makes this impossible to prove one way or the other. Schofield's NC 1 pottery, which he considered to be 'undoubtedly' Ronga ware, has been classified more recently as Late Stone Age, though the two views may not necessarily be entirely incompatible.<sup>34</sup> Although Bryant lists the Hlanga and Nkumba amongst his Nguni 'clans and subclans',<sup>35</sup>—names which also appear on Junod's list of the Delagoa Bay Thonga—there appears to have been a movement of certain Thonga groups from the south, Nguni area, northward which could account for this equally well. In the

<sup>31</sup> H. A. Junod *Life of a South African Tribe* 2 vols. London 1927 pp. 1, 31.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid* i pp. 22-23.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid* pp. 1, 4, 330.

<sup>34</sup> J. Schofield *Primitive Pottery* Cape Town 1948 p. 151.

<sup>35</sup> *Olden Times* pp. 684, 693. Beyond listing them, Bryant gives no further information.

absence of conclusive proof, however, this substratum of Thonga peoples appears as likely an explanation of the resemblances between the Tonga-Nguni and the Thonga as an intermingling farther north.

Delagoa Bay?

A final clue to Lala origins may be found in the fact that when the groups termed by Bryant Lala are plotted on his map of the Nguni in pre-Mfecane times they appear to have shown a predilection for settlement along rivers or right on the coast.<sup>36</sup> Their focus appears to have been along the banks of the Tugela River where they 'waxed fat and multiplied' and sent branch-lines off to the south. This may be as important a clue to their origins as their association with metal working.

Bryant's 'Debe-Nguni' appear to represent a more primitive population. Unfortunately representatives of this group were so shattered and scattered during the Mfecane that virtually no traditions of migrations or even genealogies appear to have been retained. It is also possible that even before the upheavals of the Mfecane, as fragmented, early groups the Debe-Nguni did not have any oral tradition of depth. Bryant places the Debe-Nguni amongst his Tonga-Nguni because of their 'facial incisions', a practice which is found amongst the Thonga people of Delagoa Bay, but not amongst either the Lala, Mbo or Ntungwa Nguni.<sup>37</sup> According to Bryant, hardly any specimens of Debe-Nguni speech have been retained, although he classifies it along with Lala as the *tekela* form of Nguni. The examples he gives—Lala: *Umunu*, Debe: *Umuntshu*, Ntungwa: *Umntu*—show how it differed in pronunciation from both Lala and Ntungwa. The Debe-Nguni appear to have stretched in a kind of column in pre-Mfecane times from the Umvoti River to the Umzimkulu, at a distance of ten or twenty miles from the coast.<sup>38</sup> This could have been either because they found the coast already occupied by 'shell-midden man' or the Lala, or because they wished to avoid the sandy flats of the coastal strip.

The third group of Tonga-Nguni includes the important Mthethwa, Cele and Dube chiefdoms. Both the Mthethwa and the Cele trace their descent to a common ancestor, Nyambose, who is not on either of their genealogies. Surprisingly perhaps, the Mthethwa genealogy is thin and ill-preserved, although the Cele

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<sup>36</sup> At the back of *Olden Times*. It is invaluable.

<sup>37</sup> *Olden Times* p. 547.

<sup>38</sup> See Bryant's map op. cit.

genealogy stretches back eleven generations from Magaye, who died in 1829, to Ndosi (who has given his name as *thakazelo* to the chiefdom). Even by Shaka's time, they were a chiefdom of considerable size and had split into numerous sub-chiefdoms. None of the other Mthethwa groups, however, appear to have genealogies longer than three or four generations before Shaka, and it is not at all clear what relationship they have with the main Mthethwa group. The classification strikes one as additionally unsatisfactory as there are also suggested associations between the Mthethwa and the Mbo (Mkize), and Bryant thinks that the Mthethwa originally formed one group with the Mbo, the Ngwane (of Swaziland) and the Ndwandwe, 'who all migrated at one time initially in one body'.<sup>39</sup> Bryant classifies them amongst the Tonga-Nguni however, because the Ntungwa Nguni refer to the Mthethwa as 'Thonga', a generic term of contempt. Their tradition of origin traces them from the neighbourhood of Mabudu (the Maputa River) south of Delagoa Bay, and they have a 'Thongaised' form of speech.<sup>40</sup>

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If oral tradition appears to lend some support to a northerly Thonga origin for the Tonga-Nguni, the pattern of Mbo migration and settlement appears more complex. Again there appear to be two and perhaps three distinct groups of people involved, the Dlamini Mbo, whose chief groups are the Emalangeni, the Mbo (Mkize), the Natal Dlamini, the Ngwane of Swaziland, probably the Ndwandwe, and perhaps the Mpondo and their offshoots; the Hlubi and their offshoots; and the Zizi-Bhele group.<sup>41</sup> According to Bryant all the members of the Mbo group trace their origins back to the Komati River and the Lubombo mountains and to Dlamini I of *Langa* royal clan. Bryant maintains, although not entirely convincingly, that Dlamini I was probably responsible for leading the Mbo from the Komati River, their traditional dispersal point, to the area between the Lubombo mountains and the sea. They remained a while in the region of Delagoa Bay, where they came into close contact with the important kingdom of the Tembe Thonga.<sup>42</sup> He believes that the Mbo are both the Macomates and the Vambe of the sixteenth-century Portuguese sources. Macomates could be Ama-Komati—the people of the

<sup>39</sup> *Olden Times* pp. 85, 391. Soga op. cit. 300 suggests that the Mthethwa may have been 'Mbo'.

<sup>40</sup> *Olden Times* p. 83.

<sup>41</sup> Soga classifies both these last two as 'Lala' pp. 398-9.

<sup>42</sup> *Olden Times* pp. 313-17.

Komati River, which Bryant points out is the *tekela* form of the river the Ntungwa would call Komanzi. Vambe is almost unmistakably the prefix Va and Mbo.<sup>43</sup>

After a considerable sojourn near Delagoa Bay, Bryant pictures the Mbo moving southward *en masse*, some peopling Swaziland, some Northern Zululand, and some of the Hlubi, Bhele-Zizi and Natal Dlamini passing onwards to people Utrecht, Vryheid and northern Natal.<sup>44</sup> Though it is not clear what Bryant means by this movement *en masse*, nor whether he thinks these groups were already differentiated amongst the EmaLangeni at the time of the move, several of these groups do trace their origin to the Lubombo and to the Langa (or EmaLangeni) parent clan.

All the Mbo groups have long and well preserved genealogies, with the exception of the Ndwandwe people. Some of them—for example the Ngwane/Langa—go back over some twenty generations,<sup>45</sup> and there is other evidence to suggest that they have been in the south-east coastlands for a very long time. For this reason, Bryant's suggestion that it was Dlamini I who led them from the Komati River is open to some doubt, as is his linking of the Hlubi and Bhele-Zizi groups to this same figure. It is simplest to handle each of the three groups—Hlubi, Zizi-Bhele and the Dlamini Mbo—separately to see how far this common origin is borne out by the traditional evidence.

Perhaps the most problematical members of this group are the Zizi-Bhele peoples who occupied a large area alongside the Drakensberg mountains between Waschbank and the headwaters of the Tshezi (Bushmans) River. Bryant asserts that together with the Hlubi and the Mpondo they formed the head of the Mbo circling movement from the Transvaal to Portuguese East Africa and then round again to the uplands of Natal and Zululand.<sup>46</sup>

↳ The only migration route, however, in their traditions takes them from the Zinyati (Buffalo) River to their pre-Mfecane home, a few miles to the south. Moreover Bryant's linking of the Mbo (Mkize) group with the Bhele-Zizi group through the common personage of one Langa, who appears on all their genealogies,

<sup>43</sup> *Olden Times* pp. 288-90, 312, 314.

<sup>44</sup> *Olden Times* pp. 7, 313.

<sup>45</sup> *Olden Times* p. 314, has twenty-four generations to Mkulunkosi; Sim *History of the Zulu* p. 3. According to Hilda Kuper *An African Aristocracy* London 1947 p. 232, 'the royal genealogy (of the Swazi) goes back some thirty generations, but there is agreement on the last eight rulers only'. This was working from 1947.

<sup>46</sup> *Olden Times* pp. 7, 313.

seems somewhat rash in view of the frequency with which this particular name occurs and recurs on Nguni genealogies, and the relative lateness of the occurrence on the Mkize line,<sup>47</sup> seven generations back from Shaka.

His views are, however, to some extent strengthened by the remarks of G. W. Stow in the unpublished manuscript already cited. It seems unlikely that Bryant knew of its existence or that they drew on the same sources. In this, Stow regretted the disappearance of Zizi tradition because he felt it would have 'assisted greatly in solving the common origin of the various Bantu nations of South Africa, for not only the Amazizi themselves but native authorities belonging to other tribes assert that the Amazizi are the direct descendants of the main or original stem from which both branches of the great Bantu family (i.e. Nguni and Sotho . . .) have descended. For many generations it is said that their chiefs and people were said to represent the paramount tribe, whose precedence and supremacy were acknowledged by all the others.'<sup>48</sup>

That Stow should have regarded this group, who originally called themselves Amalanga after their first remembered chief, as the progenitor of both the Sotho and Nguni is not surprising in view of the intermediate position they do appear to have held between the two. Thus according to the Rev. Brownlee<sup>49</sup> their language was 'more nearly related to Sechoana than that of the Kaffirs'. They stacked their grain above the ground in baskets unlike the Nguni and prepared their milk in the same manner as the Sotho.

This may of course have been the result of their geographical position between the two major groupings of present day South Africa. A cogent case, however, has been made out both by Bryant and Ellenberger for tying up the Zizi and the pioneer clans of Basutoland, the Phuti, Polane and Pehla, who appear to be connected through the chiefs Langa, Mafu and Miti, whose names appear in the genealogies of the Natal Zizi/Bhele and amongst the Phuti and Polane.<sup>50</sup> While, however, both Bryant and Ellenberger appear to have had little doubt that these Zizi on both sides of the Drakensberg are Nguni, van Warmelo has made

<sup>47</sup> Ibid pp. 147, 354, 406.  
<sup>48</sup> *The Intrusion of the Stronger Bantu Races* pp. 178-9.  
<sup>49</sup> Cited in Stow op. cit. p. 179.  
<sup>50</sup> Ibid p. 354. D. F. Ellenberger and J. C. MacGregor *History of the Basuto, Ancient and Modern* London 1912 pp. 21-26.

the interesting suggestion that the Basutoland Zizi are part of an ancient Sotho stock related to the MaPolana of Swaziland. He believes this ancient Sotho stock once inhabited the escarpment east of the Drakensberg in Natal and Swaziland.<sup>51</sup> Although in time the Zizi have become both 'Nguni-ized' and 'Bushmanized', it does seem possible that this ancient Sotho stock may be responsible for the Sotho elements which observers like Bryant detected in the Mbo group. Whether Nguni or Sotho, they appear to have been heavily influenced by the San people in their neighbourhood, sharing certain physical resemblances and practising the San custom of *Ndiki*; they also had a certain notoriety as cannibals, and this in the days of Shaka's father, Senzengakona, even before the Mfecane.<sup>52</sup>

The ties between the Dlamini Mbo and the Hlubi who trace their origin from one Dlamini may be somewhat closer than those between the Bhele-Zizi and either of these two. Even here, however, the connection seems somewhat tenuous. Like Langa, Dlamini was a particularly favoured cognomen for chiefs in this part of the world. Whereas the Dlamini I on the Natal Dlamini king list is the sixteenth (or seventeenth) generation back from 1820, and similarly on the Emalangeni/Ngwane (Swazi) king list from Ndungunya (died 1815), on the Hlubi king list he is only in the eleventh generation back from Mtimkulu (killed 1818). This Dlamini was the original founder figure of the Hlubi people. One wonders whether at this point a Dlamini was not necessary to lend respectability to the Hlubi king list. The appearance of a Hlubi as the father of Dlamini II on the Emalangeni/Ngwane king list in the third and second generation back from 1815 may conceivably have led to some contamination of the Hlubi genealogy.

On the other hand, however, the Hlubi genealogy would appear to have contracted rather than expanded over the ages: there appears to be some kind of link between the Southern Transvaal Ndebele (Manala and Ndzundza sections) and the Hlubi through the common chiefs Musi/Msi and Mhlanga. But whereas the Hlubi Musi and Mhlanga are in the ninth and tenth generation back from 1818, the Manala Ndebele list some twenty-six names back to Musi and Mhlanga, while the Ndzundza section have

<sup>51</sup> N. J. Van Warmelo *Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa* op. cit. Part 3 p. 98.

<sup>52</sup> *Olden Times* pp. 248, 348.

nineteen names back to these two founding fathers.<sup>53</sup> It is possible that whereas the Hlubi list represents generations, the Ndzundza and Manala Ndebele lists are simply king lists including collaterals.

While the ties between the Hlubi and the Bhele-Zizi group with the Langa parent clan are somewhat tenuous and vague, the relationship of the 'Dlamini' group—the Ngwane of Swaziland, the Mtonga, the Dlamini of Natal and the EmaLangeni—appears to be reasonably well authenticated. The case of the Ndwandwe is more complex. In his *History of the Zulu* Bryant placed the Ndwandwe amongst the Ntungwa Nguni, although in *Olden Times* the traditions of the Ngwane and the Ndwandwe appear to be very closely linked indeed.<sup>54</sup> Ndwandwe traditions are extremely confused, largely it would appear as a result of the Mfecane. As Shaka and Dingiswayo's chief military rivals, they were finally defeated more heavily than any other group. Their genealogy does not appear to have more than two names before Zwide, Dingiswayo's enemy.<sup>55</sup> For a chiefdom which was to achieve such influence and military prowess this seems curiously late. One is also left to account for the many sub-groups who trace their descent to the Ndwandwe.

On the other hand, the Ngwane, who were to achieve similar success in forging a state out of the disparate peoples in the area north of the Pongola River, also appear to have broken away from the parent Langa (EmaLangeni) stem at about the same time. Bryant makes the very interesting suggestion that the traditions of both these groups appear to take their rise at the time of the fall of the Tembe kingdom, the key trading state at Delagoa Bay, in the latter half of the eighteenth century.<sup>56</sup> It seems possible that, prior to their downfall, the Tembe held in check a large number of peoples on the periphery of their kingdom. It also seems possible that with the fall of the Tembe—possibly in part the result of increased pressures from the traders at Delagoa Bay at this time<sup>57</sup>—their role as state-builders and a trading power was taken on by their neighbours to their immediate south. This may in part account for the formation of the Ngwane and Ndwandwe kingdoms. The assertion of the Swazi King, Mbandeni,

<sup>53</sup> N. J. Van Warmelo *Transvaal Ndebele Texts* Native Affairs Department, Ethnological Publications No. 1 Pretoria 1930.

<sup>54</sup> *History of the Zulu* p. 12; *Olden Times* pp. 314, 316-7.

<sup>55</sup> *Olden Times* opposite p. 314, 161.

<sup>56</sup> *History of the Zulu* pp. 2-3, 51.

<sup>57</sup> An idea suggested to me by Alan Smith's chapter in this volume.

note that the Ngwane were Thonga and part of the Tembe ruling family supports this hypothesis, although Bryant rejects the notion of so close a relationship between the Ngwane and the Tembe on linguistic grounds.<sup>58</sup>

Like the Mbo and the Tonga-Nguni, the pure Nguni can also be further subdivided into the Cape Nguni (Xhosa-Thembu and their offshoots), the Ntungwa or *abasenhla*, and the *abasezantsi*.<sup>59</sup> While the terms *abasenhla* and *abasezantsi* have a simply geographical connotation, that of Ntungwa is less easily explained. Included in the ranks of the Ntungwa by Bryant are the Kumalo/Mabaso, Mbata, Buthelezi, EmaNgwaneni—to be distinguished from the Swaziland Ngwane—and Cunu clans, and the term is also the *thakazelo* of the Kumalo and the EmaNgwaneni.

note According to the Ntungwa group the term is 'in no wise applicable to individuals of the other members of the (Nguni) family' and there are differences in the history, traditions and to a minor extent in the speech of the two groups in Zululand. Thus only the Ntungwa 'up country' branch have the tradition of coming into Zululand from the west *ngesilulu*, 'with a grain basket' (an *isilulu* is the large conically shaped grain basket used by the Sotho, but unknown to the *abasezantsi*).<sup>60</sup> These differences may conceivably relate to the earlier groups found in their areas of settlement 'up country' and 'down country'.

The trail of the related Ntungwa people runs from the borders of the south-eastern Transvaal and Zululand up to Babanango mountain,<sup>61</sup> which appears to have been an important dispersal point for a number of the *abasezantsi*. At about the same time that Malandela, the progenitor of Zulu and Qwabe (some seven generations back from Shaka), was making his way to the Hlatuze River, Mafu of the Ngadini (*thakazelo* Gumede), Gwabini (progenitor of the Zungu and Makoba clans), Sibiya (*thakazelo* Gumede) and the Ema Dletsheni all appear to have been moving towards the coast.<sup>62</sup> The frequency of the *thakazelo* Gumede suggests that they may originally have stemmed from one parent

<sup>58</sup> *History of the Zulu* p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> 'Those up country' and 'those down country' are probably the nearest translations. The *abasezantsi* or *abazantsi* are the coastal section like the Qwabe, the *abasenhla* the more inland section, like the Kumalo and EmaNgwaneni otherwise known as the Ntungwa Nguni.

<sup>60</sup> *History of the Zulu* pp. 126-9. In *Olden Times* this division appears to have been ignored, and all the Natal 'pure' Nguni groups are labelled Ntungwa Nguni.

<sup>61</sup> See map at the back of *Olden Times*.

<sup>62</sup> *Olden Times* pp. 13, 25, 116.



group which is, however, now lost in the mists and myths of the past. The great rise to pre-eminence of the Zulu and Qwabe in the nineteenth century should not disguise the fact that they were relatively recent offshoots of this parent chiefdom, already settled in the heart of Zululand.

There seems little in the genealogical and tradition material to link the Thembu-Xhosa of the Cape with Natal Ntungwa groups. There are of course Natal Thembu who according to their traditions form part of the same group as the Cape Thembu. There are, however, curiously few chiefdoms grouped as pure Nguni south of the Tugela that would serve as some sort of linking trail to the Cape Xhosa, though Bryant labels the Nxasane on the Umzimkulu, the Wushe on the Umgeni, and possibly the neighbouring Zelemu as Ntungwa Nguni.<sup>63</sup>

On the other hand, it is a striking feature of the Nguni area that, unlike the Thonga area farther north, the languages do not deviate from a single parent stem in a purely geographical fashion. Thus Natal Lala is closer to Thonga than Ntungwa Nguni (Zulu) is to either, and Ntungwa Nguni is closer to Xhosa than either Xhosa or Zulu is to Lala.<sup>64</sup> The picture given of Mbo is even less clear, although it is classified along with Lala and present day Swazi as one of the *tekela* forms of Nguni.<sup>65</sup> It would be interesting to know what the relationships between the dialects spoken by the Hlubi, Bhele-Zizi and Dlamini group are within this broader classification.

This paper has been but a preliminary attempt to assess the work of A. T. Bryant. It does not claim to be an exhaustive analysis even of the published traditions. There is clearly a good deal still to be done, not least in the evaluation of Bryant's unpublished material and in the correlation of the traditions

<sup>63</sup> Ibid pp. 269, 369-72. See also Bryant's Map and list of clans and sub-clans in *Olden Times* pp. 681-97.

<sup>64</sup> See for example, W. H. I. Bleek 'Researches into the Relations between the Hottentots and Kafirs' *Cape Monthly Magazine* April 1857 p. 204 where he maintains that 'Tegeza' or the language spoken by the Africans of Natal is a third sub-group of Southern Bantu, as distinct from Xhosa-Zulu as it is from Tswana. Although knowledge of Southern Bantu was still in its infancy at the time, Bleek was one of the foremost linguists of his day and an acute observer. Moreover he was writing at a time when the differences between the sub-groups of 'Nguni' languages were far more marked than at the present. He also maintained that the habits and customs of the Zulu were similar to those of the Xhosa whilst those of the 'Tegeza' speakers were not.

<sup>65</sup> *History of the Zulu* pp. 54-55. See also D. Ziervogel *A Grammar of Northern Transvaal Ndebele* Pretoria 1959 p. 13 for a table showing the relationship of the various Nguni sub-groups.

he has recorded with those recorded by that other great authority on Nguni and Zulu history, James Stuart<sup>66</sup>; despite the havoc wrought by the Mfecane, field research on groups such as the Hlubi—which is in fact in progress at the University of Cape Town—and other similar groups, can be expected to yield results on both the linguistic and historical level which will help confirm or disprove Bryant's hypotheses. Nevertheless it is equally clear that the only way in which Bryant's work can finally be tested will be through the achievements of other disciplines—through archaeological and linguistic research as well as through archival work on the Portuguese and Dutch records of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. A complete reclassification of Bryant's work, however, would give us all a starting-point.

<sup>66</sup> James Stuart, for long a civil servant in Natal and author of a semi-official history of the Zulu rebellion of 1906, collected a considerable amount of material from informants at the turn of the century. In many important respects his work appears to confirm Bryant's, although no exhaustive examination of his vernacular histories nor of his large collection of unpublished material in the Killie Campbell Library (University of Natal, Durban) has yet been published. Three Students Studies have recently worked on the Stuart papers, but have not yet written up their conclusions.

## 7. Interaction between Xhosa and Khoi: emphasis on the period 1620-1750

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GERRIT HARINCK

### HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

At the beginning of the seventeenth century the present day Cape Province of the Republic of South Africa was inhabited by San, Khoi, Southern Nguni (of whom the Xhosa are a branch), and acculturated peoples of mixed descent resulting from interaction among these groups.<sup>1</sup> The San and the Khoi were the most ancient dwellers of the region. The San in foraging bands populated the more inaccessible areas in the interior. The Khoi pastoralists occupied defined, watered regions along the Orange River, the Atlantic and Indian Ocean seaboard, and inland along rivers as far as at least the Keiskama River.<sup>2</sup> The forerunners of the pastoral-hoe-agriculturalist Southern Nguni, the Xhosa and Thembu, probably entered the eastern regions of Cape Province

<sup>1</sup> In the literature San, Khoi, Xhosa and the Southern Nguni generally, are respectively referred to as 'Bushmen', 'Hottentots' and 'Kaffirs', and varied spellings of these words. These names are of non-African origin and presently they have derogatory connotations attached to them. Bitter controversy has raged over the word 'Hottentot' among South African scholars. For the most recent summation see G. S. Nienaber *Hottentots* Pretoria 1963 pp. 32-58. In this paper the names are those used by the peoples under discussion, with the exception of the San. The Xhosa referred to themselves eponymously. The Cape Khoi called themselves 'Khoina' i.e. 'human beings'; see Nienaber op. cit. pp. 310-11. 'Sana' was the word used by the Khoi to refer to the San.

<sup>2</sup> For the early San and Khoi see R. R. Inskip 'The Late Stone Age in Southern Africa' in *Background to Evolution in Africa* ed. W. W. Bishop and J. D. Clark Chicago 1967 pp. 557-82. Migrations of the Khoi into the Cape region are discussed in C. K. Cooke 'Evidence of Human Migration from the Rock Art of Southern Rhodesia' *Africa* XXXV No. 3 July 1965; A. R. Willcox 'Sheep and Shepherders in South Africa' *Africa* XXXVI No. 4 October 1966; E. O. J. Westphal 'The Linguistic Prehistory of Southern Africa: Bush, Kwadi, Hottentot and Bantu Linguistic Relationships' *Africa* XXXIII No. 3 July 1963; Westphal's migration route formulated on the basis of linguistic analysis of the various Khoi groups is radically different from that of Cooke and Willcox. See further A. J. H. Goodwin 'Metal Working Among the Early Hottentots' *S.A.A.B.* XI No. 42 1956. L. F. Maingard has attempted to place the Khoi chiefdoms in their proper geographical location based on contemporary work of D.E.I. Company officials, and travel accounts of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in L. F. Maingard 'The Lost Tribes of the Cape' *S.A.J.S.* XXVIII November 1931 pp. 487-504 map.