

The View from the Toposcope: talking to the Xhosa Genealogy

by Jeff Peires

It is now more than forty years since the publication of my first book, *The House of Phalo* (1981), during which time I have done a little more research and discovered many more mistakes. A revised edition is in the pipeline (but it's a very long pipeline), and I greatly appreciated the kind opportunity offered by the Lower Albany Historical Society to air some of my revisions via Power Point, and which I will now attempt to clarify and substantiate. I append a short Bibliography for readers who would like to investigate further and, rather than lumping everything together into one long and tedious chronological narrative, propose to present you with a sort of highlights package, which you should be able to follow with the assistance of Margaret Snodgrass's excellent genealogical table.

Highlight One: the Khoisan Background

As *The House of Phalo* explained, the most powerful of the Khoisan rulers in the 17th Century was Hinsati, king of the Inqua, who ruled the Camdeboo in the neighbourhood of Aberdeen. His kingdom was disrupted by the Xhosa civil war between Tshiwo, father of Phalo, and his brother Gando. Around 1760 the last of the Inqua rulers, Queen Hoho, was defeated by Xhosa chief Rharhabe, and her followers incorporated into the Xhosa kingdom as members of the Sukwini, Gqwashu and isiThathu clans.

Important research by Randolph Vigne on a 'French boy' shipwrecked in the late 18th Century has revealed that the coastal lands west of the Mzimvubu river were occupied by another group of Khoisan, later incorporated into the Xhosa kingdom as members of the Ngqosini clan. Several intermarried with convicted Xhosa witches saved by a kind-hearted executioner named Khwane. Khwane was elevated to chiefship by King Tshiwo and his people, known as the amaGqunukhwebe, settled around the Mnyameni (Bushmans) River near Alexandria.

KHOISAN PEOPLES

- * Khoi Boundary - Inxu (Wildebeest) River
- * amaNgqosini – Transkei Interior
- * Inqua [Graaff-Reinet] - amaSukwini – Queen Hoho
- * Damaqua – Zwartkops River
- * Gonaqua – East of Zwartkops
- * "Hoengiqua" - Captain Ruiter

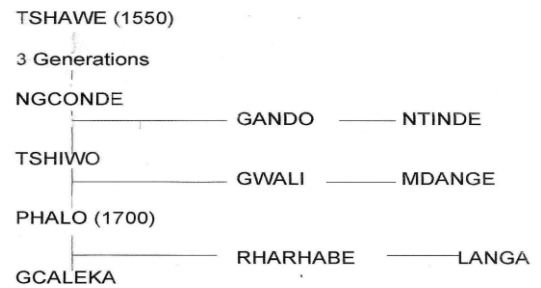
The first literate observer to enter the later Lower Albany was Ensign Beutler in 1752. He found these lands occupied by a mixed population of Khoisan and Xhosa and ruled over by a warlord named "Ruiter," a Hoengiqua Khoi from the area around Laingsburg in the Western Cape. After his death, his followers were incorporated into the Xhosa kingdom as members of the Giqwa clan.

Highlight Two : the Xhosa Royal Family

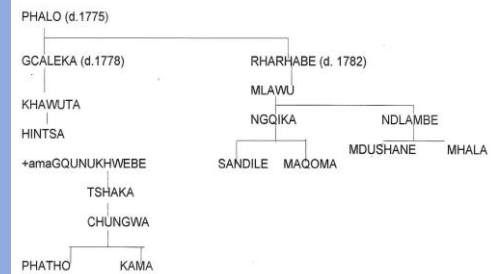
All Xhosa chiefs, except for the amaGqunukhwebe, are descended from Tshawe, who founded the kingdom by defeating his brother Cirha sometime before 1600. Very little is known about any of the early kings until the time Ngconde, father of Tshiwo and Gando already mentioned. After the death of Tshiwo, whose grave is located near Coffee Bay, the Xhosa migrated rapidly westward and, although the grave of King Phalo is located near Butterworth, he also had Great Places in the later Komga district.

Although the royal family had already suffered several splits and disintegrations, it became even more polarized after Gcaleka, the heir-apparent, disappeared into the Ngxingxolo stream and emerged as a “traditional doctor.” Rharhabe, Phalo’s Right-Hand son, objected and, crossing the Kei, established an autonomous domain which extended as far as Somerset East (known in isiXhosa as Nojoli, the name of Rharhabe’s wife). Rharhabe was well-disposed to the *trekboere* of the Boschberg but struggled to impose his authority over the Xhosa chiefs descended from Mdange, who had preceded him west of the Kei. Rharhabe, together with his Great Son Mlawu, died in battle against the Thembu, and was succeeded about 1782 by his son Ndlambe, acting as Regent for Rharhabe’s minor son, Ngqika. Ndlambe continued his father’s policy of alliance with the *trekboere*, and the two joined forces to defeat the amaGqunukhwebe and the amaMbalu (followers of Langa, another son of Phalo) during the Second Frontier War (1793) fought mainly around Alexandria. Once grown to manhood however, Ngqika rebelled against his uncle and drove him across the Fish River into the “Zuurveld,” the former Dutch name for the later Albany district (1798).

XHOSA GENEALOGY 1550-1750



XHOSA GENEALOGY 1750-1850



Highlight Three: the Frontier Wars

FRONTIER CONFLICTS 1779-1812

- * Natural Boundary – Suurberge north of Addo / Division between Stellenbosch and Swellendam Districts prior to establishment of Graaff-Reinet in 1786
- * Van Plettenberg Agreement only relevant to northern zone
- * Zuurveld occupied by amaGqunukhwebe and others
- * ImiDange Chiefs to the north; others to the south
- * Warlord Ruiter
- * Further destabilized by the arrival of Chief Ndlambe c.1796

In following the sequence of the Frontier Wars, it is helpful to remember that the Suurberge (range of mountains north of Addo) was a formidable natural obstacle in the 18th Century, dividing the magisterial district of Stellenbosch (Graaff-Reinet after 1786) from that of Swellendam (Uitenhage after 1803).

It follows that the 1778 agreement between Governor Van Plettenberg and the chiefs of the imiDange (NOT the chiefs of the amaGwali as previously asserted) was binding only on the Xhosa north of the Zuurberg (Cookhouse/Adelaide), and not on the chiefs of Lower Albany. These confusions led indirectly to the First Frontier War of 1779-1781). It is also worth noting that the chiefs resident in Lower Albany were hostile to Ndlambe when he crossed the Fish River in 1798 in flight from his nephew Ngqika.

FRONTIER CONFLICTS [CONTINUED]

First [1779-1781] ImiDange / Adriaan van Jaarsveld

Second [1793] *Trekboere* + Ndlambe / Zuurveld Chiefs

**** **First British Occupation [1795-1803]**

Third [1799-1802] Xhosa and Khoi [Stuurman] against *trekboere*

**** **Second British Occupation [1806-]**

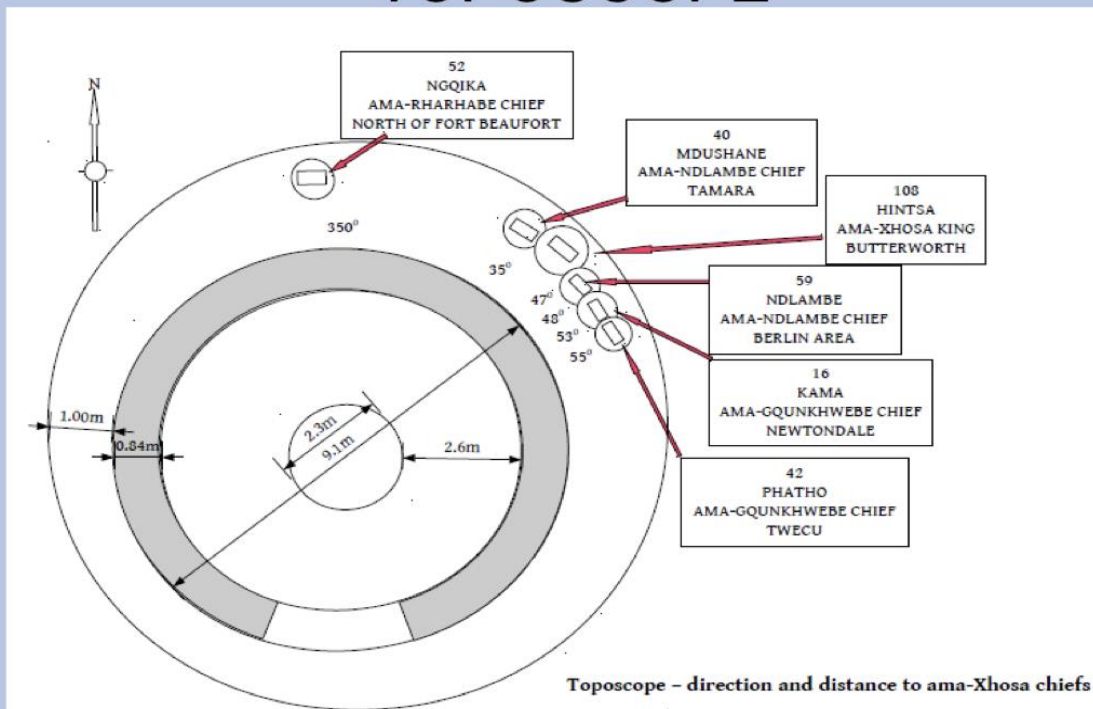
Fourth [1811-12] Colonel Graham

Ndlambe, in his capacity as Regent of the amaRharhabe, had assisted the *trekboers* of Barend Lindeque during the Second Frontier War of 1793, and was responsible for the death of Tshaka, the father of the Gqunukhwebe chief Chungwa. The Third Frontier War (1799-1803) was fought mainly between Alexandria and Port Elizabeth. It erupted almost by mistake, when the British forces landed in the Bay (to put down the Graaff-Reinet rebellion). The Khoisan (led by Stuurman brothers) thought the British were coming to fight the *trekboere* and rose up to support them. Chief Chungwa of the Gqunukhwebe, on the other hand, thought that the British had come to drive him out of the Zuurveld and attacked them. The British then changed sides and joined the *trekboere* against the Khoisan/Xhosa alliance. The whites were driven out of the whole Eastern Cape as far as Plettenburg Bay, except for the Ferreira family who held Fort Frederick against all comers until the return of the Dutch Batavian government in 1803. The Fourth Frontier War (1811-12), as is well known, was initiated by Governor John Cradock who ordered Colonel John Graham to drive the Xhosa across the Fish river, which they did. The result was the Fifth Frontier War (battle of Grahamstown 1819), which led to the Sixth Frontier War (death of Xhosa king Hintsa 1835), and so on.

Highlight Four : Toposcope

HINTSA (c 1785-1835): King of the senior Gcaleka branch of the Xhosa and, therefore, in genealogical terms, king also of the Xhosa chiefs on the immediate colonial frontier. He was not involved in the earliest frontier conflicts, but hostile to Ngqika whose army defeated the Gcaleka army while Hintsa was still a child. Hintsa was present at the battle of Amalinde (near Dimbaza) in 1818 whereby the amaNgqika were defeated by the joint forces of Hintsa, Ndlambe and Phatho. Supported Ngqika's sons Maqoma and Tyhali during the Frontier War of 1834-5. Held hostage by Governor D'Urban, he was shot and killed while trying to escape. Most Xhosa people believe that Hintsa's head was cut off and taken to Britain but there is no proof of this although his body was certainly mutilated.

XHOSA CHIEFS' CAIRNS ON BATHURST TOPOSCOPE



NGQIKA (c.1780-1829): Impatient to rule and, most probably under the influence of his mother's lover, Coenraad de Buys, he seized the Rharhabe throne from his uncle, the Regent Ndlambe. Ngqika seduced Thuthula, his uncle's wife, about 1807, and continued the rivalry until defeated at the Battle of Amalinde in 1818. Appealing to Lord Charles Somerset for help, he supported the British during the Fifth Frontier War (1818-9), thereby losing credibility with his own people, turning to drink and dying young at the age of 50.

His Great Place was just north of present-day Fort Beaufort.

NDLAMBE (c. 1750-1828). Son of Rharhabe and Regent to the young Ngqika, he initially allied with the *trekboere* against their common enemies, the amGqunukhwebe and other chiefdoms who had crossed the Fish earlier on. Following his relocation to the Zuurveld in 1800, however, he became the colonists' most determined enemy, leading resistance to Colonel Graham in the War of 1811-1812, adhering to King Hintsa and sponsoring the prophet Makhanda. After the defeat of 1819, he delegated his powers to Mdushane and welcomed the Wesleyan missionaries to his Great Place near Mount Coke.

MDUSHANE (c.1790-1830). Great Son of Ndlambe, who led the Xhosa armies when they attacked Grahamstown in 1819. Revisiting the city in 1826 to return some stolen horses, he and his councillors "were treated with unexpected kindness by the British colonists generally: received numerous presents and returned highly satisfied with their visit" (Kay 1833: 89-90). Mdushane died young; his heir Siwani was outmanoeuvred by Mhala, his crafty brother, who succeeded to the chiefship of the amaNdlambe, leaving the imiDushane an autonomous but junior house.

PHATHO (c.1790-1865) and KAMA (c.1795-1875) were sons of the Gqunukhwebe chief Chungwa (c1840-1812) who was murdered by *trekboere* near Woody Cape in revenge for the murder of the Landdrost Stockenstrom (the Elder) near the Zuurberg Mountain Inn at the outset of the Fourth Frontier War. The amaGqunukhwebe fought in all the early Frontier Wars but were befriended by the Wesleyan Missionary William Shaw and consequently remained neutral during the Frontier War of 1834-1835. **Kama** converted to Christianity, refusing to marry Mdushane's daughter as his second wife, thereby seriously offending Xhosa custom. The missionaries facilitated his removal from Newtondale (near the Fish River Sun) to Kamastone mission near Whittlesea, and thence to Middledrift where he died. **Phatho**, on the other hand, felt betrayed by the missionaries, and became the most resolute opponent of the colony during the War of the Axe (1846-7). During the War of Mlanjeni (1850-3), he was held a virtual prisoner at Fort Murray, a hostage for the good behaviour of his people. His cattle had been decimated by lung-sickness in 1855; he enthusiastically supported the Nongqawuse cattle-killing and was briefly imprisoned on Robben Island along with his Great Son, Dilima. The Phatho branch of the amaGqunukhwebe lost all their land along the East London coast and their chiefship was likewise annihilated until restored by Ciskei President Sebe in the 1970s.

About the Author:

Jeff Peires retired from Fort Hare at the end of 2019 and is working on a revision of *The House of Phalo*, his first book, published in 1981.

FURTHER READING :

Crampton, Hazel et al, *Into the Hitherto Unknown: Ensign Beutler's Expedition to the Eastern Cape, 1752* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, Series II, No. 44, 2013)

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