

**THE HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE AMAMFENGU OF THE  
EASTERN CAPE, 1820-1900**

**by**

**NOMALUNGISA SYLVIA MAXENGANA**

**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR**

**THE**



**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

**UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE**

**SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR J.B. PEIRES**

**JULY 2018**

## DECLARATION

I the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in any part submitted it at any university or other institution for a degree

.....

Signature



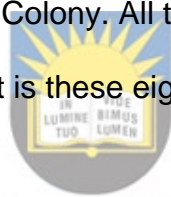
.....

Date

University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

## ABSTRACT

The name " amaMfengu " refers not to any specific African people, but is an umbrella term used up to the present day as a collective designation for amaHlubi, amaBhele, amaZizi and other chiefdoms and individuals who fled KwaZulu-Natal in the time of King Tshaka (1818 - 1828) and found refuge in the lands of the Xhosa King Hintsa. Despite their diverse origins, the shared historical experience of the various Mfengu groups provided them with a common identity and a common destiny. Their dire situation as refugees inclined them to mission Christianity which led, in turn, to alliance with the British Empire followed ultimately by rejection from the racist settler regime of the Cape Colony. All these traumatic events took place within a period of eighty years, and it is these eighty years which will be the focus of this dissertation.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	2
ABSTRACT .....	3
PREFACE .....	6
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	7
CHAPTER ONE: ORIGINS OF THE ABAMBO .....	11
CHAPTER TWO: THE AMAMFENGU IN GCALEKALAND.....	38
CHAPTER THREE: THE EVENTS OF 1835.....	633
CHAPTER FOUR: TERRITORIAL EXPANSION OF AMAMFENGU .....	955
CHAPTER FIVE: ALLIANCE AND REWARD.....	13333
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION .....	1788
ILLUSTRATIONS .....	18484
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	1899



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

## LIST OF MAPS

Map 1	AmaMfengu Nations before their Dispersion .....	377
Map 2	The Mfengu Exodus of 1835 .....	62
Map 3	Mfengu Locations in Cape Colony, 1863 .....	933
Map 4	“Fingoland” after the Exodus of 1865..... <b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>	<b>32</b>

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1	The Mqwashu Tree.....	60
Figure 2	The Mqwashu Tree inscription.....	61
Figure 3	List of Native Locations in Cape Colony .....	944
Figure 4	Chief Mabandla ..... <i>Together in Excellence</i> .....	184
Figure 5	Chief Njokweni.....	185
Figure 6	Chief Mavuso.....	186
Figure 7	Chief Ngwekazi.....	187
Figure 8	Regent of amaHlubi.....	188

## PREFACE

The third Chapter of my 2012 Masters thesis focussed on the arrival in Victoria East district of the amaMfengu people. Working on the topic inspired me to dig deeper on them, as I became increasingly aware of the controversies concerning Mfengu history. I realized that much remained unknown about this history, and that the posterity of the amaMfengu will end up losing it, as they will read about it on the Internet, work written by scholars who only write purely to get degrees and recognition. This work is my way of setting the record straight. Being an iMfengu myself, I was always wondering what we had done in the past to be called names like, 'sell-outs,' 'collaborators' with white people and the like. I therefore decided to do my Ph.D. studies on amaMfengu, as this would expose me to primary sources like contemporary official material, which the isiXhosa literature on the amaMfengu, that is otherwise so rich in history, written by the people in their own language in order to preserve it, unfortunately lacks, obviously because of the South Africa of those days! Fortunately for me, I am a scholar who is a first language speaker of isiXhosa and, having been born and bred at Peddie, the heartland of amaMfengu, as it were, I have been in a position to make use of both the original isiXhosa literature and the mostly English official material. Having used these authentic sources, I have hopefully, in a scholarly way, corrected any distortions that might have been advanced by scholars who write purely for recognition and without any regard for the people they write about, and may therefore trust that I have set the record straight concerning amaMfengu history.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first thank God for the strength and perseverance he has given me, despite all the challenges I went through, to ensure that my work does not remain a dream, but comes to fruition. My family, who has stood by me, never for a second doubted my capability, even though I was “very old to still be studying”, thank you so much. Your words of encouragement and prayers have propelled me to do this.

It will not be possible to mention everybody who assisted me, in one way or another, but I must mention Mr Themba Ndabeni and Mrs Erica le Roux of the National Archives in Cape Town. Without their assistance, I would never have been able to unearth all the historical evidence in all those stacks of primary source materials – filed away in the archives. Thank you very much, may you continue to assist all the Researchers who visit your institution.



University of Fort Hare

I also thank the staff members at the following libraries: Cory Library in Rhodes University in Grahamstown. Special thanks at Cory go to Mrs. Vathiswa Nhanha (Vathi) who went out of her way to assist me. You were always an email away, ready to assist whenever I failed to get book references correct, or, if I needed you, to search some documents or journal articles for me. I must also thank Ms Louise Verwey, also from Cory Library, for your readiness to assist me whenever I cried for help! At Howard Pim, I must thank, Mr Dlepu (Zizi), for your patience and willingness to assist this ‘very old ‘student. Without your help, I would never have obtained the relevant information needed for my dissertation. I must also thank the now retired veterans, Mr Mavuso (bhuti Bhele) and Mr Mginywa (bhuti Tshawe), of the Howard

Pim and the Main Library respectively, their practice of, calling me 'Doc'in advance has actually propelled me to achieve this status! Mrs Bokwe, one of the senior librarians in the main library calling me 'a good teacher 'has given me wings. I assure you that you need not lose confidence in me – thank you for believing in me. Mr Buyana (Thobela), for ensuring that this 'BBC' (BornBefore Computer) always had Wi-Fi on both my laptop and Tab, thank you. It is not your fault that I've had to struggle writing my Bibliography, simply because I did not invest in the well-informed 'Mendeley' workshop that you conducted for us!

Thank you, Mr Tshebi (Siya), for your readiness to help with Maps. Mr Ntsendwana (Bhuti Jeff), Mr Hlakanyane (Sandile), Mr Khembe (Manxele), Mr Z. Dayile, Mr Songwiqi (Bhuti Phindile), Mr N. Mbongisa and Liyaduma Balfour, thank you for your words of encouragement and assistance, in one way or another. There is no way I can forget to thank the Director of the Library, Dr. Bitso, for putting me in my place, so to speak, for catching me being 'comfortable' in the library staff kitchen. She has actually promoted me from a "cleaner " (which she thought I was, seeing that I was using even their microwave) to a 'Ph.D. Scholar '! I also thank the staff members of the South African Library in Cape Town. At Henderson Hall, at the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC), my thanks go to Mrs Martha Mushunje and Leo Mahachi for the assistance they gave me. For a moment I was at a loss as to how I was going to retrieve the Maps and illustrations I seemed to have lost in my Thesis. Thank you, Leo for coming to my rescue! I dare not forget to thank the staff of the Alice Municipal Library, headed by Ms Thabisa Mafika. It was at this Library that I had the



honor of meeting Mr Boyana Gqube of Gwali village, Alice, Researcher on indigenous trees and herbs and their medicinal uses. Thank you, Sir, for believing in my research work. After finishing this project, I will dig into the history of amaGwali as promised. Special thanks go to the Mupindu family, our Zimbabwean neighbors, for all the advice you gave me, which was always appreciated.

It is true that strong relationships are not only by consanguinity – I thank Miss Glory Mene for showing me that. An English teacher at Phandulwazi Agricultural High School in Alice and currently working part time on Masters in English, she really inspired me with her dedication in both her school work and private studies. The library became our second home and I did not have to worry if we had to work late in the library, because she would offer to give me a lift home. Thank you for all your words of encouragement and for ensuring that we were at the library even on Saturdays. You know you have my best wishes in your studies and may our wish to be in the Sports Centre for our graduation, materialize.

Special thanks go to the descendants of the chiefs of the three major branches of the aBambo nations who are the focus of this study. Despite their tight schedules, they did not hesitate to grant me the interviews I needed to confirm their genealogies. They are: Chief Justice Mabandla, the Paramount Chief of the amaBhele and who resides in Krwakrwa village, Alice; Chief Langa Mavuso of the Kunene House of the amaBhele, who resides in Mavuso village, also in Alice; Chief Sizakele Ngwekazi, the amaBhele Chief at Feni village, Peddie; Queen mother Lungelwa Mhlambiso of

the amaHlubi, mother-in-law of Chieftess Siphiwe Prudence Mhlambiso, the Regent of her daughter, Mbokazi, who is still a minor. These women reside in kwaMaThole village in Middledrift. From the amaZizi branch I had the pleasure of talking to Chief Njokweni who resides in Lujiko village at Peddie, who impressed me when he imitated the way the amaZizi used to pronounce words, there were lots of "ts" in their language. Thank you, chiefs. You have actually proved the importance of Oral Tradition in testing the reliability of written sources!

From the History Department at Fort Hare, I must thank Dr. D.S.Yekela for believing in me and her words of encouragement. Thank you also for your untiring endeavors to get me research funds, and for all your help in negotiating university procedures, so, thank you "mam wam".



Last, but not least, I thank Professor Jeff Peires, my Supervisor. Having supervised me for my Masters Degree, he encouraged me to do Ph.D. When I voiced my wish to continue with Chapter Three of my Masters thesis (which focuses on the amaMfengu of Victoria East), he immediately agreed with me that there was still a lot that needed to be researched, a lot of controversies that needed to be ironed out. Thank you for believing in me, Professor, your advice was always invaluable and your patience with my computer illiteracy - all those battles with "copy and paste" have finally paid off.

## CHAPTER ONE: ORIGINS OF THE ABAMBO

“AbaMbo” [people of Mbo] is the name by which those nations of the Thukela river region whom the Mfecane wars dispersed into the Eastern Cape prefer to be known. According to R.T. Kawa, the author of the Mbo traditional history, *IBali lamaMfengu* (1929), each of the major Mbo nations was independent and no nation was subordinate to another. What was remarkable was the friendly relations amongst them, each aware that they were one nation, albeit from different houses:<sup>1</sup>

*AmaHlubi ayenobukhosi bawo obabungephantsi kwabukhosi besinye isizwe, kwakukwanjalo ke ngobukosi bamaZizi, nobamaBele. Akukho babepphantsi kwabanye, nto yayikho yakukupatana ngobuzalwana, beqonda ukuba bangumntu omnye, bazizindlu nje ezahlukene ku Ludwe...,” kungekho zimfazwe zinkulu phakati kwabo; nakuba iingxwabangxwabana zamadabi zazikhe zibekho, ibuye ithethwe – [there were no major wars amongst them, though there were clashes sometimes, but these would be settled before they deteriorated into something ugly].*

University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

The colonial authorities referred to them as amaMfengu, a name that has lately aroused much controversy among historians. These controversies will be discussed in detail at the proper time, but it cannot be doubted that the amaHlubi, amaBhele and amaZizi – the three major Mbo nations – originated north of the Thukela, and it is there that we must therefore begin our study.

---

<sup>1</sup> R.T. Kawa, *Ibali lamaMfengu* (Lovedale Press, 1929), p.31.

Ntsikana, the Xhosa prophet, had predicted the so-called Mfecane wars, saying, “*Ndibona mna ukuba liyeza ixesha abothi ngalo uhlanga lusuke phezu kohlanga... nolunye luvela ngaseMpumalanga... [I foresee a time, when a nation will turn against nation... and one of them will come from the east].*”<sup>2</sup>

Ntsikana’s prophecies turned out to be accurate, as the upheavals north of the Thukela culminated in the wars of dispersal which uprooted the abaMbo from their own country and landed the bulk of them in the country of the Xhosa King Hintsa. Explaining the dispersal of the various nations from eMbo, Professor D.D.T. Jabavu uses the image of a vulture teaching its young ones to fly.<sup>3</sup> A vulture will destroy its nest, thereby forcing its young ones to fly down a cliff, but, before they fall down to their death, she will quickly fly down to their rescue, fly up the cliff with them, but then again release them. This will be done repeatedly until they can fly without the assistance of their mother. To Jabavu, it was the Lord Almighty’s plan that abaMbo should disperse from their own country, “*apho babehlala ndawonye, bejongene ngezikhondo zamehlo* [where they lived together in animosity].” In Jabavu’s view, God used King Hintsa to pick up those who were falling and helpless and so bring them back to a state of humanity. In Gcalekaland they became one, they became united in their diversified nations, they became an inseparable, solidified nation, “*imbumba yamanyama*”, as the Prophet Ntsikana had put it! This was teaching them the importance of friendly relations and unity as black nations. At the same time, bringing them to King Hintsa’s country was symbolic: abaMbo and amaGcaleka –

---

<sup>2</sup> W.G. Bennie, *Imibengo* (Lovedale Press, 1935), p.5.

<sup>3</sup> D.D.T. Jabavu, *Imbumba YamaNyama* (Lovedale Press, 1953), p.100.

living together, united in their diversity – giving the true meaning of our motto in our Coat of Arms as South Africans!

AbaMbo were named after “Imbo”, the name given to a precious stone that the amaHlubi dug out of the ground for trade purposes, and from which was derived the idiom : “*Ungalahli imbo yakho ngo Poyiyana*” (Don’t give away something precious for something which may turn out to be worthless).<sup>4</sup> H.M. Ndawo, the author of *Ibali lamaHlubi*, confirms that this was a very scarce and valuable stone, hence the idiom mentioned above.<sup>5</sup> The original home of the abaMbo was usually described as “Tukela,” by which should be understood not only the Thukela river itself, but also the valleys of its many tributary rivers rising in the Ukhahlamba/Drakensberg mountains, especially the Mzinyathi.



### **AmaHlubi**

University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

AmaHlubi today (2018) claim their own kingship. They refute that they are subject to the amaZulu king, and even reject the provincial name of KwaZulu Natal.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, of all the nations and chiefdoms calling themselves “abaMbo,” the amaHlubi are the only nation whose chiefs are all able to trace their descent to a single genealogy

---

<sup>4</sup> R.T. Kawa, *Ibali LamaMfengu* (Lovedale Press, n.d.[1929]), p.9.

<sup>5</sup> MS 16 337 Cory Library, H.M.: Ndawo, “Ibali lamaHlubi,” book 2, p.30.

<sup>6</sup> “AmaHlubi submission to the Commission on Traditional Leadership, Disputes and Claims,” Submitted by Prince Bekithemba A Langalibalele, Chairperson: amaHlubi National Working Committee, October 2005. Other sources on Hlubi history include J.H. Soga, *The South-Eastern Bantu*, (Witwatersrand University Press: Johannesburg, 1930), Chapter XXI; K.K.Ncwana, *Amanqakwana ngeminombo Yezizwe zaseMbo* (Lovedale, 1953); W.W.Gqoba, “Imbali yaseMbo,” in Bennie, pp. 89-107;

(*umnombo*), so that all the many Hlubi chiefs throughout South Africa today recognise Langalibalele II (Isilo Muziwenkosi Johannes Radebe) as their king.

The last King of the united Hlubi nation was Bhungane kaNtsele, who died about the year 1800, that is, before the beginning of the Mfecane Wars. Even in King Bhungane's time, however, the amaHlubi had splintered into different chiefdoms that operated autonomously and sometimes even came into conflict with each other. During the Mfecane Wars, the various Hlubi chiefs operated independently, each chief finding his own way through the dangers of that period of dispersion. Although we will concentrate on those Hlubi chiefs who found their way into King Hintsa's country, it is first necessary to provide a brief history of the Hlubi kingdom as a whole.



The first major split occurred during the reign of Ncobo, four generations before Bungane, that is, about 1650-1675.<sup>7</sup> Before the time of Ncobo, the nation had been known as amaMpembe or imiHuhu, not amaHlubi. Ncobo was married, or at least engaged, to the daughter of a Bhele man named Hlubi, by whom he had a son named Dlomo. It seems as if Ncobo was very cruel and unpopular with his people, who lured him to his death during a hunting party. MamHlubi, Ncobo's wife, thereafter married a man named Radebe, by whom she had a son named Zulu. The nation thus divided between two lines, both descended from the same lady, MamHlubi but by different husbands. An incident involving the wrong timing of '*ukweshwama*' (purification rite using herbs) of Zulu gave the Great House an

---

<sup>7</sup> Dates calculated in the "AmaHlubi submission," p.7.

impression that Radebe was stealing the kingship for his son, taking advantage of the fact that the rightful heir, Dlomo, was still a minor. This actually led to a civil war during which Ncobo's adherents were defeated. But they remained adamant that they would never bow to Radebe and would rather adhere to MamHlubi. To bring about peace and unity, Radebe recognised Dlomo as the future king of the nation. As the adherents of Ncobo had now assumed a new designation, the union of the two factions of Ncobo and Radebe called themselves amaHlubi, omitting the female prefix 'Mam-'.<sup>8</sup>

The original home of the amaHlubi was north-east of modern Durban, in the mountaineous region among the mountain ranges Busi, Khuphe, Vungatyeni and Ndimeni, as well as the Mzinyathi (Buffalo) and surrounding rivers: the Thangeni, Lenjana, northern Thukela and Mpfana.<sup>9</sup> The amaHlubi are said to have been gallant fighters, iziYendane, as their brave soldiers were called during the reign of Bhungane. To know more of the everyday life of amaHlubi and other abaMbo nations, back at Embo before the Mfecane wars, there is no better way than to read J.J.R Jolobe's historical novel, '*Elundini loThukela*'! One gets to know the way of life of these people, their customs, how young boys and girls were raised to be respectable and responsible men and women. A key event in the amaHlubi culture is

---

<sup>8</sup>The different versions of this story conflict in some details. I have mainly followed J.H. Soga: *The South-Eastern Bantu*, pp.403-406. See also Ncwana, p.21. MS 16 337, Cory Library, H.M. Ndawo (Book 2, pp.52-3) narrates an entirely different version. Accepting the proposal that Ncobo should marry his daughter, Hlubi, who was a Bhele chief, insisted on condition that she would not discard her father's name, but that the amaMpembe would henceforth become known as amaHlubi.

<sup>9</sup> T.B. Soga: *Intlalo kaXhosa*, (Lovedale Press, 1937), p.6.; A.T. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, London: Longmans, 1929), p. 148.

that of the circumcision of the boys of the nation. It was a common practice that, other boys had to wait for boys of Royal blood to undergo this custom, but in return, it brought about a sense of pride to be in the same ' school ' as the king's sons. This novel is very rich in the customs and traditions of abaMbo, especially amaHlubi as the largest of the abaMbo nations. The coronation of Ntsele, his courtship of Nobusi, the Princess of the amaNgwe nation and their wedding, gives us an idea of the history of the everyday life of these people before they were forced to leave their country.

It appears that the amaHlubi never themselves clashed with King Tshaka's amaZulu, but that they entered the Mfecane wars through Matiwane, the chief of the amaNgwane. It appears that, even before the accession of Tshaka, Matiwane had given his cattle for safe-keeping to King Mthimkhulu II of the amaHlubi. To Matiwane's consternation, Mthimkhulu II refused to return the cattle, thereby incurring Matiwane's wrath against him. Attacking by night, Matiwane destroyed the Hlubi Great Place, killing Mthimkhulu and occupying his land.<sup>10</sup> The amaHlubi shattered into fragments, like a broken bottle, each of the many chiefs saving his people as best he could.

The Hlubi Great House survived in Natal through Langalibalele, the son of Mtimkhulu. Other brothers, such as Ludidi, crossed the Mzimkhulu but stopped short

---

<sup>10</sup> Bryant, pp.137-8; J. Wright and A. Manson, *The Hlubi Chiefdom in Zululand-Natal* (Ladysmith: Historical Society, 1983), pp.12-14.



of the Xhosa Kingdom. The only one of Mthimkhulu's sons to enter King Hintsa's country was Mhlambiso, and it is doubtless for this reason that Rev. Ayliff, writing in May 1835, described him as "acknowledged to be the principal" of all "the Fingoes who sustain the rank of Chiefs in Hintza's Tribe."<sup>11</sup> Mthimkhulu's *kunene* (Right-Hand) brother, Mpangazitha, invaded the Highveld (modern Free State) where he continued the battles with Matiwane. Many of his descendants, including Zibi and Mehlomakhulu, later played prominent roles in the history of the Eastern Cape, but they too stopped short of the Xhosa Kingdom and are therefore irrelevant to this study.

Most of the amaHlubi who entered Hintsa's country belonged to the Radebe branch rather than the Great House. It seems that they joined the amaBhele on the Lenge Mountains so as to better resist the attacks of Matiwane. Among their chiefs, Lutshaba of the amaReledwane (the father of Matomela and Zimema), Ncwana of the amGobizembe and Maqhubela (the father of Zulu and Msuthu) were the most prominent. They seem to have linked up with Ngoza, the chief of the abaThembu waseQhudenj, who entered Mpondoland about 1821 and was killed in Lusikisiki district.<sup>12</sup> After a very brief sojourn (mainly because here they were treated like boys), the amaHlubi left Mpondoland and finally arrived in Gcalekaland, King

---

<sup>11</sup> Rev Mr Ayliff's Notice of the Fingoes, 1 May 1835, in G.M. Theal, *Documents relating to the Kaffir War of 1835* (London: Cowes, 1912), pp.140-142.

<sup>12</sup> Information from Rev D. Malgas, published in *Imvo* 1917, quoted TB Soga, p.7; Ncwana, pp.35-40;

Hintsa's country, where they met Gocini and Mvundlela who had arrived long before the Mfecane wars.<sup>13</sup>

### **AmaBhele**

The amaBhele have always been closely associated with the amaHlubi. It is said that they share a common descent from Mhuhu, and we have already related how the very name of Hlubi derives from “MamHlubi,” the daughter of a Bhele man.<sup>14</sup> Clans associated with amaBhele are the following: Ludonga, Mngwe, Khuboni, Zondi, Sonani, Ndamane, Madiba, Mdluli, Nyathi, Bhikane, Hlababisa, Mafu, Dlambulo, Lutshaba, Mciyane, Migxumela, Jwara, Memela, Ntsimbini, Dongo, Duma, Gudu, imiGumela, Mcityana, Nyongeni, Mabala, Fulo, Sindane Mazibuko, Ntshangase, Cweleka, Caluthela, Sobhekwa.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

R.T. Kawa, in his history of abaMbo, provides very interesting stories of how some people came to be amaBhele. We will cite the amaJwara as an example. AmaJwara, apparently, were not amaBhele initially. The story has it that Chief Bhele dreamt of an animal, whereupon he gave instructions that a group of hunters should go and hunt down this animal, which was duly found in the Drakensberg mountain range - the animal turned out to be a person, Jwara, but he did not have a clan name. The AmaBhele later became involved in a battle where Jwara proved his bravery. He was duly rewarded by the king, who had a house built for him and gave him cattle. In due

---

<sup>13</sup> MS 16 337 Cory Library H.M. Ndawo, Book No. 7, p. 356.

<sup>14</sup> J.H.: Soga, p.424; Kawa, pp. 19-20; *Imvo*, 23 June 1931.

course the king consulted his councilors, and it was decided to give Jwara the king's daughter in marriage, with Jwara using the cattle he had been given by the king to pay lobola. Thus, Jwara became a Bhele by the children he had with the Bhele princess, who became known as amaBhele - Jwara. His heir was Mbelu and from his Right-Hand House, Khakhaza. Mciyana and Migxumela also came from the amaJwara. The Madiba were the first to be circumcised, and they were also put in charge of burying the Bhele chiefs, which is why they were called amaDiba (from - *diba*, meaning 'to shovel earth'). They are the descendants of Nyathi-Kazi and Mdluli. The amaNyathi were entrusted with the coronation of the Bhele chiefs.<sup>15</sup>

The amaBhele resided on the Nadi River, a tributary of the Thukela, which rises in the Lenge Mountains. The Bhele chief, from which all the chiefly lines west of the Kei are descended, was Khuboni, thirteenth in line, from Chief Bhele, the founding ancestor.<sup>16</sup> He probably lived about 1700. From Khuboni are descended three chiefly lines which still exist, descended from his sons Mamba, Dlambulo and Lutshaba. The line of Dlambulo claims precedence, but most Bhele agree that the great house follows the line of Mamba, the forefather of Qunta, who was reigning during the outbreak of the Mfecane wars. The amaBhele were the immediate cause of the destruction of the nations living along the foothills of the Drakensburg, by refusing to allow Matiwane to pass through their country as he was retreating before Tshaka.

---

<sup>15</sup>Kawa, pp. 19-20.

<sup>16</sup> JH Soga, Genealogy facing page 425; Ncwana, pp.22-23; Interview with Chief Langa Mavuso, Alice, 12 April 2017; Interview with Chief Justice Mabandla, Krwakrwa, 12 December, 2017.

It seems as if Qunta died somewhere in Natal and the amaBhele somehow attached their fortunes to that of Ngoza, the chief of the abaThembu baseQudeni who crossed the Mzimkhulu about 1821.<sup>17</sup> Mabandla, Qunta's Great Son, was still a minor and the amaBhele were commanded by Mdingi, their general, whose followers go by the name of Memela or Gambu. Mdingi participated in a bitter conflict with the amaBhaca, and was blamed by them for causing the death by fire of Sonyangwe, who had inherited the Bhaca chiefship from his father, Madzikane. Mdingi was isolated by the Bhaca-Mpondo alliance and died in Mbizana. The surviving amaBhele found their way to Gcalekaland and were well received by King Hintsa. Chief Mabandla was given land at Cegcuwana in the present district of Butterworth and Nkwenkwezi, another chief of the Mamba Great House, received land very close to the Butterworth mission of Reverend John Ayliff.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Qunta's heir was Mabandla, the greatest chief of the amaBhele who had Jamangile (in Tsitsa, Transkei) and Mbovane (in the Tyhume area in Alice). This historical fact is confirmed by Chief Justice Mabandla of Krwakrwa location, Alice. On his Right-Hand House Lutshaba produced the amaBhele who are known as the amaBhele of Lutshaba. The chief of this branch is Chief Langa Mavuso in Mavuso location, Alice.<sup>18</sup> The ruler of amaBhele in the 1830's was Aaron, a grandson of Mabandla who entered King Hintsa's country with a remnant of the nation and was part of the exodus to Peddie in 1835. The two main branches of amaBhele are the Royal line

---

<sup>17</sup> For the history of the amaBhele during the Mfecane wars, see Bryant, Chapter 39, and B.B. Mabandla, *Imbali YaMaBhele KaJamangile KaMabandla* (Self-published King Williams Town, 2012, ISBN 978-0-620-53589-2)

<sup>18</sup> K.K. Ncwana, p.17.

and of the eldest son, who was neither the heir nor the head of the Right-Hand House. These two branches came into existence with Khuboni, the thirteenth in line of descent from Mhuhu, and his eldest son, Dlambulo. The royal salutation of each branch is ' Khuboni ' and ' Dlambulo' respectively.<sup>19</sup> Before they were scattered by Matiwane, the amaBhele were a big nation, said to be as numerous as Hintsa's amaXhosa. Chief Nkwenkwezi, of the amaBhele was converted to Christianity before the 1834 War, and he urged his people to do likewise.

### ***AmaZizi***

Unlike the amaHlubi and the amaBhele, the different Zizi chiefdoms cannot easily express their relationship within a single, comprehensive and all-embracing genealogy. They include the following: Langa, Lamyeni, Ndlovu, Sikhalo, Jama, Miya, Maphuthi, Tshetshengwana, Gqabi, Tolo, Shweme, Goqolo, Nzaba, Masango, Ncwabe, Ndlangisa, Tenza, Ntshweleba, Mhlwane, Mfene, Dlangathi, Mbona, Mbanjwa, - Mpethwane - Mapetla, Mapholane, Mabi, Lotha, Maphiko, Makhwabe and Mvunekho.<sup>20</sup>

Clan-names associated with the amaZizi, especially Dhlamini, are also prominent among other nations – amaKuze, amaTolo, and the amaNtlangwini. The amaSwazi do not identify themselves as amaZizi although they do recognise a common origin.

---

<sup>19</sup> J.H. Soga, p.424.

<sup>20</sup> Kawa, p. 15.

Their Great Place was adjacent to the amaBhele at the Upper Klip River and the sources of the Thukela, on the Sandlwana Mountain. Many of the Zizi-related nations trace their descent from Sibalukhulu, who was the father of Khuze, who was the father of the twins, Tolo and Zizi. Oral history relates that Tolo, who was due to succeed, fell into disfavour with his father and all the councillors because he loved food too much. Limakho, a younger brother from the Right-Hand House, came up with a plan that would jeopardize Tolo's chances of succession. He advised Zizi that, on the day of the coronation, he should postpone eating his food till the afternoon [*emva kwemini*], whilst Tolo ate everything that was brought before him, including Zizi's meat, which he said he would also eat in the afternoon [*ndakudla emini*]. Thus, on the big day, which was also the day of the feast of the First Fruits ('*ukushwama*'), Khuze gave them instructions as to what to eat and how much. Zizi did as was advised, every time food was brought before him, he kept saying [*ndakudla emini* - one who eats in the afternoon), thus gaining the name 'Dlamini,' by which clan-name all his adherents became known. On the other hand, Tolo devoured everything that was brought before him, as already mentioned, thus gaining the name 'Dlangamandla ' (one who eats too much), the clan-name by which the amaTolo are still known today. As their father secretly wanted Zizi to win, he told him to perform a certain dance as well, and this became the determining factor in his being chosen as his successor. The enmity that arose between the twin brothers culminated in a civil war that brought about a separation between them, each ruling over his own

adherents. The salutation of AmaZizi is Dlamini, whilst that of amaTolo is Dlangamandla.<sup>21</sup>

Unlike the amaHlubi and the amaBhele, the amaZizi are historically linked to the abeSotho. Many amaZizi left the Thukela region and crossed over the Ninakhulu mountains into Lesotho, due to petty conflicts among themselves. In Lesotho they became known as amaZizi angamaMfene, amaPhendla (or Maphetla in SeSotho). Another branch of the AmaZizi who migrated to Lesotho was the amaPulani, descendants of Langa, the younger brother of Ndlovu and Lamyeni, the sons of Dlamini, Dweba's heir. A third branch of amaZizi who ended up in Lesotho, were Njokweni I and his adherents, which included the amaTshetshengwana, descendants of the house of eSikalweni, who were also swallowed by the abeSotho as the abaMbo dispersed from eluThukela.<sup>22</sup> In Lesotho they were welcomed by the abaPhuthi and given land. The chief was given a princess of the abaPhuthi in marriage. They soon reunited with the amaZizi who had left Thukela before them, that is, the amaPhendla and amaPulani.

Lastly, one must also recognize the existence of the several Zizi chiefdoms of the Lamyeni house, who settled in Thembuland before the outbreak of the Mfecane wars. These are descended from a chief named Lunika whose *kunene* house under

---

<sup>21</sup> R.T. Kawa, pp. 27 - 31; J.H. Soga, pp. 426 - 427.

<sup>22</sup> The links between the amaZizi and the abeSotho are discussed in detail in Kawa pp. 15-18. Confirmed by Chief Z.P.Njokweni, interviewed by Ms. Maxengana at his home at Lujiko, amaZizini, Peddie, on 20 Dec. 2017.

Menziwe was granted land by the Thembu king Ndaba.<sup>23</sup>The remainder of Lunika's people stayed behind, but, they were soon dispersed during the Mfecane wars, losing their chief, Mkhuli, who was killed in battle. They settled in Thembuland under the protection of Menziwe. Like the Sotho-linked branches, therefore, they remained outside of the Xhosa kingdom of King Hintsa, and will not therefore be further considered in this thesis.

K.K. Ncwana lists ten houses of the amaZizi and R.T. Kawa, only five, but here we will concentrate only on those who later crossed the Kei River.<sup>24</sup> The most senior of these was the line of Langa, whose successor Zitha was killed up north during the Mfecane Wars, and who was succeeded by Mdingi, who was acknowledged as the senior chief of the amaZizi in 1835.<sup>25</sup> Mdingi was later killed during the War of the Axe, leaving his house with no issue. Another senior chief of the amaZizi was Wulana, the *iqadi* of the Great House, who became attached to Matiwane during the Mfecane Wars and later crossed the Kei to Fort Beaufort, but who seemingly never entered Xhosaland during the reign of King Hintsa.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> According to Prof J. Peires, Ndaba died before 1809, which is important because it shows Zizi settlement west of the Kei predating the Mfecane wars. The history of the Lamyeni branch has lately been traced in detail, by Prince Jongisilo Pokwana, son of Chief Jongumhlaba Pokwana of Ngqutura in Ngcobo district, whose *AmaZizi: the Dlamini of Southern Africa* is now in its second edition (2015). Page references in this thesis are from the first edition which came out in 2008, published by adaenup cc of Johannesburg. Further details and copies of the book can be obtained from [info@adaenup.co.za](mailto:info@adaenup.co.za) or [pokwana@gmail.com](mailto:pokwana@gmail.com).

<sup>24</sup> Ncwana, pp. 19-22; Kawa, pp.25-26.

<sup>25</sup> For the five royal houses, see Kawa, pp. 25-26. For the history of the senior line, that is the house of Langa, see W.W. Tshiki, "AmaZizi nezibongo zawo," in W.B. Rubusana, *Zemk'iinkomo Magwalandini* (1906; ed S.C. Satyo, Cape Town: New Africa Books, 2002), pp.210-11.

<sup>26</sup> Information from Prof J. Peires



Under these circumstances, the leadership of the amaZizi in Hintsas's country was assumed by Chief Njokweni, the head of the Tenya or Sikalweni line, relatively junior but one of the five houses recognised by Kawa.<sup>27</sup> It has already been noted that the first amaZizi arrived in Thembuland even before the beginning of the Mfecane wars. One of these, a certain Gacuza had moved to Hintsas's country and taken up residence on Ngxalathi Hill near the present Butterworth Hospital.<sup>28</sup> Later, when the first amaZizi communities arrived as a result of the Mfecane wars, Gacuza warned them to hide their chief in case Hintsas might kill him. This was presumably Mdingi of the Great House, who has already been mentioned. It was at this point that Njokweni made his move, offering himself to be presented to Hintsas as the Chief of the amaZizi so as to protect the true chief who remained concealed. Contrary to expectation, however, Hintsas received and respected Njokweni as a chief, raising him to a position of leadership among the amaZizi, which his line has enjoyed right up to the present day. Pointing to the royal status of his house, as confirmed by R.T. Kawa, the present Chief Njokweni strongly insists that, contrary to the assertions of B.A. Bangeni, Njokweni's chieftainship was not conferred on him by Hintsas, but merely recognised.<sup>29</sup>

### ***Other Nations of the abaMbo***

---

<sup>27</sup> Kawa, pp. 25-26.

<sup>28</sup> Pokwana, (2015), p.87, quoting Tamsanqa (1985).

<sup>29</sup> Bangeni, quoted by Pokwana, p.94; Chief Njokweni, interviewed by MS Maxengana at his home at Lujiko, amaZizini, Peddie, on 20 December 2017.

The importance of this chapter is to establish a framework for assessing the arguments of Alan Webster [to be fully discussed in later chapters] who boldly asserts:<sup>30</sup>

Whiteside claimed that the Fingo chiefs were all from Zizi, Hlubi, Bhele and Relidwane (*sic*) royal lineages, and that when they were with the Gcalekas they had pretended not to be chiefs, in order to avoid victimisation. But the evidence suggests that they were collaborators and opportunists, who were prepared to follow British orders on the management of the Fingo... The chiefs changed fairly rapidly. In 1854 the only two left of the original nine were Jokweni and Matomela. Within two decades the entire chiefly hierarchy had changed, presumably as a result of the dismissal of chiefs not meeting British expectations.

Webster's assertion is astonishing and arrogant. Although he has not read even one of the many isiXhosa-language sources, he casually writes off the traditional leaders of the abaMbo as "collaborators and opportunists," appointed merely on the basis of their obedience to the British colonialists. The only source he mentions is ("Whiteside"), who was a colonial apologist, although he lived among the amaMfengu and was advised by Mfengu historians, including R.T. Kawa.<sup>31</sup> In order to avoid this colonial stigma, I have therefore preferred to altogether disregard Ayliff and Whiteside's *History of the AbaMbo, generally known as Fingos*, and to rely instead only on authentic isiXhosa-language sources, which were entirely and culpably ignored by Webster. As has already been demonstrated in this chapter, the Mbo nations all had a history in the Thukela before their arrival in Xhosaland, we

---

<sup>30</sup> A. Webster, "Unmasking the Fingo: the War of 1835 Revisited," in C. Hamilton (ed), *The Mfecane Aftermath* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1995), p.272

<sup>31</sup> J. Ayliff and J. Whiteside, *History of the AbaMbo generally known as Fingos* (Butterworth: Gazette, 1912). Reverend Whiteside compiled the history at the request of I. Bud M'Belle, the Organising Secretary of the Fingo Commemoration. Only four of the chapters were written by Ayliff, the remainder were composed by Whiteside with the advice of M'Belle, R.T. Kawa and Chief Zibi Sidinane of Mount Fletcher. There is much that is valuable in this book, but it is admittedly tainted by colonial influence, and I have therefore preferred to ignore it in constructing my argument.

know where they came from and how they got there. It remains, however, to refute Webster's accusation by demonstrating that the Mfengu chiefs recognised by the British were genuine traditional leaders, and not merely British appointees.

We can do this by examining the list of nine "persons among the Fingoes who sustain the rank of Chiefs in Hintza's tribe," provided by Reverend John Ayliff, the main colonial architect of the Mfengu exodus, and one whose tenure at Butterworth mission had given him the opportunity to get to know the abaMbo chiefs.<sup>32</sup> He composed this list while a refugee at Clarkebury in Thembuland, that is, *before* he knew which chiefs were going to join the British army in May 1835. Some of the chiefs mentioned have already been discussed, but we must examine the others more closely to ensure that they were not collaborators hand-picked by the British. We look at them in the order provided by Ayliff.



University of Fort Hare

***Umhlambiso of the Amahlubi*** *Together in Excellence*  
***Matomela of the Amakeledwani***  
***Jokwene of the Amazizi***  
***Umkwenkwezi of the Amabili***

Without a doubt, these are Mhlambiso of the amaHlubi, Matomela of the amaReledwane branch of the amaHlubi, Njokweni of the amaZizi and Nkwenkwezi of the amaBhele, all of whose histories have already been dealt with.

***Ucwana of the Amaqobizembe***

---

<sup>32</sup> "Rev. Mr Ayliff's Notice of the Fingoes," in Theal, pp. 140 - 142.

Ncwana was the chief of the other branch of the amaReledwane branch of the amaRadebe, related to Lutshaba, the father of Matomela. He was not even in Gcalekaland when the British invaded, but was busy working for Boers in the colony to obtain some cattle. A very detailed history of this branch of the amaReledwane is provided by Ncwana's descendant, K.K. Ncwana (born 1864) who received the history from his grandfather.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Uhliso of the Abasekunene***

Hliso cannot be identified, but Ayliff is mistaken in translating "abaseKunene" as "the people who are in truth." "Kunene," in this context, means Right-Hand, another branch of the Radebe, and the people referred to are the descendants of Msutu, who did not join the British army in 1835, but arrived in Peddie at a later date.<sup>34</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

### ***Umkwali of the Abaswawo***

The abaShwawu never joined the British or crossed the Kei River. Ayliff is mistaken in saying they were scattered by Madzikane, the chief of the amaBhaca. According to AT Bryant, the historian of Natal, abaShwawu were scattered by Madzikane's ally, Macingwane, the chief of the amaChunu. The abaShwawu thereafter "peacefully

---

<sup>33</sup>Ncwana,(1953), especially p.ix.

<sup>34</sup> Kawa, p. 21.

settled down as amaMfengu” among the amaGcaleka, returning to Natal some time in the 1830s.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Unomtshatsho of the Amantozake***

AmaNtozakhe akwaNjeya were the followers of a one-eyed man named Ntozakhe who was given protection by the chief of the imiTwana in Mpondoland. They were working in the colony among the Boers before they moved to Hintsas’s country. They had not been there long before the 1835 war broke out, and they played no part in the events which followed.<sup>36</sup>



### ***Umkuzangwe of the Abayimani***

University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

As far as I have been able to determine, amaZangwe are not a chiefdom, but a clan (*isiduko*) only.

This survey of the nine Mfengu chiefs recognised by Hintsas reveals the names of four chiefs (Mhlambiso, Matomela, Njokweni and Nkwenkwezi) who participated in the dramatic events of 1835, two (Ncwana and the abaseKunene) who arrived in Peddie at a later date, and three (abaShwawo, amaNtozakhe and amaZangwe) who

---

<sup>35</sup> Bryant, p. 270.

<sup>36</sup>Wycliffe Matanda Nkuhlu, “AmaNtozakhe akwaNjeya,” manuscript courtesy of Prof L. Wotshela. Additional information from the James Stuart Archive through Prof J. Peires

never participated at all. The relevant aspect of the survey is to demonstrate that the people referred to as the “Mfengu” of Hintsa’s country all originated among the abaMbo communities of the Thukela region, and that their Natal origin was not a myth invented by the colonialists, as Webster and others would like us to believe. Five of the six chiefs who participated were certainly the correct traditional leaders of their communities [apart from Hliso of the abaseKunene, whom we cannot yet identify) and certainly not collaborators chosen by the British. R.T. Kawa, K.K. Ncwana and others expended much energy identifying the precise nations which later became known as amaMfengu, and everyone of them originated in KZN. Kawa was born in 1854, a mere twenty years later, and Ncwana in 1864, and they were both well acquainted with the generation that endured the Mfecane. Kawa, especially, was moreover profoundly disillusioned with colonialism,<sup>37</sup> and we may be sure that he would have blamed the British for the enslavement of the amaMfengu if any such had taken place. Were Kawa alive today, he would most definitely have rejected Webster’s views in the strongest terms. Kawa lists all the chiefs of the different nations of abaMbo and their genealogies, and he identifies the localities on the Thukela where each chief resided before the Mfecane wars.<sup>38</sup> He would have resented having the chiefs he respected so much being called “collaborators and opportunists”, and would certainly have challenged Webster’s assertion that the amaMfengu “ had no authentic chiefs.”

---

<sup>37</sup> See the Introduction to the Cory Library reprint of *IBali lamaMfengu*, eds. V.Nhanha and J. Peires, (Grahamstown: Eastern Cape Reprints, 2011), pp.vii-xiv.

<sup>38</sup> Kawa, pp. 39-40.

## ***The Legacy of the Mfecane Wars***

It is most probable that the abaMbo would have never been transformed into amaMfengu if they had formed a united front against their attackers. Unfortunately, they lacked solidarity, and did not understand that if people are united, they stand, but divided, they fall. It is possible that the abaMbo would have never been scattered by the wars of the “Mfecane”, but because different nations stood aside from each other when one of them was attacked and never consistently helped one another, they ended up being destroyed and / fleeing from their homeland.

According to Kawa, the amaBhele and amaZizi displayed cowardice, as they simply ran away without putting up a fight as soon as they realized they were the only ones left in eMbo country, after the other abaMbo nations had left, following the killing of the amaHlubi King, Mthimkhulu.<sup>39</sup>



## University of Fort Hare

The meaning and history of the “Mfecane” has been debated by professional historians ever since Julian Cobbing’s controversial article, “The Mfecane as Alibi”, published in 1988.<sup>40</sup> Cobbing himself has withdrawn from the debate, but historians remain polarised on the issue, with distinguished professors taking up partisan positions on either side, for example Prof. Jeff Peires of Fort Hare (against) and Prof John Wright of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (for).<sup>41</sup> The Mfengu question has

---

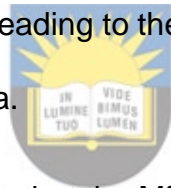
<sup>39</sup>Kawa, p.43

<sup>40</sup> J. Cobbing, “The Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo,” *Journal of African History* 29 (1988). An entire conference devoted to the controversy was held at Wits University in 1991, the proceedings of which were published in C.Hamilton (ed), *The Mfecane Aftermath* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1995).

<sup>41</sup> For example, J. Peires, “‘Fellows with big holes in their ears’: the ethnic origins of the amaMfengu,” *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa* 65 (2011); J. Wright, “Turbulent Times: Political Transformations in the North and East, 1760-1830s,” in C.Hamilton et al (eds), *The*

been powerfully argued by Alan Webster, Poppy Fry and others who have never been academically contradicted. This thesis will limit itself to this aspect alone, making full use of the isiXhosa language sources that have been hitherto ignored.

The term Mfecane, meaning “clubbing”, was commonly used by Africans throughout the Eastern Cape to describe a previously unprecedented style of warfare, associated with Shaka Zulu, the amaNgwane and the amaBhaca. It made its first appearance in the isiXhosa language in 1839,<sup>42</sup> and isiXhosa-speaking people have ever since made use of the phrase “Mfecane wars” to describe the upheavals that occurred among the African population of South Africa in the 1820’s and 1830’s, beginning in Natal and Zululand, spreading to the Highveld and making an impact that was felt as far north as Tanzania.



In *IBali LamaMfengu*, Kawa suggests that the Mfecane wars were not necessarily driven by Tshaka alone. The abaMbo, for example, were not dispersed by Tshaka but fled after Mthimkhulu, the Hlubi king was killed by Matiwane of the amaNgwane. Their movement from the Thukela was not an easy one, they endured untold hardships. Defeated and broken, thousands of men, women and children travelled hundreds of kilometres, without food, except wild fruit and bulbous roots dug out of the ground. Many died on the way, and survivors became walking skeletons. Since Africans did not take any census of their numbers, the initial number of refugees is not known. More or less 35 000 survived and sought refuge with the abaThembu and

---

*Cambridge History of South Africa*, Volume I, especially pp.232-234.

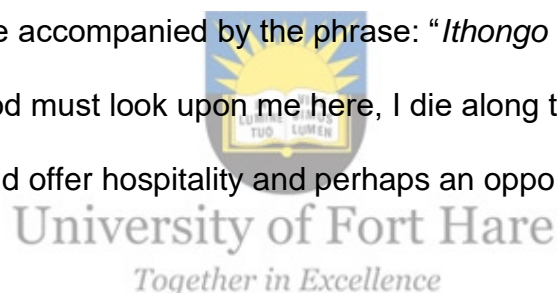
<sup>42</sup>'Indaba zokucolwa kwomtu oyiMfecane' (News extracted from a Mfecane person), *Umshumayeli Wendaba* 8 (April 1839) from Prof J. Opland via Prof J. Peires.



amaXhosa. As their country was sparsely populated the abaThembu were greatly strengthened by abaMbo refugees. They were kindly treated and enjoyed the same civil rights as their hosts. The abaMbo were also valued for their skill in the use of herbs as medicine for both man and beast. The greater number of abaMbo moved into Gcalekaland, south of the Bashee River. Here they were also given a warm welcome by the amaXhosa king Hintsia.

According to George Pamla, son of Charles Pamla, the first “Mfengu” to be ordained as a Wesleyan minister, the abaMbo must have used a term, something like “*singamamfengusa*” to describe their wretched condition and their peaceful intent.

This would probably be accompanied by the phrase: “*Ithongo malindebeke, ndafela ecaleni kwendlela*, (God must look upon me here, I die along the roadside).”<sup>43</sup> Any sympathetic chief would offer hospitality and perhaps an opportunity for settlement.



Another credible version is that offered by James Ayliff, Reverend John Ayliff’s son and himself for a long time a government official among the amaMfengu.<sup>44</sup> According to James Ayliff, Mgayise, leader of a band of refugees, on arriving in Transkei, met Ngubengcuka, the king of the abaThembu, who asked him who he and his people were and where they were going. Mgayise replied “Siyafengusa sifima nikongo,” that is, “we are wanderers seeking service.” Ngubengcuka then replied, “Ku umgili

---

<sup>43</sup> Moyer, “History,” p.75.

<sup>44</sup> Cory Library, MS 14 801: Recollections of James Ayliff.

nzakuba yemfengu yam,” meaning, “All right, then you will be my Fengu.” This meant he was welcoming them into Thembuland - as prospective abaThembu.

Thus, the name “Mfengu” was derived from the phrase “*singamamfenguza*.” Simply translated, this would be “we are wanderers seeking service.” By “service” is implied a situation where iMfengu would work for an individual in return for food, shelter and an opportunity to acquire wealth, mainly cattle and eventually economic independence. Slavery or indentured servitude, as practised by Europeans, simply did not exist among the abeNguni, and the “state of servitude” mentioned in J. Ayliff and J. Whiteside’s “History of AbaMbo”, can by no means be equated with slavery.

K.K. Ncwana, in “*Amanqakwana Ngeninombo Yezizwe zaseMbo*”, also explains that the name “Mfengu” was not the name of any nation or any leader amongst the people uprooted by the wars of Mfecane. The saying “*singama Mfengu siyamfenguza*” (we are destitute people seeking service) should not be taken too literally, nor in such a way as to detract from the dignity of the one who humbly seeks help - which is the exact meaning of “*mfenguza*”. So the name “Mfengu” was not anything like the name of an ancestor of any of the nations from eMbo. The name just means a state of virtually having nothing, thus affecting your dignity as well.

A common error that needs to be corrected is that abaMbo first called themselves amaMfengu when they arrived in Gcalekaland. It can never be overemphasized that “*eli gama lobuMfengu asililo gama lamntu okanye gama lanyange nakwisiphi na isizwe kwizizwe ezachithakala ngexesha le Mfecane,*” (K.K.Ncwana: *Amanqakwana ngeminombo yezizwe zaseMbo*, p. 46.) [The name of being Mfengu is not the name

of a person or the name of an ancestor of a nation of any of the nations that dispersed during the time of Mfecane]. AmaMfengu were not a nation, nor, did they share a common ancestor called “Mfengu”, but that these people were many different nations, back in their country of origin, Embo. As D.D.T. Jabavu explains in his book: *Imbumba yamaNyama*, p.100:

*‘...izizwe ezazihleli ngokwahlukeneyo...eMbo, ukunyusa imilambo uThukela noMzinyathi, [they lived as different nations in eMbo, along the Thukela and Mzinyathi Rivers]; “ kodwa inkcithakalo eyazifikelayo ngeb[h]jaqo yazenza zathi saa; laphela lati tu [ikratshi] lobuni, zagoba phantsi kwemeko yokuthobeka kwazo, zalutya kunye nangokufanayo udaka ezahamba zilub[h]jaqa endleleni; zayambatha ngokufanayo [ingca] ukufihla imizimba; zaqala ukuvana ngegama elinye lobuzwe, ezazibiza ngalo zada zaya kungena kwa Gcaleka – igama lobuMfengu. [but, the dispersal that got them unexpectedly caused them to scatter, ended arrogance, and, lowered in their destitution, they ate the mud they found on their way together; they covered their bodies with grass in the same way; they started to be friendly in the name of nationhood, by which they called themselves until they entered Gcalekaland – the name of being Mfengu].*

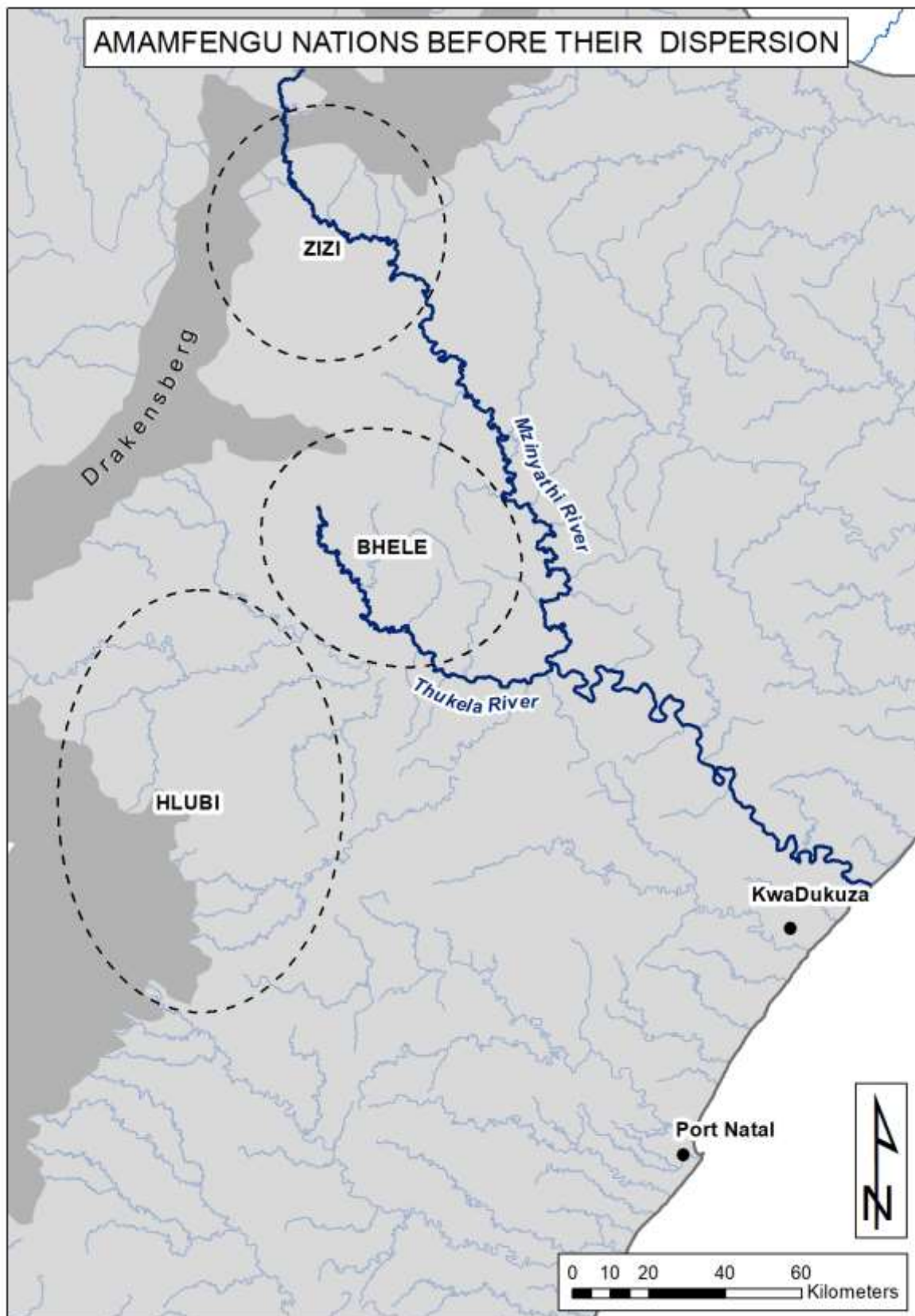
The last part of this quotation clearly indicates that even before they reached King Hintsu’s country, they were already calling themselves amaMfengu, a name befitting their destitute position.

That is why, on reaching Gcalekaland, when asked where they were from and who they were, they answered, *“SingamaMfengu siyamfenguza.”...”babethetha ukuthi bachithakele ezweni labo abasaziboni okokuba basekwisimo sobuntu ngenxa*

*yemeko ababekuyo yokuthobeka*” [We are Mfengu, we seek service...they meant they had dispersed from their country and no longer saw themselves as humans because of their destitute condition] ( K.K.Ncwana: *Amanqakwana ngeminombo yezizwe zaseMbo*, p. 40; W.B. Rubusana, *Zemk iinkomo Magwalandini*, p.97).

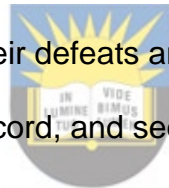


University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*



## CHAPTER TWO: THE AMAMFENGU IN GCALEKALAND [1818 – 1834]

*The History of Abambo, Generally known as Fingo*, authored by Reverends John Ayliff and Joseph Whiteside, has become the Bible on the history of amaMfengu, precisely because this Reverend John Ayliff, the missionary at Butterworth in King Hintsa's country, was the prime facilitator of the Mfengu conversion to Christianity and their subsequent exodus to Peddie in the company of the British army. Ayliff even compiled the first list of the different clans of amaMfengu and their respective Chiefs, as already noted in the previous chapter. Chapters One to Three of Ayliff and Whiteside are devoted to the history of the abaMbo in Natal, their country of origin, their chiefs, clans and way of life, their defeats and their dispersion. All in all, this book appears as a contemporary record, and seems therefore entitled to claim authenticity. Hence it is relied on by many historians when it comes to the history of abaMbo/ amaMfengu.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

One must therefore ask, is Ayliff indeed a reliable historical source? If he was subjected to deep scrutiny so as to discover the real interest he supposedly had in these people, would he pass the test that he really had their best interests at heart? It should be borne in mind that when he initially arrived in Butterworth, his intention was not to work amongst the amaMfengu but to attempt to convert the amaXhosa to Christianity. It appears that he was not succeeding in this task, as he himself admitted in reporting that King Hintsa once remarked of his sermon that "This word

may suit my dogs, the Fingos, but I and my people will not have it.' On another occasion, seeing Ayliff baptize some amaMfengu converts, Hintsä threatened to kill him.<sup>1</sup> John Ayliff, it is clear, was a missionary with an agenda; he acted as a government agent, and was primarily responsible for nurturing amaMfengu discontent and facilitating their adhesion to the British. Ayliff's narrative aligned closely with that of the British Governor Sir Benjamin D'Urban, whose official dispatches comprise the other major source of English-language documentation on Mfengu history.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the highly suspicious nature of the documentation provided by Ayliff and D'Urban, colonial and post-colonial historians, with the partial exception of Richard Moyer,<sup>3</sup> have chosen to rely exclusively on these while disregarding the wealth of isiXhosa language sources. They have preferred to propagate their own version of the "Fingo Slavery Myth." Before dealing with this, however, it is important to lay the solid foundation provided by the aforesaid isiXhosa language sources, which are available from both Xhosa and Mfengu perspectives.

Oral tradition fortunately enables us to quite precisely date the arrival of the first amaMfengu in Gcalekaland to the battle of Amalinde (October 1818, shortly after

---

<sup>1</sup> Ayliff and Whiteside, pp. 20-21.

<sup>2</sup> See Imperial Blue Book 279 of 1836, *Caffre War and Death of Hintsä*, pages 30ff.

<sup>3</sup>R.A. Moyer, "A History of the Mfengu of the Eastern Cape, 1815-1865," Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1976.



Shaka took over the Kingship of the Zulu nation from his predecessor, Dingiswayo).

According to S.E.K. Mqhayi:<sup>4</sup>

*Ukufika ko Kumkani uHintsisa ekaya evela kwimfazwe yamaLinde pantsi kwama Hlati akwa Hoho, ufike sekuko pakati komzi intloko epambili yeziya ntlanga kwakutiwa ziyeza ngaseMpumalanga.*

[When King Hintsisa arrived home from the war of Amalinde below the Hoho forests, there had already arrived the first of these nations, of which it was said that they were coming from the east]

It is apparent that the abaMbo/amaMfengu did not arrive in Gcalekaland as a whole body. Some came as individuals or in small leaderless groups, while others came in large groups with hereditary leaders. One example was a band of amaMfengu who came to Somlilo, a subordinate Gcaleka chief, who resided at the Shixini River, and asked for shelter. When asked who they were and where they came from, they said, " *SingamaMfengu siya Mfenguza,*" by which they meant (we are Mfengu, we seek service), "*bachithakele ezweni labo abasaziboni okokuba basekwisimo sobuntu ngenxa yemeko ababekuyo yokuthobeka*" ("they had dispersed from their own country and their status as humans had deteriorated because of their destitution.")<sup>5</sup> Somlilo then informed King Hintsisa that some "thin" people had arrived in his village and requested instructions as to what to do with them.

*Wayalela ukumkani uHintsisa wathi, "Maze nibagcine abo bantu, ngabakokwethu, ngabakokwenu nani. Bapheni into etyiwayo batye, niphose amadlavu bambathe, nibaphathe ngenceba, beve ukuba anisiso eso sizwe sibachithileyo; ningadlali ngabo."*

---

<sup>4</sup> S.E.K.Mqhayi: *Ityala LamaWele*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, Lovedale Press, 1931, p.44.

<sup>5</sup> Ncwana, p.57.



King Hintsa instructed him to treat them well, give them food, clothes and shelter, to help them “forget their poverty and feel you are not that nation that dispersed them.”<sup>6</sup>

This is reiterated by K.K. Ncwana, who also mentions the cordial welcome amaMfengu received from King Hintsa, "*wabayaleza esizweni sakhe okokuba sibaphathe kakuhle kude kuzekelwane nabo* (he asked his people to treat them well and even intermarry)."<sup>7</sup> This is also mentioned in *Intlalo kaXhosa* by T.B. Soga, where, in addressing his councillors, King Hintsa urged them to marry Mfengu girls, so that amaXhosa and amaMfengu might unite, to ensure that amaMfengu do not go away and for Mfenguness to be discarded. ("*iintombi zabo zizekeni ukuze nibe banye, nidibane, nokuze nabo bangemki, buphele ubumfengu.*" Pointing at a specific councillor, Mvanxeni of the Ntakwenda clan, he apparently said "*Makuqale ooMvanxeni aba* (Let those of Mvanxeni begin)."<sup>8</sup> This was a way of showing that these newcomers were welcome in his country, and what better way to bring about unity between different nations than intermarriage! He was also wise enough to know that he, as a respected head of the nation, should take the lead in what he expected of his subjects, to be exemplary, to practise what he preached, so to speak, and to maintain his credibility to the nation. That is why he addressed himself to the councillors first, the highest officials in the administration, so that the rest of the nation should do likewise. Note must be taken of the humorous way in which the King makes them look beyond the trials and tribulations the abaMbo had gone through, and to see the beauty of the fairer sex: "*Musani ukubabona benje bagqubeke yindlela, imini ngomso abayakwambatha yona* (Do not think they are as

---

<sup>6</sup> Mqhayi: *Ityala Lamawele*, p.44.

<sup>7</sup> Ncwana, p.57.

<sup>8</sup> T.B. Soga, pp. 9-10.

you see them, they have been made dusty by the road, but tomorrow they will look far better) - implying that their beauty is hidden by the dust of the road, but after some time it will shine through.”<sup>9</sup>

R.M.Tshaka also emphasizes the cordial welcome which the amaMfengu received from Hintsa in the twelfth verse of his poem, “*Siya Kuthoba KwiBhilitani* (We will obey Britain).”<sup>10</sup>

*Ukumkani waluthabatha ke olu sapho lwabaMbo  
Way'uZanzolo esithi ngabantu bakowabo...*

(The King took this family of abaMbo people  
And Zanzolo was saying they were of the same family.)



After some time, King Hintsa sent for the amaMfengu as he wanted to see them for himself. They, however, did not reveal their true chiefs, for fear of their assassination by Hintsa, hence they pointed to Njokweni, a commoner, when asked who their chief was. When Hintsa discovered that amaBhele had hidden their chief Mabandla, he remarked “that he was not in the habit of killing people who sought refuge in his country.”<sup>11</sup> To his surprise, Njokweni was welcomed as a fellow chief, was given land near Hintsa’s “great place”, and cows and people to “milk the cows.” Hintsa then directed his people to give the amaMfengu work so they could earn cattle. Seeing the welcome Njokweni had received, the true chiefs revealed their

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Zanzolo was the praise-name of King Hintsa. R.M. Tshaka, *lintsika zeNtlambo yeTyhume* [Lovedale Press, Alice, 1979, p.48.

<sup>11</sup> J.B. Peires, *The House of Phalo: a History of the Xhosa in the Days of their Independence* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981), p.88.

identity and they too were also welcomed. Like Njokweni, the true chiefs were given land where they could reside with their followers, loaned cattle and were permitted to govern within prescribed limitations. Kawa specifies the precise lands given to the amaMfengu chiefs.<sup>12</sup> For example, Njokweni was given Mgomanzi and his younger brother, Malangeni was given Mpenduza. Mabandla was given Cegcuwana, whilst Matomela and Mhlambiso were taken and supported at the Great Place, where they ate from the same dish with Sarhili, Hintsa's son. Sarhili was told by his father never to leave food in the dish for Matomela and Mhlambiso when eating with them, for by so doing, they would usurp his chieftainship from him.

Hintsa and his principal chieftains first accepted as many amaMfengu as they thought fit to take. Thereafter other people took as many as they required. Thus, Hintsa not only got an increase of people in his otherwise thinly populated country, but also obtained an increase of people to attend his cattle and cornfields. Reverend Ayliff sees this in a typically negative light, remarking that the amaGcaleka “possessed abundance of cattle, and being indolent welcomed the newcomers, as they would be useful as cattle herds.” Rev William Shrewsbury, Ayliff's predecessor at Butterworth mission, was much more sympathetic and accurate, writing in December 1826, that:<sup>13</sup>

The several [Xhosa] chiefs, ever anxious to increase their power and influence by an increase of dependents, gave them a favourable reception, so that in fact, in another generation they will be incorporated with the [Xhosa] and scarcely distinguishable from them.

---

<sup>12</sup> Kawa, p. 45.

<sup>13</sup>H. Fast (ed), *The Journal and Selected Letters of Rev. William J. Shrewsbury 1826-1835* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994), p. 37.

Besides finding some throughout the whole country mixed with the [Xhosa], we passed through two large kraals entirely peopled with Fingoes, dwelling on grants of land given by the chiefs, and enriched with cattle that were lent to them when they first arrived.

The amaMfengu were allowed to use the milk to support themselves and their families. They took the greatest care of the cows lent them. They gave particular attention to the calves lest any should die; for thus they would lose the milk of the mothers. They chose the most remote parts of the country for their huts and cattle kraals, where the grass was abundant, so that under their care the cows gave a liberal supply of milk. After the lambing or calving period, men were given an agreed upon number of beasts as a type of payment. These cattle remained theirs so long as they remained with the amaGcaleka. If an iMfengu proved acceptable and rehabilitated, he acquired greater independence within the community and was eventually granted full membership. AmaMfengu were thus given the opportunity to acquire wealth in Gcalekaland. But naturally they had to go through a period of social inequality with amaXhosa, as oral tradition puts it, 'the food that the amaMfengu were given by the amaXhosa 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>14</sup>

In addition to cultivating for their employers, the amaMfengu cultivated for themselves as well, though part of the produce of the lands they farmed was sometimes seized from them. It must be understood, however, that this was not a habit of amaXhosa in general, but just isolated cases by certain individuals.

---

<sup>14</sup> Peires, *Phalo*, p.88.

Sometimes, amaXhosa would raid a Mfengu village and take away as much maize as they wanted from the Mfengu maize pits. If a Mfengu woman taking produce or hides to a white trader met up with a Gcaleka, the produce might be confiscated even if the transaction was already in progress.

Since they could call nothing their own, the amaMfengu tended to protect themselves with the “defensive armor of deception”. To acquire property was their first priority. As they had availed themselves of iron hoes in their Thukela homeland, even the men had become accustomed to agricultural cultivation. They cultivated tobacco extensively and had learnt a method of preparing and packing it in small rush baskets. When enough tobacco was ready, under pretence of visiting their friends, amaMfengu would sometimes make up a party of peddlers, and visit parts of Xhosaland where this commodity was in demand, and which they would sell for cattle (many bags or baskets of tobacco for one small beast). After disposing of their wares, they would hide the cattle from the Xhosa employer, and then at the first convenient opportunity they would get to a trader and exchange the cattle for ornaments, spades, shoes iron, or cooking utensils – not for their own wearing or use, but for trading purposes. In this way they accumulated a good number of cattle, but were able to conceal their wealth in cattle from the Xhosa by mixing them with those of friendly neighbors. Thus, they perpetually kept the Xhosa in ignorance of the extent of their wealth in cattle.

On the cultural front, the amaMfengu were gradually assimilating into amaXhosa. For example, assimilated Dlamini-Zizi became amaGcaleka of the Dlamini-Zizi clan. AmaMfengu were required to adopt some amaGcaleka customs, but, while modification of particular customs may have been regretted, they were not particularly drastic. Most cultural differences, such as the time of day when a boy was circumcised or the length of confinement a girl underwent during *intonjane* rites, were of minor importance. One Xhosa customary practice that the amaMfengu particularly disliked was “*uphundlo*”, a sexual play involving young girls and counsellors during *intonjane* rites. AmaMfengu were sometimes also victims of Xhosa doctors’ accusations in respect of causing the sickness of individuals through witchcraft, or driving away the rain. Sometimes they were horribly punished, losing their possessions or even their lives. AmaMfengu themselves, however, also believed in witchcraft. Several were themselves traditional doctors of note. Though they themselves may have questioned individual cases as victimization, they could not have refuted the underlying beliefs and procedures that were implemented in respect of witchcraft accusations.

Colonial discourse on the status of the amaMfengu under the government of King Hintsa gives rise to the question of whether this status should be equated to “slavery.” On the evidence already presented, such a question might seem ridiculous, but, its prominence in the colonial version of the events of 1835 forces us

to confront this question head-on. The colonial view was clearly expressed by Governor Sir Benjamin D'Urban in Government Notice 14 of 3 May 1835.<sup>15</sup>

On the arrival of the Commander-in-chief on the Gona [*sic*, should be Gcuwa], he found in the surrounding country a race of people called Fingos the remnants of tribes which had formerly inhabited a district farther eastward, but which had since been nearly exterminated by Tshaka, the Zulu chief, and having fled into Hintsa's country for refuge, they were converted into slaves, and held in the most degrading bondage, the Gcalekas exercising the power of life and death over them at will, and without any appeal, and regarding them in little higher estimation than beasts. Hintsa himself, in a recent conference said that they were his dogs, and expressed his surprise that he should be forbidden to kill them at his pleasure.

The myth of Mfengu enslavement, as put forward by D'Urban, has been repeated by colonial apologists such as Ayliff and Whiteside right up to the present day. It was explicitly refuted by the amaMfengu themselves as early as 27 April 1887, by Reverend Charles Pamla, son of one of the first Christian converts at the Butterworth mission.<sup>16</sup> Pamla pointed out that the amaMfengu under Hintsa possessed cattle, which is a sign of freedom. Also, that when they were brought over the Kei by the British army, some voluntarily remained under Hintsa. In this respect, he cites Dotwana who became one of the councilors of Hintsa's son, Sarhili. He went on to say that amaMfengu should show gratitude to amaXhosa for the way they were welcomed and treated in Gcalekaland when they first arrived there, and whose mothers and fathers were saved from hardships and destitution. English writers are misleading people when they say that the Xhosa enslaved the Mfengu, as this was simply not true.

*" Bendingawacebisa amaMfengu ukuba abulele impato entle ayifumanayo kumaXhosa kuba asindisa oyise nonina ngamaxesha obunzima nenxwaleko,*

---

<sup>15</sup>Quoted in full, Ayliff and Whiteside, pp.28-30.

<sup>16</sup>*Imvo Zabantsundu*, 27 April 1887

*kuyekwe amaNgesi alahlekisayo ngokuthi Amaxhosa enze Amamfengu amakoboka.*"[I would advise amaMfengu to thank amaXhosa for the good treatment they got from them, because they saved their mothers and fathers during times of hardship and destitution and disregard the misleading English for saying amaXhosa enslaved amaMfengu]

In conclusion, Pamla maintained that the whites were responsible for sowing the seeds of hatred between these two sister nations who have a common ancestry.

Following the publication of Ayliff and Whiteside's pro-colonial book in 1912, the Mfengu slavery myth was challenged in no uncertain terms by R.T. Kawa, in his book, *Ibali lamaMfengu*. Kawa cited the way King Hintsa welcomed these destitute people, giving them land and cattle to sustain themselves and recognizing their chiefs, treating them in a way befitting their position - surely this kind of treatment and slavery do not tally. The Reverend Ayliff's characterization of the Mfengu as slaves just serves to reveal his true character. He was a missionary with a double agenda, a government agent who was bent on a mission of divide and rule, sowing the seeds of division, hatred and mistrust among the people of the same ancestry, as Kawa puts it.<sup>17</sup>

Professor D.D.T. Jabavu, a leading black intellectual of Mfengu origin, also dealt with this question of amaMfengu enslavement in an English-language article published in the *South African Outlook* in 1935. He attacked the "Slavery Myth" in the strongest terms and called for unity among amaMfengu and amaXhosa, the unity which had

---

<sup>17</sup> Kawa, pp. 44-47.



been preached by the Xhosa Prophet, Ntsikana, when he had predicted the coming of amaMfengu in Xhosa country. Ntsikana had advised that these two brother nations should be " *imbumba yamanyama*" (black people should be a unity) against the common enemy who would seek to divide them. In the same article, to promote unity between amaXhosa and amaMfengu, in the very important year of 1935, marking the first centenary of the coming of amaMfengu to Peddie, Jabavu even suggested and advocated that the time had come for amaMfengu and amaXhosa to celebrate both of their commemoration days - amaMfengu (14 May) and Ntsikana (10 April), together, to strengthen their unity. He also suggested that the so-called Mfengu slavery should be removed from school history textbooks, as it was misleading information.<sup>18</sup>



For African historians like Kawa and Jabavu and white radicals such as "Nosipho Majeke" [Dora Taylor],<sup>19</sup> the Mfengu slavery myth was part and parcel of the colonial agenda driven by Reverend Ayliff from Butterworth mission station. This aspect will be fully covered in chapter Three, but in this chapter we need to sum up by concentrating on the question of the bondage of amaMfengu so as to demonstrate that it did not reflect the historical reality but was actually sown by people of the likes of Ayliff and D'Urban. To begin with, in D'Urban's Government Notice 14, already

---

<sup>18</sup> D.D.T. Jabavu, "The Fingo Slavery Myth," *South African Outlook*, 65(1935). These rival celebrations, beginning in 1908, were divisive and reflected the rivalry between the supporters of J.T. Jabavu and W.B. Rubusana. See L. Switzer, *Power and Resistance in an African Society: The Ciskei Xhosa and the Making of South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1993), p.158. Also T.J. Stapleton, "Gathering under the Milkwood Tree: the Development of Mfengu Tribalism in the Eastern Cape (1878-1978)," *New Contree* 41(1997). Stapleton is a disciple of the Webster thesis, and his work needs to be treated with caution.

<sup>19</sup> 'Nosipho Majeke,' *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest* (1952; reprinted APDUSA: Cumberwood 1986), PP.35-41.

quoted, D'Urban himself mentions that amaMfengu were "well armed with shields and assegais." One may ask where in the world slaves would be free to walk about in their country of bondage, armed! Newcomers in most African societies and certainly Xhosa society would first assume a subordinate status, but that certainly would not amount to slavery, as T.B. Soga has pointed out:<sup>20</sup>

Bathi abaMbo sifike sakhonza emaXhoseni, asibanga makhoboka.  
Sasebenzela iinkomo, sarhweba ngamacuba nangokutya esikufumana ngokulima (AbaMbo say we arrived amongst amaXhosa and served, but were never slaves. We worked for cattle, traded in tobacco and the food we cultivated...).

As far as the legal system of the amaXhosa was concerned, King Hintsa exercised his judicial power justly without discriminating between amaXhosa and amaMfengu. This is depicted by one incident where some amaMfengu reported to him that they had been maltreated by some AmaXhosa. King Hintsa is reported to have asked the complainants:<sup>21</sup>

*Naningemadoda na maxaka ako kwethu elizweni lenu? Elu Tukela ayengeko na amahlali anentonga? Nabo banemizimba babeteni besakuni beta.*  
(Were you not men in your own country? Were there no forests containing sticks by the Tukela River whence you came? These Xhosa have bodies that feel pain too, thrash them back when they thrash you').

AmaMfengu were expected to abide by the amaXhosa customs when they had fully become members and had assimilated with them. For example, "upundlo," the custom so much complained about by the missionaries, was only observed at "intonjane" (coming of age ceremony for Xhosa girls). It is not true, as Ayliff suggests in his *History of Abambo*, that Mfengu girls were singled out for this custom. Girls

---

<sup>20</sup> T.B. Soga, p.10.

<sup>21</sup> Kawa, p. 45. Cited in translation by D.D.T. Jabavu, *SA Outlook* (1935)

were not even forced to succumb, and those who were collected to entertain the chief and his attendants at *intonjane* stayed in a separate house. At the end of *intonjane*, girls were checked by chaperones, and, if a girl was discovered to have been violated, her male partner was liable to pay a fine in cattle.<sup>22</sup>

King Hintsá's use of the phraseology, "my dogs", when referring to the amaMfengu, has been used to support the idea that the amaMfengu were "slaves," but this is just another example of the twisting of the facts. Ncwana clearly explains that the phrase of being somebody's "dog" is used not literally but metaphorically, meaning a state of needing assistance, as in the saying "*Uyinkosi wena mna ndiyinja yakho* (You are the master and I am your dog)." When the amaMfengu first came to Gcalekaland, they said, "siyamfenguza", meaning, "we are destitute people seeking service," or in other words, that they had nothing, they were no better than dogs, they needed help.<sup>23</sup> So, it is in this context that King Hintsá would have used the phrase "my dogs", not to thereby mean that he considered the amaMfengu as his slaves, as mistakenly (or deliberately) thought by Ayliff and D'Urban.

Ncwana's interpretation is fully supported by the more objective colonial sources.

Accompanying Chief Kobe of the Gqunukhwebe Xhosa on a visit to Hintsá about 1825, Engineer Rose heard him say, "We are but dogs to Hinza – as the dust is to

my foot." And Reverend Shrewsbury, who preceded Ayliff as missionary in

Butterworth, records in his journal that the amaXhosa:<sup>24</sup>

Generally stile (*sic*) themselves *the dogs* of their chief, and the Chief himself applies that term, not only to the commonalty, but to the whole of his captains and counsellors. Hence, on a former occasion, Hintsá ... seeing sometime afterwards a party of his Ama-pakati, or noblemen, coming along the path, exclaimed, "Here come *my dogs* running after me".

---

<sup>22</sup>Ayliff and Whiteside, p. 21.

<sup>23</sup>Ncwana, p. 47.

<sup>24</sup>C. Rose, *Four Years in Southern Africa* (London: Colburn and Bentley, 1829), p.179; Fast, pp.66-67. "My dogs" is emphasised in the original.

By referring to the amaMfengu in this way, Hintsa was calling them nothing worse than what he called his own Gcaleka chiefs and councillors.

Let this whole question of the “Fingo Slavery Myth” be laid to rest by quoting Kawa’s explanation as to why people should completely disregard any information pertaining to the enslavement of amaMfengu in Gcalekaland:<sup>25</sup>

*Inyaniso emsulwa yona yile: umlungu ngumlungu. Ukutsho ke kukuthi le mpato-mbi yamaXosa siboyamkela ingxelo engayo cum grano salis, ...Indawo yokuba amaMfengu enziwa amakoboka; ndiyipika unompela, yayingeko; elo liqinga labase “Lenye” xa bengxamele intiyano, incaswano no vundi pakathi kwaba bantwana babini baka Mtungwa, baka Ntu*

The truth is that a white man is a white man. That means we should accept the report of the enslavement of amaMfengu by amaXhosa *cum grano salis*,...That amaMfengu were enslaved; I totally oppose that, it never happened; that is a plan of those from “Lenye” [suggesting newcomers, referring to the white people] to sow seed of enmity, animosity and division between the two children of Mtungwa, of Ntu.

When amaMfengu first came to Gcalekaland they were given a very warm welcome by King Hintsa. When Njokweni was pointed as a chief, Hintsa welcomed him as a fellow leader, and gave him land and cattle. He did the same to all the others, such as Matomela and Mabandla, as soon as they revealed themselves. Apart from the land they were given by King Hintsa, amaMfengu were granted the freedom to observe their customs. The fact that they were settled near to the Great Place merely demonstrates King Hintsa’s intention to protect them more effectively. The AmaZizi were settled at Ceru, the amaBhele at Ezolo, a small tributary of the Tsomo River near Ngqamakwe, the amaHlubi near Teko Springs and, others at Zinqayi near

---

<sup>25</sup> Kawa, p. 47.

Ibeka.<sup>26</sup> They were given both the freedom to control their own domestic relations under their chiefs, and all the traditional freedoms. Whoever had a grievance had a right to seek justice at the King's Court, as depicted in S.E.K. Mqhayi's classic work *Ityala Lama Wele*. Surely this is far from slavery?

### ***The Fry Hypothesis***

We cannot conclude this chapter on the condition of the amaMfengu under Hintsisa's rule without considering the ideas of Dr Poppy Ann Fry in her 2007 doctoral dissertation, "Allies and Liabilities: Fingo Identity and British Imperialism in South Africa's Eastern Cape, 1800-1935," which was accepted by the prestigious Harvard University and popularised among the Anglo-African academic community by an article in the equally prestigious *Journal of Southern African Studies* in 2010.<sup>27</sup> Although Fry has dismissed some of Webster's wilder assertions (to be discussed in Chapter Three), she follows Webster in rejecting Thukela origins as the primary basis of "Fingo" identity. She insists indeed on using the term "Fingo" rather than Mfengu, a sure indication, even before she starts, that she has never familiarized herself with either the language or the people she is writing about. It can therefore be said, right from the start, that Fry displays a misunderstanding of what the amaMfengu were and are and, perhaps unintentionally, associates herself with "white observers [who] still struggled to pin down what it meant to be Fingo and what

---

<sup>26</sup> Kawa, p. 45.

<sup>27</sup> P.A. Fry, "Allies and Liabilities: Fingo Identity and British Imperialism in South Africa's Eastern Cape, 1800-1935," (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, August 2007); Poppy Fry, "Siyamfenguza: The Creation of Fingo-ness in South Africa's Eastern Cape, 1800 – 1835," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 36 (2010).

characteristics were associated with their identity”<sup>28</sup>. She begins her Chapter Three; “The Fingo Frontier” on a wrong footing by misinterpreting the isiXhosa proverb, “*Izinto azimntaka Ngqika* (not everybody is a son of [Chief] Ngqika)” thereby confirming her ignorance of this language. She thinks it means that ethnic identity does not necessarily imply descent from a common ancestor and that “Xhosa-ness did not depend on a blood connection.” Actually, the proverb has a much more mundane meaning, either, ‘not everybody is equally fortunate’ or, more recently, “things aren’t what they used to be.”<sup>29</sup> Actually it is correctly written, “*Izinto azimntwaka Ngqika*”. On this weak foundation, and not much else, Fry builds an argument that neither “Xhosa” nor “Mfengu” are authentic ethnic identities based on common descent but rather that they reflect opposing socio-economic classes within the framework of a common society.



University of Fort Hare  
Together in Excellence

Fry recognises, as Webster does not, that “Fingos” were present in Gcalekaland before the British invasion of 1835. She does not therefore buy Webster’s argument that “Fingo” identity was an invention of the British. But she also insists – against all evidence – that “the question of Natal origins failed – and continues to fail – to provide a sufficient basis for characterizing Fingo identity.” She argues, without any supporting evidence, that most “Fingos” were originally Xhosa people who had broken from the Xhosa lifestyle, and established themselves as “a discernable

---

28 Fry, “Allies,” p.93

29 Fry, ‘Allies,’ p.93. G.M. Theal, Fry’s source, does not support her interpretation and, in passing, it may be noted that her footnote 4 on page 93 gets both the name of the publisher, the date of publication and even the page number quite wrong. The correct reference is G.M. Theal, *Kaffir Folklore* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1886), p.193. For further discussion of the proverb, see Rubusana, p. 24 and B.E.N. Mahlasela, *Some Xhosa Idioms and Expressions* (Grahamstown: Rhodes University, 1982), p.12.

community of their own.”<sup>30</sup> According to Fry, Xhosa identity was characterized by “control over cattle and women,” expressed for example by the alleged Xhosa male exclusive devotion to pastoralism, and rejection of agricultural cultivation as women’s work, associated with a patriarchal society governed by chiefs. Fingo identity, on the other hand, was characterized by male cultivation, buying and selling, and hostility to Xhosa chiefs. Witchcraft accusations, noted by Ayliff and others, were an indication of the tension between the dominant Xhosa ruling class and an emergent class of Fingoes rejecting the old order.

From this fundamentally mistaken basis, Fry proceeds to two equally mistaken conclusions concerning Mfengu attitudes to the colonial system and to the amaXhosa. With regard to the colonial system, Fry fails to consider the possibility that the amaMfengu might have been misled by false British promises. In her view, love of money and the accumulation of wealth became one of the marked characteristics of “Fingo identity,” leading to the willing participation of the “Fingo” in the colonial system.<sup>31</sup>

Monetization may thus be seen as a strategy for situating one’s self in a privileged position in the colonial hierarchy... The willingness of Fingos to trust the worth of currency and turn that currency over to white bankers or landlords indicates a significant level of faith in the British system of order. Identification as Fingo constituted a vote of confidence in a world bounded by capitalism and equality before the law.

---

<sup>30</sup> Fry, “Siyamfenguza,” p.26.

<sup>31</sup> Fry, “Allies,” pp. 109-110.



Monetization highlighted two facts about “Fingoness”, securing a “privileged position in the colonial hierarchy” and the trust the “Fingo” put in the colonial world of capitalism and the “British system of order (characterized by their willingness to engage with British systems of capital and banking.”

Fry is also of the opinion that Mfengu identity was characterized by violent resentments between Xhosa and Fingo, manifesting especially in the 1846-47 War of the Axe - the first real Xhosa-Mfengu encounter after the 1835 exodus from Gcalekaland. According to Fry, amaMfengu had finally got their chance to revenge themselves for the “bad treatment they went through in Gcalekaland, this grudge, being summed up by the amaMfengu’s newly “acquired ” song, “*Wena Wakwa Ndlambe, Wena Wakwa Ngqika, Ngamana Wadliwa Zizinja Zakho* (You of the Ndlambe, you of the Ngqika, it is my wish that your dogs should bite you).” This all persuades Fry that the amaMfengu used this war to quench their thirst for more Xhosa cattle and the land they were sure to get afterwards.<sup>32</sup>

An alternative interpretation of Mfengu participation in the colonial system and the frontier wars will be put forward in the following chapters. Here we may say that Fry’s hypothesis is a speculation based on colonial generalizations about “Xhosa” and “Mfengu,” lacking any precise example or reference to even one specific person or one specific place. IsiXhosa language sources have been ignored; the few

---

32 Ibid., pp. 113-114.

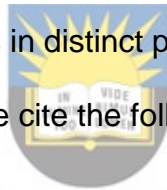


isiXhosa quotations cited all come from colonial sources, some of which – as has been shown above – she misunderstood, or were incorrectly written.

Fry's fundamental error is her refusal to accept the Thukela origins of the amaMfengu, an error which leads her on a fruitless search for alternatives.<sup>33</sup>

Fingo-ness [was] an individual identity, not the foregone conclusion of kinship relations. As such, Fingo identity could be put on or taken off like a garment – complicating any attempts to draw clear boundaries around the Fingo ... Without the clear principle of kinship-based tribal boundaries.

This completely ignores the irrefutable evidence that the amaMfengu settled in Gcalekaland as distinct communities in distinct places and under the authority of distinct chiefs. As an example, let me cite the following from R.T. Kawa:<sup>34</sup>



*Nokuba ke ngaba wayembi u Hintsisa kwisi Mfengu esininzi wayemhle ko Njokweni, ko Mabandla, ko Mhlambiso no-Matomela nditsho kuba aba wabapata njenge nkosi, wabanika imihlaba amabeme kuyo nesizwe sabo. UNjokweni wanikwa uMgomanzi, wada watumela umninawe wake, uMalangeni eMpenduza. UMabandla wapiwa iCegcuwana, waza uMatomela noMhlambiso batatwa, bondliwa Komkulu, badla sityeni sinye no Sarili owaxelelwa ngu yise ukuba aba ngabantwana be nkosi angaboze abashiyele ukutya esityeni, okokuba ute wakwenza oko baya kubuhluta ubukhosi kuye.*

[Even if [King] Hintsisa was bad to many amaMfengu, he was good to Njokweni, Mabandla, Mhlambiso and Matomela, because he treated them like chiefs and gave them land to reside on together with their clans. Njokweni was given Mgomanzi and he sent his younger brother, Malangeni, to Mpenduza. Mabandla was given Cegcuwana, whilst Mhlambiso and Matomela were taken to be raised at the Great House, eating from the same dish as Sarhili who was told by his father that they were sons of Chiefs and therefore he should never leave food in the dish for them when eating as they would usurp his Kingship.]

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>34</sup> Kawa, p. 45.

Together with the detailed history presented in the first chapter, this paragraph should be enough to demolish Fry's hypothesis that the "Fingo" identity is defined by chieflessness, landlessness and an anti-traditional world-view.

Fry makes much of the fact that:<sup>35</sup>

Although both European records and indigenous oral histories are available for early nineteenth-century Natal, there is no mention of any group either bearing the name Fingo (or Mfengu) or fitting the Fingos' description, and thus Fingo origins cannot be traced to the migration, en masse, of an existing ethnic or kin group.

This could be interpreted as meaning she thinks these people should have inherited their identity (their "Fingo-ness" as she puts it), from a common ancestor. She ignores the fact that common descent of a common ancestor did predominate among the amaMfengu, even though these were multiple common ancestors (Hlubi, Bhele, Zizi) not reducible to a single common ancestor. These inherited identities were supplemented – not replaced – by the additional, supplementary identity of Mfengu due to the circumstances and tribulations they had experienced during the Mfecane wars and on the road, which ultimately led them to associate themselves with a new collective entity - amaMfengu. As the question of Mfengu identity will come up again in the following chapter, we can close here with K.K. Ncwana's fine explanation on this point.

---

35 Fry, "Siyamfenguza," p.30.

*Abafundi baya kuphawula okokuba ngokweli bali, eli gama lobuMfengu asililo gama lamntu okanye gama lanyange nakwisiphi na isizwe kwizizwe ezachitakala ngexesha leMfecane ....*

*Ngako oko ke eli gama lithi, “singamaMfengu” yayiligama lokuzithoba, phawula ngale nto yokokuba intombi yaseMbo akusoze uyive ikhuza isithi, “amaMfengu!” Uya kuva isithi, “amaBhele!” “maZizi amahle!” Ngako ke eli gama akafuneki kunanyathelwe kulo ngokungathi amaBele, namaHlubi namaZizi nezizwana ezathi zabusa phantsi kwawo zizalwa linyange eligama linguMfengu, kube ngathi se sisisiduko sabo eso.*

[ Readers will notice that according to this history the word Mfengu is not a name of anybody or any ancestor of any of the nations that dispersed during the time of Mfecane...Therefore this word, “singamaMfengu” [we are Mfengu] was a name depicting destitution, notice that you will never hear a Mbo girl exclaim, “amaMfengu!” You will hear her say, “amaBhele!” “maZizi amahle!” (“Bheles!” “Beautiful Zisis!”) Therefore this name must not be glued to as if amaBhele, amaHlubi, amaZizi and their subordinate smaller nations are descendants of an ancestor named Mfengu, as if that (Mfengu) is their clan name.]



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*



Figure 1: The Mqwashu Tree

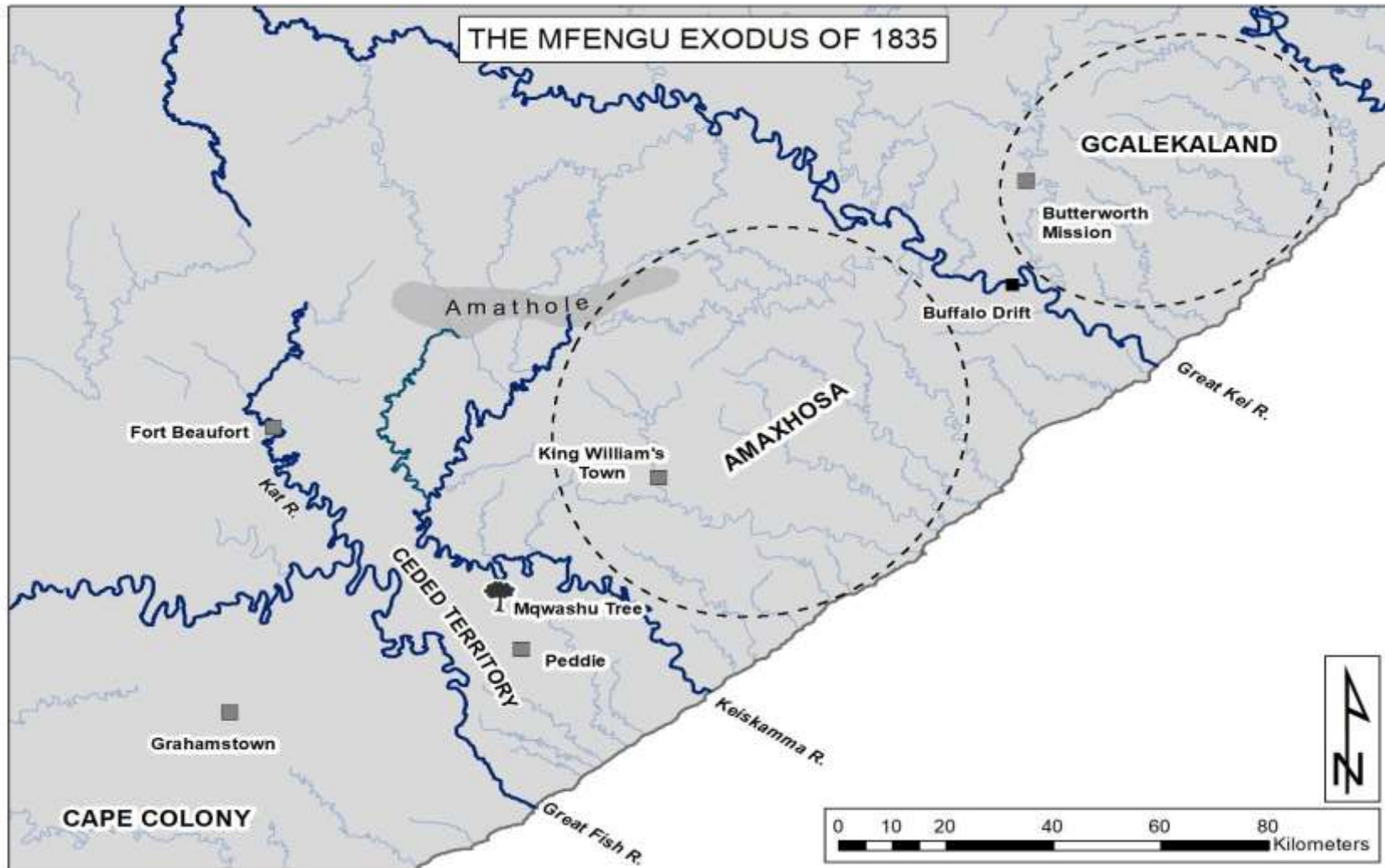


Figure 2: The Mqwashu Tree inscription



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*





Map 2: The Mfengu Exodus of 1835

## CHAPTER THREE: THE EVENTS OF 1835

The dramatic events of May 1835, during which many, probably most, of the amaMfengu under the leadership of their chiefs departed Gcalekaland in the company of the British army were the result of a much longer process that began with the establishment of Butterworth mission in August 1827. After initially refusing the missionary presence, King Hintsa submitted to colonial pressure and reluctantly allowed Reverend W.J. Shrewsbury of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to establish a mission station in his country.<sup>1</sup>



Perhaps Hintsa thought at the time that a missionary would be a convenient liaison officer between him and the government and would add to the dignity of his place. In any event, he took Shrewsbury in his care, and sent him an ox with the message 'here is a cake of bread from the house of Kauta, the great ancestral chief of the Gcalekas. Hintsa adopts you into the same family and makes the mission the head of the house.'<sup>2</sup> Shrewsbury was given a warm reception by those he visited, and his sermons were greeted with interest and curiosity. A resident population soon settled on the station to hear the Word of God, though very few actually converted. Like other missionaries of his persuasion, Shrewsbury was somewhat arrogant and intolerant. According to the editor of his journals,<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>For the early history of Butterworth mission, see Fast, pp. 21, 53.

<sup>2</sup> Ayliff and Whiteside, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Fast, p. 53.

Shrewsbury could clearly not identify with his listeners ... regarding them as "wretched people whose nudity increasingly filled him with "loathing and disgust." His rigid code of morality led to frequent collisions with Hintsa and his people for violating the Sabbath, practising polygamy and torturing and killing those accused of witchcraft.

Fortunately for Shrewsbury, his tenure occurred at a time of good relations between the Cape Colony and the Xhosa kingdom, who co-operated well in fighting off the invasion of Matiwane's amaNgwane at the Battle of Mbholompo in August 1828.

But by the time Reverend John Ayliff took over Butterworth mission in October 1830, the relationship had much deteriorated. Although Gcalekaland itself was not itself adjacent to the Cape Colony, the lands on the immediate colonial border were occupied by the amaRharhabe, a branch of the amaXhosa junior to and respectful of King Hintsa. In 1829, the colonial army had expelled Chief Maqoma, the dynamic Rharhabe regent, from his lands along the Kat River and had instituted aggressive "commando" raids on the excuse of alleged cattle theft. That this was the principal cause of the Sixth Frontier War was acknowledged by the British Governor himself in a letter to the Colonial Office in London. He blamed the war on the ' ill-advised measure of expelling the tribes ...from the grounds they had so long held.<sup>4</sup> This is reiterated by Rev William Shaw, the Wesleyan Superintendent who, while not totally exonerating the amaXhosa from blame, pointed out that the colonists themselves were not as innocent as had been portrayed in their newspapers. The unjust "reprisal system" and " the entire, always changing border policy " left much to be

---

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Sir Benjamin D'Urban to R.W. Hay, 24 March 1835, in Theal, *War of 1835*, pp. 112 – 113. "More clearly perhaps than any other chief," Maqoma saw the " loss of their lands before the inexorable advance of the Europeans," J.S. Galbraith, *Reluctant Empire* (University of California Press, 1963), p. 47.



desired. The "sore place in the heart", however, was the frequent forcible seizure of Xhosa land.<sup>5</sup> Early in December 1834, a colonial patrol opened fire on Chief Xhoxho who was guarding his brother's herds. On 24 December, the Rharhabe armies invaded the Colony, burning farms and seizing cattle.

King Hintsa was not directly involved in these events, but tension was meanwhile building around Reverend Ayliff and the Butterworth mission. It so happened that the church, which was initially established for the amaGcaleka, had become crowded at every service by amaMfengu. Indeed, their relationship with the missionary at Butterworth had opened a new and highly sensitive chapter in the history of amaMfengu. The presence of Ayliff offered amaMfengu an alternative to their African situation, something they could not have foreseen. Without the presence of a missionary, amaMfengu could perhaps have assimilated with the amaXhosa. Unfortunately our knowledge depends on missionary writings which are biased. We are however obliged to begin with the narrative essentially as presented by Reverend Ayliff. Afterwards, we will correct this by looking at the broader picture.

---

<sup>5</sup> Imperial Blue Book 252 of 1835, *Papers relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Inhabitants of Southern Africa*. Rev. William Shaw - Earl of Aberdeen, 7 April 1835, pp. 137 - 142. The reasons for the outbreak of the war have been related many times. See for example, Legassick, pp. 42-43; Peires, *Phalo*, pp. 89-94; D.R. Owen, *Ubukhosi neenkokheli: A directory of Eastern Cape Black leaders, from c.1700 to 1990*, p.37; C.Brownlee, "The Old Peach Tree Stump: A reminiscence of the war of 1835," in A.M.Lewin Robinson (ed), *Selected Articles from the Cape Monthly Magazine (New Series 1870 – 76)* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1978), pp.231-234.

Much as it is true that amaMfengu were never liberated from Gcalekaland by Governor D'Urban (since they had never been enslaved in the first place), one of the positive things they obtained from the Wesleyan mission was spiritual liberation, as Pamla explained in *Imvo Zabantsundu* for April 27, 1887: "wabakulula ebukhobokeni besono ngentshumayelo" [he liberated them from sin by preaching]. Pamla names some of Ayliff's other Christian converts as Mtoba, Mdledle, Buya, and Ndzululeka

When Ayliff arrived in Butterworth in 1828, he found the Mfengu community very receptive to the Gospel, with the missionary assisting them by educating their children. AmaMfengu started attending church services in earnest, and sending their children to school. This new state of affairs caused friction between Hintsisa and the mission family. The Christianization of the amaMfengu, as far as the amaGcaleka and King Hintsisa were concerned, was tantamount to the missionary taking the amaMfengu from them, and, consequently, relations between the King and his principal men, on the one hand, and the missionary, on the other, soured.

The amaMfengu also obtained cattle by using the remuneration they received through working for the missionary and English traders. These earlier positive encounters with the missionaries encouraged the amaMfengu to get closer to the colonists. No wonder they were attracted by the missionary church, where a white man, Rev. Ayliff, was the minister. King Hintsisa quickly noticed the Mfengu's positive relationships with the whites. He was angere by the amaMfengu children attending the Day and Sabbath schools, thereby acquiring the skills of reading. He began to

view the missionary with suspicion. One day he entered the church and was angered by the sight of several amaMfengu being administered the sacrament of baptism. He was furious as he stormed out of the Church, threatening to kill Ayliff.

It is clear that there was a marked deterioration in the relations between Hintsa and the missionary and the amaMfengu, especially with those residing at the mission station. Hintsa's change in attitude may have been caused by extraneous factors, including the deteriorating relationship between whites and the amaXhosa west of the Kei. Hintsa's own relationship with the colonial authorities had worsened due to the death in July 1834 of a trader named John Purcell, apparently in revenge for striking a Gcaleka who had entered his store. It seems as if Ayliff reported these matters to the colonial government through the messengers of the Bhele chief Nkwenkwezi. Hintsa quite understandably regarded such acts as espionage, facilitated by collusion between the missionary and amaMfengu.

For these reasons, King Hintsa resolved to remove the amaMfengu from Ayliff's influence. About September 1834, Hintsa determined to move up to the Ameva (Indwe) River, and issued an order that the whole coast country should be evacuated, on the pretext that the area was infested with some insect, which was dangerous to the cattle. The real reason was probably his wish to remove the amaMfengu from the vicinity of Butterworth, and therefore from the influence of Ayliff

and his teaching.<sup>6</sup> Most amaMfengu, especially those in charge of the King's and his principal men's cattle, reluctantly obeyed the order to move. They, however, pleaded for their wives to remain to look after the houses and the corn, which was about to be harvested.

Meanwhile, the war between the British and the amaRharhabe west of the Kei had intensified with the arrival of the British commander Harry Smith on 6 January 1835. He was joined in Grahamstown by his political superior, Governor Sir Benjamin D'Urban, and these two spearheaded the invasion of King Hintsa's country of Gcalekaland. The Rharhabe chiefs, Maqoma and his brother Tyhali, had withdrawn into the Amathole mountains where the British army could not defeat them. "It was a stalemate," according to the military historian, Noel Mostert. Maqoma and Tyhali "wanted a truce, but did not consider themselves defeated. Sir Benjamin D'Urban understandably created another objective, which offered a neater sense of conclusion than the inconclusive foraging through the Amatolas."<sup>7</sup> The Fish River boundary had always been a military thorn in the side of the colonial authorities. The concealing capacity of the bush in that area made it easy for the amaXhosa to attack the colony unnoticed, whereas the Kei River was more plain and "the open country would prevent the enemy from moving without being observed by patrols."<sup>8</sup> Compared to the mountainous Amathole, Gcalekaland was flat and indefensible

---

<sup>6</sup> Moyer, "History," p. 147.

<sup>7</sup> N. Mostert, *Frontiers* (London: Pimlico, 1993), p. 709. Mostert, Chapter 19, is a reasonably fair summary of the colonial sources relative to the war of 1834-5.

<sup>8</sup> Galbraith, *Reluctant Empire*, pp.112 – 113.

against firearms. King Hintsa was identified as the scapegoat for D'Urban and Smith to revenge their failure to defeat the amaRharhabe.

Although King Hintsa had not openly engaged in the war, it was alleged that he had received stolen cattle and harboured Rharhabe fugitives. D'Urban informed his Minister in London that "if not the original contriver and instigator "of the invasion against the colony, Hintsa knew about it and had taken the cattle raided from the settlers into his safe keeping. According to W.H. Dutton, D'Urban's military secretary, Gcalekaland was going to be invaded because Hintsa " had been playing a double game," [on the one hand] " he has received the plundered cattle into his territory, [ and some of his people have undoubtedly also joined the invaders ..., on the other hand, " the King professed not to be hostile towards the Colony." The Governor interpreted this attitude as Hintsa biding his time whilst assessing the proceedings of the war.<sup>9</sup> Later, Governor D'Urban explained himself to King Faku of amaMpondo, by saying that he and the British troops were now in King Hintsa's country, " to exact from [ King Hintsa] retribution from having harboured the Plunderers of the Colony..., and for other acts which he had presumed to commit, trusting to his distance from me."<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Notice issued by W.H. Dutton, 13 April 1835, in Theal, *War of 1835*, p.129.

<sup>10</sup>Notice by W.H. Dutton, 13 April 1835 (Theal, *War of 1835*, p. 129; (Imperial Blue Book 252 of 1835, *Papers relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Inhabitants of Southern Africa* p.9; also mentioned in a letter from D'Urban to the Earl of Aberdeen, 19 June 1835, in Theal: *War of 1835*, pp. 208-226 and D'Urban - Faku, p. 133.

D'Urban began his aggression against Gcalekaland on 2 March 1835 by sending Hintsa an ultimatum demanding to know whether the King was at war or at peace and, if at peace, to prove it by returning all colonial cattle hidden in his country.<sup>11</sup> If not, he would be treated as an enemy. On 15 April the British army crossed the Kei and on 24 April D'Urban formally declared war, with serious consequences not only for King Hintsa and the amaGcaleka but for the amaMfengu as well.

It is not clear at precisely which point the amaMfengu became directly involved in the war between the amaXhosa and the British. It has already been noted that Hintsa began to distrust Ayliff as early as September 1834, when he resolved to move his Great Place up from Butterworth to the Ameva (Indwe) River. On 17 February, without first informing the amaMfengu, Ayliff himself fled to the safety of Clarkebury mission in Thembuland where the Thembu Regent Vadana had promised to protect all white people. Tension between Hintsa and the amaMfengu increased still further when the Rharhabe Chief Tyhali informed Hintsa that the amaMfengu in his country had gone over to the British, and that the amaMfengu were not to be trusted.<sup>12</sup> Fighting between the amaMfengu and the amaGcaleka broke out when, as the British army advanced, the amaGcaleka decided on the immediate removal of their cattle. Fortunately, we have a highly reliable account of exactly what happened from the Mfengu leader Veldtman Bikitsha.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Mostert, pp. 710-715.


<sup>12</sup> Letter from Ayliff, 27 August 1835, in *Grahamstown Journal*, 17 September 1835.

<sup>13</sup>W.T. Brownlee, "Sir Benjamin D'urban, Hintsa, and the Fingoes," *The Critic* 4(3) (June 1936), pp. 160-162. Although available only in English, this is a verbatim transcript and not a colonial record.

When things began to become critical, the Gcalekas began to move their cattle down from the northern parts towards the coast. And among others a councillor of Hintza named Mbondi travelled south with his cattle and retinue ... among Mbondi's retinue were three Mfengu brothers named Mavata, Ngxwata and Jokweni. They were Mbondi's herdsmen and Mavata was Mbondi's chief milkman and they were all three permitted to carry arms ...

Mavata began to play before his chief "as a warrior plays before an army... drawing nearer and nearer until at last he leapt upon Mbondi and driving his spear into his master's breast killed him as he sat.

Mavata then proceeded to Bikitsha, whose employer was Nxala, another councillor of Hintza but Bikitsha would not kill Nxala who, he said, had always been kind to him. Instead he warned Nxala to collect his people and his cattle and to run away to the forests for safety. Nevertheless, in those days, cattle were trained to run before an army and so the cattle themselves raced to join Mavata's party as they passed by, drumming upon their shields. When morning dawned, the hills around Butterworth mission were black with a mass of cattle and people. There they were joined by Chiefs Mhlambiso of the amaHlubi, Njokweni of the amaZizi and Mabandla and Nkwenkwezi of the amaBhele.<sup>14</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
Together in Excellence

When the war commenced, Hintza moved with his people to the Amavi, and he also ordered us to move with him, which we did not think fit to do, and then Hintza borrowed Umgalouza's guns [Mnyaluza, a Rharhabe chief], and threatened to destroy the Captains [Mabandla] and [Nkwenkwezi] against the latter of whom he was highly incensed, for having taken a letter from Mr Ayliff to the Mission Station, Mount Coke, and he said we regarded Mr Ayliff more than him. Our previous treatment from them and finally these threats were the cause of our banding together, and determining on joining the English; and, when the Governor's army arrived, we were nearly a separate people, standing up in defence of ourselves and cattle.

---

<sup>14</sup> Declaration of the Fingo Chiefs residing under British protection at Fort Peddie, 5 September 1837, in J.M. Bowker, *Speeches, Letters and Selections from Important Papers* [1864; facs. reprint Cape Town: Struik, 1962), p.41.

Even before his flight to Clarkebury, Ayliff had received reports that Hintsa intended to kill him “with his own assegai” and to destroy the station, whereupon the amaMfengu had assured the missionary that if “he [Ayliff] died, it should be behind their shields.” Although Ayliff had left them to their plight, they were nevertheless saddened by his decision to depart and they steadfastly remained in Butterworth. On hearing that the English were approaching the Kei, they sent messages to Ayliff at Clarkebury. Meanwhile, Ayliff had communicated to Governor D’Urban that the amaMfengu were requesting to be delivered from “bondage” in Gcalekaland. He gave a certain Makalima his personal suit, as well as pieces of white calico for each of the different amaMfengu groups, advising him to dress in this European suit, accompanied by the men holding pieces of calico. They should then approach the advancing British army, and ask the Governor, Durban, to accept them as British subjects.<sup>15</sup>



The fatal deal was struck on 24 April 1835 with chiefs Makalima, Mabandla, Njokweni, Mhlambiso, Matomela, Msutu, Jama and “Umsumkubela,” a scene well described by a British officer on Governor D’Urban’s staff:<sup>16</sup>

Dark masses of Fingo warriors were seen advancing down the hills; they drew near, and were found to be armed with shields and assegais; and their heads were variously ornamented with jackals’ tails, feathers and pieces of hide cut like horns, giving them an unearthly appearance. The doctors wore

---

<sup>15</sup> Makalima’s name does not appear anywhere among the chiefs listed by Kawa or in any of Ayliff’s own manuscripts. There are different Makalima families unrelated to each other. This particular Makalima seems to have been the head of the abeNguni clan subject to the amaHlubi of Mhlambiso, also known as amaChumane and related to the Kheswa family of Mzimkhulu. (Ncwana, p.11.). He was killed in 1843 by Mtirara, the Thembu King, but his son, Sikunyana, was eventually appointed as headman of Hala (Auckland) Location in Victoria East. [ Information from Mr B.B. Makalima of Gauteng and Prof. J. Peires ].

<sup>16</sup> J. Alexander, *Narrative of a voyage of observation ...and a campaign in Kafferland*, 2 vols, (London: Colburn, 1837), II, pp.110-111. The names of the chiefs appear in Government Notice 14 of 3 May 1835, Ayliff and Whiteside, p.29.



gall-bladders among their long matted hair; and the great doctor, who strengthened the people for war by gall, incantation &c. wore on his head a great fur cap ....

The Fingoes advanced in compact bodies of fifty. Holding their broad shields and assegais before them, and their staves in the air, they stamped the ground with their heels; sang, in a deep melancholy tone, "that they wanted a home, and would fight for one;" then broke into a more animated war song; struck their shields with their staves, uttered short cries, and whistled.

This proves beyond any reasonable doubt the independent existence of amaMfengu, contrary to the theories of scholars like Webster and Stapleton who maintain that amaMfengu were a colonial creation, enslaved by the British. I also dispute the belief that they were enslaved. We see them here, in military gear and ready to fight, their motive for joining the British being the fact that they "wanted a home, and would fight for one." They did not see themselves as collaborators, but as subjects of the Queen. As Moyer explains:<sup>17</sup>



As British subjects they fought the Xhosa for the same reasons the whites did. They fought for land and cattle, to protect their families, homes and wealth, and to create an environment in which they could have greater security and prosperity.

Five days later, King Hintsá bravely entered Governor D'Urban's camp in order to negotiate with the British invader.<sup>18</sup> The British demanded compensation of 50,000 cattle and 1,000 horses, half of them payable immediately. By that time, fighting between the amaMfengu and the amaGcaleka had become somewhat general as the two sides disputed the ownership of cattle herded by the amaMfengu. The British took advantage and, on 2 May, they accused Hintsá of killing amaMfengu,

---

<sup>17</sup> R.A. Moyer, "The Mfengu, Self-Defence and the Cape Frontier Wars," in C. Saunders and R. Derricourt, *Beyond the Cape Frontier* (1973), pp. 107-8.

<sup>18</sup> The story has been told many times. See Mostert, pp. 715-726, for example.

disarmed his bodyguards and threatened him with death. The 50,000 cattle were again demanded and when, by 10 May, these had not yet arrived, Hintsá was placed in custody of a military guard of soldiers and settlers under the personal command of the British commander, Harry Smith. Smith demanded that Hintsá lead them to the cattle, but when they arrived at the Nqabarha River, King Hintsá attempted to make his escape. He was shot, fell off his horse and, while lying helpless, was finished off by a settler named George Southey. Thereafter, his body was shamefully abused and mutilated. His remains have never been found, and many suspected, at the time and still today, that his head was cut off and taken to Britain. The murder of the King was a shameful act, even by the cruel standards of the British Empire. When it was made known in London by the missionary John Philip, it created such a scandal that Governor D'Urban was eventually replaced, as will be explained later in this chapter.



The murder of King Hintsá occurred on 12 May 1835, but the amaMfengu were completely unaware of it as they had already arrived at the new “home” promised to them by the British on the other side of the Kei River. On 3 May, they were joined by the missionary John Ayliff, who the British had fetched from Clarkebury in Thembuland. On 5 May, D'Urban deployed Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Somerset to take care of amaMfengu's departure and journey, and on 6 May, they began to cross the Kei River at the Nyathi Drift. By the time Commander Harry Smith led King Hintsá to his death, the amaMfengu were already long gone.

Wagons were made available to take very small amaMfengu children to encamp at the British military camp the night before the march out of Gcalekaland. Thirty days supply of provisions was made available for the Rev Ayliff and, in addition, oats, barley, maize and sorghum were to be distributed for seed to the 'most industrious' amaMfengu. Statistics of the exodus were provided by Alexander Trotter, a senior official of the British army commissariat, on the basis of a headcount done during the passage of the Buffalo and Keiskamma rivers.<sup>19</sup> According to Trotter, the Mfengu men numbered 2,000, the women, 5,600 women and the children, 9,200, a total of 16,800 amaMfengu. Their livestock consisted of 18,200 oxen, cows and young cattle plus 4,000 calves, a total of 22,200 head altogether.

Finally, the amaMfengu arrived in the "Ceded Territory", where John Mitford Bowker had been appointed as Government Resident, with the task of ensuring the "defence of these people [the amaMfengu] against the inroads of [the amaXhosa]"<sup>20</sup>To consolidate the British presence, D'Urban had built Fort Peddie on the Ngqushwa River. On 15 May, the chiefs were assembled at the Gwangqa River and informed by Lieutenant-Colonel Somerset that "they were now in the country given to them by the King of England."<sup>21</sup> On 12 July 1835, he appointed a Commission, consisting of Reverend Ayliff, Magistrate J.M. Bowker, Captain Halifax, and Lieutenant Moultrie, to demarcate the boundaries of the country given to the amaMfengu. The first step was to differentiate amaMfengu according to their "tribes" and families, and to prepare a

---

<sup>19</sup>Imperial Blue Book, 279 of 1836, *Caffre War and Death of Hintsa*, A. Trotter - B. D'Urban, 15 May 1835, in, pp. 36-37. Although one normally regards British official documents with some suspicion, Trotter was an official of the British supply services and would have been responsible for provisioning amaMfengu on arrival in Peddie. He therefore had every reason to furnish accurate information for the sake of his budgetary calculations.

<sup>20</sup>D. Campbell – J. M. Bowker, 21 May 1835, in Theal, *War of 1835*, pp.182-184.

<sup>21</sup> Ayliff in *Graham's Town Journal*, 17 September 1835.

census. Other instructions concerned the healthiness of the locations to be selected, the land to be used for agriculture, and the obligations of the amaMfengu to obey the laws. Great emphasis was placed on their military obligations, such as “the necessity of being ready to assemble together armed,” the guarding of the river fords, and the construction of buildings with a view to defence and surrounded with strong stockades, within which their houses and their cattle would be secure at night.<sup>22</sup>

Reverend Ayliff accompanied the amaMfengu, although he only stayed on for a short time. Some days after their arrival at Peddie, Ayliff called the amaMfengu leaders together under a prominent local landmark, being a *mqwashu* (milkwood) tree, to which many amaMfengu have ever since attached great historical and symbolic significance. There they were told their rights and obligations as “British subjects,” and, in return, made “three pledges”: (a) to be faithful to God (b) to be loyal to the British king (c) and to support their missionaries and educate their children.<sup>23</sup> The exact date of the Mfengu oath is uncertain, but the annual commemoration *emqwashwini* (at the milkwood tree), which began in 1907, set the date of 14 May, which was the day the amaMfengu crossed the Keiskamma river into Peddie district. The three pledges inextricably bound the amaMfengu to the British government and the Cape Colonial community.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> “Instructions to the ... Commissioners for the Management, Establishment and Location of the Fingo nation,” 13 July 1835, in Theal, *War of 1835*, pp.255-257.

<sup>23</sup> Kawa, p. 51.

<sup>24</sup>The annual commemoration was initiated in 1907 by Veldtman Bikitsha of Butterworth (Ayliff and Whiteside, pp.74-75), and is generally known to all amaMfengu people, though not all are in sympathy. For a representative recent sample of Mfengu thinking, Sol K Ngqangweni, *Emqwashwini* (East London: Plaza Stationers, 2005), especially pp. 18-23. Also, Stapleton, ‘Milkwood Tree,’ cited in Chapter Two, but must be used with caution.

### ***The Betrayal of the amaMfengu***

At this point, we need to take a step backwards and analyse the precise aims and intentions of Governor D'Urban in accepting the amaMfengu into the colony, and even more to compare D'Urban's aims and intentions with those of the amaMfengu themselves. D'Urban's aims were made very clear in his Government Notice 14 of 3 May 1835, which was already noted in the previous chapter as the first colonial assertion of the "Fingo Slavery Myth."<sup>25</sup>

[The amaMfengu] are represented as industrious, gentle and well disposed tribe, good herdsmen, good agriculturalists, and useful servants, withal well armed with shields and assegais, and practised in their use. They are exceedingly well spoken of by all the Missionaries who have lived amongst them, whose ministry they regularly attended ....

#### University of Fort Hare

[D'Urban] therefore acceded to their wishes, and received them as British subjects, and will bring them back to the Colony, where they will be settled in the uninhabited and worse than useless district, between the Fish River and the Lower Keiskama, they will soon convert it into a country abounding with cattle and corn, will furnish the best of all barrier against the entrance of the Kaffirs into the Fish River bush, so long a source of mortal apprehension and of injury to the Colony, and will besides afford to the Colonists a supply of excellent hired servants. In the meantime, they are of essential use here as guides and cattle drivers, and moreover well disposed to fight.

It is clear that D'Urban had something else in mind for the amaMfengu other than the "home" he had promised them and for which they were fighting. Much as he praised their agricultural potential, he was providing them with inferior land only, in the

---

<sup>25</sup> Government Notice of 3 May 1835, quoted in Ayliff and Whiteside, pp.29-30.

“uninhabited and worse than useless district” later known as Peddie. Much as he received them as “British subjects,” he was providing them only with a future of defending the settlers against the “Kaffirs” in the Fish River bush and of providing the settlers with “excellent hired servants.” Taking the amaMfengu under British protection was therefore to be for the benefit of the colony and not for the benefit of the amaMfengu per se.

Militarily, D’Urban thought that the amaMfengu could be to the Eastern Cape what the “sepoys” were to British India. It is for that reason that he decided not to settle them deep in the Cape Colony, as they wanted, but between the Fish and Keiskamma Rivers as human frontier buffers to guard against the entry of the amaXhosa to the Fish River bush. This area had always been a site of conflict between whites and amaXhosa, as far back as when it was made a “no man’s land” by Lord Charles Somerset after the 1819 war.<sup>26</sup> D’Urban was counting on the animosity between the amaXhosa and the amaMfengu, hoping it would last, and that there would never be a rapprochement between these two peoples to the detriment of the whites. He was therefore, applying here the old rule of “divide and rule” – very convenient indeed for him. This tactic was to prove successful throughout the later frontier wars between the amaXhosa and the whites, where the amaMfengu sided with the whites, fulfilling one of their pledges – to always be faithful to the King of Britain. In these frontier wars, amaMfengu did not side with the whites against the

---

<sup>26</sup> The area between the Fish and the Keiskamma was annexed by Lord Charles Somerset under the name of the “Ceded Territory,” but it had been temporarily closed to white settlers. See Mostert, pp.507-509.

amaXhosa out of hatred of the latter. They fought more for land and cattle, to protect their families, homes and wealth and to make their existence more secure.

At the time when D'Urban had issued Government Notice 14 on 3 May, King Hintsa was still alive, though held hostage in the Governor's camp. Once the news of the shocking murder leaked out in London, D'Urban acquired an additional reason to appear as a knight in shining armor for the amaMfengu in Gcalekaland. Was he trying to camouflage something he had done, which he did not want the home government in Britain to know about? Was he trying to convince the home government that he was a kind Governor, ready to extend the work of the British Humanitarians in South Africa, by setting free a poor people [amaMfengu], from the bondage of slavery? He was forced to consider the likely reaction in London to the circumstances under which King Hintsa was killed, even when the king was helpless and asking for mercy, as nothing less than just cold blooded murder, aggravated by the mutilation of his body. Once this became known in Britain, D'Urban was anxious to argue, as he did, that he was upholding "the true spirit of the sweeping emancipation (of slaves) so recently made in the Mother Country."<sup>27</sup>

There were other benefits to be gained in the "deliverance" of the amaMfengu. D'Urban saw the amaMfengu as a cheap labour force for the white colonists who were constantly demanding more labourers, particularly now that slavery had been

---

<sup>27</sup> Moyer, "History," p. 164.

abolished. The majority of amaMfengu entered the Colony and got employment as farm labourers, cattle and sheep herds. From their usefulness at those tasks, they received encouragement, and thus the settlers obtained what they greatly desired – cheap labour. Some amaMfengu acquired a considerable number of livestock, as the result of their thrift. Others migrated to frontier towns where they were employed; they lived in locations placed on the adjoining commonage. This was the beginning of the “monetization” of the amaMfengu, many of whom became “successful peasants and the vanguard of a new African elite.”<sup>28</sup>

The question one needs to ask is, “Why did the amaMfengu decide to leave Gcalekaland if they were not slaves?” Again, Ayliff’s influence comes into play here—he told them they would have their own land and chiefdoms back. It is understandable that, to serve under somebody is not the same as being independent. As Mbovane Mabandla puts it in R.T. Kawa’s *Ibali lamaMfengu*, Mabandla, Njokweni and other amaMfengu chiefs left Hintsa’s country not because of ill treatment, but because they were promised that they would get their own land and chiefdoms such as they had possessed at the Thukela.<sup>29</sup>

It was therefore a shock to the amaMfengu when they were dumped on the open veld near the newly-constructed Fort Peddie and told this was to be their future

---

<sup>28</sup>Legassick, p. 45. C. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (London: Heinemann, 1979), pp.32-33.

<sup>29</sup> Kawa, pp. 46-47.



home.<sup>30</sup> They had expected, it seems, to be taken to the Eastern Cape capital of Grahamstown before being allocated permanent homes. Most probably, although this is nowhere recorded, they expected some form of prior consultation regarding their future. The amaMfengu soon discovered that Peddie was not suitable for the cultivation of corn. This made them very unsettled, and many departed at every opportunity, some to King William's Town, some to surrounding military posts, others to seek work on the settler farms. The change of diet caused quite a big number of the amaMfengu to suffer from dysentery and many died. Chief Mhlambiso himself nearly died. This sickness aroused the fears of the amaMfengu, and they attributed their ill-health to witchcraft, believing that the amaXhosa had bewitched the waters. But, in the short term, the priority of the amaMfengu was to get out of Peddie and establish themselves in more fertile lands. By July 1835, so many amaMfengu had abandoned the Peddie locations that the colonial authorities were forced to allow them to move. Chiefs Makalima, Matomela, Kaulela and Zibi, with more than a thousand followers, settled on the Tyhume, while Chiefs Njokweni, Mabandla and Jama moved to the newly established King William's Town to support D'Urban's military commander, Harry Smith.<sup>31</sup>

But worse was to come as far as the amaMfengu were concerned. Shortly after the British army crossed into Gcalekaland, a new Colonial Minister had been appointed in London.<sup>32</sup> This was Lord Glenelg, a liberal politician who was receptive to the

---

<sup>30</sup> Ayliff in *Grahamstown Journal*, 17 September 1835; Moyer, pp. 192-193.

<sup>31</sup> Moyer, "History," pp. 194-5. (Quoting *War of 1835*, pp. 273-5), in C.A. Acc. 519, Vol. 1, Report of the Commissioners locating the Fingoes on the Clusie to Governor D'Urban, Fort Peddie, 5 Oct 1835.

<sup>32</sup> The role of British politics in overturning D'Urban's policies is explained in Galbraith, Ch.VII;

arguments of “the Saints,” an anti-slavery lobby in Britain headed by Sir T.F. Buxton. Through the influence of Buxton, the full story of colonial oppression and the murder of King Hintsa were revealed to the British public, and Lord Glenelg ordered Governor D’Urban to abandon his policies and his conquests. Andries Stockenstrom, a former Landdrost of Graaff-Reinet, was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the Eastern Cape to implement a new policy known as the “Treaty System.” Stockenstrom was sympathetic to the amaXhosa and hostile to the amaMfengu, whom he viewed as a stumbling-block to peace. He forced the amaMfengu to give up the lands they had settled on the Tyhume and the Buffalo rivers and to retreat to Peddie. He even tried to persuade the amaMfengu to relocate to the Tsitsikamma forests near the Western Cape.<sup>33</sup> Even their occupation of Peddie was challenged by the Xhosa chiefs Nqeno and Siyolo, who attacked them near the fort in January 1837, and by the Gqunukhwebe Xhosa under Chief Phatho who ruled over the coast near the fort. Increasing numbers of amaMfengu were forced by hunger to work for the farmers, and Mhlambiso, regarded by all as the most senior Mfengu chief, departed for the Orange River in 1842. Stockenstrom was recalled in 1838, but the situation of the amaMfengu continued to be vulnerable until the War of the Axe broke out in 1847. We will deal with this in the following chapter.

### ***The Webster Hypothesis***

---

Mostert, pp.753-761; Legassick, pp. 47-48.

<sup>33</sup> For the impact on amaMfengu of the reversal of D’Urban’s policies, see Moyer, “History,” pp. 198-208.

Alan Webster's misunderstanding of the history of amaMfengu has already been touched upon in Chapter One, where the point was made that the amaMfengu chiefs were not "collaborators and opportunists" as painted by Webster, but authentic traditional leaders of their various communities. The Fry hypothesis, discussed in Chapter Two, is an offspring of the Webster hypothesis but the Webster hypothesis requires deeper consideration because it has been the source of so much incorrect or distorted scholarship in the English-dominated academic world, while not being taken seriously by any isiXhosa-speaking person.

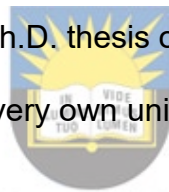
To fully grasp the damage done by the Webster hypothesis, one must begin by citing his disciples and his victims. He himself was a student of Julian Cobbing at Rhodes University, and his hypothesis has to be seen in the context of the "Cobbing hypothesis" which – to cut a long story short – maintained that the Mfecane wars were a myth devised by colonialism to cover up the slave-trading activities of the Portuguese, the Griquas and the British themselves. Shaka Zulu was regarded by Cobbing as a chief of minimal importance demonized by the colonialists as a scapegoat for their nefarious deeds. Although the Cobbing hypothesis exerted a superficial attraction due to its anti-imperialist message, it was soon discredited on empirical grounds, and even its remaining supporters admit that Cobbing made many mistakes.

Cobbing laid out his hypothesis in a famous article published in 1987- as follows:<sup>34</sup>

The next land and labour expedition, D'Urban's war on the Xhosa of 1834-5, was organised on such a scale and defended with such an array of pretexts as to be accepted as a 'war,' subject to the adjustments of moral perspective which allowed collective criminal acts to be dressed up as another humanitarian blessing. Whereas Somerset [in 1828] brought out a couple of hundred prisoners, D'Urban and his missionaries brought out 17,000, eighty-five per cent of whom were women and children. They, too, were hypocritically described as full of gratitude for being rescued from the 'bondage' of their own rulers, and for further disguise, supplied with a fictitious past. These were the Fingos or Mfengu.

From his footnotes, it is clear that Cobbing had read no primary sources except Ayliff and Whiteside, and a settler propaganda work called *Irruption of the Kaffir Hordes*.

He claimed that there was "no evidence" to support the contention that the amaMfengu "came from the Mzinyathi-Tugela region." And this in spite of the fact that Richard Moyer's diligent 1971 Ph.D. thesis on the amaMfengu was freely available in the library of Cobbing's very own university!



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Under Cobbing's supervision, Webster completed a Master's Thesis entitled "Land Expropriation and Labour Extraction under Cape Colonial Rule: the War of 1835 and the 'Emancipation' of the Fingo."<sup>35</sup> His findings were summarised in "Unmasking the Fingo: the War of 1835 Revisited," a conference paper published later in *The Mfecane Aftermath* (1995), edited by Carolyn Hamilton.<sup>36</sup> From there it spread like wildfire throughout the academic world attracting such eminent disciples as Professors Norman Etherington (Western Australia), Clifton Crais (Emory University,

---

<sup>34</sup> Cobbing, pp. 513-514.

<sup>35</sup> A. Webster, M.A. Thesis, Rhodes University, 1991.

<sup>36</sup> Op cit

Georgia), Timothy Stapleton (Trent University, Canada, formerly at Fort Hare) and John Wright (University of Natal).<sup>37</sup> Dr Poppy Fry's, (now of Saint Anselm College) support of Webster's conclusions has already been discussed in Chapter Two. Neutral academics such as Alan Lester (University of Sussex) and Richard Price (University of Maryland) have bowed to the authority of these distinguished "experts" and repeated the Webster hypothesis in their otherwise credible books.<sup>38</sup> Finally, the Webster hypothesis was given the prestigious endorsement of *The Cambridge History of South Africa* (2010).<sup>39</sup> The only established academic to dispute the Cobbing-Webster line is Prof Jeff Peires of Fort Hare, and it is no coincidence that he is the only one to have made use of isiXhosa-language sources.<sup>40</sup> Yet, even he has not published a direct contradiction of Webster. The burden of refutation therefore rests on this writer, but I accept it gladly.



University of Fort Hare  
Together in Excellence

The broader context of Webster's hypothesis, namely that the Mfengu exodus was motivated by the colonial greed for labor, has already been dealt with by Peires and the above explanation of the causes of the War of 1834-5. The discussion which follows concentrates on Webster's fundamental shortcomings, but will also attempt to refute his most important specific mistakes. The page references refer to

---

<sup>37</sup>N. Etherington, *The Great Treks* (Harlow: Pearson, 2001), pp.234-235; C. Crais, *The Making of the Colonial Order: White Supremacy and Black Resistance in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865* (Wits University Press, 1992.), pp.117-8; T.J. Stapleton, *Maqoma and Xhosa Resistance to Colonial Advance* (Parklands: Jonathan Ball, 1994), pp. 50, 90-91.

<sup>38</sup> A. Lester, *Imperial Networks* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp.89-90; R. Price, *Making Empire* (Cambridge: University Press, 2008), p.228.

<sup>39</sup> John Wright in C. Hamilton, B.K. Mbenga and R. Ross, *Cambridge History of South Africa, Volume I* (Cambridge: University Press: 2010), p.233.

<sup>40</sup> Peires, "Matiwane's Road" and "Fellows with big holes in their ears," both op cit.

Webster's most widely-cited production, "Unmasking the Fingo" in Hamilton's *Mfecane Aftermath* collection.

- *Few of the Fingo had similar backgrounds ... Their existence was owed to the British devastation in the war of 1835, not to Shaka.* [p. 256].
- *Different categories of Fingo can be distinguished ... [1] mercenaries ... [2] opportunist Rharhabe, Gcaleka, Mpondo and Thembu from the trans-Fish Wesleyan missions who were granted land at Peddie, Tyhume and King William's Town by the government. They were joined there by a scattering of Natal refugees from the Caledon River area, who were appointed by D'Urban as Fingo chiefs* [p.256]
- *By October 1835 there were a mere 698 Fingo at Peddie. And hardly any of these 'Fingo at Peddie came from the Natal region'.* [p.268].
- *Because there was no such thing as a 'Fingo tribe' before and during 1835, it was impossible for there to be natural chiefs... Whiteside claimed that the Fingo chiefs were all from Zizi, Hlubi, Bhele and Relidwane [sic] royal lineages ...but the evidence suggests that they were collaborators and opportunists who were prepared to follow British orders on the management of the Fingo... The chiefs changed fairly rapidly ... Within two decades, the entire chiefly hierarchy had changed, presumably as a result of the dismissal of chiefs not meeting expectations..* [p.272]

University of Fort Hare  
Together in Excellence

Lastly, as if recognising that there is a hole in his argument, Webster pre-empts a possible question by asking a question of his own. Bear in mind that the essence of his argument is that the overwhelming majority of the "Fingo" originated not at the Thukela but were actually amaXhosa enslaved by the British.

- *The mechanics of the tribalisation process that created the Fingo have yet to be explored. What were the forces that caused Rharhabe and Gcaleka to forgo their history and culture – even their clan names and adopt a foreign culture?* [p.274]

One might think that a historian sincerely motivated to examine the impact of colonialism on a particular ethnicity would begin with the history as understood by

the people themselves, and only then move on to the colonial record. But Webster does not even take the history back to front. He takes only the colonial record, and never once bothers to consider the abundant material provided by the amaMfengu themselves. Even worse, he thinks that his justifiable distrust of the colonial record legitimises his picking and choosing whatever he wants while neglecting any colonial source, however trustworthy, which might contradict his argument.

Alan Webster starts on a wrong footing by displaying his shortcoming in understanding who the amaMfengu were and his lack of knowledge of the isiXhosa language. Not only does he maintain that “the etymology of the term Fingo is not clear,” [p.256], he does not even trouble to discuss the well-known isiXhosa word “*ukumfenguza*.”<sup>41</sup> He refuses to accept that 'Mfengu' and 'Fingo' are one and the same word: isiXhosa speaking people saying “Mfengu,” whereas English-speakers would say “Fingo.” He then runs wild as to associate 'Mfengu' with a supposedly new nation, in line with ' Verwoerd's retribalisation...'

Webster is at his best when criticizing Ayliff and Whiteside's *History of the abaMbo*. This is a soft target, it is so full of colonial prejudice but it is also very easy to see through and this thesis has already drawn attention to its many misleading and untrustworthy statements. Webster's scrutiny shows that the book is an unreliable piece of work, full of anachronisms and distortions that do not tally with the contents of, for instance, Ayliff's own diary. So far, so good, but Webster feels that his critique

---

<sup>41</sup>In his MA thesis, Webster goes so far as to speculate that the term “Fingo” derives from Latin, and was introduced by the missionary at Pirie. Webster. “Land Expropriation,” p.133.



of Ayliff and Whiteside enables him to simply dismiss everything in it. He questions their population estimate of 250,000 abaMbo back in Natal on the grounds that this does not correspond with that calculated by A.T. Bryant, who "calculated the entire population between the Thukela and Pongola in 1820 to be 80 000,<sup>42</sup> and on the basis of such small points Webster arrives at the conclusion that the amaMfengu as an entity and identity, do not exist, and, or, they did not originate in Natal. There are so many other issues Webster raises about Ayliff and Whiteside's book: the collective name abaMbo used to refer to themselves-amaMfengu. Webster seems unable to make the connection between abaMbo and amaMfengu. It must be repeated and underlined that these nations, collectively, were abaMbo whilst they were still at Thukela. They were indeed different nations, but after circumstances beyond their control had brought them to Gcalekaland, it was their sorry condition that earned them the name amaMfengu. The entire history of the abaMbo in the Thukela region is written off by a statement from John Wright, another Cobbing admirer, that "there is virtually no evidence for a large-scale flight of refugees southwards from the Natal region into the Eastern Cape region in the 1810s and 1820s."<sup>43</sup> And yet, as has been demonstrated in Chapter One, abaMbo were not refugees before the *mfecane* wars and their route into the Eastern Cape can easily be traced.

---

<sup>42</sup> MS 17,405 Cory Library: A.C. Webster: Ayliff, Whiteside, and the "Fingo" Emancipation of 1835: A Reappraisal, BA (Honours) Thesis, Rhodes University, October, 1988.

<sup>43</sup> Webster, "Unmasking," p.259. For Wright's assistance to Webster, see p.276.



Webster voices his surprise that, according to him, Ayliff and Whiteside has been taken as the “Bible” about the history of the amaMfengu. This is a deeply Eurocentric view. Taken by whom, one may ask? Ayliff and Whiteside were admittedly once influential, but their book was superseded in 1929 by R.T. Kawa’s *Ibali lamaMfengu*, which Webster has never read, nor has he ever read Pamla, or Ncwana, who, like, Kawa got their information straight from the grandfathers who personally participated in the events of 1835. Even in English, Webster has ignored Veldtman Bikitsha’s narrative of the Mfengu rebellion before the arrival of the British army, the only major indigenous source available in English.<sup>44</sup> Although Webster wrote his thesis in Grahamstown, he did not take the trouble to travel the 70 kilometres to Peddie to interview even one single Mfengu person. On these grounds alone, his hypothesis could be safely disregarded.



University of Fort Hare  
Together in Excellence

It is because of his sheer ignorance of isiXhosa language and social norms that Webster seems puzzled as to why the amaMfengu retained their own clan names while still calling themselves amaMfengu. On the Thukela, they were different nations coming from eMbo, which explains the wars which sometimes occurred amongst themselves. But once they departed beyond their home region, they became united into a single one destitute collective, which needed assistance. They needed to find strength in their unity, in their solidarity, they had to be “*imbumba yamanyama*”, that is, a solidified unity. But, to be in need does not mean one must lose one’s identity as well, and this is precisely why they preferred to call themselves

---

<sup>44</sup> Op. cit

by their clan names, regardless of their being amaMfengu. The relationship between clan-name and Mfengu name has been clearly explained by K.K. Ncwana:<sup>45</sup>

*Ngako oko ke eligama lithi “singamaMfengu” yayiligama lokuzithoba, phawula ngalento yokokuba intombi yaseMbo akusoze uyive ikhuza isithi, “amaMfengu” Uyakuva isithi “maBele!” “maZizi amahle!” Ngako ke eligama aka ufuneki kunanyathelwe kulo ngokungathi amaBele, amaHlubi, namaZizi nezizwana ezathi zabusa phantsi kwawo zizalwa linyange eligama linguMfengu, kubengathi se isisiduko sabo eso.*

Therefore this word that says “singamaMfengu” [we are Mfengu] was a name to humble oneself, notice that you would never hear a “Mbo” girl exclaim, “amaMfengu!” You will hear her say, “maBhele!” beautiful “maZizi!” Therefore this name must not be held on as if the Bhele and the Hlubi and the Zizi and their subordinate nations descend from an ancestor named Mfengu, as if this is their clan name.

“AmaMfengu” is not the name of a nation, or of a certain ancestor they might have had, but refers to a state of having nothing, of being in dire need of assistance on account of destitution. It is not a name that they were given by the amaGcaleka, but one which they bestowed on themselves, to highlight their desperate condition. In their own country they were “abaMbo,” in Gcalekaland they became “amaMfengu”. Their destitute condition united them into a single entity - brought closely together by their destitution, a community *yabantu abamfenguzayo* (of people seeking help.) Hence there are no records of any wars amongst themselves in Gcalekaland. Their common need became a bond that tied them closely together.

---

<sup>45</sup> Ncwana, p. 47.

This explanation also serves to address the question of amaMfengu identity, which Webster seems to doubt. Along with the question of clan-names, the prevalence of Mfengu chiefs settles the question of their identity. That some names do not appear in Ayliff's Diary does not rule out their existence. There is, also, the living heritage of amaMfengu, their living chiefs who are descendants of those chiefs who had eventually ended up in King Hintsa's country, Chief Ngwekazi in Feni Location, Peddie and Chief Matomela in emaHlubini Location, also at Peddie, are good examples of the living evidence of amaMfengu. These Chiefs agree unanimously about their origin at eMbo in the KZN region, and they still use the same clan names.<sup>46</sup>



Ignoring as he does that the history, chieftainship and clan-names of the “abaMbo” of the Thukela and the “amaMfengu” of Gcalekaland are exactly one and the same, Webster speculates, on the basis of a few confused white visitors before 1830 that most of the “Fingo” came from north of the Orange river. Webster even regards Ayliff's personal converts at Butterworth as Gcalekas who “were encouraged to reject Gcaleka society and traditions, especially polygamy and circumcision”. These were the Gcaleka “society misfits” who were “appointed to die” because of whatever they had done that was not morally or behaviorally accepted in Gcaleka society.<sup>47</sup> He

---

<sup>46</sup>Interviewed by me as follows: Chieftainess Lungelwa Mhlambiso, at her home at kwa-Mathole, Middle Drift, 11 December 2017; Chief Justice Mabandla of amaBhele at his home at Krwakwa village, Alice, 12 December 2017; Chief Z.P. Njokweni of the amaZizi at his home at kwaLujiko, emaZizini, Peddie; Chief L. Mavuso of amaBhele in Alice town; Chief S. Ngwekazi, at his home at Feni Location, Peddie, 28 April 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Cory Library, MS 17,405, Webster Honours Thesis, p. 12.

emphasizes the fact (“it is vital to note”) that when Ayliff joined the Mfengu exodus, he was accompanied by “station people” from Clarkebury, Morley and Buntingville who, in Webster’s view, formed the nucleus of the “Fingo.” But he fails to note that the Thembu and Mpondo among them were sent home in March 1836.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, asserting that the amaMfengu could not possibly have acquired 22,000 cattle while in Gcalekaland, he claims that “the Fingo did not take the cattle. The British did.”<sup>49</sup> In so doing, Webster not only disregards the story of the Mfengu revolt as related by Veldtman Bikitsha, he implicitly buys into the Mfengu slavery myth – as if amaMfengu were slaves and not allowed to keep cattle.

The argument that 17,000 Mfengu were taken captive by the British army and forcibly abducted to Peddie in the middle of a fiercely contested war is so ridiculous that it is even dismissed by some of Webster’s own supporters, like Alan Lester and Poppy Fry. Fry writes:<sup>50</sup>



On a highly permeable and understaffed frontier, the ability of British forces to hold tens of thousands of people captive seems questionable at best, but more importantly, this view dismisses the evidence that Fingo identity existed within Xhosaland prior to the war.

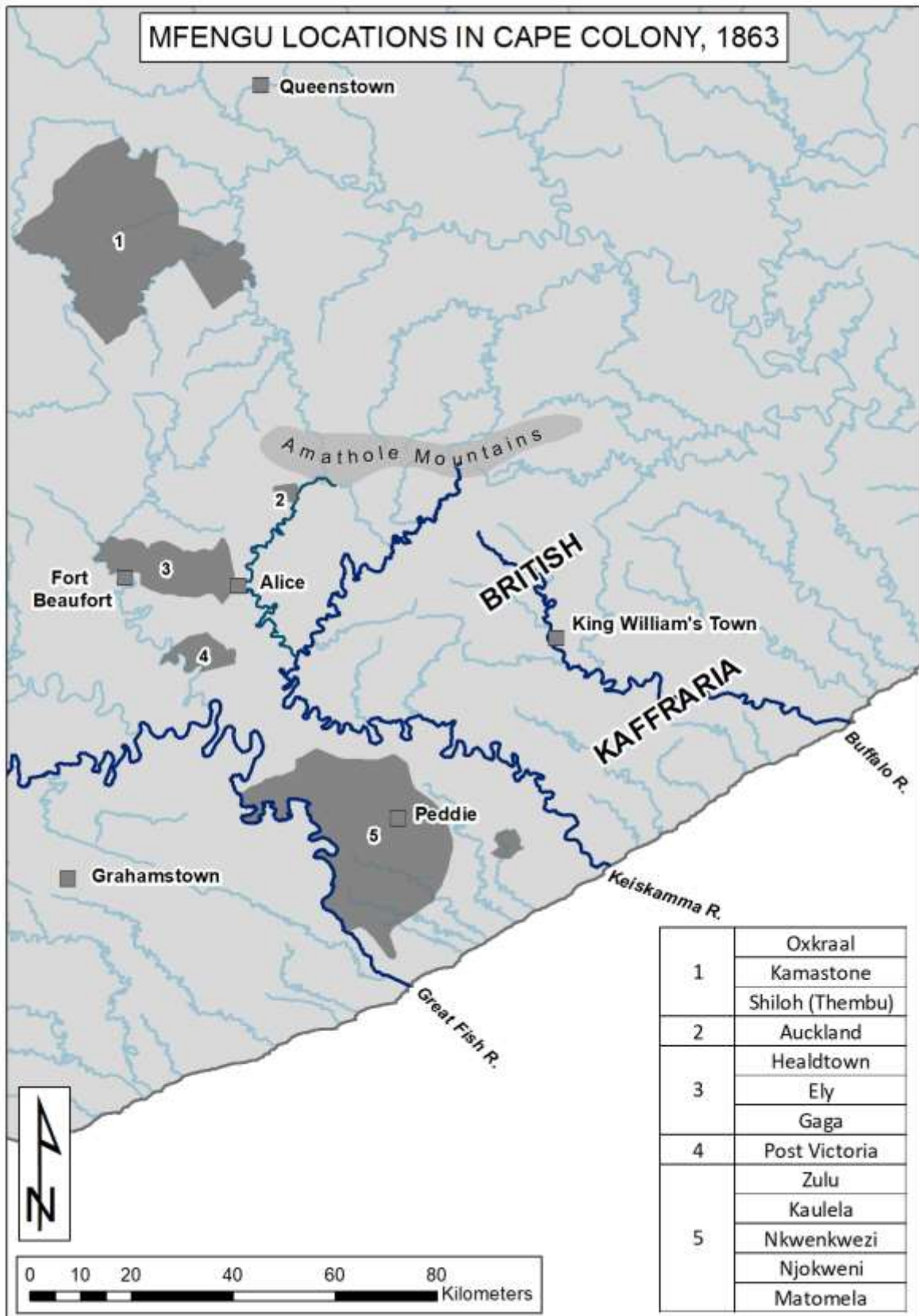
With these words, Fry throws out half of Webster’s argument. She should have gone all the way and thrown out the rest of it as well.

---

<sup>48</sup> Webster, ‘Unmasking,’ p.268. The total number of non-Mfengu in this group numbered no more than 256. They were sent home in March 1836. Information from Prof. J.B. Peires, citing the Journal of J.M. Bowker, LG 405, Cape Archives.

<sup>49</sup> Webster, “Land Expropriation,” pp. 139-140.

<sup>50</sup> Fry, “Siyamfenguza,” p.26.



Map 2 : Mfengu Locations in Cape Colony, 1863



LIST of Native Locations in the Eastern Districts.

District.	Number on Plans.	Name of Location, &c.	Approximate extent in morgen.	
Fort Beaufort .....	1	Healdton (Fingo) Industrial Institution.....	8,000	
Victoria East.....	2	Galiga and Ely (Fingo).....	9,000	
	3	Post Victoria (do.) .....	6,000	
	4	Auckland, Lovedale (Industrial Institution)*....	2,700	
	5	D'Urban (Fingo) .....	800	
Peddie .....	6	Newtondale, included in } .....	16,000	
	7			Jokweni's
	8			Zulu's (Fingo) .....
	9	Matomela's (do.) .....	9,000	
	10	Umthlonli's (do.) .....	4,500	
	11	Pato's Kop (do.) .....	3,000	
	12	Kaulela's (do.) .....	3,000	
	13	Kwenkwezi's (do.) .....	3,000	
	Queen's Town,.....	14	Shiloh (do.) .....	10,000
15		Goshen.....	1,800	
16		Oxkraal and } probably.....	50,000	
17				Kamastone (not measured)
18	Lesseyton, Tambookies.....	10,000		
Aliwal North.....	19	Wittebergen.....	192,000	

G. MONTAGU, Dep. Surveyor-General.

\* The extent not accurately known here, but may be ascertained by referring to the title registered in Surveyor-General's Office, granted in favour of Free Church of Scotland Mission.

An extent of 500 acres, more or less, situated around Fort Hare, on the Kaffrarian side of the Chumie River, has been granted to this mission.—(Vide Records in Surveyor-General's Office, King William's Town).

G. MONTAGU, Dep. Surveyor-General.

Dep. Surveyor-General's Office, 9th July, 1863.

Of the 19 titles prepared in favour of the Free Church of Scotland Mission, submitted for His Excellency's signature, only 3 were signed, conveying an extent of 51 morgen 496 square roods.

The remaining 16 titles, returned unsigned, convey 61 morgen 566 square roods and 87 square feet.

Surveyor-General's Office, July, 1863.

Figure 3: List of Native Locations in Cape Colony

## CHAPTER FOUR: TERRITORIAL EXPANSION OF AMAMFENGU

### *Following the Sixth Frontier War*

According to a Treaty between Lieutenant - Governor Stockenstrom and the amaMfengu Chiefs Mhlambiso and Njokweni, on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 1836, land in the Ceded Territory was "to be held by the said Chiefs and Tribes, their Heirs and Successors, in perpetuity, never to be reclaimed by, or on behalf of his said Majesty, except in case of hostility committed, or a war provoked by the said Chiefs or Tribe." The provisions of this Treaty were confirmed by a revised Treaty of 1845 entered into between Governor Maitland and the Mfengu Chiefs Njokweni, Mabandla, Nkwenkwezi, Matomela, Kaulela, Phala and Jama on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1845. Clause 6 of the 1845 Treaty at the same time guaranteed the said land to the said Chiefs and Tribe.<sup>1</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Despite these treaties, however, amaMfengu remained desperately short of land between 1836 and 1847, following the reversal of D'Urban's arrangements by Lord Glenelg. Some of the population pressure was relieved by the emigration to the Wittebergen Reserve (later Sterkspruit) to which Mhlambiso, widely recognised as the most senior chief among all the amaMfengu, emigrated in 1842. Zimema, another Hlubi chief, settled in Hewu, and Njokweni's land problems were partially

---

<sup>1</sup> These treaties as well as other relevant documents were conveniently reprinted in an unnumbered Cape Parliamentary Paper of 1855 entitled 'Report of the Select Committee appointed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 1855, to examine... the disposal of the Lands in the Ceded Territory and on the Chumie.'

solved when he was able to occupy the land around Newtondale, vacated by Chief Kama of the amaGqunukhwebe when he moved north under Wesleyan influence, also in 1843.<sup>2</sup>

### ***After the War of the Axe***

The amaMfengu's shortage of land was only alleviated in 1847 after those amaXhosa who had joined the War of the Axe were expelled from the "Ceded Territory" between the Fish and the Keiskamma rivers (later Peddie and Victoria East districts). Governor Maitland, acting on the advice of the Wesleyan Missionary William Shaw, planned to settle this territory not with European farmers, but rather with amaMfengu and other friendly black nations to act as a human buffer between the amaXhosa and the Colony.<sup>3</sup> It must, however, not be lost sight of that the real reason for Rev. Shaw to be so keen to assist here was that a future settlement of amaMfengu offered him the opportunity to spread the Gospel on a larger scale. In a settlement of their own, they would be more prone to accept the Word and not be distracted by the amaGcaleka as was the case back in the 1830's in Gcalekaland. Governor Maitland instructed Reverend Shaw to implement this plan, and many amaMfengu, especially the amaZizi of Chief Njokweni, had already moved to this new territory when, to their disappointment, Maitland was dismissed in 1847 and

---

<sup>2</sup>Moyer, "History," pp. 207-8; 370-371. For Njokweni, see Cape Archives LG 408 T. Shepstone – H. Hudson, 24 July 1843 (Thanks to Prof J. Peires for this reference).

<sup>3</sup>Report of 1855 Select Committee, p. 1.



replaced by the pro-settler Governor, Sir Harry Smith.<sup>4</sup> Smith dropped Maitland's plans and resolved to settle white people on the lands from which the amaXhosa had been expelled. Subsequently another great portion was given out as allotments to white settlers by Smith's successor, Governor Sir George Cathcart, leaving only a small part for the amaMfengu.<sup>5</sup> The government went as far as evicting amaMfengu from land they already occupied to satisfy the whims of the white settlers, as befell the Hlubi Chief Luzipho who was evicted from an unoccupied land in Victoria East district.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Keiskammahoek***

Despite their betrayal by Governor Sir Harry Smith, the amaMfengu did at least gain the lands in the Amathole Mountains, the later district of Keiskammahoek, following the victory of Governor Sir George Cathcart in the War of Mlanjeni (1850-1853). Although this was not a total victory for the British, who failed in their major war aim of driving all amaXhosa across the Kei River, they nevertheless succeeded in clearing the amaXhosa out of their mountain stronghold. This made available a vast tract of fertile country, which was annexed to the colony under the name of "Crown Reserve" or "Royal Reserve." Cathcart was very reluctant, for military reasons, to give out this land as typical settler farms. He wanted closer settlements with smaller

---

<sup>4</sup>Memorandum by W. Shaw, 16 September, 1846, *Ibid*, pp. 2-3. First printed with related documents in Imperial Blue Book 786 of 1847, *Correspondence re .... Eastern Frontier*, pp. 188-189.

<sup>5</sup>The whole sad story is related in detail in the Report of the 1855 Select Committee already cited.

<sup>6</sup>R.A. Moyer, "The Mfengu, Self-Defence and the Cape Frontier Wars," in C. Saunders and R. Derricourt, *Beyond the Cape Frontier* (London: Longman, 1974), p. 116.

agricultural plots rather than big cattle farms which would be difficult to defend against amaXhosa.<sup>7</sup>

On the principle that there should be no lone dwellings or individual grants of large detached grazing farms with right of pasturage, inasmuch as that system is productive of much waste of land available for cultivation, and consequently calculated to defeat the all-important object of a dense and industrious population, with means for their own support ... as far as may be every place, suitable for gardening and cultivation shall be made available for those purposes.

Explicit permission was granted to “Fingoes and other loyal natives” to settle in specified parts of this “Royal Reserve,” but on stringent conditions that would not have been imposed on white farmers. They were to be settled on individual plots in villages of not less than twenty dwellings, for which they would have to pay quitrent. Pasturage would be allocated but only to a maximum of ten cattle per dwelling. Each village would have a “headman” chosen by the community, but he would be accountable to a white Superintendent who would keep a register of the inhabitants and collect the quitrent.

Such a system was clearly designed to advance the colonial economy by limiting cattle numbers and encouraging agricultural gardening. It also clearly undermined the authority of traditional leaders, not only by placing them under a Superintendent but by allocating plots to individuals on payment of quitrent. The chiefs objected strenuously and some of the worst provisions were dropped, though agricultural

---

<sup>7</sup>Government Notice of 8 March 1853. *Correspondence of ... Sir George Cathcart* (London: John Murray, 1857), pp. 253-255.

allotments of three acres per individual were eventually made.<sup>8</sup> One outcome of these policies, however, was that chiefs and communities already established at Peddie did not, on the whole, move to the Royal Reserve (the future Keiskammahoek). The colonial government was most concerned to occupy the most sensitive military positions with the best Mfengu fighters. Hence Chief Mabandla of the amaBhele was granted the lands around the sources of the Tyhume. Chief Mhlambiso returned from Hewu to occupy the Amathole Basin, and Chief Zibi of amaHlubi to the “seven kloofs” near Fort Cox. Most of the other new arrivals were chiefs whose tenure in Fort Beaufort and the Kat River had become uncertain: Ulana (amaZizi), Socitshe (amaKhuze), Mgodana (amaZizi), Njikelana (amaNxasana).<sup>9</sup>



### ***Return across the Kei: Creation of 'Fingoland'***

University of Port Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

The apparent prosperity of the amaMfengu concealed a dangerous and growing land shortage. As early as 1855, Special Commissioner Calderwood had drawn attention to problems in four locations near Alice: Lower Gaga, Middle Gaga, Ely and Roxo, which were complained of “as being too narrow for grazing purposes though abundant for cultivation.” He reported that “these locations comprehend the finest country in all respects in this fertile neighborhood, but they are certainly too small for the present inhabitants.” Calderwood blamed the chiefs for inviting too many people,

---

<sup>8</sup>See the correspondence between G. Montagu (Deputy Surveyor) and British Kaffraria Commissioner J. Maclean in Cape Archives, BK 23, for example, Montagu-Maclean 26 July 1856.

<sup>9</sup> BK 1 Cathcart - Maclean, 18 June 1853; BK 1 W.F. Liddle - J. Maclean, 21 June 1853; BK 24 J. Ayliff, J.- Maclean, 16 June 1856. Thanks to Prof J. Peires for these references.

avoiding mention of the fact that these amaMfengu were probably returning from migrant labour with the cattle they had earned, not wishing to be servants for the rest of their lives.<sup>10</sup>

Although war was never declared, the tragic and calamitous Nongqawuse cattle-killing movement of 1856-7 assisted the attack of the colonial government on tribal cohesion and effectively broke the military power of the amaXhosa.<sup>11</sup> King Sarhili, the son of Hintsu, took the leading part in the cattle and grain destruction, resulting in widespread starvation. What was more fatal to Sarhili, however, was the decision of Sir George Grey, the Cape Governor, to hold him personally responsible. In February 1858, Grey instructed the Frontier Armed and Armed Police to seize the Gcaleka country between the Kei and the Mbashe rivers. Colonel J. Gawler, commanding a force of amaXhosa who had refused to kill their cattle, located them at Idutywa, the first colonial settlement in the later Transkei. The Idutywa community was comprised of different nations, including the amaMfengu, but the senior chiefs were Sigidi of the amaGcaleka and Smith Umhala of the amaNdlambe. Idutywa and the Butterworth Mission Station were the only parts of King Sarhili's former territory that was occupied. Otherwise, for the next seven years, this territory was vacant and guarded by the police.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Report of Special Commissioner, 22 January 1855, op. cit, p.47.

<sup>11</sup>J. Peires, *The Dead Will Arise* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), esp. pp. 277-286, 295-296.

<sup>12</sup> F. Brownlee, *The Transkeian Native Territories: Historical Records* (Lovedale, 1923), p.5; Cardwell - Wodehouse, 5 August 1864, Imperial Blue Book 3436 of 1865, *Correspondence relative to the Annexation of British Kaffraria* pp.23 -25.

The Colonial Government realized that Sarhili would not rest until he had got his land back. They feared an outbreak of another frontier war, where Sarhili might even be assisted by the Rharhabe amaXhosa west of the Kei, whose land had been given to the amaMfengu in 1835 and 1847 – surely the grudge on the part of the amaXhosa was still there! In 1861, it came to the notice of Sir Walter Currie, Commander of the Frontier Armed and Mounted Police, that King Sarhili was planning to return and he reported this to the new Governor, Sir Philip Wodehouse. Major arrangements were made for the defense of the Colony, to the point of calling in reinforcements from Cape Town. Though this also turned out to be a false alarm, it showed that the frontier police had to be on their toes all the time to prevent a possible attack from King Sarhili and his people.<sup>13</sup>



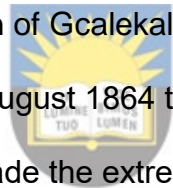
On the other hand, the white farmers could not wait to get their hands on Sarhili's land. What was clear was that the territory could not remain vacant for long. It had to be occupied. Moreover, the Imperial Government was thinking of disbanding the Cape Mounted Rifles. To boost the strength of the European population, Governor Wodehouse therefore proposed to give out the Gcaleka country as farms for white occupants under military tenure. Applications for farms were called for, though the scheme had not yet received the approval of the Home Government in London, as

---

<sup>13</sup> Imperial Blue Book 3436 of 1865, *Correspondence Relative to the Annexation of British Kaffraria*. P. Wodehouse - Duke of Newcastle, 11 June 1864. For a good general overview of colonial thinking at this time, see C.C. Saunders, "The Annexation of the Transkeian Territories," *Archives Yearbook for South African History* (1976), pp.12-13.

the settlers would require temporary protection from the imperial forces until they could stand on their own feet and be able to defend themselves.

Before the Governor's plan could take off, however, King Sarhili had regained his feet. He was being rejoined by his people, who had been scattered by famine, and the space he was temporarily occupying in Bomvanaland could no longer contain all of them. The Governor offered Sarhili a tract of vacant land elsewhere, but Sarhili was determined to move back to his own country, the same from which he had been driven in 1858. It was rumored in England that he planned to attack the government police occupying his former territory, and so, to avoid any disastrous results of the prospective occupation of Gcalekaland by settlers, the Home Government issued instructions in August 1864 that "British dominion must be withdrawn from it, and the Kei be made the extreme boundary."<sup>14</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Governor Wodehouse's plan was thus thwarted. He therefore came to the conclusion that the status quo was no longer sustainable, and that it was unwise to leave the Transkei territory unoccupied, as this would continue to give hope to both Europeans and Sarhili's people. As he explained to the Colonial Secretary in London, "by compelling [Sarhili] to remain where he is, we must ultimately, at no distant day, be involved in a general war, caused by an attempt on his part to

---

<sup>14</sup> Cardwell – Wodehouse, 5 and 14 August 1864, Imperial Blue Book 3436 of 1865, *Correspondence Relative to the Annexation of British Kaffraria*, pp. 13-14, 23 - 25.

recover his lost possessions.”<sup>15</sup>At the same time, Wodehouse was not keen to return the whole territory to Sarhili,“ from whom it was taken as a punishment for his persevering hostility to us, for the use only of his immediate retainers, would be assuredly unsafe and would be regarded by the natives as the strongest testimony of our weakness.” He therefore decided to follow the only course that appeared open to him, that of dividing the Gcaleka territory amongst the different nations. J.C. Warner, a colonial official stationed among the abaThembu, was instructed to negotiate with King Sarhili, to the effect that he would be allowed to return to a portion of his former territory as well as receiving an annual allowance of £100, provided “he should conduct himself in a friendly manner.” Sarhili accepted and, within no time, his subjects reoccupied the area that henceforth became known as Gcalekaland, extending from the Mbashe to the Kei, and from the sea to the waggon road running eastwards past Butterworth.



University of Fort Hare

*Together in Excellence*

The so-called “Emigrant Thembu,” under Mathanzima, were given Sarhili’s territory between the Kei and the Indwe rivers on the extreme north western corner of the Transkei. It was important to the Colonial government that the abaThembu be granted land, as they had to be “encouraged and protected as a counterpoise to the power of [Sarhili].” The government also contemplated the granting of additional land to the abaThembu later on, when the settlement of the Transkeian Territory had been finalised.<sup>16</sup>J.C. Warner, the Thembu Agent, was stationed on a tract of neutral

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>GH Vol. 23/30: Letter from Governor Wodehouse to E. Cardwell, 9 February 1865.

territory between the abaThembu and the amaGcaleka, and it was arranged to install him as a British Agent, to act as a liaison officer between these nations and the government.

There remained the question of the vacant land in the centre, concerning which the Home Government had clearly stated that settling white farmers was not an option. Sandile and the other Ngqika chiefs of British Kaffraria seemed to provide a perfect solution. The land to which they had been confined since the Nongqawuse cattle-killing was insufficient and sooner or later would be too small to sustain them. Wodehouse wished to authorise these chiefs to move over the Kei with their followers. They were promised that they would be outside the jurisdiction of the British authority, though under the general supervision of Mr Warner. By allowing them to retain some of their salaries, they would maintain friendly relations with the Colonial government and guard against any depredations by their subjects. Those remaining behind would cease to be part of an organized tribe and as such would be easy to put under the control of ordinary colonial law as individuals.<sup>17</sup> When Colonial Secretary Cardwell approved his plan, Wodehouse offered this central sector of the vacant land to Sandile and his subordinates, thinking that, once they were gotten out of the way, their territory could be given to the white farmers.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> E. Cardwell - Governor Wodehouse, Imperial Blue Book 3436 of 1865, *Correspondence relative to the Annexation of British Kaffraria*, p.171.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 171, 179.



To the Governor's dismay, Sandile and the Ngqika chiefs declined his offer, pointing out that the territory rightfully belonged to Sarhili, King of all the amaXhosa including themselves, and that they would not want to deprive him of the opportunity to get it back. What a display of astuteness! It was a way of showing their solidarity with their King, a very subtle way of saying to Wodehouse, stop your divide and rule tactics, we are not going to fall for them! The Governor, however, failed to analyze this answer, and was led to believe that their objection was because "they acknowledged the benefits they had derived from living in tranquility under our rule, and were indisposed to fall back under the uncontrolled authority of their own Chiefs." The Governor thus "gladly accepted this declaration as the best [answer] for the preservation of peace, and made no efforts to induce them to alter this determination."



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

This is why the government again turned to their friends in need, the amaMfengu, to provide them yet with another human buffer against Sarhili across the Kei. Of all the things that worried the colonial authorities, nothing was more of a thorn in their side than the prospects of the amaMfengu and the amaXhosa coming closer together. The war scare of 1854 was repeated in January 1865 when Zazela, a Mfengu chief from Fort Beaufort, refused to accept a "Certificate of Citizenship," which was promoted as being of benefit to the amaMfengu.<sup>19</sup> Moreover younger men were heard proclaiming such things as "we know the English way of fighting and we will

---

<sup>19</sup>Cape Parliamentary Papers, A 56 - 65. *Titles to land issued to Fingoes and correspondence on the refusal of Zazela to received new certificates of citizenship*. L.H. Meurant – Colonial Secretary, 4 January 1865.

drive the English into the sea” which caused alarm in colonial circles. The war panic subsided in due course but not before it had caused a great “mixture of fear and irritation”, and giving Governor Wodehouse reason to reflect on the future of amaMfengu.<sup>20</sup>

Colonial thinking was well reflected in these comments by a magistrate:<sup>21</sup>

[The government should] keep up until a fitting time, without actually causing a rupture, the old animosity between [Xhosa] and Fingoe, and this has been effectively done by the latter being put in possession of a part of the country that was formerly Rhili’s ... For many years the [amaXhosa] will require a watchful policy, and if they are to fight, it is better that they should do so with the Fingo first.



AmaMfengu knew very well that the Colonial Government depended on their alliance to keep amaXhosa at bay and they capitalized on that. The Mfengu population had increased considerably since they had been located at Peddie in 1835, and brought with them their cattle and possessions of every description. Consequently, because of the over crowdedness of their reserves, new locations were later found for them in Victoria East and Tsitsikamma, but these areas too were soon overcrowded and the people were once again clamoring for more land. The Government did recognize the justness of their complaints and made promises of further allotments of land, but could not fulfill them. AmaMfengu complained about the congestion of the villages they were forced to live in and they hated the meddling of the government with their

---

<sup>20</sup>Cape Parliamentary Papers, A 4-65. *Correspondence relative to the Excitement that has prevailed on the Frontier*, GH, Vol. 23/30: P. Wodehouse - E. Cardwell, 6 May 1865

<sup>21</sup>Magistrate Bisset, quoted Saunders, p.15.

customary way of life. Knowing this, the colonial government was eager to please them to keep them on their side. They recognized that the amaMfengu liked independence to the extent that they were even prepared to buy land to ensure that it remained in their personal possession. The government therefore took advantage of the large quantity of land that remained for disposal, even after the amaGcaleka and the abaThembu had received their allocations. Hence the proposals of the Governor's proposals for the 'migration of a large number of the [amaMfengu] residing in the Colony.'<sup>22</sup>

Governor Wodehouse therefore instructed Sir Walter Currie, the Commandant of the Frontier Police, to "undertake the Superintendence of the removal and location beyond the Kei of such [amaMfengu] as might be found willing to go over. Various allotments were assigned for the principal Headmen."<sup>23</sup>In order to communicate with the amaMfengu, Currie identified Veldtman Bikitsha, who had previously worked for him, as an interpreter.

The 1865 Mfengu exodus, like that of 1835, has received attention from the Cobbing school, in this case Professor Timothy J. Stapleton of Canada with his article, "The Expansion of a Pseudo-Ethnicity in the Eastern Cape: Reconsidering the Fingo "Exodus" of 1865."<sup>24</sup> As was done with the arguments of Webster and Fry,

---

<sup>22</sup> GH, Vol.23/30: P. Wodehouse - E. Cardwell, 11 October 1865.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid

<sup>24</sup>*International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 29 (1996), pp. 233-250.

discussion of Stapleton's hypotheses will be reserved until the events have been properly considered in the light of the available sources which Stapleton ignored. Since, however, there seems to be no isiXhosa language sources describing the events, we are forced to rely on the private correspondence of Sir Walter Currie to his friend Richard Southey, the Colonial Secretary, plus one valuable statement by Veldtman Bikitsha.<sup>25</sup>

According to Veldtman, he was sent by Sir Walter Currie on a mission to Peddie, to inform the amaMfengu of that district that land was available across the Kei for anyone who wanted it. Bikitsha met with Chief Zulu of amaHlubi, who arranged a meeting of about 500 people, so that they could hear the news from Bikitsha himself. While addressing the people, Bikitsha realized that the amaMfengu unanimously wished to move to the Transkei. They voiced their concern to not be left out if Sir Walter Currie was giving out land to other amaMfengu, particularly as they had indicated long ago to their Magistrate that their land was inadequate. They therefore asked Bikitsha to accompany them to W. Edey, the Magistrate of Peddie as his presence would add weight to their mission.

When they eventually arrived, the Magistrate feigned ignorance, pretending that he knew nothing about land being given away across the Kei. All he did was to read an

---

<sup>25</sup>Relevant correspondence is found in Accession 611 at the Cape Archives (Southey Papers), especially volumes 17-19. Statement of Veldtman Bikitsha, 14 September 1865, in the correspondence of the Magistrate of Peddie, CO 3082.

irrelevant Proclamation, whereupon Chief Zulu and others got angry, and told the Magistrate that he should be the one telling them about this vacant land, rather than waiting for Currie to send a black person. They told him that they would move. The chiefs who were undecided about moving told the Magistrate to ask the Governor to write a letter of explanation, whether the amaMfengu were to get land across the Kei or not. Edye suggested, however, that the letter be written by Mr Tainton, the Superintendent of the amaMfengu at Peddie. Bikitsha asked those Chiefs who wished to move immediately to indicate their desire, and six Chiefs responded immediately – Matsongo, Macantya, Chili, Umchabu, Njokweni's son, Tshikalana and Zulu. It would appear that the Peddie officials were playing some sort of game with the chiefs, and it really ended up being Bikitsha's word against theirs. Tainton, in particular, was telling some of the amaMfengu that the land over the Kei still belonged to Sarhili.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Bikitsha, on the other hand, refuted Tainton, telling the people that the territory now belonged to the government and that King Sarhili himself had recognised this fact by asking the government to return his land. Eventually Tainton conceded, but indicated that people should take everything they possessed, even their sick people, as the land they were leaving would be allocated to those who would remain behind. Again, Bikitsha objected, saying this was not the government order. He also refuted Tainton's argument that the people would be occupying the land at their own risk, informing the amaMfengu that he had met Captain Cobbe, their future Magistrate, and he had assured him that the amaMfengu would be taken care of by the

government, so long as they remained loyal. By the end of the day, Bikitsha had gained the confidence of the people, proving himself a man of authority, an equal to the government representatives such as Sir Walter Currie and Captain Cobbe. The people believed him and were ready to move, so Tainton and Edye had no choice but to let them go.

Bikitsha did not have an easy time with the other magistrates either. At some stage he had to defend himself from the accusations of Mr Bisset, the Magistrate of Middledrift, that he was running around the country inciting amaMfengu to cross the Kei and that "all the magistrates both in the colony and Kaffraria are very angry with you." Bisset also accused Bikitsha of holding meetings with Sir Walter Currie and the amaMfengu of Peddie without the knowledge of the magistrates, and that he was a "Schelem" (schemer). It soon became clear that Bisset was ill informed about the whole thing, whereupon Bikitsha explained to him step by step about everything pertaining to the prospective Mfengu exodus. He also informed him of a meeting that Currie had held with the amaMfengu of Fort Beaufort, who were asking for the land promised them by Sir George Grey. However, Njokweni, who had previously expressed his willingness to move, decided at the last moment that he wanted to wait for a letter from the Governor. This shows how divided the Mfengu chiefs were about moving over the Kei. Apart from the three Njokwenis, chiefs Matomela and Mhlawuli also indicated that they did not like the Transkei and would therefore

remain. Chiefs Zulu and Nkwenkwezi said they would move over the Kei immediately.<sup>26</sup>

Since the amaMfengu were moving from colonial territory to the Transkeian lands beyond the Colonial boundary, they naturally needed to be sure of their future status and their relationship, including military support, with the colonial government. The Magistrate of Alice, W.F. Liddle, informed the colonial secretary that sixteen Mfengu chiefs and headmen, led by Chief Mavuso, were willing to cross the Kei provided, however, that all their questions were answered, such as, whether Currie was fully authorized to locate them there. They alleged that Currie had promised them that they could choose their own magistrate and that they were “very much dissatisfied” that “a gentleman from Graham’s Town” had been appointed over the head of their favored candidate.<sup>27</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Other Mfengu concerns were captured in a telegram from Richard Tainton, the Superintendent at Peddie, who spoke isiXhosa and was closer to the people than the other colonial officials:<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup>CO 3082, W. Edye - Colonial Secretary, 27 October 1865.

<sup>27</sup>W.F. Liddle – R. Southey, 21 June 1865. J. Mavuso-W.F. Liddle, 21 June 1865. A 14 - 67, *Correspondence with Reference to the Principles, Conditions, and Detailed Arrangements on which the Fingo Exodus has been Carried Out*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>28</sup>Telegram from C.H. Huntley, 24 July 1865; Telegram from Wodehouse, 25 July 1865. A14 -67, *Correspondence with Reference to the Principles, Conditions, and Detailed Arrangements on which the Fingo Exodus has been Carried Out*.p. 4.



First, whether they will continue to be British subjects, and be under British protection. Second, whether they have to pay quitrent or hut-tax. Third, whether their deeds of citizenship will continue valid. Fourth, whether they will have magistrates to appeal to in case their chiefs oppress them.

The Governor's reply was evasive to say the least. The amaMfengu would continue to be British subjects, but they would no longer receive Certificates of Citizenship. Although he promised that a "British officer will live with them to administer justice," the legal basis of his authority remained deliberately vague. The only positive aspect was that they would no longer be required to pay hut-tax. Tainton, however, was pressured to contradict what he had actually said to Bikitsha. It was probably fear which made him change his statement, to avoid appearing as if he was trying to derail the wishes of the Governor. He now claimed that he had done his best to carry out Magistrate Edye's instructions as soon as he got them, to ensure that the removal of the amaMfengu was carried out to the letter.<sup>29</sup>



## University of Fort Hare

Surprisingly enough, although Chief Mavuso took the lead in questioning the conditions under which amaMfengu would relocate across the Kei, he himself never relocated there. Nor did most of the other prominent amaMfengu chiefs: Mabandla and Mhlambiso of Victoria East, or Njokweni and Matomela of Peddie. The main reason appears to be the warning they got from Walter Currie himself that, although they would continue to be British subjects, they would have to rely on their own strength in case King Sarhili turned hostile against them (which was very likely). Currie promised that the government would not turn a blind eye if King Sarhili attacked them, but it was clear to the chiefs that amaMfengu went to the Transkei at

---

<sup>29</sup> CO 3082: Tainton - Edye, 27 October 1865.

their own risk, as usual, to be a human buffer for the Colonial government. The so-called “protection” was conditional, as it were, provided the amaMfengu continued to defend the Colony against the amaXhosa. In any event, as we shall see, the Xhosa attack on the colony was never to materialize. AmaMfengu knew that their position was precarious in the sense that they were of diverse origins, and that to maintain the country bestowed upon them, they had to continue their friendship with the whites. The white government didn’t fail to pick up on this. Currie pointed out to the Colonial Secretary that the only unifying factor would be to give the amaMfengu a white “chief” who would ensure that they remained loyal to the colonial side. The slightest move towards Mfengu disintegration would give the amaXhosa a chance to devour them. Knowing this, they had no choice but to be on the government’s side.<sup>30</sup>



In spite of the reluctance of Chief Mavuso and others, Currie was not short of volunteers willing to cross the Kei. “As it is,” he reported on 28 July 1865, “I know not where to find country for the present applicants.”<sup>31</sup> Although this is not a complete list, the chiefs who relocated included Zazela, Nobanda, Katangana, Umbasa, Klaas Bangani, Falan, Hendrick Mazuka, Lamda, Qegu and Boy Tuguza from Fort Beaufort; Luzipho, Vuba, Sogoni, Mavi, Mqambela, Gube, Ncwana and Vuso from Victoria East; Zulu from Peddie, and Sobekwa from Oxkraal (Hewu).<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup>A14 - 67, Currie-Colonial Secretary, 28 July 1865. *Correspondence with Reference to the Principles, Conditions, and Detailed Arrangements on which the Fingo Exodus has been Carried Out*, pp. 5-6..

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>W.F. Liddle - Colonial Secretary, June 1865, A 14 – 67, *Correspondence with Reference to the Principles, Conditions, and Detailed Arrangements on which the Fingo Exodus has been Carried Out*, p.3; FA 3/1/31 C. Cobbe - Colonial Secretary, 15 August, 1865.

AmaMfengu strength in their new territory was equal in numbers to the combined forces of Gcaleka King Sarhili and Rharhabe Paramount Sandile. We must not lose sight of the fact that everything about the movement across the Kei had to look attractive so as to entice as many amaMfengu as possible to move. Governor Wodehouse replied on 25 July with all the answers to the concerns of the amaMfengu. As an incentive, the amaMfengu in the Transkei would not be required to pay hut tax and those in arrears with quitrent at their former homes were forgiven their debts.<sup>33</sup> Chiefs who relocated to the Transkei received salaries of £10 per annum whereas the salaries of those who remained behind were stopped.<sup>34</sup> This was done to discourage Mfengu chiefs from sending their subordinates across the Kei while yet still keeping possession of their lands in the Colony. In addition, those amaMfengu who retained their quitrent titles west of the Kei had to continue to pay on an annual basis, failing which their land could be sold by the Government. This just shows how desperate the Colonial Government was for the amaMfengu to occupy King Sarhili's territory.

Once Sarhili and the amaGcaleka had returned to the coastal lands between the Mbashe and the Kei, it became urgent for the Colonial Government to occupy the remainder of his former territory with their own allies. The "Emigrant Thembu" began their move to the upper part in April 1865, and the amaMfengu in May. Under the

---

<sup>33</sup> FA 2/1/1 Colonial Secretary - Superintendent of Natives, 27 March 1867.

<sup>34</sup> FA 3/1/31: C. Cobbe - Colonial Secretary 15 August, 1865.

energetic supervision of Walter Currie, assisted by Veldtman Bikitsha, the Mfengu settlement was completed by September. The locations of the different chiefdoms were demarcated by Currie himself who rode across the country pointing out boundaries to the chiefs and headmen. On 25 August 1865, Currie reported that the locating of the amaMfengu in the Transkei had been accomplished.

Approximately 40,000 were expected to move there by the end of 1865.<sup>35</sup> Some were already in occupation to deal with any opposition on the part of the amaXhosa who might not be happy with their arrival. He also reported all the infrastructure he had prepared in the Transkei – outspans, a police station, a Wesleyan school, a commonage for grazing, a ferry and a Public house for the accommodation of white travellers. He reserved forests for further disposal, awaiting the approval of the Governor, as well as giving licenses to traders and surveyors.<sup>36</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
Together in Excellence

The senior official in this new “Transkei” territory was the veteran official, J.C. Warner, whose son Ebenezer Warner was responsible for the Emigrant Thembu, with William Fynn as the Diplomatic Agent with Sarhili. Rather than appointing a superintendant familiar to them, an English gentleman named Captain Charles Cobbe was placed over the amaMfengu with the title, “Fingo Agent.”<sup>37</sup> Before departing, on 21 August, Currie convened a meeting of about 200 Mfengu chiefs and headmen to introduce them to the government officials they would work with. He

---

<sup>35</sup>According to a census of 1874, the eventual figure was lower than 40,000. The census counted 6,000 married men, and 8,000 “huts” Saunders, p.14, fn. 97.

<sup>36</sup>A14-67, *Correspondence with Reference to the Principles, Conditions, and Detailed Arrangements on which the Fingo Exodus has been Carried Out*. W. Currie – Colonial Secretary, 25 August 1865, pp. 6-7.

<sup>37</sup> F. Brownlee, p.7.

took the opportunity to give the amaMfengu Instructions and Regulations for their new country. The following were some of these Regulations:<sup>38</sup>

1. That the Magistrate of the country to be the paramount Chief thereof, subject, however, to the British Resident.
2. The Chief or Headman of each location to select from among his people a council to assist him [as a] Jury in settling trifling cases; such council first to be approved by the Magistrate. Serious cases to be brought before the magistrate for settlement;
3. The people of each location to be held responsible, collectively, for all spoors of stolen property traced to their location – when no proof can be brought against any particular kraal or kraals the people of the whole location to be held liable for any penalty incurred, but should there be sufficient proof against any particular kraal or kraals, such kraal or kraals alone to be liable.
4. In cases of theft from the Colony, the thief or thieves must be, if possible, apprehended and handed over to the magistrate to be dealt with according to Criminal Law.
5. The individual residents of each location and kraal to be held collectively responsible for the acts of its individual members.
6. All disputes between Chiefs and Headmen or Residents of different locations to be brought before and settled by the magistrate.
7. The Magistrate may [approach] any Chief or Headman to assist him in the investigation or settlement of any matter or for any purpose he may think proper – such Chief or Headman to be bound to attend under a penalty.
8. All Fines levied in 'Civil Cases' to go to the party in whose favour the judgement is given, subject to deduction of costs and expenses incurred.
9. The Chief or Headman of each location to be bound to take possession of stray livestock found within his location and to forward the same without delay to the Magistrate. His neglecting to do so, subject him to a penalty.

---

<sup>38</sup>A14-67, Memorandum, 21 August 1867, *Correspondence with Reference to the Principles, Conditions, and Detailed Arrangements on which the Fingo Exodus has been Carried Out*.pp.7-8.

10. No Chief or Headman of a location, unless with the sanction of the Magistrate to allow any persons other than Fingoes to settle or reside in his location.

Currie went on to lecture the amaMfengu about everything the colonial government had done for them and how beneficial it had been for them to live in the colony for more than thirty years. It must be borne in mind that to the colonial authorities, “civilized” and law abiding amaMfengu meant a peaceful frontier, which is why they had to be reminded that it would be unbecoming of them to return to their old, warlike ways, and that, thanks only to the Government, they now returned to Transkei as a rich, educated and industrious people, much loaded with livestock. Their children had been educated along European lines and they had also acquired ploughs to pursue agricultural ventures. It is clear from Currie’s speech that the colonial authorities expected something in return from the amaMfengu – quid pro quo! As long as the amaMfengu listened to their White superiors and as long as they united against their common enemy, the amaXhosa, everything would be just fine. What better way to apply divide and rule than to remind the amaMfengu that the amaXhosa were nothing but a ticking time bomb, waiting for the least mistake by the amaMfengu as an excuse to come down on them like vultures to devour them! Currie ended his speech by wishing them luck in their new country, but emphasizing that, if they wanted to keep their new country their loyalty to the colonial government should be unailing.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> FA .8/1: Address by Sir Walter Currie to a gathering of amaMfengu at Tonguana, 21 August 1865.

Charles Cobbe was appointed as “Fingo Agent” with an annual salary of £200 and forage allowance of £50 pounds.<sup>40</sup>It was his duty to go around his entire district once a month and to visit the British Resident in Idutywa once a quarter. He found this too challenging – the district was vast, he had to take a servant, carry stationery, blankets, etc – and he felt that his allowance was not enough. He also complained about the shortage of staff to carry messages and post, shortage of money to pay chiefs and headmen like Nobanda from Healdtown, Fodin from Alice, Zulu from Peddie and Sobekwa from Oxkraal.<sup>41</sup>In another post, Captain Cobbe voiced his concern that a cheque for the payment of some amaMfengu Chiefs, Headmen, messengers and interpreter, was not enough. He cited the names of the amaMfengu affected, and stated that the cheque was inadequate to cover the payments of all of them.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

He was, however, more successful in sorting the problems arising from the fact that the amaMfengu in the Transkei were not issued with “certificates of citizenship.” The amaMfengu had been, however, promised that “arrangements” would be made if they needed to visit the Colony.<sup>42</sup> In December 1867, therefore, Cobbe was authorized to issue passes to amaMfengu entering the Colony under the provisions of Act No.22 of 1867. He, however, had to screen the individuals before granting the passes, to ascertain that their entering the Colony was lawful. He had, in addition, to

---

<sup>40</sup> FA 2/1/1: Colonial Secretary to C. Cobbe, 26 August 1865.

<sup>41</sup> FA 3/1/3/1: C. Cobbe to the British Resident, 24 March, 7 April 1865

<sup>42</sup>FA 8/1 Governor – CC Grahamstown, 25 July 1865.



keep a register of all the persons who had been granted passes, with all their particulars.<sup>43</sup>

Another problem for Cobbe was the presence of amaGcaleka on the Mfengu border, probably fearing that friendship might develop between these two peoples. He saw red when he became aware that some of the people at Butterworth Mission openly referred to themselves as Sarhili's subjects. Cobbe lost no time in writing to Rev Longden, the station missionary, that, as long as people stayed at the Station, an area demarcated for amaMfengu, they would be treated as such. If they were dissatisfied they should leave the station.<sup>44</sup> The contents of this letter were reiterated to W. Fynn, the British Agent with Sarhili, and to the Colonial Secretary.



The colonial government lacked any legal basis for enforcing their authority over the amaMfengu. It therefore capitalized on the jealousy with which the different nations that settled in the Transkei viewed one another, and the fact that each chief wished to retain the good will of the government. In addition, the chiefs valued the allowances they were receiving from the government. Benefits like these sustained the authority of the British Resident, making it possible for him to issue orders, albeit with discretion. The salaries of the Transkeian Chiefs were paid conditionally, and

---

<sup>43</sup> FA 2/1/1: Colonial Secretary – C. Cobbe, 26 December 1867.

<sup>44</sup> FA 3/1/3/1: C. Cobbe - Rev. Longden, 13 April 1866; A14-67, *Correspondence with Reference to the Principles, Conditions, and Detailed Arrangements on which the Fingo Exodus has been Carried Out*, C. Cobbe-Col. Sec, 14 April 1866, pp. 14-15

there is a good example of a headman's £10 stipend stopped in October 1867 because of an offence he had committed.<sup>45</sup> Although customary law was used to settle disputes amongst the amaMfengu, Cobbe was uncertain how to put his foot down when the amaMfengu refused to recognize his authority. All he could do was request J.C. Warner, the British Resident to back him up in case of need. The same applied to some land squabble about a piece of land claimed by Sarhili, concerning which a solution was arrived at by the British Resident.<sup>46</sup>

AmaMfengu chiefs and headmen were expected to comply with government regulations and to keep their fellow countrymen under strict surveillance, but, since they were not all traditional leaders, the amaMfengu were not always ready to obey. Under these circumstances, the Mfengu Agents often abused their powers, as shown in one case where Chief Jama apparently did not comply with some order issued by the Agent and the Governor himself had to block the Agent's attempts to compel amaMfengu to attend a particular Church, or force their children to attend school.<sup>47</sup> Since the headmen were on the government payroll, the government was always able to replace them with someone who was more ready to comply with colonial expectations in terms of keeping order in the locations. That is why Charles Brownlee, the Secretary for Native Affairs, saw red when he heard that some Mfengu headmen were frequenting canteens. He immediately communicated with the Agent

---

<sup>45</sup> FA 2/1/1 Colonial Secretary - Superintendent of Natives, 16 October 1867

<sup>46</sup> FA 3/1/3/1: C. Cobbe to W. Fynn, 13 April 1866.

<sup>47</sup> FA 2/1/1: Colonial Secretary - Agent, 19 November 1870.

and directed him to report any headman passing his time in canteens instead of performing his duties. He pointed out that the use of liquor resulted in incompetence in work and rendered them “ unfit to receive orders from the magistrates...”. As if he was a parent speaking to children, Brownlee threatened to demote any headman degrading himself by liquor, as they were supposed to be exemplary to their fellow country-men. The use of strong liquor at social gatherings was also discouraged. To make sure that no chiefs or headmen pleaded ignorance of this notice, Brownlee had it translated into isiXhosa and published in Lovedale’s *Kaffir Express* newspaper, which was distributed to the missionaries and headmen through the Resident Agent.<sup>48</sup>



While he was the Mfengu Agent, Cobbe was forever uncertain as to the extent and nature of his authority over the amaMfengu of the Transkei. Indeed, the same uncertainty applied also to the other British agents in Emigrant Thembuland and the Idutywa Reserve. The bottom line was that the British Government had, for the time being, refused to annex the lands east of the Kei River, and the British agents were thus entirely without any power or legal authority. The situation was summed up as follows by the Colonial Secretary Richard Southey:<sup>49</sup>

The British Officers employed (in Transkei) should be perfectly aware that they possess no authority in the legal sense of the word, derived from the British Government inasmuch as Her Majesty’s Government have deliberately determined to relinquish the possession they had obtained of that country. The authority of the British officers must therefore strictly speaking be derived altogether from the chiefs and the people with whom they dwell ...But although it is right that these officers should themselves

---

<sup>48</sup> FA, Vol.2/1/3: Secretary for Native Affairs (Cape Town)- Fingo Agent 13 September 1873.

<sup>49</sup> R. Southey – British Resident (J.C. Warner), 6 November 1866, quoted in F. Brownlee, p. 8.

correctly appreciate their position, it by no means follows that they should bring this circumstance prominently into notice, and thus lower their own influence in dealing with the natives.’

This remarkable letter highlights the fraud practiced by the colonial government on the amaMfengu and other African allies such as the Emigrant Thembu. Among themselves, the officials admitted that they had no legal authority except that delegated to them by the chiefs. But, on the other hand, the Colonial Secretary gave them the green light to conceal that vital fact from the people themselves. That the Transkei amaMfengu were not under the authority of Britain was made crystal clear when Captain Cobbe reported a case of “insubordination” by some Mfengu Chiefs, including Chief Nkwenkwezi, to the British Resident. The Colonial Secretary explained that because the British Government never intended to take possession of the Transkei territory, amaMfengu living there were free of British law and authority, hence the British officials in that territory had to maintain harmonious relations with its African residents by influence alone.<sup>50</sup> In fact, it had not taken long for amaMfengu to discover that the officials stationed with them lacked any authority over them. Captain Cobbe, who did not speak isiXhosa, was unable to cope with this situation, and was withdrawn in May 1869 to make way for the much more capable Captain Matthew Blyth.

---

<sup>50</sup> FA 8/1: Southey-Warner, 7 October 1868.

## ***Economic Prosperity under Magistrate Blyth***

Captain Blyth very soon proved himself an able and very influential administrator who was seemingly much loved by the amaMfengu. Under Blyth's direction as "Fingo Agent" (1869-1876), "Fingoland" stabilized and reached the peak of prosperity described by Professor Colin Bundy in his famous book, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (1979).<sup>51</sup> The arrival of amaMfengu from Peddie, Victoria East and King William's Town brought a remarkable economic change across the Kei River. They quickly demonstrated the same agricultural potential that they had displayed in the Cape Colony. Within a short space of time much land was under cultivation in Butterworth and the Tsomo area, not to mention the wool production, as most amaMfengu re-entered Transkei territory as a sheep-rearing peasants. Very soon, the products of the hunt were overtaken by sheep, cattle and grain.<sup>52</sup> Their familiarity with Gcalekaland conditions, which they had gained as clients in Hints's country, was supplemented by the technical experience they gained by mixing with the white colonists after 1835. This developed in them a sense of independence, and the ability to adapt innovative ways of acquiring wealth. They had taken advantage of the Xhosa cattle killing to acquire capital by buying cattle cheaply and selling surplus food to the survivors. Blyth reported in 1872 that the amaMfengu were taking many wagonloads of corn to the Gcaleka and Thembu districts, and selling them there in exchange for cattle and sheep. By 1873 the amaMfengu

---

<sup>51</sup> Bundy, *Rise*, pp.69-83; The decline of the "Fingoland" peasants is described in C. Bundy, "The Transkei Peasantry, c.1890-1914: 'Passing through a Period of Stress,'" in R. Palmer and N. Parsons, *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1977), pp.201-220. The political implications are discussed in W. Beinart and C. Bundy, *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), especially Chapters 2 and 4.

<sup>52</sup> Bundy, *Rise*, p. 57.

population of about 44,000 owned some 440 wagons, about 2,000 families owned ploughs, while 182,000 sheep were grazed.<sup>53</sup> Under these prosperous circumstances, they were easily able to pay a “hut tax” of ten shillings a year from 1873 onwards, providing colonial revenue that exceeded the costs of their administration.<sup>54</sup> They also contributed £4,500 towards the establishment of an Industrial Institution comparable to Lovedale, which they named Blythwood in Blyth’s honor.<sup>55</sup> Under Blyth’s guidance as “Chief Magistrate of Transkei” from 1882 onwards, the amaMfengu also voluntarily paid hut tax towards a “ Fingoland District Fund, ” which was used for the maintenance of Butterworth hospital, the construction and repair of roads, and public works chosen by a committee of magistrates and headmen.<sup>56</sup> When Blyth died in 1889, amaMfengu collected an amount of £690, of which £150 pounds was used to erect a memorial and the remainder was given to Mrs Blyth.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

By 1873 amaMfengu had progressed both materially and educationally in the Transkei that the Home Government had to express its satisfaction. They had, of course, to be reminded who their patrons in civilization were. To show their appreciation of amaMfengu progress, the home government expressed their willingness to establish a high school in the Transkei for the educational advancement of amaMfengu and their posterity. This was the future Blythwood.<sup>57</sup> It

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.71.

<sup>54</sup> Saunders, pp. 41-42.

<sup>55</sup> F. Brownlee, p.9 (For a full profile of Captain Blyth, see *Christian Express*, XIX, August 1, 1889.).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p.15.

<sup>57</sup> Ayliff and Whiteside, p. 81. (in 1886, however, the Government withdrew its grant to Blythwood, whereupon amaMfengu contributed some funds to ensure that this institution would continue its operations (*Isigidimi samaXhosa*, November 1, 1887.).

must be understood, however, that the government did not go out of its way to do things for these people as a goodwill gesture, for there was always a hidden agenda, a catch somewhere. Government benefits always came with conditions attached, but the conditions were stated so nicely that amaMfengu interpreted them as praises. Yet, they were to be forever bound to the Colonial Government – as loyal subjects of the government - killing any chances of friendship developing between them and their sister nation, the amaXhosa!

### ***Aftermath***

Once established in “Fingoland,” the amaMfengu were free to move into the lands beyond the Mbashe, then known as the St John’s Territory, especially if they were granted permission by the Resident Agent and had paid their hut tax.<sup>58</sup> The colonial government wished no restrictions to be placed on any people wishing to move as they wanted the entire territory between the Cape and Natal occupied by people who were loyal to the government and willing to pay taxes. They therefore hoped that the amaMfengu would smooth their path. It was not long, however, before imperial expansion was again interrupted by African resistance.

After Blyth was transferred to East Griqualand, James Ayliff, the son of the missionary John Ayliff, was appointed as Magistrate. It was during his term of office that the enmity between the amaGcaleka and the amaMfengu erupted into what

---

<sup>58</sup> FA 2/1/1: Secretary of Native Affairs - Fingo Agent, 11 June 1875; FA 2/1/2 Secretary for Native Affairs - Fingo Agent, 28 June 1875.



came to be known as the 'War of Ngcayechibi'. The immediate cause was a quarrel over beer at Ngcayechibi's place near the Mfengu-Gcaleka border, but the underlying cause was the border itself, the amaGcaleka never having accepted the loss of their land following the Nongqawuse catastrophe of 1858. The quarrel escalated into a full-scale war as the colonial government backed the amaMfengu whereas the amaRharhabe under Sandile backed their close relatives, the amaGcaleka. By March 1878, as was inevitable, the amaGcaleka were crushed by the British army and King Sarhili was driven into exile in Bomvanaland on the other side of the Mbashe River.<sup>59</sup>

The final defeat of the amaGcaleka enabled the rationalization of "Fingoland". In September 1878, Fingoland was combined with Idutywa and Gcalekaland to establish a new Chief Magistracy of Transkei, headed by Captain Blyth. The Mfengu part was sub-divided into the three districts of Ngqamakhwe, Tsomo and Butterworth, which remained as such until the new demarcations that followed the democratic dispensation of 1994. In order to keep King Sarhili out of it, part of Willowvale district, the area around Fort Malan, was peopled with amaMfengu, yet again performing their historic function as a buffer zone to the colonial state. A similar process repeated itself a few years later with the Gun War of Lesotho and Hope's War of amaMpondomise, supported also by many abaThembu. That is,

---

<sup>59</sup> The most detailed discussion of the causes and results of the War of Ngcayechibi (Ninth Frontier War) is still that of M.W. Spicer, "The War of Ngcayechibi, (M.A. thesis, Rhodes University, 1978).

however, a long and complex story, involving several new factors and stakeholders, and we cannot enter into it here.<sup>60</sup>

At this juncture, it is appropriate that Professor Stapleton's hypothesis about the identity of the amaMfengu, as portrayed in his article on the amaMfengu "Exodus" of 1865, be looked at more closely, similar to what has been done with the "Webster Hypothesis" elsewhere in this work, so as to correct any errors made about this incident and these people.

### ***The Stapleton Hypothesis***



Professor Stapleton begins his work on a wrong footing by describing the amaMfengu as a "pseudo-ethnicity...created and manipulated by nineteenth-century colonial authorities". The various schools of South African history he refers to / quotes are very wrong to think that Tshaka was the immediate cause of the wars of Mfecane, my research proves that it was the killing of Mthimkhulu, King of amaHlubi, by Matiwane of amaNgwane that caused the abaMbo to flee their country and to eventually land with the amaXhosa in Gcalekaland, Transkei. It should be noted that not all the nations that ran away from the Natal region became amaMfengu, but only those who eventually landed in the Transkei. They were the ones who said, when asked who they were and where they came from, replied ... "siyamfenguza," from where the name 'amaMfengu' was derived.

---

<sup>60</sup> For further details, see Saunders, "Annexation of the Transkeian Territories."

The very first footnote of Stapleton's article renders it unreliable. He mentions Rev. Ayliff as having "recategorized" amaXhosa forced labour into [amaMfengu] and later on fabricated the "refugee" story... One may ask, how on earth would Rev. Ayliff know about the different nations he reported on? One tends to wonder if Dr Stapleton is aware that the different abaMbo nations Ayliff described in the Grahamstown Journal of 17 Sept 1835 even still exist today! One would agree that the Missionary Ayliff, having failed to convert the amaGcaleka of King Hintsa, he would turn to the new comers as fertile ground for the cultivation of his "Word" – hence his fabrication of the story about the enslavement of these people later on!

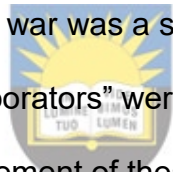


Whilst the Colonial – Webster hypothesis is correct about the fact that the Mfecane wars did not originate with Tshaka, as explained above, but, that it was a camouflage by the Cape Colonial government to raid the African communities in order to get slaves is ridiculous, to say the least. To get the Cape settlers slaves to the number of about 17000, which is the number of AmaMfengu that were brought over the Kei. Such a number of new African arrivals as laborers in the colony would mean they would outnumber the settler community, which in turn would result in the redundancy of the laborers/ slaves needed, now that there was a shortage of cheap labor caused by the emancipation of slaves within the British Empire.

Whilst Stapleton is worried about the Mfecane being incorporated into the history school textbooks and used, to quote Stapleton's opinion," to justify white supremacy by promoting the myth that... Shaka's Zulus had depopulated the land subsequently settled by the Afrikaner trekkers in the 1830s," the main concern for this writer is the fact that the Cobbing/ Webster/Stapleton's distorted view of the amaMfengu has taken the academic world by storm, disseminating incorrect information via books, journals and even the Internet to the present generation. There are grounds for fearing that the history of the the amaMfengu people might be lost forever unless these scholars are thoroughly refuted by scholarly research and the record is set straight. Fortunately, all is not lost. My research, which has made use of isiXhosa literature written by these people themselves about their history, with the aim of preserving it and not to get degrees, has managed to set the record straight about amaMfengu and their history. Their clan names and the names they give their children is living evidence of their existence and their origin. To quote just a few examples, within amaHlubi, there are girl names like Noma-Hlubi; No-Mbokazi; Mbokazi, these show their origin, just like the boy name, "Mahlubandile" – to show the amaHlubi nation. There is a village at Peddie called emaHlubini, the majority of the inhabitants of which are amaHlubi – the descendants of the amaHlubi who came to Peddie in 1835. One finds names like "Matiwane", Mangwane - descendants of amaNgwane of Matiwane. Names like "Thukela" (boy name), "NoThukela"(girl name) – indicate the origin of these people from the valleys of the Thukela River in the KZN region. There are girls' names like "Nomazizi," a Zizi; NomaBhele, a Bhele, these are the names derived from clan names – of all those nations that landed in King Hintsa's country. These names are one of the means by which the history of the

amaMfengu has been preserved. Cobbing, Webster, Stapleton and other scholars who fall in their camp would, of course, not have a clue about these names, as they do not have the necessary African language skills to understand them. They are writing just to get recognition, to the detriment of the people whose history they distort and mangle. It is hoped that this work has, in a scholarly way, managed to put the amaMfengu in their rightful place in the history of the Eastern Cape and that it has answered all the questions people have been asking about these people and their contribution in the Eastern Cape Historiography.

It seems hardly necessary to continue with the other egregious errors in Stapleton's article – e.g., his claim that the 1835 war was a slave/raiding campaign for the settlers, "Xhosa prisoners and collaborators" were brought over to the Cape as "Fingoes", to camouflage the enslavement of these people. He claims that Fingo identity was created to camouflage their enslavement.



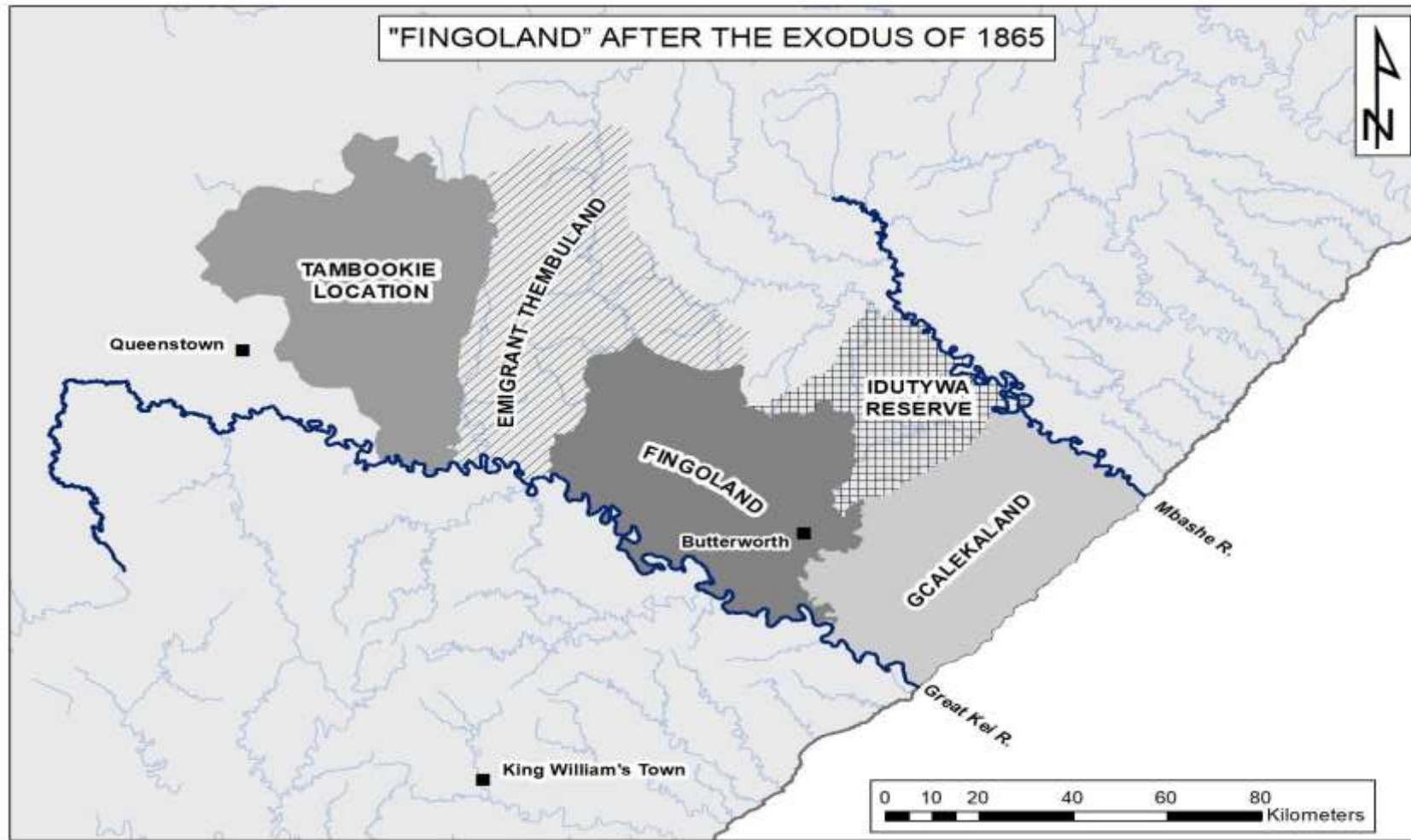
University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Even his discussion of the Mfengu Exodus of 1865 contains many mis-statements. He calls Chief Mavuso a "Headman" and a "paid colonial agent" (p.245), which was not the case. Stapleton has this obsession with Transkeian Fingoland, concluding that it was "created by both a colonial redesignation of a Gcaleka population and a forced removal of Fingoes from the Cape Colony," (p.235.) and that Fingoland itself was used as a "funnel" through which amaMfengu could re-enter the Colony as forced labor. He also misinterprets King Sandile's refusal to move to the Transkei (p.245.). Because the major hypotheses underlying Stapleton's argument are

incorrect - seeking to justify the nonexistence of the amaMengu and a denial of their identity - there is no point in continuing with a discussion of his article.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*



Map 4 : "Fingoland" after the Exodus of 1865



## CHAPTER FIVE: ALLIANCE AND REWARD

The amaMfengu have been viewed as collaborators with the white Colonial Government, primarily because of their role in the three frontier wars between 1846 (“War of the Axe”) and 1878 (“War of Ngcayechibi”). This chapter will look at the balance sheet of the alliance between the amaMfengu and the British Empire, which involved territorial gains by the amaMfengu but accompanied by a serious decline of their status due to the racist measures of the colonial government.



### **Overview**

The amaMfengu were drawn into the capitalist economic system almost as soon as they reached the colony from Gcalekaland in 1835. In addition to providing labor services to white settlers, they were already conducting business ventures whilst still in Gcalekaland, where they cultivated and sold tobacco. Added to this cumulative advantage was their role as allies or collaborators with the British in the Cape. The amaMfengu were more than just a buffer, they were active combatants during the wars of 1846-47 (War of the Axe), 1850-53 (War of Mlanjeni) and 1877-78 (War of Ngcayechibi). For their services they were rewarded abundantly in land. Apart from the original 1835 grant in the Ceded Territory (Peddie, Victoria East and Whittlesea districts), by 1857 amaMfengu had also received territory in the King Williams Town district, including Keiskammahoek and in the Wittebergen Reserve (later Herschel

District). In 1865 they were granted "Fingoland" (the magisterial districts of Butterworth, Idutywa, Ngqamakhwe and Tsomo in the Transkei), amounting to about 45 per cent of the former Gcaleka territory, as well as a good portion of "East Griqualand" (Tsolo, Qumbu, Mount Fletcher and Matatiele). In addition to these "communal" grants, individuals and smaller groups were found in every frontier town and on smaller holdings on mission stations and elsewhere, in all forms of enterprises - trade, transport and agriculture. <sup>1</sup>

The colonial government could not have successfully subjugated the amaXhosa had they not been assisted by the amaMfengu. Yet the Mfengu contribution was given very scant recognition, all the victory being attributed to the superiority of the British armies and their armaments. This omission, however, is understandable, given the egocentrism of the British Government and the colonists. There was a mixed feeling about the participation of the amaMfengu on the side of the English. Some colonists did not want to recognize the contribution of amaMfengu to the victory in the frontier wars, saying they were a liability more than an asset. This probably emanated from the difference in the fighting tactics of these two different nations. While, on the one hand, the British were used to the conventional, disciplined and fixed way of fighting, this was not exactly effective in a dense forest, the preferred field of battle for the amaXhosa. On the other hand, the amaMfengu were quite at home with guerrilla-type warfare, a scenario which did not require rigid discipline or rules. Hence the English army officers were sometimes put off when their "assistants", their "native

---

<sup>1</sup>Bundy, *Rise*, pp. 34-35.

foreigners,” “mercenaries” – as the amaMfengu were sometimes referred to by the colonists - defied all rules and fought their own way, and successfully. Some colonists were against the amaMfengu getting any kind of reward after the war, claiming that fighting on the side of the English was compensation on its own, as this ensured they would not again be “enslaved “by the amaXhosa.<sup>2</sup>

The colonists resented their dependence on the amaMfengu to repel the amaXhosa. Giving them their due would be tantamount to admitting to their own military inadequacy on the one hand and on the other it would give the amaMfengu reason to believe that they were more skilled warriors than the colonists on the battlefield. It would also give them the right to vie for better land with the colonists after every war, as both these nations were land hungry. Some Cape governors, especially Governor Cathcart, did not share these sentiments because, after witnessing the amaMfengu prowess in battle, they had become convinced that the amaMfengu were better at preventing the amaXhosa infiltration of the Colony than either whites or “Coloureds” (Khoikhoi). The amaMfengu could, however, not get recognized for their own military accomplishments, due to their lack of fluency in English. For this they depended on white spokesmen who, naturally, did not do justice to their achievements. The British army officers, who, by virtue of their superiority, made no effort to communicate with amaMfengu soldiers, often deliberately overlooked their accomplishments. This would possibly explain why these gallant amaMfengu soldiers were oftentimes overzealous in battle. They wanted to get the attention

---

<sup>2</sup>Moyer, ‘Self-Defence,’ p.105.

of the English officers and make them take note of how good they were and, in the process, make them see the extent to which the amaMfengu were indispensable to any colonial victory.<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to note the way the British interpreted the motives of the amaMfengu in fighting against the amaXhosa – they are depicted as showing no mercy to the injured, nor did they believe in taking captives. This was attributed by the British to the deep - rooted Mfengu hatred of amaXhosa, dating back to their sojourn in Gcalekaland prior to 1835. This attitude to war and lack of mercy - [as if there is ever any mercy in a war!] is described as their “bloodthirstiness.”<sup>4</sup> But there can be no discrimination when it comes to war - guns, soldiers, volleys – all these are “bloodthirsty.” Victory in a war is determined by the number of casualties and the severity of destruction, the more casualties and devastation, the more of a victory and one never speaks of a black or a white victory, just victory! What about the scorched earth policy the British soldiers were so fond of! Does it portray mercy or care for human life? As Kawa puts it, “a White man will always be a White man!”<sup>5</sup>

The fact of the matter is that the whites did not trust the loyalty of the amaMfengu, which is why they ensured that they were normally not armed with guns for fear that

---

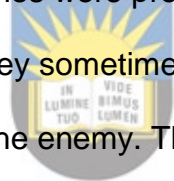
<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp. 102-3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Kawa, p. 47.

they might change their allegiance to the amaXhosa, or, be in a position to attack the colony. At the beginning of the 1846-47 war, very few amaMfengu were armed.

The *Grahamstown Journal* of 4 April 1846 stated, for example, that Thackwray's Mfengu levy had no guns distributed to them, and that the few guns they had were their own property. There were the names of 130 amaMfengu who were capable of using guns and were registered, but even these were not issued with firearms. When Lieutenant- Governor Hare heard that the Mfengu levy was being trained in the use of firearms, he told its commander that it was too dangerous to allow amaMfengu to use guns lest they turn against the colony and join the amaXhosa. When amaMfengu were organized to accompany the troops to scour dense forests, in Oliphants Hoek for example, no clothes were provided as a uniform to show they were part of the army. No wonder they sometimes complained that white soldiers sometimes fired at them instead of the enemy. They were simply told that their physical resemblance was far too similar – very convenient!



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

To render them even more unequal to white soldiers, ammunition was rationed to amaMfengu only in very small quantities.<sup>6</sup> These were all endeavours to kill their confidence in their fighting capabilities, so that they would not claim any contribution in any victory against the amaXhosa. This just shows the determination of the whites to keep their superiority over amaMfengu, to keep them in their place, so to speak, so that they dare not think there could never be a white victory against the amaXhosa without their assistance. Yet the truth is that it is doubtful whether the

---

<sup>6</sup>Moyer, "Self-Defence," pp.103-4, 107.

British could have won any of those frontier wars without Mfengu support. On the contrary, the continued assimilation of amaMfengu and amaXhosa which was proceeding in Gcalekaland before the divide and rule tactics exercised by Ayliff in the name of Christianity, would have been very devastating for the British, totally changing the history of the Eastern Cape in particular and South Africa in general.

Some aspects of the triangular amaMfengu - amaXhosa - British relations remain a puzzle. Richard Moyer has summarised some of the many questions surrounding why the amaMfengu fought for the British side. He begins by acknowledging the kindness with which the amaMfengu were received in Gcalekaland, pointing out that although it is indeed true that they fought against the amaXhosa, this did not arise out of vengeance, as Ayliff maintained, or treachery, as the amaXhosa believed, but because they were lured by the whites to think that they would be better off out of King Hintsa's country, that they would have land of their own, rule themselves and not be subordinate to anybody; in short, that they would again become the independent nations they had formerly been back in their own country at the Thukela.<sup>7</sup> If there is anything white people are good at, it is playing people who belong together against each other - this is where their power lies. One can go anywhere around the world, people have fought for hegemony, for complete independence and freedom, and if one has tasted freedom before and at a later stage was subjected to subordination or subjugation of any kind, one will seize any opportunity that will return one's former independence. This was exactly the state of

---

<sup>7</sup> Kawa, pp. 46-47.

affairs with the amaMfengu. The missionary John Ayliff, who orchestrated this whole thing,(in that he cultivated in the amaMfengu the idea that they would be given land unconditionally and live as independent nations once more, if they moved out of Gcalekaland), knew everything about amaMfengu and their background, so he used them as leverage against King Hintsa and his people in retaliation for his failure to convert the amaGcaleka to Christianity. Moreover, the amaMfengu saw themselves as in every way equal to the colonists, in terms of having the same aspirations and needs. They therefore fought for the same reasons as any other subjects of Queen Victoria, in their case to acquire wealth in the form of land and cattle Thus, amaMfengu's insatiable hunger for land of their own is what made war a bearable pain for them - as for loss of life, well, casualties are always part of any war!



In Chapter XIV of *Ibali lamaMfengu*, R.T. Kawa gives a detailed narrative of the participation and contribution of the amaMfengu in the Frontier Wars of 1846, 1850 and 1877. They did not participate to the same extent during the 1834-5 Frontier War. After crossing the Kei to Peddie, about five hundred armed amaMfengu fought on the side of the British, mostly in the forests of the Amathole Mountains, thus preventing the capture of cattle by the amaXhosa and ensuring the distribution of food to the army camps.<sup>8</sup>They later joined their countrymen in the neighbourhood of Fort Peddie. Situated half-way between Grahamstown and King William's Town, as well as about half-way between the Great Fish River and the Keiskamma River,

---

<sup>8</sup>Kawa, p. 54.

Peddie was of great strategic importance and has been described as the “cockpit of the struggle for land and cattle between the [black nations] and the Colony.”

It became critical when Governor D’Urban’s annexations were reversed by the British Government in London. The amaXhosa were given back their land between the Keiskamma and the Fish Rivers, confining the colonial presence to Fort Peddie and its vicinity. Established in 1835 and named after its commanding officer,<sup>9</sup> the main function of Fort Peddie was to protect the amaMfengu from the surrounding black nations, whose land they occupied and who were their potential enemies. During the time of the Glenelg-Stockenstrom Treaty System (1835-1846), Peddie served as a base for the diplomatic agents J.M. Bowker (1835-1839) and Theophilus Shepstone (1839-1845) who were responsible for keeping the peace between the amaMfengu and their Xhosa neighbors, especially the amaGqunukhwebe, amaNdlambe and amaMbalu. There were no white settlers at this stage, and it was only after the war of 1846-47 that Peddie district was made available for white colonists to purchase as farms.

### ***The War of the Axe***

By the end of 1845, the Glenelg - Stockenstrom Treaty System was losing its grip.<sup>10</sup> The extreme settlers, determined to reinstate D’Urban’s annexations, in 1845 incited

---

<sup>9</sup>PR 896, Cory Library. *Evening Post*, 27 August 1960; J.B. Bullock (ed.), *Peddie: Settlers’ Outpost* (Grahamstown: Grocott and Sherry, 1960)

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed discussion of the breakdown of the Treaty System, see Peires, *Phalo*, pp.127-134.



Governor Maitland to revise the treaties in their own favour. At the same time, Phatho, the powerful chief of the amaGqunukhwebe Xhosa, was growing increasingly discontented with the presence of amaMfengu in his neighborhood. When his younger brother, Kama, converted to Christianity and moved away from the colonial boundary, Diplomatic Agent Shepstone allocated his ground to Chief Njokweni of amaZizi for the better protection of the passes and fords over the Fish River. The decision was questioned by Phatho because, as the senior chief of the amaGqunukhwebe, that land should have accrued to his territory following Kama's departure. Letting Phatho occupy the land in question was definitely not an option as far as the colonial government was concerned, infuriating Phatho to such an extent that he welcomed war as providing a much-awaited opportunity to vent his anger and frustrations against the amaMfengu.<sup>11</sup>



War was finally sparked in 1846 when a certain Tsili allegedly stole an axe at Fort Beaufort.<sup>12</sup> Tsili's friends rescued him by cutting off the hand of a Khoi to whom he was handcuffed. When the Khoi died from excessive bleeding, the young Rharhabe King Sandile refused to hand over the perpetrators, thereby triggering the "War of the Axe." It should, however, be understood that the war was not caused by the stealing of an axe or anything else, but it was fought over land, like the wars which had been fought before it, hence the amaXhosa originally called it 'the War of the

---

<sup>11</sup>Cape Archives. LG 407, T. Shepstone, Resident Agent Peddie – H. Hudson, Agent-General, 14 May 1843; LG 408, Shepstone – Hudson, 24 July 1843.

<sup>12</sup>J. Appleyard, *The War of the Axe and the Xhosa Bible*, ed J. Frye (Cape Town: Struik, 1971)pp. 35-6.

Boundary,' or," *imfazwe yeGwatyu*" after the famous "*ingoma*" which was composed at the time.<sup>13</sup> Military operations commenced when the colonial army marched on Sandile's Great Place near Burns Hill. Their efforts ended in disaster when the amaXhosa successfully ambushed the colonial ammunition wagons, gaining immense booty, raising their fighting spirit and inspiring many more Xhosa chiefs to join the war. <sup>14</sup>

Prominent among these was Chief Phatho who attacked the amaMfengu at Bhirha near Peddie on 30 April 1846. Indeed he "immediately ordered his followers to attack Peddie and kill every Mfengu in that and their own district."<sup>15</sup> In this case at least, it is clear that the amaMfengu were fighting a defensive war which they did not start, fighting only to defend the land they had been given.<sup>16</sup> AmaMfengu requested assistance from the British at Peddie, but it took the Dragoons and the Cape Mounted Rifles more than two hours to arrive, and even then, they did nothing more than fire a few shots before returning to the safety of the fort. The only explanation given of this failure to assist the amaMfengu was that the ground was unsuitable for horses, and that the men and horses were already tired from a long march.

Something similar happened on 28 May 1846 when Fort Peddie was attacked by 7,000 amaXhosa. On that occasion, the British commander invited all the whites inside the fort and closed the gates, leaving the amaMfengu, led by chiefs Matomela and Fundakubi Njokweni, outside to defend themselves and their cattle against the

---

<sup>13</sup> Peires, *Phalo*, p.134.

<sup>14</sup>MS. 15,543, Cory Library. J. Ayliff, 'Brief sketch,' 7 November 1853.

<sup>15</sup> Moyer, 'Self-Defence,' p.111.

<sup>16</sup> Kawa, pp. 54-55.

attackers.<sup>17</sup> In spite of this, amaMfengu obediently joined the British forces to defeat the amaXhosa in the battle of the Mgwangqa, where young Mdingi, grandson of Zita and the most senior of all the Zizi Chiefs, was killed.

The fact that amaMfengu were left to do their own fighting, makes it clear that the colonial forces were not prepared or willing to assist them. This should have opened their eyes as to the unfaithfulness of the White government - their so-called protector as British subjects - but, in addition to any potential rewards, they were so obsessed with proving their worth, that they continued fighting on the British side right up to the end of that war, as well as those which followed later. Never did they ever manifest the least reluctance to proceed to any point of danger to which they were ordered. They did a remarkable job defending the settler capital of Graham's Town, although they were always put in the most dangerous positions. For example, they guarded Graham's Town at night, while the white sentries guarded during the day. In the words of George Cyrus, their Superintendent, they performed these duties "without flinching and with success, and had it not been for their assistance the Colony would have been in a most deplorable state." AmaMfengu also performed intelligence work, checking the exact position of amaXhosa in the dense Kowie bush near Graham's Town, thereby enabling the British army to surprise the enemy. British officers like Commandant Somerset and Colonel Johnstone confirmed that the town's safety depended on the amaMfengu and praised them for their effective service.<sup>18</sup> In so many places, some as far west as Tsitsikamma and

---

<sup>17</sup> Moyer, 'Self-Defence,' p.112. The battle is also described in Appleyard's journal, pp.63-64.

<sup>18</sup>MS.15 543, Cory Library: Ayliff, 'Brief sketch.'

Cradock, the amaMfengu put up a heroic fight, even though they were denied the use of firearms. Captain Hogge, their commander at Mnyameni (Alexandria) stated that he “never saw such active men in the bush like the [amaMfengu] and he could sooner keep back a pack of hounds when on the pursuit of the enemy”, a compliment which R.T. Kawa approved and translated as “*Andizange ndibabone abantu ababukali ngoluhlobo ehlatini. Babefana namabaku xa besukela utshaba.*”<sup>19</sup>

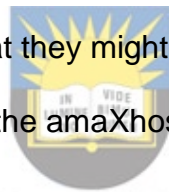
The first Mfengu levies were created under white officers and the missionaries encouraged them to enlist in these levies. Later the whites realized that the levies would be more successful if carried out by their traditional leaders, and the sons of chiefs were also recruited as officers. Some Mfengu officers lacked royal blood but were appointed on account of previous experience amongst whites and their ability to speak a European language. The most prominent of these was Veldtman Bikitsha, a Zizi of the Jama clan, who played such a significant role in the Wars of the Axe (1846-47), Mlanjeni (1850-53) and Ngcayechibi (1879). After the Mfengu exodus of 1865 Bikitsh became a headman in Zazulwana, near Butterworth, living there till his death in 1910. In 1889 Bikitsha visited England and was invited to a Gala dinner at the Royal Palace, where he sat at the same table as Queen Victoria and other elegant Englishmen.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Kawa, p. 56.

<sup>20</sup> Kawa, pp. 110 – 111; Ayliff and Whiteside, pp. 73-75.

AmaMfengu fought bravely in all the battles they were engaged in, recapturing their own cattle raided by the amaXhosa, but also preventing the amaXhosa from taking colonial cattle. In fact, they protected the frontier in every way possible, taking over much of the intelligence and guide work, which had previously been performed by the Khoikhoi. The whites were obviously using the amaMfengu, and studying all the time their fighting skills. Whenever the location of battle looked dangerous, the amaMfengu would be sent to the front - fighting in thick forests was reserved for them, as well as scouring forests searching for the amaXhosa and cattle. It would appear, however, that though they did their best to prove their loyalty, some whites did not have complete faith in them, which is why it took so much time before Governor Maitland trusted them enough to issue them with guns. Even then, their ammunition was rationed, for fear that they might trade the guns with the amaXhosa, or, that the guns would be taken by the amaXhosa when amaMfengu were killed or, worse, changed their allegiance.<sup>21</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Switching their allegiance, however, was the last thing on their minds, as there was nothing they would gain by that, whereas, siding with the English meant having a share in the booty. Besides, they did not see any prospects of the amaXhosa ever winning against the whites and driving them into the sea. Being the clever people that they were, they quickly noticed what was best for them - stick with the winning side and gain immensely in the process. Of the approximately twelve thousand

---

<sup>21</sup> Moyer, 'Self-defence,' p.115.

amaMfengu who participated in the War of the Axe, not one switched over to the Xhosa side.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Loyalty Unrewarded***

R.T. Kawa, himself a Zizi from Peddie district, strongly emphasised that during the War of the Axe, the amaMfengu of Peddie fought for virtually nothing. As he put it, “*alwela umhlaba anawo, kwanomhlaba owoti unikwe wona emva kwemfazwe ngokoMnqophiso, kanti kutetwa ingongolotela engasaziwa mlungu namhlanje*” [they fought for their land and the land they would get after the war, as per the agreement, something the white man no longer knows today.]<sup>23</sup>



To explain their disappointment, it is necessary to go back to the Treaties (*iminqopiso*) to which Kawa refers. The first of these, signed in December 1836 by Lieutenant-Governor Stockenstrom with Chiefs Mhlambiso and Njokweni, granted them their lands in the “Ceded Territory” (between the Fish and the Keiskamma Rivers), “to be held by the said chiefs and Tribe, their Heirs and Successors, in perpetuity, never to be reclaimed by, or on behalf of his said Majesty, except in case of hostility committed, or a war provoked by the said Chiefs or Tribe.” This was confirmed by a revised Treaty entered into by the Governor Maitland and the

---

<sup>22</sup>Cory Library, MS 15,543, Ayliff, Rev John. “Brief sketch”

<sup>23</sup> Kawa, p. 56.

Mfengu chiefs Njokweni, Mabandla, Nkwenkwezi, Matomela, Kaulela, Phala and Jama on 2 January 1845.<sup>24</sup>

Since Chief Phatho and the amaGqunukhwebe Xhosa had played such a major part in the War of the Axe, they were totally expelled after the colonial victory in that war. Even before the war was over, the Wesleyan Superintendent Rev William Shaw was authorized by Governor Maitland to begin the process of settling amaMfengu on the newly available territory.<sup>25</sup> But, as already explained in Chapter Four, Maitland's promises were discarded by his successor, Governor Harry Smith.



AmaMfengu chiefs of the Peddie district, especially Chief Njokweni, were furious that Governor Harry Smith had broken the promises made by Governor Maitland in 1846. In addition to taking amaMfengu land, the settlers were constantly impounding their cattle, which were allegedly "trespassing" on the land that they had grazed for so many years.<sup>26</sup> Njokweni voiced his anger at the Government, saying, "The Government had made the [amaMfengu] liberal promises during the war; but now it was peace, they were circumscribed within such narrow limits that they could not

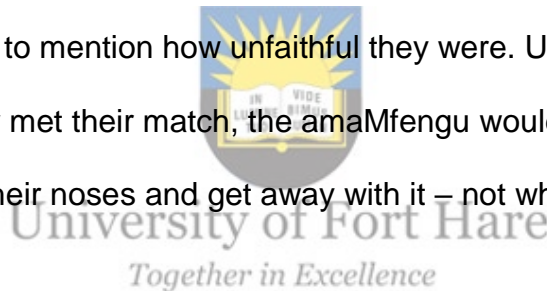
---

<sup>24</sup>Unnumbered Cape Parliamentary Paper of 1855 entitled '*Report of the Select Committee ... relative to the disposal of the Lands in the Ceded Territory and on the Chumie*,' p.1.

<sup>25</sup>Memorandum dated the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 1846, in *ibid.* [Also mentioned in Imperial Blue Book 786 of 1847, pp.188-189.]. These references, one from the government side and another from the Missionary Shaw have one thing in common - the stationing of amaMfengu on the land from which amaXhosa had been chased away. Each side had its own agenda, the government wanted to get a human buffer and Shaw to get fertile ground on which to cultivate the "Word". Both plans were thwarted by the appointment of the new Governor, Sir Harry Smith, who was pro-settlers and wanted the available land for the white settlers.

<sup>26</sup>J. Maclean- R. Rawson, 6 April 1853, *ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

leave.”<sup>27</sup> Chief Matomela expected to get the tract of land between his location and the sea on which they had grazed their livestock, but on which the settlers had erected buildings.<sup>28</sup> There were even white government officials who possessed land adjacent to amaMfengu locations including: Mr Davies commanding a Mfengu Militia, owned about 4000 acres, a portion of which adjoined Post Victoria (Sheshegu); R. Taylor, Resident Magistrate of King Williams Town possessed 3000 acres, a portion of which adjoined Gaga Location; W. Edey, Resident Magistrate of Fort Peddie, possessed about 1000 acres, adjoining the Lands of Chief Nkwenkwezi. It must be borne in mind that these were not the only settlers who encroached on amaMfengu land. An official physically residing in King William’s Town, but possessing land in Alice, is just one of many examples of how greedy for land the white people were, not to mention how unfaithful they were. Unfortunately for them, in the amaMfengu they met their match, the amaMfengu would not let them steal their land from under their noses and get away with it – not when they owned it by Treaty! <sup>29</sup>



This dissatisfaction ultimately gave rise to the “Fingo War Scare” of 1854. It appears that Chief Njokweni of the amaZizi may have been seeking an alliance with the Rharhabe Xhosa king Sandile, so discontented were the amaMfengu and, to seal this newly found friendship, he had given Sandile his daughter in marriage. At some

---

<sup>27</sup>C. Brownlee - Maclean, 26 October 1854, *ibid*.

<sup>28</sup>J. Maclean - W.F. Liddle, 29 October, 1854, *ibid*, p.7. Maclean stated that he ‘saw houses of white men erected on the land granted by treaty to the [amaMfengu], Unfortunately, Shaw had misled the amaMfengu on the basis of Maitland’s instructions but these were never been expressed in written treaty form.

<sup>29</sup>H. Calderwood - W.F. Liddle, Alice, 2 February, 1855, in *ibid*, p.5.



stage, Njokweni also told Sandile that he was leaving the colony, since the government had given the settlers land which the amaMfengu had cultivated for many years. Colonel Maclean, the Chief Commissioner of British Kaffraria, advised that the matter should be addressed with the urgency it deserved. He himself had witnessed the signing of the 1845 Treaty, and he said it would be a 'breach of faith' if white settlers were allowed to encroach on land formerly allocated to the amaMfengu. He further advised that a redress of the matter could also take the form of allocating land for a part of Chief Njokweni's people, under his son, or a headman appointed by him.<sup>30</sup> To add to this disturbing news, there were numerous beer-drinking gatherings among the amaMfengu, and rumours spread that they were not engaged in any cultivation, which would have been noteworthy as it was the time for such work. This did not sit well with the Colonial authorities, the atmosphere just smelled of war! In reaction the government appointed Henry Calderwood as a Special Commissioner to get to the bottom of the rumours.<sup>31</sup>



Calderwood's communications with Chief Njokweni convinced him that there was no war brewing. Nevertheless, he decided to visit all the Mfengu locations in the different Districts and engage with as many amaMfengu as possible. The responses of the Chiefs allayed his fears - the amaMfengu were still loyal to the government.

---

<sup>30</sup>J. Maclean – R.W. Rawson, 6 April, 1855, in *ibid*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>31</sup> Imperial Blue Book, 1969 of 1855. *Papers re State of the Kaffir Tribes* Report of Special Commissioner [Calderwood] appointed to inquire into the Present State of the Fingoe Locations on the Eastern Frontier, 22 January, 1855, pp.42-51; The 'War Scare' and the Calderwood Report is also discussed in A.E. du Toit's D.Phil. Thesis: *The Cape Frontier: A Study of Native Policy with special Reference to the Years 1847 – 1866*, p.87, where Calderwood assured the Governor that 'the rumours of an outbreak were due to "gross and intentional misrepresentation."

Chiefs Mhlawuli, Sobekwa and Mabandla were unanimous in their gratitude for the peace and security they had enjoyed since 1835. Calderwood voiced his satisfaction with their loyalty and, to ascertain that the amaMfengu were still eating from the palm of his hand, he put them to the 'test', daring them to let amaXhosa pass through their locations on their way to invade the colony. As expected, his 'children' (Mfengu Chiefs) strongly assured him that even Jesus Christ would come down before they would allow that to happen! This positive attitude convinced Calderwood that all the rumours were just a 'War Scare' without any foundation.

When this matter came before a Select Committee of the Cape Parliament chaired by the liberal politician Andries Stockenström, the Committee recommended in favour of amaMfengu, on whose land the white settlers had encroached.

The case of the [amaMfengu], imperatively demands the most anxious solicitude of the Government, that their grievances and even imaginary grievances call for the strictest investigation and explanation, that redress be offered where wrong has been done, and that by strict justice, and a conciliatory but firm control, they be made to feel it their own interest to adhere to the British standard. With this view your Committee beg leave to recommend, that an Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor, submitting for his serious consideration a copy of this Report.<sup>32</sup>

Unfortunately, the Cape Parliament of those days had no executive authority and the new Governor, Sir George Grey, had ideas of his own. Nothing was done.

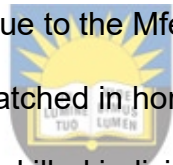
---

<sup>32</sup>A. Stockenström – G.M. Shepstone, 1 May 1855, Unnumbered Cape Parliamentary Paper of 1855 *Report of the Select Committee ... relative to the disposal of the Lands in the Ceded Territory and on the Chumie*, p. 8.

Notwithstanding amaMfengu complaints about the violation of Maitland's treaties, not only did Calderwood deny any knowledge, but he even justified those cases in which land claimed by amaMfengu was allocated to white government officials. Of the officials who usurped Mfengu land, a certain Mr Edye's case is a very interesting one as it exposes Calderwood for the kind of dishonest government official he really was. First Calderwood doubted that Mr Edye's application for a grant of land was ever brought to a Board of which he was a member, although "it may have been, unknown to me," adding that the amaMfengu themselves had never complained. He admitted that the Queenstown Land Board [of which he was Chairman] "relaxed" the rules granting land to white settlers after Governor Cathcart had "yielded to repeated and urgent applicants." Not a single Mfengu chief objected to Calderwood's arguments, instead, they expressed their satisfaction with the land they occupied. Even chief Matomela seemed to be forgetting about his claim on the tract of land between his location and the sea, on which he had cultivated and grazed his livestock for so many years. As if hypnotized, not a single Chief failed to express his gratitude to Government for the land they possessed. Calderwood had virtually twisted their thinking to a point that he himself could not believe, knowing them to be as land hungry as he himself. The Mfengu chiefs praised the government for the land they were given, not realising that this was done not for their benefit, but that the government saw the amaMfengu as a potential labor supply for the white settlers; for

example, the small Mfengu village near D'Urban mission was established "with the view to a supply of labor."<sup>33</sup>

Although Kawa does recognize the additional land the amaMfengu were given around Healdtown, Alice and Sheshegu, he nevertheless strongly criticizes the deceitful arguments of the former Governor, Sir Harry Smith, namely "(a) *Anizange nipiwe [mhlaba] nanibolekiwe (b) IMinqopiso kudala yatshatyalaliswayo, yabulawa.*"[(a) You were never granted [the land], but were borrowed [it] (b) the treaties by which you were granted the land were nullified long ago].<sup>34</sup> Kawa's perspective of a deceitful white government is more credible than Moyer's contention that the white change of heart was due to the Mfengu practice of "total war." In Moyer's opinion, white observers "watched in horror when the Mfengu killed an individual Xhosa or tortured and then killed individuals who had been taken captive."<sup>35</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

One fails to believe that any white observer could ever think that the white soldiers were less cruel than the amaMfengu, or that their war tactics were less devastating than those of their black partners. It is more probable that white land hunger got the better of them, and that they did not feel like sharing the war gains. Hence they

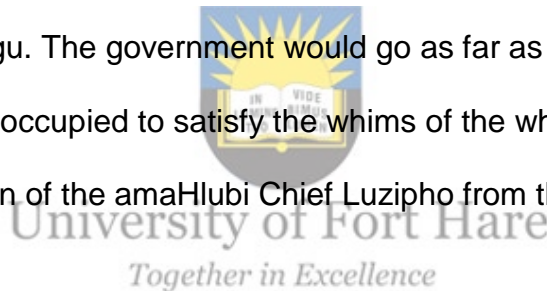
---

<sup>33</sup>Imperial Blue Book: 1969 of 1855. *Papers re State of the Kaffir Tribes*, Report of Special Commissioner [Calderwood] appointed to inquire into the Present State of the Fingoe Locations on the Eastern Frontier, 22 January, 1855, pp.42-51.

<sup>34</sup> Kawa, p. 56.

<sup>35</sup> Moyer, 'Self-defence,' p.115.

needed any excuse, no matter how lame, to avoid fulfilling the promises, even if that involved discrediting themselves and risking losing potential allies in the future. The challenge here is that the amaMfengu and the white settlers were birds of the same feather, so to speak, and for both war meant gains in cattle and land. Since the amaMfengu knew what a significant contribution they had made to the war effort, they saw no reason why the government should go back on their word. It must also be borne in mind that they saw themselves as equal to the white settlers – they were both British subjects, both industrious and held a capitalist orientation. Most of all, they fought side by side as allies against a common enemy. Surely they were entitled to an equal share of the booty! And as for the government discrediting itself by failing to fulfil its promises! That the government always put the white settlers first angered the amaMfengu. The government would go as far as evicting amaMfengu from land they already occupied to satisfy the whims of the white settlers, as indicated by the eviction of the amaHlubi Chief Luzipho from the land he had occupied.<sup>36</sup>



### ***The War of Mlanjeni (1850-1853)***

To demonstrate one example of how the whites encouraged the enmity between the amaXhosa and the amaMfengu, we can point out that the latter were allowed to occupy Xhosa land only two years after the end of the War of the Axe, at a time when the amaXhosa had not fully recovered from the vestiges of the last war - perfect timing by the white man, this would so anger amaXhosa that any chance of a

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.116.

rapprochement with amaMfengu would be lost, thus ensuring that they could continue to count on the amaMfengu's unflinching assistance in any future war. Overcrowding in amaMfengu villages was the determining factor in why they sided with the white colonial government in the 1850 -1853 war against amaXhosa, for, how else could they get additional land other than by helping the colonial government defeat the amaXhosa and be rewarded with land afterwards! Apart from the natural increase of the amaMfengu population, more amaMfengu were brought over the Kei after the close of the war in 1847. From a Xhosa perspective, the Mlanjeni war was no different from the earlier wars of dispossession, their objective being to recover their lost land and to resist total subjugation.



This time around the colonial government was compelled to fulfil its promises to the amaMfengu because of the “Kat River rebellion” whereby many Khoikhoi shifted their allegiance to the amaXhosa, greatly strengthening the military capacity of the anti-colonial forces. Richard Moyer explains this rebellion in terms of Khoikhoi jealousy against the amaMfengu for having stolen the affection of the colonial government. As if that was not enough, the amaMfengu had stolen their job opportunities as well, as the colonists preferred their services, since they worked harder for less money than their colored brothers.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Moyer, 'Self-Defence,' p.116. For a full discussion of the causes of the War of Mlanjeni, see N.S.Maxengana, "The Causes of the Eighth Frontier War: The War of Mlanjeni, 1850 - 1852,"University of Fort Hare Honours thesis, 1989.

The war began with Chief Sandile's surprise attack in the Boomah Pass, capturing supplies and ammunition from the colonial army, while at the same time attacking the white military villages along the Tyhume River. R.T. Kawa has provided details of Mfengu participation in this war, starting with the battle of Fort Beaufort in January 1851, in which the Coloured/Xhosa forces were led by Hermanus Matroos (Ngxukumeshe), a former member of the Cape Corps who had interpreted for Ayliff when he persuaded amaMfengu to cross the Kei in 1835.<sup>38</sup> The British relied heavily on the amaMfengu to crush the Coloured rebellion, while Rev Ayliff himself, now in Fort Beaufort, encouraged amaMfengu to enlist reminding them that Harry Smith, now Governor, had facilitated their evacuation from Gcalekaland in 1835.<sup>39</sup> This shows that amaMfengu were still abiding by the oaths they took at Peddie, administered by the same Ayliff! AmaMfengu saved Fort Beaufort in a heroic defense that resulted in the death of Ngxukumeshe and the defeat of his forces.<sup>40</sup> This notable victory earned them the praise of Governor Smith, which seemed so important to R.T. Kawa that he even translated them into isiXhosa:<sup>41</sup>

I hereby declare my satisfaction and perfect faith in the loyalty of the Fingos who did so gallantly aid in the defence of Fort Beaufort, and afterwards in the pursuit of the rebels, and they shall ever receive the protection of Her Majesty's Government.

*'Ngokwenjenje oku ndivakalisa ukweneliswa nokuk[h]olelwa kwam okufezekileyo kukunyaniseka – ekuthobeleni um-Buso – kwamaMfengu at[h]e ancedisa ngokuk[h]alip[h]a ekuk[h]useleni i[Bhofolo], aza emva koko asukela abavukeli-[mbuso], ayakuhlala esamkela uk[h]uselo [kulawulo] lo [Mntwan'Omhle.*

---

<sup>38</sup> Kawa, pp; 47, 57.

<sup>39</sup> Moyer, 'Self-Defence,' p.118.

<sup>40</sup> For a detailed description of the Mfengu contribution in this battle, see T. Couzens, *Battles of South Africa* (Claremont, 2004), Chapter 15. For the military aspects more generally, see J. Milton, *The Edges of War* (Cape Town, 1983). There is no need to go over this familiar ground, so this chapter will concentrate on the neglected contribution of amaMfengu.

<sup>41</sup> Kawa, pp. 57-8.

AmaMfengu also assisted in the battle of Vetlisi (Whittlesea) when this town was under siege from the amaXhosa and the Kat River rebels. The British ran out of ammunition and, if the amaMfengu had not arrived when they did, this town would have fallen. They saved the day and fought with great bravery. The amaBhele assisted in expelling Chief Sandile from the Amathole Mountains, being led by Chief Mabandla, (praised as “*Tshaka wase Cegciwana, uToba sikutshela/ U Tye lase Nkondlo elibutele*”) and Zizi Chief Wulana (“*UMbhamshe, Bam kwaNgwekazi, UmTungeli wengub’ezimarwexu Engazinikwanga nanguyise uMbolekwa.*”). The amaMfengu from Peddie, that is, the people of Chiefs Njokweni, Matomela, Msuthu and Khawulela, assisted in chasing out Chief Maqoma from his stronghold at Mthontsi (Waterkloof), near Fort Beaufort. Alice was defended by the Hlubi Chief Luzipho (“*uMqomboli akakohlwa zindlela Ngani nabadala zibakohlile, U Calaca we-Cunu, uGaba wecibi*”) and Siyolo, son of the Bhele Chief Mavuso (“*Gqogqa wentselwa, unonyand’ontsundu waseCumakala, Isidang’esimhlope sakwa ma Nkomo.*”).<sup>42</sup>

As in previous wars, colonial forces invaded Gcalekaland across the Kei. The AmaMfengu who were still residing on that side as subjects of King Sarhili tried to drive their cattle into Mpondoland for safe keeping, but were attacked by the abaThembu of Chief Joyi. Thus, when the British Colonel Eyre arrived at Butterworth, in December 1851, the amaMfengu had no option but to join his army.

---

<sup>42</sup> Kawa, pp. 56-59.



When the war ended, about 7000 amaMfengu crossed the Kei under the leadership of Zizi chiefs Xengxe and Ntintsilana, bringing thousands of cattle and goats.<sup>43</sup> It was probably because of this large booty that some whites published articles in the *Grahams Town Journal* criticizing the amaMfengu for being unruly and lacking in discipline. This was most probably an attempt to reduce the extent of land to be given as a reward, but fortunately Governors Smith and Cathcart had themselves personally witnessed the bravery and efforts of amaMfengu. It was therefore unthinkable that the whites, having fought side by side with amaMfengu, would afterwards not share the booty. Governor Cathcart was so impressed by the contribution of amaMfengu that he “perceived them as the key to the maintaining peace on the frontier” once the war was over.<sup>44</sup> As rendered by Kawa, Cathcart wrote “ *Kule mfazwe esandulukupela amaMfengu enze umsebenzi omhle, owokukalipa esilwa namaXosa – Abantu – alingana nabo totse ngokuba ngamaroti okulwa ngazozonk’indlela.*” (“ In the war that has just ended, amaMfengu have done a good job of bravery, fighting with amaXhosa – equal to them as brave men in all the strategies of fighting.”) Writing to the Colonial Secretary in London, Cathcart added, “These people have always proved true and faithful; and have, during the late war, when enrolled in companies under European officers, done good and gallant service against the [amaXhosa], to whom they are equal as warriors, in every respect.”<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup>Moyer, ‘Self-Defence,’ p. 120. For a description of Colonel Eyre’s speech at Butterworth, leaving amaMfengu with no alternatives, see Eyre-Cloete, 14 December 1851, Imperial Blue Book 1635 of 1853, *Papers re State of the Kaffir Tribes*, p.6

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, pp. 119-120.

<sup>45</sup>Kawa, p. 59; Cathcart, p. 210.

Governor Cathcart was even thinking of forming an army of amaMfengu along the lines of the Sepoys of India, but he was sensitive enough to realize that the amaMfengu were potentially dangerous to the colonial government - a ticking time bomb, so to speak, if rubbed up the wrong way! In his words, "neglect, ill usage, or breach of faith towards them, might make them formidable enemies, and troublesome to deal with."<sup>46</sup> The very same view was echoed by Commissioner Calderwood writing to the new Governor Sir George Grey, following the "War Scare" of 1854 discussed in Chapter Four, and causing Grey to note that "our future relations with the Fingoes are likely to be attended with difficulty" because the amaMfengu were no longer as "humble and docile "as when they first arrived, but had developed into "rich and powerful ... people who had forgotten their former difficulties," "and whose demeanor had therefore altered."<sup>47</sup> He emphasized that this kind of situation was not one in which the Colonial Government could feel at ease. There was much at stake if colonial relations with the amaMfengu should sour.

### ***The War of Ngcayechibi (1877-1878)***

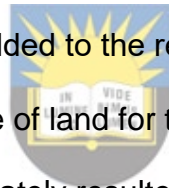
The War of Mlanjeni ended in 1853, followed very shortly by the Nongqawuse cattle-killing movement of 1856 -1858 whereby, as is well-known, the majority of

---

<sup>46</sup> Cathcart, p. 211.

<sup>47</sup> Imperial Blue Book, 1969 of 1855, *Papers re State of the Kaffir Tribes*, Governor Sir George Grey – Colonial Secretary Sir George Grey, Bart, December 12, 1854, p.35.

amaXhosa killed their cattle and destroyed their maize in the hope of bringing about the resurrection of the dead and the return of their lost prosperity and happiness. AmaMfengu remained to one side during this period, very few if any of them killing their cattle. Indeed, many of the starving amaXhosa were fed and sheltered by their Mfengu neighbors.<sup>48</sup> The lands between East London and Queenstown from which Sir George Grey expelled the starving amaXhosa were allocated to white settlers, mostly Germans, so amaMfengu did not benefit in any way from the disaster which had afflicted their neighbors. It was only in 1865 when, as already explained in Chapter Four above, Chief Sandile and his people declined to move, that amaMfengu occupied part of the former Gcaleka territory, namely Butterworth, Ngqamakhwe and Tsomo districts. Nevertheless, the settling of amaMfengu in what came to be known as “Fingoland” added to the resentment of the amaGcaleka had against them. The resulting shortage of land for the Gcaleka was worsened by the drought of 1876 and 1877, and ultimately resulted in the war of Ngcayechibi, also known as the Ninth Frontier War,<sup>49</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
Together in Excellence

It will be remembered from Chapter Four that when Gcalekaland was restored to Sarhili in 1864, the amaGcaleka remained an independent kingdom, and their territory was not subjected to colonial rule. The officer stationed with them, known as the “Resident with Sarhili,” performed consular duties only and did not interfere with

---

<sup>48</sup>For the effects of the cattle-killing on amaMfengu, see J. Peires, *The Dead Will Arise* (Johannesburg, 1989), pp.95, 168, 241.

<sup>49</sup>The best account is M.W. Spicer, “The war of Ngcayechibi, 1877–1878.” MA Thesis, Rhodes University, 1978.

their government. While Sarhili's chief councilor was Maki, a man of peace, all remained quiet but, in 1870, Maki was replaced by Chief Ngubo who was deeply hostile to the white colonial government. AmaGcaleka had by then increased in numbers since 1864 and needed more space. Hence they now looked on Fingoland as a solution for their land problem. The bone of contention remained Butterworth, formerly the capital (*komkhulu*) of King Hintsa, but subsequently given to amaMfengu by the Colonial Government. Butterworth was geographically separated from Gcalekaland only by the insignificant Gcuwa River. Only the diplomatic management skills of Chief Magistrate Captain Blyth had prevented the souring relations between amaMfengu and amaGcaleka from deteriorating into a hot conflagration. In 1876, however, Captain Blyth was succeeded as Chief Magistrate of Transkei by James Ayliff, son of Rev. John Ayliff, and it was during his term of office that animosity between the amaMfengu and the amaGcaleka erupted.<sup>50</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

The eventual clash arose out of a very trivial matter involving the drinking of beer. On 3 August 1877 there was a marriage ceremony at the house of Ngcayechibi, a Mfengu living near Butterworth town. As is customary with black nations on such occasions, quite a number of people, both amaMfengu and amaGcaleka, attended this function including the Gcaleka chiefs Mxoli and Fihla.<sup>51</sup> Even after one of the Mfengu hosts had indicated '*Eli lixsha lokuba kugodukwe, ndiyagoduka.*' [It is time to go home and I am going home],” Chief Mxoli nevertheless asked for more beer.

---

<sup>50</sup> F. Brownlee, p.10

<sup>51</sup> Spicer, p. 68; Kawa, pp. 59-60.

More was given, but the chief continued to insist, knowing that amaMfengu had a reputation of hiding most of the beer for their private consumption later on. When one of the amaMfengu eventually said, “*hambani kuhlwile* [go home it is dark]” Mxoli replied, “*babeteni, bayabufihla utywala* [beat them up, they are hiding the beer].” A fight ensued, giving rise to the proverb, “*utywala be Mfengu abupel’ekoyini*. [Mfengu beer does not get finished in its reservoir].” The outnumbered amaGcaleka were easily beaten and chased across the Gcuwa River, leaving one of them dead.

The matter was referred to Chief Magistrate James Ayliff, who usually adjudicated matters involving amaMfengu and amaGcaleka, but in this instance he obviously underestimated the seriousness of the situation.<sup>52</sup> On the third day, according to Kawa, a thousand amaGcaleka, led by Mapasa and Mxoli invaded amaMfengu and confiscated cattle, sheep and goats, burnt houses and destroyed hoes and pots. Thus began the War of Ngcayechibi.

Unfortunately some of the stock taken from the amaMfengu had already been consumed by other amaGcaleka as well, and not only by the iTsonyana chiefdom, home of chiefs Mapasa and Mxoli. In his thesis, M.W. Spicer mentions many instances of mutual cattle theft between amaGcaleka and amaMfengu, especially in the Idutywa Reserve, where there was a lot of tension. Since the amaGcaleka far outnumbered the amaMfengu, Secretary of Native Affairs, Charles Brownlee,

---

<sup>52</sup>Spicer, p. 69.

allowed James Ayliff to arm the amaMfengu, to prepare them for any eventuality. Governor Sir Bartle Frere, recognizing the obligations of the government, observed, “ [we] are under the strongest obligations...to protect [amaMfengu] who have been placed in this country under our Government. ” Frere appreciated that such government intervention would antagonize amaGcaleka and would “possibly turn a “possible tribal war into a black-white confrontation”. But, at the end of the day, the colonial government had no choice but to “protect” their loyal Mfengu subjects.<sup>53</sup> All three parties were now very keen on a war, although for different reasons: the amaGcaleka to recapture their land; the amaMfengu, who had prospered to the extent that they again felt overcrowded and in need of more space, as well as cattle, the customary reward of war; the whites too were looking forward to the annexation of Gcalekaland, which meant more land and captured cattle for the settlers.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

On 5 October 1877, Governor Frere issued a proclamation announcing the deposition of King Sarhili and the intention of the colonial Government to finally annex Gcalekaland. He regarded these as legitimate steps to punish the amaGcaleka for their attacks on British subjects, namely the amaMfengu, and British troops.<sup>54</sup> The first battle was fought at Gwadana, where amaGcaleka fought with great bravery. The police cannon broke down, whereupon the colonial forces ran away and amaMfengu, thinking they had been left in the lurch, also retreated. In the

---

<sup>53</sup> Spicer, pp. 70-79.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

battle of Ibika (29 September 1877) however, the colonial forces' superior armaments and organization took their toll and handily defeated the amaGcaleka.<sup>55</sup>

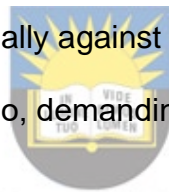
Veldtman Bikitsha of the Jama clan of amaZizi, together with many other Zizi, Bhele and Hlubi chiefs – Zulu, Ndongdo, Nkwenkwezi, Njikelana, Ngcongolo, Luzipho, etc. fought at Ibika, routing the amaGcaleka with the aid of cannon. The amaMfengu levies were led by James Ayliff, their Magistrate, and by white officers. R.T. Kawa served in this war and, despite his traumatic experiences, mentions the white officers with personal respect, especially the Maclean brothers Alan, Lexie and Jack ...”into zikaMakileni, ezikuk[h]alip[h]a kwakungu ndaba-mlonyeni. Ngamadoda kwap[h]jela lawo – Agcine intet[h]o yegor[h]ja lawo, uLord Nelson et[h]ji [ renowned for their bravery...those were real men living up to the words of their hero, Lord Nelson who said, “England expects every man to do his duty” – “ I- Inglane ilindele indoda nganye yenze imfanelo yayo...”Kawa goes on to say: “ ungabot[h]ji wakuhlut[h]ja nazintshula ntshula zak[h]o ucinge uya kuhlut[h]jela kubo. [ if you have had too much to drink ( traditional beer is drunk from an enamel container which has a handle, ‘ ntshulantshula ‘is one size of these. To say one “ uhluthi nguntshulantshula” is euphemism for being drunk – drunkenness can mislead into thinking one can tackle any challenge, even that which one fears when sober. So, this is a way of saying, never let drink mislead you into thinking you can tackle an Englishman – be warned, you! [“Pasop - wenna!”]<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Milton, pp. 258-259.

<sup>56</sup>Kawa, p. 62.

The amaGcaleka, pursued by amaMfengu, were eventually forced to retreat to the forests of Dwesa and Manyube. At the battle of Kabakazi, Chief Mxoli, the main instigator of the war, was killed and Mcothama, King Sarhili's kunene [right-hand] son, badly wounded. Defeated, the amaGcaleka crossed the Mbashe River into exile with the colonial forces hard on their heels. The war, however, was far from over as, in early 1878, the amaXhosa opened a new front west of the Kei. The Gcaleka chief Khiva, son of Maphasa, and the Ndlambe chief Makinana roused the amaRharhabe to assist Sarhili. Chief Sandile's old councilors advised him not to participate, but he could no longer restrain the younger men who had never fought in a war and eagerly sought a taste of battle, more especially against the amaMfengu. Even the praise-singers worked on King Sandile's ego, demanding that he join his countrymen across the Kei:<sup>57</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

*“Kungade kulale wena:  
 “Ndanda ko Vece, Xesi limagqagala.  
 “Ndlela zinamac[h]ap[h]az ’egazi, Ndlov ’enentsente’  
 Gag ’oluhamba lugongqoza ukuk[h]wez ’iXesi”  
 Sibinza ma-Mfengu abaleke  
 Aye ko[o]yise kobelungu.’  
 [Can even you sleep!  
 Hover over Vece, dry Keiskamma  
 Roads with bloodstains, Elephant with dirt  
 Breastbonethat moves in big strides along the Keiskamma  
 We stab amaMfengu till they run to their fathers the whites].*

These lines are by no means King Sandile's praise names but, the Praise singer [most probably of young blood] here is trying to induce the King to join the war. It

---

<sup>57</sup>Kawa, p. 65.



must be remembered that the young warrior had never tasted war and now that fate had availed them the opportunity to prove their bravery, they cannot let their chance slip through their fingers! If the King does not join it will mean they will lose the chance to kill amaMfengu [Sibinza ma-Mfengu], defeat them [abaleke Aye koyise kobelungu – till they run to their fathers, white people!]. The Praise singer's diction is so powerful that the King must understand the necessity to join and revenge for all the previous wars which even stained the roads with blood [” Ndlela zinamac[h]ap[h]az ‘egazi...”

Of all the battles that were fought in this War, the Battle of Centane (7 February 1878) was perhaps the hottest. Both King Sarhili of amaGcaleka and Chief Sandile of amaRharhabe were personally present, having been rendered “invincible” by Ngxitho, the Xhosa war doctor who commanded the Gcaleka armies. But things did not go well for amaXhosa on this day: Sarhili and amaGcaleka were forced to cross the Mbashe into Bomvanaland, whilst Sandile retreated to his strongholds in the Amathole Mountains.

When Sandile and the amaRharhabe entered the war, they attacked the white settlers, burning many of their farmhouses. Among the whites who were killed was Richard Tainton, formerly the popular Superintendent of the amaMfengu at Peddie. The amaMfengu raised a levy in response and went into action at Tyityaba near Qumra. The future historian, Richard Tainton Kawa, was a great councilor of Chief Njokweni, and commanded amaZizi, together with Chief Dabi Njokweni. AmaHlubi-

Reledwane were led by Chief Diba David Matomela, whilst amaHlubi-Kunene were led by Prince Mlungwini Mjoli and Sonjica Simakuhle; amaBhele were led by Chief Komityana Ngwekazi and Councillor Adam Marambana. IMbutho was led by Chiefs Sigudu Kaulela and Fepiwe Nombewu. All these forces fought at Tyityaba, Tunxe, Hoho and Ntaba-ka-Ndoda. They retook a lot of cattle that were confiscated from the settlers, as well as cattle which belonged to amaXhosa. Another force from Peddie was led by Chiefs Lawini, Mxokelelwana and Mhlanganiso Njokweni, Nyaniso Mhlauli, Sergeant Kaulela, Johannes Qangana and Councilors Isaac Nginda, Thomas Mqanda and Richard Bangani. They fought at Mpunzane, Mtombe, in Xesi River. The final battles of the war were fought at NtabakaNdoda and Ludakaneni against the great warrior, Chief Matabese, son of Mdushane. Chief Mbovane Mabandla from Tyhume was at this battle:



*'UBam-Bam njengabakandayo,  
Inzongonzongwana, Cimela waphandlwa ngumsebe...'*  
[Bam-Bam like those who knock down,  
One with fast movements (as in giving instructions during battle), close your eyes lest your eyelash enter your eye]

Other chiefs who also fought in the battles west of the Kei were Chiefs Wulana, Nangu and Gumede of KeiskammaHoek. AmaMfengu from Hewu fought at Tunxe, where the white forces got a surprise attack from amaXhosa, but were saved from total annihilation by the arrival of amaMfengu residing at Hewu, led by Sishuba, Mtiya and others. Starvation caused the amaXhosa to capitulate to the English and,

following the death of Sandile in the Isidenge forests (June 1878), the war finally came to an end.<sup>58</sup>

### ***After Ngcayechibi***

The War of Ngcayechibi marked the end of the frontier wars, the wars of Xhosa land dispossession and the Colonial Government *yayitshotsh'entla* [was dominating], having succeeded in subjugating the black nations with the aid of the amaMfengu. But now that their mission was accomplished, they no longer needed their black allies. The government started to seek ways and means of breaking their wings, of depriving them of their means to fly on the same level with their masters, as it were, for, there was nothing that was more irritating to the settlers than the realization that the amaMfengu had the same aspirations as them, that they were industrious, liked wealth and better still, that they could create their own wealth.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

The first openly discriminatory measure directed against the amaMfengu was the so-called “certificates of citizenship” that were issued to amaMfengu by the Colonial Government in 1857. The alleged purpose was, as Fry points out, to “differentiate between [amaMfengu] individuals - who were included as members of the colonial community – and the [amaXhosa ] individuals – who were seen as foreigners.”<sup>59</sup>The earliest version of this scheme, however, raised complaints from the white settlers who argued that the certificates did not provide enough details of the possessor and

---

<sup>58</sup>Kawa, pp. 60-67.

<sup>59</sup>Fry, “Allies,” pp. 159 - 161

could therefore be easily passed from a Mfengu to a Xhosa. In 1864, the legislation was amended to require more details of the possessor, also requiring amaMfengu to replace the old certificates with the new ones. These changes, done by the government unilaterally, did not sit well with the amaMfengu. Hence, they showed their resentment by threatening violence, such as in Fort Beaufort, for example, when the local magistrate tried to enforce the new citizenship documents. This resentment was the Mfengu way of pointing out the inferior position they held in colonial society. It must be remembered that, as far as they were concerned, they had become colonial citizens in 1835 when they were brought over the Kei, little realizing the hypocritical racism and double dealing of the colonial government.



Racism was beginning to transform the political landscape of the Eastern Cape, and, to their dismay, the amaMfengu found they were also placed in the same category as the other black nations being discriminated against, something which was new to them. The certificates of citizenship worked hand in hand with the pass system and marked the involvement of the government in the lives of individuals, providing the means by which government officials kept track of the movement and location of every black person, including amaMfengu. In addition, as A.E. Du Toit points out, much as these certificates of citizenship exempted amaMfengu from carrying passes, thereby giving them a few privileges, they did not confer the right to vote, since the vast majority of amaMfengu lived in locations under tribal conditions and therefore could not meet the voting qualifications, low though these were.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup>A.E. Du Toit, "The Cape Frontier, 1847-1866," *Archives Yearbook* (1954), p.286

## ***Disarmament***

On the 7<sup>th</sup> August 1876, the Cape Governor Barkly appointed a Colonial Defence Commission to investigate eastern preparedness against attack. The settlers who testified before the Commission, chaired by John Gordon Sprigg, the future Cape Prime Minister, voiced a mixed feelings about whether any group of Africans could be trusted with guns. While some settlers were of the opinion that amaMfengu could be trusted and as a militia, and could be drilled together with whites, others were totally opposed, fearing that amaMfengu could turn against the white colonists. What was clear was the fear of an attack by amaXhosa, hence the idea that the only way to ensure the safety of the colony was to disarm each and every African.<sup>61</sup>



The Peace and Preservation Act of 1878, according to which all Africans were disarmed irrespective of whether they had fought for or against the colony, marked a shift in the native policy at the Cape. More than anything else, it indicated a shift in the relationship between the amaMfengu and the colonial government and at the same time placed amaMfengu and amaXhosa on the same level - at the very bottom of the ladder.<sup>62</sup> Worse, it was imposed on the very people who were so dependent on the government that they were obliged to submit. This was especially a blow to the amaMfengu, for, as the former allies of the government against amaXhosa in all the frontier wars since 1835, they had sworn to abide by the government's rule no matter what. No less a personage than Sir Garnet Wolsey, the British commander

---

<sup>61</sup>W.S.Storey, *Guns, Race and Power in Colonial South Africa*, Cambridge, 2008, chapter 8.

<sup>62</sup> Fry, p. 186.

of the imperial forces in South Africa, condemned the Act, according to R.T. Kawa, in the following words:<sup>63</sup>

*“ I Linga lokut[h]abat[h]a izix[h]jobo ku Bantu, ingasiwa-so into yokuba bebenyanisekile –na nokuba bebenganyanisekanga em-Busweni iyakuvusa izimvo ezi[k]ra[k]ra ekuc[h]aseni impatho yet[h]ju.”* [The attempt to disarm people without taking note of whether they were loyal or disloyal to the government will arouse bad feeling about our rule.]

Even the conservative historian G.M. Theal regarded this law as extremely unjust and related the following incident which he personally observed in King William’s Town, where 2,628 guns had to be surrendered.<sup>64</sup>

A middle-aged Fingo, having parted with his gun, excitedly threw his jacket on the ground, and, almost tearing open his shirt, showed some scars on his breast. “Look at these scars,” he said to the magistrate, “all were received fighting for the government; there will never be another, for I am no longer a man.”



To many Mfengu, owning a gun was held dear as owning land. The Mfengu were both angry and suspicious about motive behind the legislation. “ If we have been disloyal, say right out when and where we have so acted; but if we have served the Government faithfully, we ought to be allowed to keep our guns.” Residents of Kamastone and Oxkraal even sent a petition to the House of Assembly expressing their discontent and voicing the general reaction of amaMfengu to the Disarmament Act throughout the entire Cape Colony.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Kawa, p. 70.

<sup>64</sup> G.M. Theal: *History of South Africa from 1873 to 1884* (London, 1919), Vol. II, p.56.

<sup>65</sup> For the reaction of amaMfengu to the Disarmament Act, see R.R.Edgar, *The Finger of God, Enoch Mjijima, the Israelites and the Bulhoek Massacre in South Africa*, University of Virginia Press, 2018, pp. 25-26.

AmaMfengu immediately realized their vulnerability. They were now open to attack at any time from their enemies of many year, for, without their weapons, how would they defend themselves! When they complained about this law, citing their loyalty to the government and that they had always fought side by side as partners against their common enemy, their complaints fell on deaf ears - Sir Gordon Sprigg, the Cape Prime Minister of the time, had made up his mind.

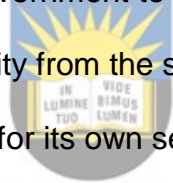
To be treated in the same way as the other black nations, as if they were rebels? That was very hard to stomach! They soon sensed that the whole affair smelled of discrimination – they were being treated in this way because of the colour of their skin! Very soon their fears turned into reality as in October 1880 there were rebellions in different parts of the colony and amaMfengu suffered significant losses in killed and wounded.<sup>66</sup> Surprisingly enough, the amaMfengu continued to defend the white people. For example, during the rebellion of the abaThembu under Siqungathi and in the battle of Ngqwaru Hills, many amaMfengu were killed. When amaMpondomise killed Hamilton Hope, the magistrate of Qumbu, and besieged the magistrate of Maclear in a shop at Chevy Chase, it was amaHlubi under Chiefs Zibi Sidinane, Ludidi, Magadla, Lupindo, Bubesi and Matandela who came to his rescue. At Clarkebury in Thembuland, the amaQwathi of Dalasile were checked by Veldtman Bikitsha's son, Mkhathshane. In another rebellion, that of the Sotho Chief Moorosi,

---

<sup>66</sup> Kawa, p.68

Chiefs Mehlomakhulu, a Hlubi; Meyi, a Bhele; and Nombewu, a Zizi, with their followers assisted the government.<sup>67</sup>

The Disarmament Act resulted in the first major petitions by Africans to the Cape Parliament since its inception in 1854. One of those who led the protests was the prominent Bhele Chief Mbovane Mabandla. With this Act, he said, Prime Minister Sprigg had actually opened their eyes and led to the mobilization of the educated people, who realized that ‘...if we do not wake up and stand up for our rights none will do it for us.’ John Tengo Jabavu, the future editor and African intellectual, summed up the motives of the Act in letters he published in the *Cape Argus* newspaper in December 1878. “From the very outset the natives knew that it has been the intention of the present Government to disarm every black man, merely because he is black, to gain popularity from the section of the colonists, whose aim is to reduce the natives to nonentity for its own selfish ends. Let the press, politicians and constituencies guard against this despotism.”<sup>68</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
Together in Excellence

Instead of abating its segregation policies, the Cape government moved towards depriving amaMfengu of the franchise. It must be remembered that the amaMfengu had always considered themselves equals of the settlers, being also “ British subjects”, now the government was showing them its true colors, revealing very clearly whose interests they were serving. This all came as a shock to the amaMfengu, who had all along thought the government had their best interest at

---

<sup>67</sup>Ibid, pp. 68-69.

<sup>68</sup> A. Odendaal, *The Founders: the Origins of the ANC and the Struggle for Democracy in South Africa* (Auckland Park: Jacana, 2012), pp.41-42.



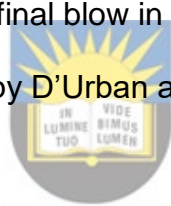
heart, it now dawned on them that they had been taken for a ride all these years. The government was not to be trusted. Now that the amaXhosa were no longer a threat, the amaMfengu were no longer of any use to the settlers and the government. The government passed more segregation laws, which aimed at making the black people, including the amaMfengu, second class citizens in the country of their forefathers. They were not allowed to join the defense force and the education system was restructured so as to prepare them for manual labor at very low wages.<sup>69</sup> As the government had advanced its true objectives, they had no had no second thoughts at treating their former allies, the amaMfengu, like trash. The amaMfengu had been used as a means to an end, they had been a step ladder by which the whites climbed to the top and, having reached their final destination, the ladder was of no use to them, they simply kicked it till it fell to the bottom - where all the black people should be! The amaMfengu now risked becoming isolated from their fellow black people because the Colonial government had achieved the only thing they were good at - effectively sowing the seeds of animosity among the black nations, to prevent their unity which would otherwise make it difficult to apply divide and rule.

---

<sup>69</sup>Kawa, p. 70.

## ***The End of Divide and Rule***

The colonial policy of dividing sister nations was initiated in 1835 by Governor Sir Benjamin D'Urban when he tried to build a strong amaMfengu nation centered on Peddie, in order to create a buffer against the amaXhosa between the Keiskamma and Fish rivers. Despite the ongoing territorial issues, however, the amaMfengu and the amaXhosa began to find each other to the extent that, by the time of the "Fingo War Scare" of 1854, Special Commissioner Calderwood found it difficult to differentiate between the two, observing that they were closely related, with the same complexion and the same language. The division of the black nations was finally brought to an end, as already indicated, by Sprigg's Disarmament Act, which dealt the pro-colonial amaMfengu a final blow in that it rendered them vulnerable to the enemies that had been created by D'Urban and Reverend Ayliff way back in 1835.<sup>70</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Healdtown and Lovedale did much to unite and groom the first generation of school-literate African intellectuals, the future African leaders-in-the-making. Among the male students in Healdtown in 1875 who were later to be prominent in African politics were James and Meshach Pelem, John Tengo Jabavu, Jonas Goduka, Silas Molema, Charles and James Pamla, Richard Kawa and Boyce Kota. During the same period another group of future leaders was entering nearby Lovedale,

---

<sup>70</sup>PR 1416, Cory Library: *Imvo zabaNtsundu*, 16 October 1884.

including Edward Tsewu, Isaac Wauchope, Walter Rubusana, Isaiah Sishuba. The English-isiXhosa monthly newspaper, the so-called “*Kaffir Express*,” known in the vernacular as “*Isigidimi samaXhosa*” was established in October 1870 to provide students with reading material in their own language. The first editor was James Stewart, the Principal of Lovedale, assisted by Elijah Makiwane and John Knox Bokwe. *Isigidimi*, like the earlier but short-lived *Indaba*, provided educated Africans with a platform on which to express their views. The remarkable increase in enrolment at these institutions facilitated not only African education but African political mobilization as well. In July 1873, *Kaffir Express* and *Isigidimi* became separate newspapers. At the beginning of 1874 Elijah Makiwane began to edit *Isigidimi*, albeit under supervision, thus becoming the first African newspaper editor in South Africa.<sup>71</sup> *Isigidimi* was launched as an independent publication aimed exclusively at the isiXhosa-speaking Christian community. The African editors and contributors to *Isigidimi* were politically conscious and covered political news and opinion of concern to their readers, as such, it “acted as a vehicle for mobilizing African opinion” during this period.

When Britain granted responsible government to the Cape Colony in 1872, effective political power passed from London to Cape Town, the seat of the Cape Parliament. This move opened the eyes of Africans to the importance of the franchise (right to vote), which had been theoretically color-blind since the first Cape Parliament of

---

<sup>71</sup>Odendaal, pp. 33-38; Switzer, pp. 121-122. *Isigidimi* was later edited by J.T. Jabavu, who established *Imvo Zabantsundu*, the first black-owned newspaper, in 1884: D. Hemson, “The African Press, “A Study of the History and Development of African Publications in South Africa,” (University of Natal, BA Honours. 1969, p.11).

1854. But although about 700 amaMfengu qualified for the franchise in Victoria East in 1873, and 280 applied for registration, the court turned them all down on 'technical grounds,' to appease the white electorate. Under J.T. Jabavu, as editor from 1881, *Isigidimi* became the mouthpiece of the African nation. He used the newspaper to educate Africans about their rights, the importance of the vote, as well as organization, he emphasized the need for African 'advancement and combination. 'African intellectuals took the lead in bringing about solidarity and unity amongst Africans as seen in the formation of bodies like the Native Educational Association (NEA) and other organizations. Early in 1885 Bhele Chief MbovaneMabandla took the lead in organizing an "Empire League," to pressure the Imperial Government to take the government of Africans from the settler Parliament.<sup>72</sup>



*Imbumba Yamanyama*, established in Port Elizabeth in September 1882 is generally recognized as the first African political organization in southern Africa clearly working towards African unity and fighting for the rights of all Africans rather than the traditional rights of specific chiefs and chiefdoms. The name of the organization reflected the inspiration of the prophet Ntsikana towards "*imbumba yamanyama* [inseparable unity of all black people]." This *Imbumba* was the first to realize that the struggle of African liberation had entered a new phase, and that the battles of the day against white domination required to be tackled not by guns, but by writing, hence "fighting with the pen" became the unifying theme in their quest for political rights. Everything about this new organization had connotations of unity, the uplifting

---

<sup>72</sup> Odendaal, pp. 67-69.

of the “family of Africa” which transcended the feuds between the different African nations – amaMfengu, amaXhosa, amaZulu and abeSuthu all had to form “a unity that nothing could dissolve”. *Imbumba* thus heralded the birth of the various black freedom organizations that mushroomed in the different colonies of South Africa around the beginning of the new century, culminating in the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) which was established in 1912.

With the coming of the white-dominated Union of South Africa in 1910, the aged Veldman Bikitsha thought it strategic to remind the British government of Mfengu services to the British Crown. He introduced “Fingo Emancipation Day” every 14 May to commemorate the oath at the *mqwashu* tree. But the British paid no attention and the move provoked the amaXhosa, who responded with a Ntsikana day of their own.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, although amaXhosa-amaMfengu tensions could not disappear overnight, it would be a mistake to regard the political competition between African leaders J.T. Jabavu (a Mfengu) and W.B. Rubusana (a Xhosa) as ethnically motivated. Prominent Xhosa intellectuals such as I. Wauchope and J.K. Bokwe supported Jabavu, whereas R.T. Kawa, author of *IBali lamaMfengu*, was at some point the editor of Rubusana’s newspaper, the *Izwi laBantu*. By the time (1923) that Congress officially changed its name to African National Congress, the old enmity was already dead. The advent of South African democracy in 1994 finally brought to fruition the healing process started by these school-educated intellectuals of the nineteenth century.

---

<sup>73</sup> Mqhayi, *Ityala lamaWele*, pp.122-123; Edgar 2018, pp.32-34.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This Chapter will wrap up the whole question of amaMfengu History, their origin and how they impacted on the Eastern Cape History.

The dissertation began by looking at the various distinct aBambo Chiefdoms in the area of the Thukela River, the three biggest nations of which are the focus of this research, namely, the amaHlubi, amaBhele and amaZizi. The wars of dispersal uprooted them from their country of origin and as they migrated as refugees from their homeland, their suffering and impoverishment established in them a common identity, that of being amaMfengu. Their destitution eventually landed them in Gcalekaland, the country of the amaXhosa King Hintsa, who welcomed them and even instructed his people to assist in every possible way to make them independent respectable people again. They were given land according to their different chiefdoms so that they could live as they used to back home, as far as possible, and undergo a quick rehabilitation.

In Chapter Two, we meet amaMfengu living in Gcalekaland, as thriving citizens on their way to full rehabilitation and assimilation. It is very clear that the amaMfengu lived as free people in Gcalekaland - they had land, were involved in trade, (for example, they cultivated tobacco and sold it in exchange for cattle) and had cattle. In fact, they enjoyed full citizenship, as they were not left out in the justice system of their new country and their cases were treated equally with those of all the other amaXhosa citizens. The assertion that they were enslaved is nothing but a myth,

completely unfounded and an attempt to sow division among these sister nations. It was probably their past experiences that drew them to the missionary John Ayliff and his Word. This chapter also enables us to examine in depth, and consequently discard, the hypothesis put forward by Dr Poppy Fry, to the effect that amaMfengu did not migrate from the Thukela under the circumstances of the Mfecane wars but were, instead, a subordinate class of diverse ethnic origins.

This leads us to Chapter Three, where we see amaMfengu getting closer and closer to the missionary Ayliff, offering Ayliff the chance to gain leverage with the King of the amaGcaleka, Hintsisa. It must be remembered that initially the missionary John Ayliff had come to Gcalekaland to convert amaGcaleka to Christianity, but he had failed dismally in that mission. He found some solace with the arrival of the amaMfengu. Here were a people who had virtually nothing, and who, in their destitute condition, would surely find comfort in the Word of God. The amaMfengu were therefore a fertile ground for him to sow the seeds of Christianity. That is why, when relations between him and King Hintsisa turned sour, Ayliff turned to the amaMfengu. He knew about the tribulations they had gone through, and realized that, if he showed them sympathy, they soon would be eating out of the palm of his hand. To appear to show an interest in them and their sorry circumstances, he compiled their history, listing their chiefs and chiefdoms, and naming the different nations that had come to seek refuge in Gcalekaland, which he later published in the *Graham's Town Journal*.

It was perhaps their desire to be completely free, to have a country they could call their own, that made the idea of seeking British protection (on the advice of John Ayliff, of course) so attractive. This ultimately led to their evacuation of Gcalekaland, in the company of Ayliff. Hence Governor D'Urban emerged as a knight in shining armor in the eyes of the amaMfengu, a benefactor, a savior who was so kind as to bestow upon them a country of their own. This fitted in with the agenda of the colonial government, as the Governor Sir Benjamin D'Urban had already planned how the amaMfengu (whose presence in Gcalekaland he was aware of even before he crossed the Kei with the British forces) would provide a human buffer on the eastern frontier. The colonial government's agenda found expression in the famous three amaMfengu oaths under the Mqwashu tree at Peddie, and the missionary John Ayliff became a link through education and conversion. The amaMfengu became the obedient trustworthy human buffer the government needed on the frontier against the amaXhosa. They became a ready defense mechanism and protectors of the settlers. Their attachment to the missionaries, entrenched by the Mqwashu oaths, made them more accepting of missionary teachings.

This chapter also enables us to examine in depth, and consequently discard, the hypothesis put forward by Alan Webster under the influence of the Cobbing hypothesis that amaMfengu did not originate from Thukela, but were a diverse collection of Africans, including many amaXhosa, who were captured in a gigantic labour raid disguised as a Frontier War.



Chapter Four shows that the relationship between the colonial government and amaMfengu was so precarious that the Government was obliged to keep them happy if they wanted them on their side against amaXhosa. The amaMfengu, knowing their indispensability, capitalized on this. Sadly, the government was aware that the amaXhosa and the amaMfengu belonged virtually to the same nation - their language, physical resemblance and fighting tactics were proof of this. That is why a rapprochement between these two peoples would have been highly dangerous to the colonial government. The government therefore had to keep the animosity between the two African peoples fresh at all times as any appearance of possible friendship between amaMfengu and amaXhosa was always a thorn in the government's side.



It was therefore a relief for the colonial authorities at some stage, to realize that what looked like a hovering cloud of war was nothing else but a 'war scare,' and that the amaMfengu were still loyal. To satisfy amaMfengu complaints about land shortage, it was decided to give them part of the land taken from the amaGcaleka King Sarhili after the cattle killing of 1857. The white settlers had been desperate to get farms on this land, but the colonial officials nevertheless decided that it was more important to placate the amaMfengu. The amaMfengu continued to prosper back in the Transkei, especially under Captain Blyth, the British Agent in Fingoland. As a result, they named their educational institution, for which they themselves had collected funds, Blythwood in honor of Captain Blyth.

This chapter also enables us to examine in depth, and consequently discard, the hypothesis put forward by Professor Stapleton, under the influence of the Cobbing

hypothesis, that amaMfengu were a “pseudo-ethnicity,” amaXhosa “reategorized” as Fingos, to avail land to white farmers and create a labour reserve in Transkei.

Chapter Five deals with the changes in the triangular relationship between the amaMfengu, settlers and the colonial government. AmaMfengu had always seen themselves as equal to the settlers - birds of the same feather, so to speak, having the same hunger cravings for cattle and land, and fighting together against the amaXhosa. As a result, the view has sometimes been expressed that the amaMfengu were collaborators with the colonial government, resulting in a “Cold War” between these two nations which lasted way into the twentieth century. But, as soon as the War of Ngcayechibi (the last of these wars) was over, the colonial government showed the amaMfengu its true colours, in the form of, for example, the Disarmament Act. This Act treated the amaMfengu in the same way as the other black nations, something they never expected to see in their lifetime. Now that the whites had subdued their enemy the the amaMfengu were of no further use!

AmaMfengu were thus pushed down to the bottom of the social ladder, sharing the same status with the other black nations. This they could not stomach. It was this new status of being nonentities that pushed the amaMfengu to fight for political rights, using the same education they had been given to be better neighbours and servants of the settlers to get the franchise. The organisations that were formed brought about unity, for they had recognized the strength in unity, the solidarity that was advocated by Ntsikana long ago. The amaMfengu used these organisations in

their quest for change in the political landscape of the Eastern Cape. These organisations heralded the organizations that were formed in the twentieth century and that eventually brought about democracy in South Africa.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

## ILLUSTRATIONS

### *Traditional Leaders of amaMfengu – 2018*



Figure 4: Chief Mabandla



Figure 5: Chief Njokweni



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*



Figure 6: Chief Mavuso



Figure 7: Chief Ngwekazi





Figure 8: Regent Chieftainess of amaHlubi, Sipiwe Prudence Mhlambiso



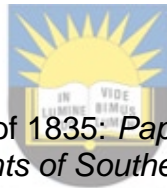
# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## A: PRIMARY SOURCES

### 1. Oral Sources

1. Interview with Chief Mabandla, J.: Krwakrwa Location, Alice, December 2017.
2. Interview with Chief Mavuso, L.: Alice, December, 2016.
3. Interview with Chief Mhlambiso, L.: Mathole Village, December 2017.
4. Interview with Chief Ngwekazi, S.: Feni Location, Peddie
5. Interview with Chief Njokweni, Z.P.: Lujiko Village, Peddie, December 2017.

### 2. Official Printed Sources



Imperial Blue Books 50 and 252 of 1835: *Papers relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Inhabitants of Southern Africa*

Imperial Blue Book 279 of 1836: *Caffre War and Death of Hintsa*

Imperial Blue Book 786 of 1847: *Correspondence re .... Eastern Frontier*

Imperial Blue Books 1635 of 1853; 1969 of 1855: *Papers re State of the Kaffir Tribes*

Imperial Blue Book 3436 of 1865: *Correspondence relative to the Annexation of British Kaffraria into the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope.*

### Cape Parliamentary Papers

1855 (Unnumbered) ' *Report of the Select Committee... relative to the disposal of the Lands in the Ceded Territory and the Chumie.*'

G5 – '58: *Papers indicating the Nature of the Plans formed by the Kaffir Chiefs, which led to the late Destruction of Cattle and Property among the Native Tribes; as also a Return of the Number of Persons who have disappeared from British Kaffraria, in consequence of those Proceedings.*

A 4 – 65: *Correspondence Relative to the Excitement that has prevailed on the Frontier.*

A 56 - 65. *Titles to land issued to Fingoes and correspondence on the refusal of Zazela to receive new certificates of citizenship.*

A 14 - 67 *Correspondence with Reference to the Principles, Conditions, and Detailed Arrangements on which the Fingo Exodus has been Carried Out.*

### 3. Archival Sources

#### 3.1 Cape Archives, Cape Town

Resident Magistrate, Albany (1/AY) Vol 8/24

British Kaffraria (BK) Vols 1, 23

Colonial Office (CO) Vols 3080 – 3082, 5384, 5711, 5802, 5963, 6163, 6168, 6190, 6593

Fingo Agent (FA) 2/1/1; 2/1/1/1; 2/1/2; 2/1/3; 3/1/3/1; 3/3/31; 8/1

Government House (GH) Vol. 23/30

Lieutenant Governor (LG): Vol 148: Military Officers of the Fingo Militia (1846-1855); Vols 305, 344-352; Letters Received from the Resident Magistrate, Alice, 1860; Vols 407 – 408, 412, 415-418, 427-460, 587, 602, 605, 684: Letters Received from the Resident Magistrate, Peddie, 1861-1863;

#### 3.2 Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown

MS 493 Smith-D'Urban, 17 April 1836

MS 2033 Smith-D'Urban Correspondence, ed. G.M. Theal, 1914

MS 15 543 John Ayliff, "Brief sketch of the history of the Fingo Tribes now on the Eastern Frontier of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope," prepared for Governor Sir George Cathcart, 7 November 1853.

MS 16, 337 H.M. Ndawo, "Ibali lamaHlubi"

MS 14,801 Reminiscences of James Ayliff

PR 896 Extract from *Evening Post*, 27 August 1960.

PR 1416 Extract from *Imvo ZabaNtsundu*, 16 October 1884.

#### 4. IsiXhosa Language Primary Sources

Anonymous, 'Indaba zokucholwa kwomntu oyiMfecane ' ( News extracted from a Mfecane person), *Umshumayeli Wendaba* 8 (April 1839), courtesy of Prof J. Opland.

Bennie, W.G.: *Imibengo* (Lovedale Press, 1935)

Gqoba, W.W., "*Imbali yaseMbo*," in Bennie, op cit.

Kawa, R.T., *Ibali lamaMfengu*, (Lovedale, 1929)

Mabandla, B.B.: *Imbali yamaBhele KaJamangile KaMabandla* (Self-Published, King Williams Town, 2012, ISBN 978-0-620-53589-2)

Mahlasela, B.E.N.: *Some Xhosa Idioms and Expressions* (Grahamstown: Rhodes University, 1982).

Mqhayi, S.E.K., *Ityala Lamawele*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, Lovedale, 1931.

Ncwana, K.K., *Amanqakwana ngeminombo Yezizwe zaseMbo* (Lovedale, 1953).

Ngqangweni, S.K.: *Emqwashini* (East London: Plaza Stationers, 2005).

Nkuhlu, W.M.: "Amantozakhe akwaNjeya," manuscript courtesy of Prof L. Wotshela.

Pamla, C. "AmaXhosa naba-Mbo," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 27 April 1887.

Rubusana, W.B., *Zemk'iinkomo Magwalandini* (1906; ed. S.C. Satyo, Cape Town: New Africa Books, 2002).

Soga, T.B.: *Intlalo kaXhosa* (Lovedale Press, 1937).

Tshaka, R.M.: *Iintsika zeNtlambo yeTyhume* (Lovedale Press, Alice, 1979).

Tshiki, W.W. " AmaZizi nezibongo zawo", in Rubusana, op cit.

#### 5. English Language Primary Sources

Alexander, J.: *Narrative of a Voyage of Observation...and a Campaign in Kaffirland*, 2vols, (London: Colburn, 1837).

Appleyard, J.: *The War of the Axe and the Xhosa Bible*. Ed. J. Frye (Cape Town: Struik, 1971).

Ayliff, J. and J. Whiteside: *History of the Abambo, generally known as Fingos* (Butterworth: Gazette, 1912).

Bowker, J.M. *Speeches, Letters and Selections from Important Papers* (1864; reprint Cape Town: Struik, 1962).

Brownlee, C. "The Old Peach Tree Trump: A reminiscence of the war of 1835," in A.M.Lewin Robinson, *Selected Articles from the Cape Monthly Magazine (New Series 1870-76)*(Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1978), pp.231-248.

Brownlee, F.: *The Transkeian Native Territories: Historical Records* (Lovedale, 1923).

Brownlee, W.T.: "Sir Benjamin D'Urban, Hints, and the Fingos," *The Critic* 4(3) (June 1936).

Bryant, A.T. *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (London: Longmans, 1929).

Bullock, J.B. (ed.): *Peddie: Settlers' Outpost* (Grahamstown: Grocott and Sherry, 1960).

Cathcart, G.: *Correspondence of ... Sir George Cathcart* (London: John Murray, 1857).

Chalmers, J.A. *Tiyo Soga: A Page of South African Mission Work*, (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1878).

Hunter, M.: *Reaction to Conquest*, Second Edition, (Oxford University Press, London, 1961).

Langalibalele, Prince B.: "AmaHlubi submission to the Commission on Traditional Leadership, Disputes and Claims," AmaHlubi National Working Committee, October 2005.(Courtesy of Prof. J.B. Peires).

Pokwana, N. and Z. Pokwana, *AmaZizi: The Dlamini of Southern Africa*, First Edition, (Adaenup, Johannesburg, 2008; Second Edition, 2015).

Rose, C.: *Four Years in Southern Africa* (London: Colburn and Bentley, 1829).

Shrewsbury, W.J.: *The Journal and Selected Letters of Rev. William J. Shrewsbury, 1826-1835*, ed. H.H. Fast (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994).

Soga, J.H.: *The South Eastern Bantu*, (Witwatersrand University Press: Johannesburg, 1930).

Theal, G.M.: *Documents relating to the Kaffir War of 1835* (London, Cowes, 1912).

## 6. Newspapers and Journals

*Grahamstown Journal*

*Imvo Zabantsundu*

*Kaffir Express (Isigidimi samaXhosa)*

*The Christian Express*

## B. SECONDARY SOURCES

### 1. Books

Beinart, W. and C. Bundy: *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987).

Bond, J. *They were South Africans*, (Oxford University Press, London, 1956).

Bundy, C.: *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1979).

Couzens, T. *Battles of South Africa* (Claremont: David Philip, 2004).

Crais, C. *The Making of the Colonial Order: White Supremacy and Black Resistance in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865* (Wits University Press, 1992).

Dracopoli, J.L.: *Sir A. Stockenstrom, 1792-1864*: (Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1969).

Du Toit, A.E. "The Cape Frontier, 1847-1866," *Archives Yearbook for South African History* (1954).

Edgar, R.R. *The Finger of God, Enoch Mgijima, the Israelites and the Bulhoek Massacre in South Africa*, (University of Virginia Press, 2018).

Etherington, N.: *The Great Treks* (Harlow: Pearson, 2001).

Galbraith, J.S. *Reluctant Empire: British Policy on the South African Frontier, 1834-1854*, Berkeley, (University of California Press, 1963).

Legassick, M. *The Struggle for the Eastern Cape, 1800 - 1854: Subjugation and the roots of South African Democracy* (Johannesburg, KMM Review Publishing Company, 2010.).

Lester, A.: *Imperial Networks* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

Majeke, N.: *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest* (1952; reprinted APDUSA: Cumberwood 1986).

Milton, J.: *The Edges of War* (Cape Town: Juta, 1983).

Mostert, N.: *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People* (London: Pimlico, 1993).

Odendaal, A.: *The Founders: the Origins of the ANC and the Struggle for Democracy in South Africa* (Auckland Park: Jacana, 2012).

Owen, D.R.: *Ubukhosi neenkokheli: A directory of Eastern Cape Black leaders, from c.1700 to 1990*, (Grahamstown: Albany Museum, 1994.).

Peires, J.B. *The Dead Will Arise* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989).

Peires, J.B. *The House of Phalo: a History of the Xhosa in the Days of their Independence* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981).

Price, R.: *Making Empire* (Cambridge: University Press, 2008).

Saunders, C.C.: "The Annexation of the Transkeian Territories," *Archives Yearbook for South African History* (1976).

Stapleton, T.J.: *Maqoma and Xhosa Resistance to Colonial Advance* (Parklands: Jonathan Ball, 1994).

Switzer, L.: *Power and Resistance in an African Society: The Ciskei Xhosa and the Making of South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1933).

Theal, G.M.: *History of South Africa from 1873 to 1884* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1919).

Thompson, L.: *A History of South Africa* (Yale University Press, 1990).

Troup, F.: *South Africa: An Historical Introduction* (London, Eyre Methuen Ltd, 1972).

Wright, J. and Manson, A.: *The Hlubi Chieftdom in Zululand-Natal* (Ladysmith: Historical Society, 1983).

## 2. Journal Articles and Chapters in Books

Bundy, C.: "The Transkei Peasantry, c. 1890-1914: 'Passing through a Period of Stress,' in R. Palmer and N. Parsons, *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1977).

Cobbing, J.: "The Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo," *Journal of African History* 29 (1988).



Erlank, N.: "Re-examining initial encounters between Christian Missionaries and the Xhosa, 1820-1850," *African Historical Review*, 31 (1999).

Fry, P.: "*Siyamfenguza: The Creation of Fingo-ness in South Africa's Eastern Cape, 1800-1835*," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36 (2010).

Jabavu, D.D.T.: "The Fingo Slavery Myth," *South African Outlook*, 65 (1935).

Lamont Smith, A.J.: "Calderwood, Henry," in W.J. De Kock (ed.), *Dictionary of South African Biography*, Vol. 1 (Cape Town: National Council for Social Research, 1968).

Moyer, R.A.: "The Mfengu, Self-Defence and the Cape Frontier Wars," in C. Saunders and R. Derricourt, *Beyond the Cape Frontier* (London: Longman, 1974).

Nhanha, V. and Peires, J.B. "Introduction" in R. Kawa, *Ibali lamaMfengu*, (Grahamstown: Cory Library, 2011).

Peires, J.B.: " ' Fellows with big holes in their ears': the ethnic origins of amaMfengu," *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa* 65 (2011).

Stapleton, T.J. " Gathering under the Milkwood Tree: the Development of Mfengu Tribalism in the Eastern Cape, 1878-1978," *New Contree*, 41(1997).

Stapleton, T.J. "Oral Evidence in a Pseudo-Ethnicity: The Fingo Debate," *History in Africa*, 22 (1995).

Stapleton, T.J. "The Expansion of a Pseudo-Ethnicity in the Eastern Cape: Reconsidering the Fingo "Exodus" of 1865," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol, 29, No.2 (1996).

Webster, A.: "*Unmasking the Fingo: the War of 1835 Revisited*," in C. Hamilton (ed.), *The Mfecane Aftermath* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1995).

Wright, J.: " Turbulent Times: Political Transformations in the North and East, 1760-1830's", in C. Hamilton et al, *Cambridge History of South Africa*, Volume 1, (Cambridge University Press, 2010)

### **3. Theses, Dissertations and Unpublished Papers**

Fry, P.A.: "Allies and Liabilities: Fingo Identity and British Imperialism in South Africa's Eastern Cape, 1800-1935," (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, August 2007).

Hemson, D.: "The African Press, A Study of the History and Development of African Publications in South Africa," University of Natal, BA Honors (Comparative African Government and Publications, Durban, 1969.).

Maxengana, N.S.: "The Causes of the Eighth Frontier War: The War of Mlanjeni, 1850 -1852" (Honours Thesis, University of Fort Hare, 1989).

Maxengana, N.S.: "The Impact of Missionary Activities and the Establishment of Victoria East, 1824-1860" (M.A. Dissertation, University of Fort Hare, 2012).

Moyer, R.A.: "A History of the Mfengu of the Eastern Cape, 1815-1865," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of London, 1976).

Spicer, M.W.: "The War of Ngcayechibi," (M.A.Thesis, Rhodes University, 1978).

Tisani, N., "Gender Relations in Mission Stations", (unpublished paper presented to the Conference on People, Power and Culture: the History of Christianity in South Africa," 1992).

Webster, A.C. "Ayliff, Whiteside, and the Fingo "Emancipation" of 1835: A Reappraisal," BA (Honors) Thesis, Rhodes University, 1988.

Webster, A.C. "Land Expropriation and Labour Extraction under Cape Colonial Rule: the War of 1835 and the 'Emancipation' of the Fingo (M.A. Thesis, Rhodes University, 1991).

Williams, D.: "The Missionaries on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony, 1799 -1853" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1959).



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*