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THE HISTORY OF FIRIE
MISSION AND AMAHLEKE CHIEFDOM

THESIS

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by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the history of the amaHleke people and Pirie Mission, which have become so closely associated that they cannot be separated. It covers the period from the time of Chief Hleke to 1967, the year in which the amaHleke chieftainship was resuscitated.

The first chapter relates the origin of the amaHleke, from the time of Hleke himself (17th century) to Jwarha (about 1820). It explains the relationship between the different branches of the Hleke royal line, and it covers the Hleke settlement at the Mqgakhwebe river.

The second chapter deals with the establishment of Pirie Mission by the Presbyterian missionaries John and Bryce Ross. It discusses the various aspects of the mission operation, and explains why and how the amaHleke opposed it. But the situation changed as a result of the 1850-3 Frontier War. Whereas the other Xhosa were expelled from their lands, the Hleke connection with Pirie Mission enabled them to stay on. The Hleke were therefore united with the mission, whether they liked it or not. The remainder of the chapter describes the educational and cultural changes which the mission imposed on them.

The third chapter covers economic change at Pirie. Like other mission stations, it was converted from communal to individual land tenure. This was opposed by Chief Jwarha as

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a blow to his authority, but it did result in the growth of a peasant class. The chapter concludes with the implementation of betterment in 1963.

The fourth chapter explains what happened to the mission after the death of Bryce Ross. The Ross missionaries had frustrated black aspirations in the church. This was especially frustrating to Burnet and Ntsikana Gaba, the great-grandsons prophet Ntsikana. Burnet broke away under the banner of the "Wee Free" branch of the Church of Scotland. This church also could not accommodate Burnet's aspirations. The remainder of the chapter deals with educational developments, with an emphasis on the introduction of Bantu Education.

The last chapter deals with the political history of Pirie after the death of Chief Jwarha. The Cape government tried to replace chieftainship by a headman and a Village Management Board. But the Board did not function satisfactorily, and it was scrapped in 1921. Pirie continued to be administered by headmen. Applications for the revival of chieftainship were turned down, partly because there was no agreement on Jwarha's heir. However, this was finally resolved in 1967 with the appointment of Chief Pani Busoshe.

INTRODUCTION

One of the major reasons for choice of this topic is that I am a member of the amaHleke and my birthplace is Pirie, where the mission station established by John Ross is situated. The mission has always been a source of curiosity to me as a child, and now that I am advanced academically, I have felt the urge to research it. As a young student of the area I have often heard elders in the village posing rhetorical questions such as "what have our own children to say about the history of their people? We have educated them out of nothing".

It is important to say loud and clear that to be ignorant of what occurred before one was born is to remain always a child. Human life becomes worthwhile only when it is woven into the life of ancestors by the records of history. This endeavour will in part satisfy my curiosity and educate my people about their past. They are concerned to a very large extent about the institution of Chieftainship. My hypothesis is that the Pirie Mission has much to do with the present day concern of the amaHleke.

It is also quite relevant to state that the history that one is often exposed to, is usually the history of political power elevated into world history. It is therefore objective to view such history from the other angle, the angle of those who have been subjugated. For this reason, and also because

the archival material is scrappy and inadequate, much use has been made of oral history from the elders of the amaHleke in Pirie Mission. The material thus obtained is very interesting and revealing.

As form of acknowledgement I owe a debt of gratitude to all who have assisted and motivated me in the compilation of this thesis. In particular I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to my promotor, Dr J.B. Peires of the Department of History, Rhodes University, for his insightful and meritorious guidance without which the success of this study would not be realised. The staff of Rhodes University Library, especially Mr M. Berning, Mrs S. Fold and Mr Z. Vena readily made their library resources available to me for this study. Mr Denver Webb of the Kaffrarian Museum in King William's Town has been not only a help, but a friend as well.

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CHAPTER I

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE AMAHLEKE

The Amahleke chiefdom is a branch of the Xhosa Kingdom which in former times stretched between the Bashee and Kei Rivers.¹

Hleke was the son of Ngconde, the King of all the Xhosa and therefore a member of the Tshawe Royal clan. The Amahleke were one of the first Xhosa chiefdoms in what is now called the Ciskei.

Hleke, born during the seventeenth century in the Transkei, was one of Ngconde's senior sons of the Right-hand House. Ngconde's Great Son was Tshiwo followed in order of seniority by Gwali, Hleke and Mdange. It seems as if Hleke was at one time more senior, but that for some reason he was demoted. The German Missionary, A Kropf who got his information from J.K. Bokwe, states that Hleke and Mdange were twins, and that "owing to dullness, Hleke's younger brother Mdange took his place."² A contributor to Rubusana's Zemk'iinkomo Magwalandini states that "Hleke was removed from Chieftainship, and he was given to Gwali because he lacked the knowledge of how to rule."³ The exact circumstances are unclear, but it seems

¹. J. Peires: The House of Phalo, Johannesburg, 1981, Chapter 11.

². A. Kropf: Das Volk der Xosa - Kaffern, (Berlin, 1889, p. 5.

³. W.B. Rubusana: Zemk'iinkomo Magwalandini, (London, 1906), p. 88.

certain that Hleke associated with Gwali against Mdange. Hleke's chiefdom is called the amaHleke, and now resides mainly about Pirie Mission some miles West of King William's Town.

When Tshiwo died, apparently at an early age, he was survived by his brothers Gwali, Mdange and Ntinde. His recognised Great Wife, not having borne him any son was sent back to her people. Gwali ruled in Tshiwo's place not as a regent but in his own name as a legitimate successor. After the passage of some years, Mdange produced a boy called Phalo, claiming that he was the Great Son of Tshiwo. According to Mdange, Tshiwo's Great Wife was already pregnant when she was sent back to her people hence the birth of this boy, Phalo. As Gwali, Hleke and other chiefs refused to accept Phalo, fighting began among the Xhosa. Mdange was victorious, as a result Gwali fled to what is now Somerset East, where he was given land by the Khoi Chief Hinsati.⁴

The amaHleke were thus one of many nations who crossed the Kei river chased by Mdange. Hleke settled his newly-born tribe along the east bank of the Bashee River until 1720 when he moved towards the present district of King William's Town. In the meanwhile Mdange had crossed the Kei to join the amaNtinde, amaGwali and amaGqunukhwebe with his imiDange tribe. With the arrival of Hleke in the Ciskei the territory between the Kei and the Knysna forests was shared by the

⁴. J. Peires: The House of Phalo, p. 45.

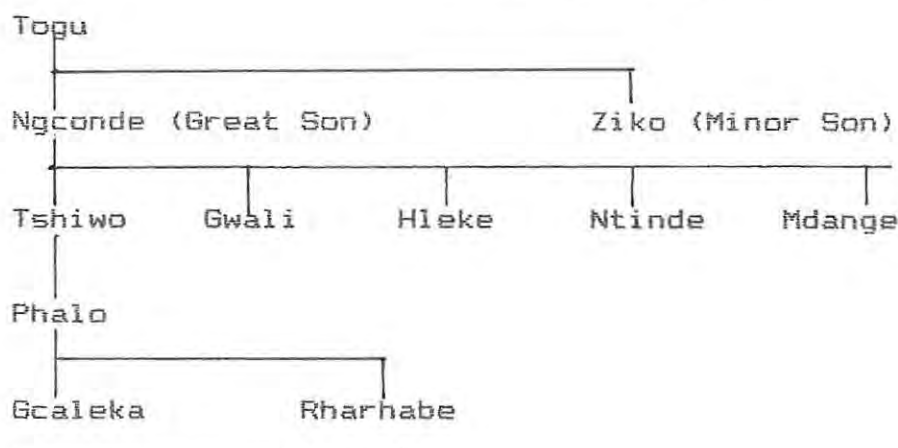
amaNtinde, amaGwali amaGqunukhwebe, imiDange and amaHleke long before Phalo's sons Gcaleka and Rharhabe were born.⁵

It was Ntinde, Hleke's uncle, who assigned land to Hleke and his tribe. That was the land today known as Toyise, Hleke, Rabhula, Izeli, Peelton and part of the present Stutterheim district.⁶ When Phalo came of age, Mdange yielded the royal authority to him and went to live west of the Kei, which he ruled in the name of the King.⁷

These minor chiefdoms broke away from the main Xhosa stem before the conflict between Gcaleka and Rharhabe, which led to the division of the Xhosa nucleus, the two virtually autonomous divisions of the amaGcaleka and the amaRharhabe.

GENEALOGY 1

The Family of Toqu



⁵. S.M. Burns-Ncamashe: The AmaHleke Tribe of King William's Town Monograph (Uitenhage, 1967).

⁶. Ibid.

⁷. J. Peires: The House of Phalo, p. 46.

Nothing worth mentioning was ever done by Phalo during his period of reign instead he was overshadowed by his sons, Scaleka and Rharhabe who caused the split of his nation. His heir Scaleka, when he came of age was:

"instigated by his young Councillors to claim control of the tribe, although his father, Phalo, was still in the vigour of body and mind. Rharhabe the right-hand son of Phalo and his, father's favourite, opposed the heirs pretensions and war followed."⁶

Although Rharhabe was victorious in the war, he decided to cross the Kei river and settled at Amabhele near present day Stutterheim. "This split may be regarded as the most significant feature of Xhosa internal politics in the second half of the eighteenth century."⁷ This occurred before the death of Phalo in 1775.

The westward movement of Rharhabe across the Kei was not an easy one. He got strong resistance from the Khoi chiefdom living west of the Kei river, refusing him entry into their country. Nevertheless the Khoi were defeated and driven back with their chief killed in the battle. Chieftainess Hoho was forced to cede her land in exchange for tobacco, dagga and

⁶. J.H. Soga: The South Eastern - Bantu, (Johannesburg 1930), p. 124.

⁷. J. Peires: The House of Phalo, p. 46.

dogs.¹⁰ It was after this fighting between Rharhabe and the Khoi nation that the Hleke chiefdom was settled in the present place of the Hoho forest.

We will give a full geographical description of Pirie later, as it existed after the War of 1850-1853, when its boundaries were finally settled. The following description by Reverend van der Kemp, who settled there briefly in 1799, gives some idea of how the area appeared to the first amaHleke:

"Before this house we had a beautiful field of grass in the middle of an amphitheatre of high mountains, inhabited by numbers of caffres, divided into different kraals, eleven of which were near us. Round the foot of the mountain the river Guatzoeby (Mggakwebe) ran, affording us most excellent water. The ascent to the mountains was covered by a thick wood of timber of every kind: some of the trees were above one hundred feet high. Above this wood towards the top of the mountain were meadows of a vast extent, and of a beautiful verdure and the top itself was covered with inaccessible woods."¹¹

The district was also known to produce abundant sorghum (amazimba) and sweetcane (imfe).¹²

¹⁰. Ibid., p. 48.

¹¹. J.T. van der Kemp, "Second Attempt to Enter Caffraria," Transactions of the London Missionary Society," Vol. I, 404.

¹². J. Backhouse: A Narrative of a visit to the Mauritius and South Africa (London, 1844, pp. 233-4.

Mdange was reluctant to accept Rharhabe's seniority. We do not know what the Hleke chief's view about this matter was, but in the end, Rharhabe being a stronger chief, his leadership was eventually recognised by all the other chiefs except the amaGqunukhwebe, who claimed that they were directly under the Gcaleka line. The amaHleke, though not minor by birth, recognised Rharhabe's leadership.¹³

We have no information concerning where the amaHleke stood in the conflicts between Ngqika and Ndlambe. However, unlike Ndlambe, the amaHleke never crossed the Fish River. They always remained where they are. When the missionary van der Kemp came to Ngqika in 1799 and asked him for a place to settle, Ngqika pointed out the amaHleke district around the Mqgakhwebe river. The Hleke chiefs also called in Ngqika to settle their disputes.¹⁴ They should therefore be seen politically, as autonomous chiefdom within Ngqika's sphere of influence.

Hleke had four houses, namely the Great House which gave him only a daughter, the renowned Ntlushe. In this Great House known as uMcholo, Hleke had no male issue. The second house is the Right-hand house known as Jikolo with Mtyawu as its heir.

¹³. J. Peires: *The House of Phalo*, p. 48.

¹⁴. T. Enklaar: *Life and Work of Dr J.T. van der Kemp* (Cape Town and Rotterdam, 1988), pp. 96-7.

W.B. Rubusana: *Zemk'iinkomo Magwalandini*, p. 200.

The third or the Left-hand House with Mtshiza as the senior son is known as Mwangwini while the last one or Ixhiba called Hobe, Matadi is a descendant.¹⁵

When the Great House had no male issue, Mtshiza, with the approval of Rharhabe, was transferred into it. He was thus treated as Iqadi of the Great House, whose business was to substitute for the heirs of the Great House. (Ube ke yinkulu yomzi).¹⁶ Mtshiza remained head of the Great House until his eldest son and heir, Mangxa, became of age. Mtshiza then handed over the seniority to Mangaxa and took up his former inferior place of the head of the "Hobe" or the Left-hand House. Today it is Mangxa's descendants who enjoy precedence among the Hleke people.¹⁷

Mangxa had twins in his Great House namely Xili and Vazi. The polygamous Xili had two daughters from the senior wife called Xhalata and Nongongo. Xili married a second wife, Nokandlo, a commoner from the Mpinga clan. She had the following sons, Bini, Khwankwa, Tshetshe and Sijentula.¹⁸ His twin brother Vazi had three sons, namely Mambu, Cata and Kula. In the circumstances Nokhandlo's eldest son, Bini, was raised to the status of senior chief of amaHleke while his brother, Khwankwa was appointed the Head of the Right-hand House of Xili.¹⁹

¹⁵. Imvo Zabantsundu, 4 May 1963.

¹⁶. W.B. Rubusana: Zemk'iinkomo Magwalandini, p. 198.

¹⁷. Imvo Zabantsundu: 4 May 1963.

¹⁸. W.B. Rubusana: Zemk'iinkomo Magwalandini, p. 199.

¹⁹. Imvo Zabantsundu: 25 May 1963.

Whilst Xili was still in power, Bini, still very young was sent to the Transkei where he stayed with his mother's people. When Xili died, the amaHleke chiefdom nominated Vazi regent until Bini was of age. After some years, a group of Hleke people without consulting Vazi, crossed the Kei river and fetched Bini, the heir to the Hleke chieftainship. With the support of some of the councillors, Vazi refused to hand over the royal seat. It was then that some prominent personalities of the Mcholo and Jikolo houses decided to eject Vazi from Chieftainship. It was also at this time that Vazi's eldest son Mambu, followed by the younger brothers, Mbovana, Makani, Msindwana, Ngingi and Febhana moved to settle in the Transkei for several years. The exact year in which these events took place is not known but this occurred in Ngqika's time, that is about the year 1800.²⁰

It is clear that relations between Bini and his uncle Vazi were very strained. On one occasion Vazi sent out a hunting-party, and a man named Gwadele killed an elephant. When Vazi sent a man to get the task, he was caught and beaten by Bini. Shortly thereafter, Bini sent a band of armed men, who attacked Vazi at his home. Vazi survived but all except two of his men were killed.

W.K. Ntsikana relates that Vazi was very much disappointed by these events. When an epidemic broke out, covering Bini and two women of his family in sores and then killing them, the blame naturally fell on Vazi.

²⁰. W.B. Rubusana: Zemk'iinkomo Magwalandini, p. 70.

It was said that he had purchased a medicine from the Thembu, paying a cow and a calf for it. This accusation, however, was probably due to jealousy. While Bini's heir was still young, Vazi ruled as regent a position filled by Vazi descendants in later times.²¹

Bini had two children before he died, a daughter named Nomaheya and a son named Jwarha. Jwarha grew up in the Transkei at kwaMjubi, the place of his mother. He was brought up and circumcised over there and served Hintsu, the Gcaleka Xhosa King. When the time arrived, Jwarha's uncle Tshetshe and some other amaHleke arrived to bring him home. His mother's people loved him so much that they did not want to let him go. Eventually he departed, leaving twenty of his thirty cattle behind him. When they got back Vazi handed over the chieftainship to Jwarha without any hesitation. This was after Ngqika's defeat at Amalinde probably in the early 1820's.²²

One of Jwarha's most famous exploits was his expedition against Chief Diko of the Mpondomise in the Transkei. In those days, new army recruits received their training by actual fighting. It was also customary for a new chief to

²¹. W.B. Rubusana: Zemk'iinkomo Magwalandini, p. 70.

²². W. Ntsikana, quoted by Rubusana, Zemk'iinkomo, p. 200.

W.D. Hammond - Tooke: The Tribes of King William's Town District (Pretoria, 1958), p. 120.

show his ability by some great deed. The form of provocation which most quickly brought the desired results was the forcible seizure of cattle. This was normally done in broad daylight.²³

In this matter, Chief Jwarha acted together with Chief Sonto of the amaMbalu, who was probably of an age with him. Diko's Mpondomise were a very powerful group, but the combined force of the amaHleke and amaMbalu were armed with guns and horses, which were not yet available in the Transkei. The first step was to send scouts to check whether there were any cattle worth seizing.²⁴ These scouts returned and reported to Chief Sonto that there were plenty of cattle at Diko's place. The Hleke army commanded by Chief Jwarha assisted by Chief Sonto left immediately for the Transkei. Some of the warriors stayed behind, however, as the hut at the Great Place belonging to Jwarha's mother had burned down mysteriously. This was considered to be a bad omen.

On reaching the Gangululu mountains in Diko's land, another group of spies under the leadership of Jwaqu of the amaHleke and Heyi of the amaMbalu, were sent to the Great Place to make an attempt to capture whatever cattle were at their disposal.

²³. S.M. Burns-Ncamashe: The amaHleke Tribe of King William's Town.

J. Peires: The House of Phalo, p. 7.

²⁴. The story of the expedition is related by W.K. Ntsikana, quoted in Rubusana: Zemk'iinkomo, pp. 201-202.

Unfortunately for them, their presence was already known. As a result, Heyi and Canekana were captured in the skirmishes. In desperation, Heyi shouted for Jwaqu asking him that he should bring his cattle as ransom as he had been captured. Heyi's captors would not listen to his plea, but confiscated his gun and remanded him in custody. Jwaqu alarmed the rest of the Hleke army on the mountain about what had happened.

Chief Sonto, who became emotionally concerned as Heyi was his favourite soldier, demanded that they should retaliate immediately but his proposal was thwarted by the majority of the army who felt that any attack should be done in the morning not in the evening as was then the case. Fighting began in the early hours of the day as planned. In the chaos which characterized the beginning of this attack on Diko's Great Place, Heyi got an opportunity to escape, managing even to recover his own gun. Diko's army tried hard to fight back and though the Hleke army seemed victorious at the beginning, it was defeated and forced to flee. Chief Jwarha would have been killed, were it not for Jwaqu who was the most courageous and determined warrior. Infact the enemy, noticing that Chief Jwarha was very tired ordered him to stop running so that they could stab him. Jwaqu strengthened his chief by singing praise names and urging him to continue running as he says:

"Uso Ndundumesha
 Ugabusixaka
 Lumek' amalongwe simke
 Mazembe lukuni, nakona beyijwaqu akukuphuma nto
 Umzimba wenxawa ntwana ingaka na?
 Idla ngetshoba sihlahlaninga

The man with a big body
 He who opens the way
 Light up the cow's dung and off we go
 The axes are heavy, even though they hit they will
 get nothing.
 The body of the animal, is it a small thing?
 It hits with the tail and we are shocked²⁵

By that time Chief Jwarha had already lost even his sheep skin. Chief Diko's army managed to rescue some of the cattle which had in the course of the fight been swept off by a group of Hleke warriors on horseback. But the amaHleke managed to retain Diko's favourite ox called Dangazele. A lot of people died in this battle.

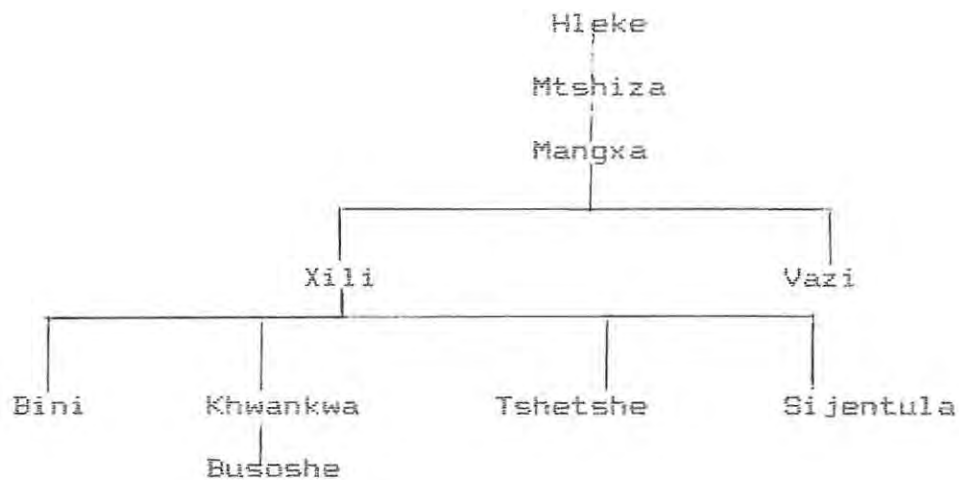
The Hleke army, returning home did not go straight to their homesteads, being in need of purification after their defeat. Instead they went to Hoho forest where Diko's ox, Dangazele, washed by national medicines, was eaten. Part of the ceremony ordered by the diviner was that all Hleke polygam-

²⁵. W.B. Rubusana: Zemk'iinkomo Magwalandini, p. 203.

ists should sleep with their senior wives on the night before the feast. During that night, Jwarha's brother Khwankwa chose Nomsa out of his three wives to sleep with.²⁶ This tradition became very important in the Hleke chieftainship dispute of the 1960's.

GENEALOGY II

THE FAMILY OF HLEKE



²⁶. S.M. Burns-Ncamashe, The amaHleke Tribe of King William's Town. Monograph, 8 June 1967.

CHAPTER IITHE ROSS MISSION TO THE AMAHLEKE1. The establishment of Pirie Mission

Dr Johannes Theodorus van der Kemp, the first Missionary to the Xhosa, was sent by Chief Ngqika to the amaHleke at the Mqgakhwebe river in October 1799. In his journals, van der Kemp gives us no information at all about the amaHleke, though he clearly found the place very attractive and fertile and tried planting European crops such as potatoes, raspberries and peaches. He founded a school, but made no converts and was forced to leave in April 1800, as a result of troubles caused by the Third Frontier War and Ndlambe's rebellion against Ngqika.¹

The next missionary among the amaHleke remained there for much longer than Dr van der Kemp, forty-seven years, in fact. He was Reverend John Ross of the Glasgow Missionary Society.

This Society, which was founded in 1796, decided to extend its operations to the Eastern Cape in 1820. It

¹. Transactions of the London Missionary Society, Volume I, pp. 404-416.

was the second Mission Society to do so, the first being the London Missionary Society, which had sent out Dr van der Kemp. However, the London Missionary Society had only one missionary among the Xhosa at that time, namely John Brownlee. The way was wide open for the more energetic Glasgow Society, which soon became the dominant mission in the Ngqika area.

The first missionary sent out by the Glasgow Society were the Reverend William Ritchie Thomson and a catechist named John Bennie. They attached themselves to Brownlee's station at the Gwali river. In December 1823, they were joined by John Ross, who was to play such an important role in the history of the amaHleke. In 1824, Ross helped Bennie found Lovedale Mission, and in 1828, he founded another new station named Balfour with Chief Maqoma in the Kat River valley. But Balfour mission had not been long established before Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Somerset drove Maqoma's Xhosa out in May 1829. The excuse that was given was that the government wished to make the border more secure by establishing a Khoikhoi settlement there as a buffer zone.²

². J. Peires: *The House of Phalo*, p. 89.

Maqoma asked John Ross to follow him but Ross refused. The government invited Ross to remain at Balfour, but Ross refused that as well because there were no people around for him to teach.³ It is clear that Ross thought Maqoma's expulsion was unjustified, but he was unwilling to get involved in politics.

It was probably to avoid politics that Ross decided to establish his new mission east of the Keiskamma, which was not subject to expulsion. This was, of course, the Pirie Mission among the amaHleke. It was named after Dr Alexander Pirie, who was the first chairman of the Glasgow Missionary Society.

It is interesting to note that Ross followed exactly the path which Dr van der Kemp took to reach the amaHleke. His presence was reported to Vazi by his driver Mgcuwa.

Vazi welcomed him with the gift of a goat and sent Tywini to inform Chief Jwarha that the missionary had come to preach the word of God to the amaHleke. Jwarha accepted him and bade Vazi to bring him to the Mqgakhwebe river. Under the guidance of Vazi and Tywini, John Ross travelled till he reached a spot almost opposite van der Kemp's escarpment, but separated from it by the perennial Mqgakhwebe stream.⁴

³. U. Long: Index to authors of unofficial privately owned manuscripts relating to the History of South African (London, 1947), pp. 231-232.

⁴. Blythswood Review IV (Jan. 1927), p. 7.

After he had selected his site, John Ross showed that he was no stranger to work. He finished building a house, doing the manual labour himself by the beginning of August 1820. A few men and many women came with grass for thatching. On the 28 of July 1830, Ross left for Lovedale, to remove his family. They arrived at the station on 4 August 1830.⁵

The house was a wattle and daub structure and was both for himself, his family and the use of the mission. From his arrival in May 1830 until his death, Ross worked at Pirie practically all his life. He was responsible for the religious and educational upliftment of the Xhosa around the area. This pioneer missionary regarded his Xhosa country as an important mission field. He embraced opportunities for commencing on divine things with people from neighbouring areas who used to come to the place as visitors. As a means of organising his church congregation, John Ross started by opening his little room on Sundays where he devoted himself to his spiritual labours inviting all those journeying to and fro past his house, to sacred matters.⁶

⁵. Glasgow Missionary Society Reports, 1830, Journal of Mr Ross, kept at his station, p. 11.

⁶. GMS Report, 1831 Journal of Ross kept at his station.

Besides preaching the gospel in his house, Ross and Joseph Williams, his Xhosa teacher, were diligent in visiting and conversing with the people of the area. In his attempts to catechise these people, Ross used to put his questions in a serious yet engaging manner. They had to repeat each question and answer after him. Those who seemed to be accepting the gospel, attention was paid to them and on enrolling in their desire to be received into the church, they were then considered as:

"Candidates for baptism, and after further instruction, and a suitable period of probation, they are baptized. If they still maintain an exemplary walk and conversation, and desire to be admitted to the Lord's supper, they are first permitted to be once present as spectators, they are then considered as candidates for the communion, and after some time, they are admitted as communicants.⁷

The manner in which John Ross spent his time is well illustrated in the following extracts from one of his journals that:

Lord's Day, 15 May 1831 - while I was examining the young people of the station, before 7 a.m., seven of the circumcised lads, and six women, came and sat down beside us, Joseph conversed with the latter, on his returning from visiting some of the kraals over the river. Had worships twice in the afternoon, at which have been the largest congregation that I have seen here, fully in hundred each time, and these generally attentive.⁸

⁷. W. Brown: The History of the propagation of Christianity among the Heathen since the reformation, (Edinburgh, 1823), p. 32.

⁸. Glasgow Missionary Report, 1831. Extracts from the Journal of Mr Ross, p. 9.

On Sunday morning Joseph Williams who was principally employed in visiting Xhosa homesteads beyond the mission used to visit those homesteads which were near, while visiting more distant homesteads during the week. During weekdays, neighbouring homesteads were always visited with intentions of reaching and catechising various parties of them. The ordinary work of John Ross assisted by Joseph Williams was that the few families residing on the station were assembled in the morning about sunrise, and in the evening about sunset, for worship. A small portion of scripture was read and explained, and generally the people were examined in the evening on what they had heard in the morning. On Saturdays it was the usual practice to visit the places near the station and urge them to come to church on Sunday.

The determined efforts of John Ross and Joseph Williams eventually paid off. It is not necessary to give detailed figures concerning the growth of the mission, but their numbers increased from 0 in 1829 to 127 communicants and 154 full converts in 1863.⁹

The growth of the Pirie Mission community was paralled by the growth of the church buildings. John Ross as

⁹. BK 92 Ross Statistics, 31 December 1863.

already mentioned, started by opening his little wattle and daub room on Sundays, where he devoted himself to his spiritual labours.

"Of the noiseless and unassuming labours of the little band at Pirie, we have an interesting picture in the following statement: The enlargement of the church was completed during winter. After failing to get a builder, and being myself disabled from other duty by inflammation in my eyes, I built the walls, Joseph Williams was chief Plasterer.¹⁰

The first church also served to house the school. The mission buildings at Pirie were again damaged during the war of 1846. By 1850 the station had not yet been supplied with anything like adequate buildings, either as church, schools or mission houses. School and missionary work which had only been resumed in 1851, was again disrupted by the war of Mlanjeni. When John Ross visited the station at the end of the war in 1853, everything was

"down except two stone buildings, to which very little of them had fallen. The back wall of the school had stood very well, but front and gable were down nearly to the ground.¹¹

¹⁰. Glasgow Missionary Society Spring Quarterly Intelligence, 1841, p. 2.

¹¹. MS 3246 Ross' Journal, 5 November 1852 to 10 May 1853.

During the time of Bryce Ross (1861-1897), six stone buildings were erected at Pirie and outstations and the work was greatly extended in various directions. The most important of these constructions was the present church, the Bryce Ross Memorial which was appropriately opened on 12 April 1874 the fiftieth jubilee of John Ross's Mission in South Africa. This church is a massive stone building of 72ft by 32ft and was built on a hill. It is visible from a considerable distance in any direction, and it commands a fine view of the eastern end of the Amatola range and of the Buffalo valley. It contains a fine bell, which was sent as a gift by mission ladies in Scotland.¹²

It was indeed an appropriate memorial tribute in honour of Ross's labours.

This magnificent church naturally cost a great deal of money - £2580 to be precise. It is significant that most of this money, £1365 in all, was received from the people of Pirie themselves.¹³

Chief Jwarha, though not himself converted, led the way with his best riding horse as well as a money contribu-

¹². Kaffir Express, 1 May 1874.

¹³. MS B774, Circular appealing for funds for the Pirie Mission Church.

tion. Most of his followers also donated money and livestock. A Xhosa address in Ross's honour was signed by the following elders:

Oloba Xego
 Njoli Mgxam
 Pita Qwela
 Ngqola Vazi
 William Gaba
 Jeremiah Ngcabaza
 M. Makubalo
 Matayo Dungele
 John Dungeane
 Ntlabathi Jiya¹⁴

It can be seen from this that Ross Mission earned some respect and admiration from amaHleke at Pirie. However, there was also much popular opposition to the mission as will appear from our next section.

2. Reaction of the amaHleke to the Ross Mission

During his first years at the station Ross envisaged some difficulties as people on both sides, had been unaccustomed to christian worship, in fact they were:

"averse to attend at the institution, and when he did get a few of them to sit down around him, and hear the gospel, they were exceedingly impatient, and not unfrequently laughed and behaved very improperly."¹⁵

¹⁴. Kaffir Express, 1 May 1874.

¹⁵. BMS Report: June 1832, p. 22.

Peires in his House of Phalo gives a good explanation of this where he writes that the missionaries attempted to:

"persuade the Xhosa to abandon their trusted practices which they regarded as essential to their earthly prosperity and well being in favour of doctrine which was abstract and explicitly devoid of material benefits."¹⁶

In fact the Xhosa of Pirie as in other stations, felt that their nationality was being threatened by the encroachments of the missionaries. These missionaries brought religious and educational policies based on their laws and cultures and strongly opposed to existing customs.

Frontier wars had direct bearing on the missionary of Pirie as well. According to the Glasgow Missionary Report of 1835, during the war, the people of the station had in some way or other become more familiar with the use of ardent spirits, and began to ask for them with importunity, that their cattle were mostly gone, they had little or no seed corn to sow."¹⁷

The Hleke people also tended to have some resistance to westernized system of education and to its apparent results especially in the case of girls. To them lobola was of greater consequence than school education. In

¹⁶. J. Peires: The House of Phalo, p. 25.

¹⁷. GMS Report: June, 1836, p. 19.

fact the people realised that with education a girl would not receive more lobola on her marriage. Ross like his contemporaries failed to take into account the moral and social conditions of the people. Correspondence between him and the Glasgow Missionary Society board highlighted this as he said that

"there has been greater cause of regret as to six of the scholars belonging to the scripture class and next to it. One of these died last week, another married a man at a distance, two were circumcised, and two have been repeatedly driven from school by their parents and guardians."¹⁸

One mission scholar was told that if he went to school, he would turn into a hilihili (a stupid and confused person). The women mocked him, saying that if he did not get circumcised he would be no good from a sexual angle.¹⁹ Another rumour which was spread to make the missionaries unpopular was that they brought measles and other diseases. It was alleged that Reverend J. Laing "brought the measles here in a red handkerchief, that he

¹⁸. GMS Report, Correspondence from John Ross to Glasgow Missionary Society, 1840, p. 9.

¹⁹. Glasgow Missionary Society Quarterly Intelligence, Summer, 1840. Journal of J. Ross, 7 April 1840, p. 3.

wrote to me [Ross] that he had killed many people at the Keiskamma, and that I must kill people here."²⁰ This rumour shows the suspicion with which Ross was viewed by the amaHleke.

3. The Reaction of the Chief

Chief Jwarha of the amaHleke never accepted christianity although according to Ross's Journal, on the 27 May 1830, the chief visited Ross. Donovan Williams comments that the rejection of christianity by many of the Ngqika chiefs, though apparently well disposed towards the missionaries, was due to the constant

"fear of the chiefs ... that the mission institutions were removing people from their jurisdiction. The Scottish Missionaries noted that it was often said by both chiefs and people that we baptize the people to send them out of the country."²¹

Regarding the frontier wars of 1834-1835, 1846-7 and 1850-1853, the amaHleke chiefdom, being closely associated with the amaNgqika of chiefs Maqoma and Sandile, identified with the aims of their fellow Xhosa. Although information is scarce regarding the exact

²⁰. Glasgow Missionary Society Quarterly Intelligence, Winter 1840. Journal of J. Ross, 21 July 1839, p. 4.

²¹. D. Williams: The Missionaries on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony, 1799-1853. Ph.D., University of the Witwatersrand, 1959, p. 327.

activities of the Hleke warriors, it seems that they joined the main body of the Xhosa forces. The Pirie bush was always a major scene of hostilities as it afford a good cover for Xhosa guerilla tactics.

During the War of Hintsa in 1834-1835, it is recorded in the Glasgow Report that "the chief of the Pirie district (presumably Jwarha) insisted that the station should furnish its quota of fighting men for the Xhosa commando."²²

The hostile attitude of the neighbouring Xhosa led Ross to flee to Burnshill. This was the residence of the chieftainess Sutu, widow of Ngqika who, being convinced of the "exposed and perilous predicament in which John Ross was placed, sent Matwa her son with a message and wagons to bring him from Pirie to Burnshill."²³

Another indication of the hostility of the Hleke people towards colonialism was the killing of a trader in the Pirie district. This incident was reported in the Glasgow Missionary Report as it said that John Ross:

"was necessitated at the time to sleep in concealment out of his own house, and a trader had been murdered near him, and his orphan children had fallen to his care and as those who were chiefs of

²². GMS Report: June 1835, p. 19.

²³. Ibid.

the people advised the step, he began reluctantly to pack the waggons and prepare for his departure."²⁴

Despite the hasty departure, the good relationship between John Ross and the people of his station was shown at the day of his departure as they followed him and his family some way, and parted with them crying. The younger group went on about two miles, others came out from their homesteads by the way, and expressed their great regret at him leaving them. Altogether Pirie Mission, got a serious setback as it was burnt down.²⁵

Buildings at Pirie were destroyed only when deserted and it is possible that the attack was not directed at the missionary and his work but done to prevent from being occupied by the military as was the case with Lovedale.²⁶

Another interesting illustrations of Hleke attitudes towards the Ross mission is provided by the activities of rainmakers. Soon after his arrival at Pirie, Ross noted that the sufferings of drought resulted in more

²⁴. Ibid.

²⁵. GMS Report: 1836, p. 18.

²⁶. The Home and Foreign Missionary Record, 1848, p. 474.

irregular attendance at the mission by the Xhosa. He also felt that "the people of Pirie station were more disposed to wait upon, propitiate and worship the rainmaker." ²⁷

Ross therefore concluded that the sufferings had been the means of causing many of them to return with fresh avidity to old customs and gross superstitions.

The rainmaker was attacked by the missionary as he was said to be opposing the introduction of christianity amongst the countrymen. The missionaries were in fact forgetting the truth of the fact that the power of the rainmaker was subject to prolonged droughts. Crop failures and death of cattle caused hunger during the winter and periods of droughts.²⁸

On one hand the rainmakers felt that their power was being challenged by the missionaries, while on the other hand the missionaries were determined to usurp the functions of the rainmaker so as to impress upon the Xhosa that God was greater than the rainmaker. In the Scottish Missions of Lovedale, Tyume, Burnshill and Pirie, there was according to their missionaries,

²⁷. D. Williams: The missionaries on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony, p. 299.

²⁸. Ibid.

"particular active, violent and influential rainmaker by the name of Mngqatsi of whom there is evidence of him having moved from place to place keeping alive the hatred for missionaries."²⁹

According to Donovan Williams, the tactical approach of the rainmaker who has the reputation of drawing rain from heaven, Mngqatsi being the prime example, was first to:

"blame the missionary for driving the rain away. It was alleged that since the missionaries had come into the country the seasons had changed and the rain withheld, the drought was caused because they had denounced the rainmakers as impostors. It was suggested that they should leave the country for a year so that the people might witness for themselves whether or not the rain would fall."³⁰

The rainmaker was highly respected by the society as he was summoned only by the chief in council. In the missionary point of view all selfish men could easily set themselves up as rainmakers. The missionaries maintained that Mngqatsi was very shrewd as he knew that even prolonged spells of drought were succeeded by rain after a year. Mngqatsi was always challenged by missionaries in open competition. In 1839 for example, Mngqatsi won one of the competitions when after he was actively invoking rain in the neighbourhood of Burns-

²⁹. Ibid., p. 302.

³⁰. Ibid., p. 303.

hill, the rain fell. From the later thirties there was no longer much doubt in the mind of the Xhosa that the rainmaker was the better proposition.

It is said that whenever crops failed during the time of Mngqatsi, blame would always be put on the missionaries that they had come into the country to kill the people with hunger.

Mngqatsi's following was strengthened by his frequent and prolonged ceremonies, many of which were attached to the ritual of rainmaking. These according to their enemies would often take place deliberately on:

"a Sunday and were mainly concentrated around Pirie and Burnshill. The ceremonies were a considerable distraction to the congregations of the station around which they took place. Obviously they were a means of preventing kaffirs from falling under the influence of the missionaries, and often of reviving and strengthening the authority of the rainmaker among the people."³¹

Mngqatsi was also often accused of threatening and frightening some who had intercourse with the station that they would be killed by lightening and tried to institute what was probably the first "economic boycott" of a mission station in Kaffirland. No one was permitted to sell corn, milk or meat to the inhabitants of Pirie Mission.³²

³¹. Ibid., p. 305.

³². Ibid., p. 306.

Mngqatsi was, however, blamed by the people for his failure to relieve the drought of 1842.

He fled with all his cattle and does not appear in the records again.³³

4. The Impact of the Frontier Wars

As a result of the War of the Axe (1846-1847), the territory between the Keiskamma and the Kei Rivers, including Pirie Mission and the amaHleke, experienced a major change in status. Whereas previously Pirie had been a mission station in independent and sovereign Xhosaland, now that portion of Xhosaland was taken under direct colonial rule, by the name of British Kaffraria. In the proclamation of 23 December 1847, Governor Harry Smith defined the future condition and rule of the Xhosa in British Kaffraria to which the Xhosa chiefs had submitted. He gave notice that:

"the land of their mission stations shall be held from her majesty, and not from any Kaffir Chief whatever."³⁴

As the Xhosa were unwilling to accept direct rule by magistrates in British Kaffraria, and as they were

³³. J. Backhouse: A Narrative of a visit to the Mauritius and South Africa (London, 1844) p. 217.

³⁴. The Home and Foreign Missionary Record, 1846-1849, p. 474.

promised victory by the famous doctor, Mlanjeni, a final attempt was made to cast aside the British yoke in 1850. The war of Mlanjeni (1850-1853) was the longest of all the Frontier wars. In the war of Mlanjeni, just as in the previous wars, Pirie was destroyed by fire and burned to ground. But whereas on previous occasions, Ross and his family had fled alone, this time they were accompanied not only by Xhosa converts, but by Chief Jwarha himself. Jwarha led the Ross family to safety in person, saying:

"This is your missionary, you ought not to harm him, let him pass and bring him safely to the place of refuge."³⁵

This is significant because in the Frontier Wars of 1834-1835 and 1846-1847, Jwarha had remained in the bush, fighting with his warriors. This time, Jwarha entered King William's Town with Reverend Ross and remained there with him until the end of the war (14 February 1853).

³⁵. Blythwood Review, January 1927, p. 7.

It was fortunate that the amaHleke remained neutral during the war of Mlanjeni because major territorial changes followed this conflict. The British authorities decided that they could no longer tolerate the presence of the Ngqika Xhosa in the Amathole mountains, which had been their stronghold in all three wars. Sir Harry Smith decided that the Xhosa should be expelled and replaced by loyal Mfengu, and this policy was confirmed by his successor, Sir George Cathcart.³⁶

Under the new arrangement the rebellious Ngqika chiefdoms were deprived of their land while loyal chiefdoms were rewarded. The Amathole mountain area, which included Pirie Mission, was declared to be a Royal Reserve from which all Xhosa, except mission inhabitants were barred. Only the Mfengu were allowed to enter, while certain parts were left vacant for future white settlement.

It was at this point that Reverend Ross was able to do the amaHleke a great service. Being a missionary, he was allowed to re-occupy his station, and to take back not only its former inhabitants but also such of the "Kaffirs in the neighbourhood as he can recommend."³⁷

³⁶. E.A. du Toit: The Cape Frontier, 1847-1848, Archives Yearbook for South African History (1954), p. 71.

³⁷. The Home and Foreign Missionary Record, 1853, p. 120.

Ross used this opening to plead not only for his converts but for all the amaHleke people. He wrote a letter to John Maclean, the Chief Commissioner of British Kaffraria, pointing out that amaHleke had been helpful to the whites during the war.

"They rescued a party of wood cutters and sawyers, about a mile on the side of the station, after the war cry had resounded from hill to hill, when a party of Natives flushed with success at Burnshill but it was scarcely known that some of the same people, with others, protected two waggons sent on a pressing necessity by Captain Robertson of the Royal Engineers for the removal of wood to King William's Town and saw them safely on their way."³⁸

To summarise, all the Xhosa except the mission inhabitants were driven out of the Amathole mountain area. Pirie, formerly a mission station in the heart of Xhosaland, became an isolated station of amaXhosa among the whites and the amaMfengu. Among the first of those admitted by the Government upon Ross's recommendation was chief Jwarha, who had not only befriended the missionary in times of danger, but had also rescued other Europeans in the neighbourhood at the commencement of the war. Jwarha on his reception was accompanied by one or two followers. Subsequently, various groups of blacks were admitted by the Government at the request of the missionary. They were all received on the same footing as people of the Pirie mission station.³⁹

³⁸. BK 90: J. Maclean to J. Ross, 30 September 1854.

³⁹. Ibid.

During 1854, the amaMfengu chiefs and their people were located in the Royal Reserve by its Superintendent, James Ayliff. Strict watch was kept against the entry of the amaNgqika. Ross did his utmost to prevent any strange Xhosa joining his people, except those coming in the true spirit of loyalty.⁴⁰

In that same year of 1854, the terrible cattle-disease of lungsickness arrived in the Eastern Cape. Writing from Lovedale, Bryce Ross warned his father, Reverend John Ross, that the people of Pirie should keep their cattle isolated if they hoped to escape the disease.⁴¹ But the amaHleke delayed sending their cattle to the mountains as advised, and in May 1855 lung-sickness broke out at Chief Jwarha's place.⁴² Cattle were dying at a rate of three to four head a week, and by September 1856, Jwarha had lost all his cattle except three cows.⁴³

⁴⁰. A.E. du Toit: "The Cape Frontier", p. 79.

⁴¹. MS 7639 B. Ross to J. Ross, 8 May 1854.

⁴². MS 7655, Bryce Ross to John Ross, 17 May 1855.

⁴³. MS 3029, J. Ross to B. Ross, 22 September 1856, MS 3329 J. Ross to n.a. 30 October 1856.

It has been established that this lungsickness was one of the very things that caused the Xhosa people to heed the prophecies of Nongqawuse.⁴⁴ The prophecy was that the people should kill all their cattle so as to cause the dead to rise. It is not clear how the amaHleke reacted to this prophecy because Ross's letters for this period do not single them out. He does talk about the beliefs current at the time, but he often cites examples from other chiefdom and so we cannot tell who, exactly, he is talking about.

It is however clear that many of the Xhosa in the neighbourhood did believe the prophecies. Some of them sold their cattle for as little as 2/6, and wasted corn by scattering it about or boiling it.⁴⁵ It seems that attempts were made by the cattle-killing to win over Ross's converts to their point of view.

"The doctrines of the atonement and that of sanctification were represented as justifying cleansing by standing on the smoke of burning fact. All that was said or done was in the name of God, or that His Word says so."⁴⁶

⁴⁴. J.B. Peires: "The Central Beliefs of the Xhosa Cattle-Killing," *Journal of African History* 28 (1987).

⁴⁵. MS 2990 J. Ross to R. Ross, 13 September 1856.

⁴⁶. MS 3236 J. Ross to A. Thomson, 24 November 1856.

As persuasion did not work, the school people were also threatened that they would become ashes.⁴⁷

As the prophecies failed, the cattle-killers began to get hungry. Ross described some of them who came to Pirie as "very much ashamed of their late belief and conduct - offering no wordy excusses." They were glad to beg mealies, pumpkins and milk from those who had not slaughtered. Some of their wives were employed weeding the grounds that others had ploughed.⁴⁸ But Pirie never saw most of the refugees from this disaster because Pirie was in the Royal Reserve, and, according to the Proclamation of Sir George Grey, no "Kaffir" was allowed to enter the Royal Reserve on pain of death.⁴⁹

The next important development at Pirie was the arrival of another missionary to assist Reverend Ross, who was getting old. This was none other than his son, Bryce Ross. Bryce Ross was born in August 1825, while his father was still at Lovedale. He was educated at Lovedale, and then went on to study theology at Edinburgh in Scotland.⁵⁰ He also took some courses in

⁴⁷. MS 7741 J. Ross to R. Ross, 23 July 1856.

⁴⁸. MS 3336 J. Ross to J. Laing, 28 February 1857, MS 3337 J. Ross to J. Laing, 9 March 1857.

⁴⁹. Personal communication by Dr J. Peires.

⁵⁰. Christian Express: 12 January 1898, p. 46.

medicine. He returned to South Africa in 1850 as a missionary at Lovedale, where he specialised in translations and preparation of educational materials.

There was not much difference in outlook between Bryce Ross and his father, John Ross. Both were sympathetic to the Xhosa in a paternalistic kind of way, but both were equally determined to uphold Christian and European ways at the expense of Xhosa traditions. If there was any difference between John Ross and Bryce Ross, it was that Bryce Ross was more inclined to promote colonial rule than his father had been. All the same, there was a great deal of continuity between the two of them, so we are justified in looking at the Ross mission as a single period in Pirie's history stretching all the way from John Ross's arrival in 1829 to Bryce Ross's death in December 1897.

The last frontier war was the war of Ngcayecibi, which was fought between the whites and the Xhosa. Although this war started in the Transkei, Sandile, the senior Xhosa chief in the Ciskei decided on nationalistic grounds to support Sarili, the Xhosa King. Since the Ciskei was under the direct rule of the colony, the colonial authorities branded this national struggle as a rebellion.

As Sandile was then living in the Stutterheim area it is said that when he decided to join the war, he called a meeting of all the Ngqika at Bolo. There he told them that:

"this was the last war that he would fight in, since he had had a premonition of his death. He asked some of the Ngqika chiefs, especially those near the forest to be non-combatants and to act as a Xhosa commissariat."⁵¹

Much of the fighting took place in the Amatola forest including the Pirie Bush. A regiment of soldiers and the Albany volunteers were stationed at Pirie mission station under the charge of Major Dunbar and captain Chamberlain. The officers used the mission house as their offices, but went up to the church at night. During this war, the Ngqika occupied the eastern sector of the Amatole mountains known as the Pirie Bush.⁵²

Defeated with Sarili in the Transkei, Sandile retired too. After Sandile's death on 4 June 1878, the Ngqika ceased to fight. Many warriors, fearful for their lives, continued to lurk in the Pirie bush, desperate starving men, struggling only for resistance.⁵³

⁵¹. M.W. Spicer: The war of Ngqayecibi, 1877-1878, M.A. Rhodes University, 1977, p. 150.

⁵². MS 3287: Extract from MS pages sent to Mr Brownlee by Miss Ross.

⁵³. J. Milton: The Edges of War, p. 280.

Chief Jwarha of amaHleke was very old and obviously, fighting was out of the question and although the decision of most of the Ngqika chiefs to participate in the war was determined by various circumstances, the case of Jwarha seemed to support the above-mentioned tradition as it was alleged that:

"The former supplied Sandile from the Pirie Mission area when he was fighting a desperate war of resistance in the last stages of the war, and that the latter's locations acted as refuge for Combatants."⁵⁴

This above statement shows that although the aged Chief Jwarha spent the war in the mission house with Bryce Ross, the sympathies of the amaHleke were obviously with their Xhosa brothers. Reverend Bryce Ross, who was fully in favour of colonial authority, referred to "many evil doers determined to create confusion and involved the whole caffre population in rebellion."⁵⁵

When the war was over, all the amaNgqika were forced to cross the Kei river to settle in Kentani in the Transkei. Their lands were given out to white settlers. Even those who could prove their neutrality such as Chief Anta and Headman Tyala were expelled. Some white

⁵⁴. M.W. Spicer: The War of Ngcayecibi, p. 151.

⁵⁵. MS 7950, Bryce Ross's comments on system of registration adopted by the Government.

land-sharks had their eyes on the Pirie lands, and argued that the amaHleke should also be expelled because they were Ngqikas and many of them had been hostile to the colony during the war. Only the fact that they had titles prevented them from being expelled.⁵⁶ That was the last time that Pirie experienced war. After Ngcayecibi, no one questioned Pirie's boundaries, or the right of its people to live there.

5. Education at Pirie during the Ross years

From his arrival in 1830 until his death, John Ross worked at Pirie practically all his life. He was responsible for religion and for the educational upliftment of the people around the area. Because in the 1830's, no teachers were to be had, whatever was done in educating the children had to be done by the missionary himself. Ross, his family and Joseph Williams, the Xhosa catechist, laboured earnestly to teach the young people and the children of adjacent homesteads.

⁵⁶. 64 - 1883, Commission on Native Laws and Customs, Evidence of Bryce Ross, p. 224, Evidence of R. Dick, p. 175.

Ross and his assistants did their best to attract scholars to their schools in many ways such as rewarding the regular attendants and also for progress. These rewards used to bring great joy to the scholars. Education at Pirie, as at other Glasgow Mission stations aimed at imparting a basic knowledge of literacy and religion, rather than teaching Xhosa children in the same way as European children would be taught. The Missionaries referred to this policy as that:

"The lowest form of education should reach the lowest circumstances of the population, and that it should at least be capable of being carried into the remotest territory of the unconverted."⁵⁷

The objective was to make Christianity as accessible as possible to Africans living in remote, hitherto unconverted areas by teaching it in the Xhosa language. Also like in other mission stations, at Pirie emphasis was not to be placed upon education and arts at the expense of preaching of the word of God. The Gospel had to have the pre-eminence, but the other was also relevant and would be turned to account in helping on the greater work of moral and social revolution. In this regard the words of Lekhela, writing on church activity among the Tswana, are equally applicable to the Eastern Cape:

⁵⁷. E.A. du Toit: Archives Year Book, p. 231.

"Conversion and education of the Bantu were synonymous. The two were interdependent whatever attempts were made by the church at conversion implied some measure of education. Bantu education was christianity and christianity was education."⁵⁸

The report given by the Presbytery on 1 June 1840, expressed its satisfaction with the progress of the scholars, discipline of the school as well as with the manner in which Bryce Ross, had conducted the examination where a "dozen specimens of writing were exhibited, six learning the letters, and the rest in the first and second books."⁵⁹

The appointment of Miss Thomson in 1842 by the Glasgow Ladies Society as female teacher in charge of girls did indicate a sign of progress. She also found at Pirie a kind of grass from which straw hats were made. In both schools at Pirie, a first and second lesson book with portions of scriptures printed in Xhosa and a catechism were used. A few of the scholars read the scriptures in English, writing both on slates and paper, arithmetic, a little geography and lessons in natural history were attempted. Many of the students wrote letters, defi-

⁵⁸. Lekhele, E.P.: The development of Bantu Education in North Western Cape, 1940-1967, Historical survey, p. 38.

⁵⁹. GMS Reports, Summer Quarterly Intelligence, 1840, Pirie, under the care of the Rev. John Ross and Joseph Williams, p. 2-3.

nately a useful aspect of education. In the female school, sewing was taught and practised in making articles of female clothing.⁶⁰

From the early stages as already mentioned, the education of the Xhosa of Pirie as in other mission stations, was the responsibility of the missionaries whose original purpose was to establish mission schools as an ancillary to their evangelical work. In other words these schools were maintained by the missionaries from their own little financial resources. It was only at about 1850 that very small government grants did become available to schools in the colony that catered for the poorer classes, of whatever racial groups. Various conditions applied:

"The newly appointed Superintendent - General of Education claimed the right of returns, pupils of any denominations had to be admitted and religious instructions given during school hours and had to be confined to scriptures."⁶¹

The Missionary remained responsible for the erection and maintenance of buildings, the appointment of teachers, the securing of the local contributions and the submis-

⁶⁰. The Home and Foreign Missionary Record, 1845, 219.

BK 91. J. Ross to J. Maclean, Statistics for 1858.

⁶¹. BK 90. Letter by Ross to Colonel Maclean, 29 July 1854.

sion of statistics. But the missions had lost their former independence, because they were now subject to the Cape education authorities.

Governor Sir George Grey in his determination to "civilize" the blacks, decided to foster both academic and industrial training in British Kaffraria. He visited the missions soon after his arrival and after expressing his deep interest in their success, communicated to John Ross and other missionaries his purpose of granting Government aid, with the view of enlarging the machinery for the material and moral elevation of the Xhosa.

Grey aimed at the extension of the means of education, in connection with the Free Church mission in Kaffraria, and the establishment of an Industrial Institution for the training of Xhosa youth. Grey, therefore, induced the Cape Government to give grants to help certain schools of handicrafts and agriculture which were already existing at the time. Such a centre was also opened at Pirie. But when the British government grant was withdrawn, support for Industrial Training was reduced, and this department was closed down at Pirie and all the other Prebyterian Missions except Lovedale.

The Industrial Mission idea at Pirie did not die away completely and it was revived by Reverend Bryce Ross in 1876.⁶² However, it was now combined with another old Pirie idea, namely the idea of education for girls. This had begun in 1842 with Miss Thomson. The new Industrial school for "Native Girls" was endowed with £468 by Reverend John Ross, and supported by annual grants of £75 from the Cape Government and £30 from the Ladies Association in Scotland. An infant school charging a penny a week was attached to the Industrial School, but the Industrial school was free. A trust to administer the funds, consisting of the Pirie Mission Deacon's Court was set up in 1882, and the new school formally opened its doors in 1883.⁶³

The first teacher was Miss Helen Blair, a relative of Bryce Ross who had come out to Pirie as a missionary teacher in 1878. Miss Blair remained at Pirie for twenty seven years altogether and became something of a legend in mission circles. There is even a biography of her published by the Lovedale Press.⁶⁴

⁶². Free church of Scotland, Pirie, Deacons Court Minutes of 9 October 1876.

⁶³. Ibid, 9 April 1882.

⁶⁴. Biography of Miss Helen Blair, Lovedale Press.

It would seem that Miss Blair's interest in industrial education was second to her interest in the Bible. She would ride out every Saturday armed with a Bible, and she would conduct prayer meetings at both Christian and Red homesteads. It was at these prayer meetings that she picked out the girls to come and board at the Industrial school. Later these girls would be asked if they want to become Christians. Even at the school itself, Christianity was the most important thing. A register of Sunday church attendance was kept, and a big Bible was given every year for the child with the best attendance. Other children could also earn Bibles by labouring tasks, such as the watering of fruit trees in the orchard.

On the issue of Industrial Training there is less information in Miss Blair's biography than concerning the Bible, and we can take it that this reflects the priority of the school itself. The emphasis was definitely on rural rather than urban society, and included horticulture, Domestic Science, and the scrubbing of floors. The boys, who had their own boarding school, were also under Miss Blair's direction.

The progress of education was not smooth especially at the start of the mission. The amaHleke people tended to have some resistance to westernized system of education

and to its apparent results especially in the case of girls. To them lobola was of greater importance than school education.

School operations at the mission also suffered periodically when there were outbreaks of certain epidemics such as measles in particular which affected all stations in 1839. It was recorded that "The school attendance had been extremely irregular during the year, particularly in consequence of the above - epidemic.

"After the harvest had been got in, the number of scholars increased till it amounted to 86. But when the measles reached, the number enrolled fell to 30."⁶⁵

The progress of the scholars at the station was also retarded by the lack of books as they had to purchase books, some with corn, others with work and with money. It was also hindered by the agricultural cycle as well as when boys had to go for circumcision. This was reflected in Ross's journal as he wrote that:

"The number attending school has increased of late in consequence of the corn being got in. Many of the scholars who had been little at school since

⁶⁵, GMS, Spring Quarterly Intelligence, 1840, pp. 10-11.

the sowing season have again returned bringing others with them. The former had forgotten much of what they had learned, and some are missing.⁶⁶

The school at Pirie just like that in Burnshill and Lovedale was destroyed during the wars of 1834-1835, 1846-1847 and 1850-1853.

6. Cultural Change Aspect During the Ross Period

Ross's generally contemptuous attitude towards Xhosa traditional customs of Pirie can best be shown in his report published in the Home and Foreign Mission Papers of 1845. There he described the Xhosa of this station as people in their heathen and uncultivated state, given to the indulgence of all animal propensities, the strong also oppressing the weak, and their wives being little better than the slaves. Ross claimed that the custom and traditional practices were a hindrance to the reception of the Gospel among these people. To Ross, custom was the great tyrant of the land, although idolatry in the ordinary sense of the term, could scarcely be said to exist. He stressed the fact that:

"Most usages which lay hold on the minds of the Kaffirs and proved main hindrances to the gospel, are the marriage dances and races which go on for days together, and the continually recurring dances for the alleged discovery of witch craft."⁶⁷

⁶⁶. GMS, Summer Quarterly Intelligence, 1839, p. 2.

⁶⁷. The Home and Foreign Missionary Record, 1845, p. 45.

It is easy to believe that at Pirie as at other mission stations, the message of the missionaries was based upon a misunderstanding of Xhosa society in general. To the Xhosa for instance, ancestor worship is part of their religious life, and it is resorted to for such benefits as victory, healing of the sick, to mention but a few. On this basis death results in a person going to his fathers.⁶⁸

Ross's negative attitude towards these practices was for example further displayed in his sarcastic response to the request by members of the amaHleke to join them in dancing at a wedding ceremony. He told them that he had no love to beat the earth hard with his feet. To Ross, christianity was superior to Xhosa custom as he stated in the same journal again sarcastically that he was much beset for the gift of an ox and a cow, to help the bridegroom to pay for his wife.⁶⁹

Missionaries including Ross, compelled the converts on their stations to abandon Xhosa traditional activities such as initiation dances, which were judged by white community standards to be indecent. Nopi, at the Deacons Court meeting of the Pirie Free Church of

⁶⁸. D. Williams: "Missionaries", p. 293.

⁶⁹. GMS Report: 1831, Extracts from the Journal of Mr Ross, p. 7.

Scotland held at Pirie on the 31 July 1885, appeared and confessed that he had fallen into great sin such as adultery, attending heathen dances as well as drinking Xhosa beer.⁷⁰ She was suspended for six months. In a similar case of observing Xhosa culture, Ntungwa was saved from being excluded by his elder to whom he had been so faithful and obedient. In his case before the Kirk session it was alleged that he failed to attend church services for more than a year as he had been engaged in offering sacrifices in a garden which had been struck by lightning. In another case of cultural undermining, it was reported that Robert Gaba, who had been in the church communion, had been suspended for having gone to circumcision school. He was ordered to undergo another probationary period.⁷¹

Ross of Pirie Mission was also strongly opposed to the Intonjane celebrations, as he referred to them as a sinful indulgence to which women of Pirie were attached. In reaction to it, Nonesi Ntuli was reported by the elder Jeremiah as helping in the ceremonies of Intonjane. After confessing, and also giving as a reason for

⁷⁰. Minute Book. Pirie Free Church of Scotland, 1880-1885.

⁷¹. Ibid.

not reporting to the elder that she had to look after her sick husband, she was warned strongly against this deed.⁷²

Ross strongly condemned these ritual practices such as the slaughtering of beasts and the traditional dances connected with them. Referring to circumstances and Intonjane, he maintained that at Pirie, there was an excessive excitement throughout the district because of the "Abakhwetha" (circumcision initiation) ceremonies, and this always resulted in effects of the worst kind with regard to attendances to missionary preaching.⁷³

At one stage, Ross was alarmed by the thanks-giving ceremony which took place around Lovedale in 1844 for those who had survived from the smallpox epidemic which had plagued the Ngqika territory for the past three years. In the neighbourhood of Pirie, he lamented that it was towards the rejection of Christianity that the slaughtering was directed.⁷⁴

Practices of Xhosa doctoring were always denounced by the missionary family at Pirie. Norayi Ncule appeared before the Deacon's Court members at their meeting held

⁷². Minute Book: 3 January 1885.

⁷³. D. Williams: "Missionaries", p. 342.

⁷⁴. Ibid., p. 345.

at Pirie on 20 April 1884. After confessing that she had voluntarily submitted to the works of a Xhosa doctor who had been employed in the case of her son who was ill, she was excluded from the church membership roll. In another case three women from Tyusha outstation appeared and confessed that they had been to a witchdoctor though they had been forewarned by their deacon against taking such actions. In their confession, they emphasized the point that they had been urged by their heathen husbands to do so and were now aware of the sin they had committed. Seeing that they had long been debarred, it was agreed that they should be readmitted and be entitled to Christian rights again.⁷⁵

The usurpation of the Xhosa traditional legal system and culture was further exposed in a meeting of 26 November 1880, where Ngqola, one of the elders reported to the meeting chaired by Reverend Bryce Ross that Qalabe, Mabona's wife was aware of the stolen animal brought to her place though she did not partake of it. Before this church meeting, she admitted that she did not report the matter as she was avoiding to expose the people of the place.⁷⁶

⁷⁵. Minutes Book, 20 October 1880.

⁷⁶. Ibid., 26 November 1880.

Mabona, who was accused number one, then appeared with three others. The three agreed that the stolen cattle were slaughtered in Mabona's cattle fold, and that he also partook of the meat in their presence knowing very well that it was stolen. After admitting the allegations, Mabona was excommunicated for an indefinite period. His wife was suspended for six months.⁷⁷ The church at Pirie did not forgive those who went astray, rather it added to their disgrace. For example, it was reported that Deacon Jim Vantji was in prison in King William's Town awaiting trial for the death of another man. It was further reported at the same meeting that he had submitted his resignation withdrawing from church membership roll as he believed that it would be hurtful to the interest of God's work for him to remain a member and a deacon owing to what had recently transpired. His resignation was accepted.

Several cases of excommunication resulted from things such as adultery, elopement and marriage through customary law were recorded in the minute book at Pirie Mission. Tutani Sityana, after having confessed that he was guilty of adultery, at a kirk session meeting held at Pirie on the 21 January 1881, was debarred and told to appear at the next meeting where she was subsequently excluded as a member. In another case reported, Martha Ngcakaza and Nozimanga Meleni who also appeared and

⁷⁷. Minute Book, 26 November 1880 and 27 April 1881.

confessed that they had been guilty of "Ukumetsha" (adultery) and had since stopped, and therefore desired to keep their way as Christians were also excluded at the meeting of 29 February 1884.⁷⁸ In a related case of marriage, Ntsangani, who was some years ago excluded for "Uncleanliness" appeared on 29 February 1884 requesting that he be restored.

In the confession Ntsangani told the members that he had already intimated to the woman with whom he had been co-habiting that they should separate, and that he intended using every available effort to get his legal wife back though she was very far. His plea was accepted, but he had to be received under discipline for six months. In another case on the 3 November 1888, after having been excluded for carrying off a girl in "heathen" style (Ukuthwala), Yedwa Ngaki was ordered to marry the girl in the Christian manner before he could come to church again.⁷⁹

The Reverend Bryce Ross, just like his father, John Ross, was totally against the brewing and drinking of Xhosa Beer. At a meeting on 2 August 1889, he said emphatically that the people of Pirie generally, and especially Christians, should be told that such gatherings be discouraged and discontinued. He reported

⁷⁸. Minute Book, 26 November 1880 and 27 April 1884.

⁷⁹. Minute Book, 29 February 1884 and 31 July 1888.

further that at a meeting held at Whiteville on the drink question, although they were very fully warned, very few of the people attended. It was agreed un-animously that similar meetings should be held at all stations.⁸⁰

This discussion has shown how little suited the ideas of Ross, imported as they were from Scotland, were to the people at Pirie. The principles of behaviour which were imposed were contrary to the ordinary habits of the people, so that even innocent customs and amusements such as dancing, beer-drinking and intonjane become outlawed.

It is clear that many Hleke were attracted to Christianity, but found difficulty in complying with the requirements of the mission. The above-mentioned cases from the kirk-sessions only deal with the small proportion of amaHleke who were actually mission members. The majority of amaHleke also practiced these customs, but were not under the church, and were therefore not being disciplined.

It can be inferred from these cases that the penetration of Ross's brand of mission Christianity did not go very

⁸⁰. Minute Book, 2 August 1889.

deep, and it can be guessed that this strictness made most Xhosa to be repelled, and to stay as far as possible away from the church.

CHAPTER IIIECONOMIC CHANGE AT PIRIE1. Geography of Pirie Location

After the Frontier War of 1850 to 1853 the boundaries of Pirie Mission and the AmaHleke tribe became clearly defined. These may be seen on the accompanying map. Pirie forms a rough triangle, bordered by the forest, the Kwelerana river and the Mngqesha river. To the north of Pirie location was the Hoho forest, to the east the boundary was the Kwelerana river, south of the Kwelerana river a surveyed line marked by beacons proceeded as far as the Mngqesha river which forms the southern boundary of the location. The Nomgwadla one of the sources of the Mngqesha links the Mngqesha boundary of the forest reserve in the north. The Mngqakwebe river which originates in the Hoho forest and the Mzintshane stream, a tributary of the Mngqesha river run right through the location. All of these rivers and streams have smaller tributaries as shown on the map. It can be seen from this that Pirie location is extremely well watered.

To add to this, the average annual rainfall is estimated at 75 cm. It is a summer rainfall area, but it is estimated that up to 20% of the rain falls during the Winter and

Autumn. A fair amount of mist is also experienced especially along the section adjacent to the Pirie forest. It has a comparatively cool climate and light frosts are experienced. Relatively speaking the climate at Pirie is good and generally healthy, the atmosphere being dry, and clear. Snow seldom lies except on the high mountains.¹

Most of the soils are sandy and sandy loam derived from sandstone of the lower Beaufort series of rock. In the north-eastern corner and along the eastern boundary there are areas of doleritic soils. Both these soils are fairly deep. On the slopes to the ravines and the Mnggesha stream there are patches of rather shallow shale soils. According to John Ross the soil near the mountains was more moist so much so that in wet seasons the crops sometimes suffered from an excess of wet.²

The grazing could best be described as mixed with a decided tendency towards sourness. There was a good percentage of themado triandra grass. Other common grasses were eragrotis species, digitaria, sporobuslus capensis and hyparrhenia. It is good all year round grazing for cattle.

¹. Department of Agriculture. File No. (49)
N. 2/11/3/52.

². GMS Report, Summer Quarterly Intelligence, 1840.

After the survey of 1869 Pirie was divided into building lots, garden lots and commonage. All the building lots were surveyed in the area of Pirie mission usually called Pirie Central. The garden lots were laid out along the banks of rivers and streams. The remainder of the location was given over for commonage and used for grazing.

While this might have been the best way to utilize the natural resources of the area, it caused great inconvenience to the people because some of the garden lots were very far from the residential areas at Pirie Central in many cases more than five kilometres.

As time went on people started moving closer to build houses near their garden plots, though this was not intended by the surveyors. These houses were built either on the commonage or on the plots themselves. This effectively subdivided Pirie into four geographically distinct sections Pirie Central (or old Pirie), Kwelerane (Jikolo), Mpundu and Mzintshane. (see map)

Pirie had no neighbours directly to the north because that was the forest reserve. To the north-east and east over Kwelerane river were several locations of Mfengu under headmen namely Tyusha, Jaftas, Cwengcwe and Zeleni. South of the Mnggesha river was an area of larger black peasant farms

granted in the Sir George Grey period towards the end of the 19th century. These came under the jurisdiction of the Mngqesha Village Management Board.

The total area of Pirie location is 3056 morgen in extent approximately 10 sq. miles.³

It is about 25 km from King Williams Town. The population of Pirie in 1882 totalled 1045 divided among 158 homesteads.⁴

According to Hammond-Tooke's calculation based on the 1951 census the population of Pirie was probably 1064. This shows that over a period of 70 years the total size of the Pirie population remained unchanged, a truly remarkable fact. By 1970 however, population had risen to 1840.⁵

2. Land Tenure at Pirie

Before the coming of Colonial domination, the amaHleke held their land like any to other Xhosa people, communally under the direction of the chief and his councillors. The right of the chief to allocate land was one of the main sources of his power.

³. W.D. Hammond-Tooke: The Tribes of King William's Town District (Pretoria, 1958), p. 120.

⁴. Cape Blue Book 690 of 1882, p. 25.

⁵. A.D. Jackson: The Ethnic composition of the Ciskei and Transkei, (Pretoria, 1975, p. 53).

For many years the missionaries agitated against the system of communal land ownership, saying that it was part of the heathen traditional system which was crushing the enterprising individual and holding him back from accepting Christianity. Another reason they had against the traditional system of land tenure was that it encouraged dispersed settlement which made it difficult for the missionaries to get at the people for the purpose of converting them. For such reasons, the missionaries petitioned the government to introduce a system of individual land tenure. It is not known whether John Ross was one of those who was fighting for individual land tenure, but we have seen that Ross shared many of the biases of the other missionaries against Xhosa culture and way of life.

After the War of Mlanjeni, it was decided to turn the Royal Reserve into an experimental laboratory for the introduction of individual tenure. This was not only on account of missionary pleadings, but also because the Government was keen to keep a tight limitation on the numbers of blacks inhabiting the area so that they could settle whites over there. Pirie was part of this Royal Reserve. In July 1853, John Ross was told by John Maclean, the Chief Commissioner of British Kaffraria,

that it was necessary for the station to have titles, as the countryside might soon be filled with German families.⁶ Cathcart also said that as soon as the land survey was completed, the magistrate and the surveyor and some of the adult males of the mission would go around the boundaries together so that these might be well defined. Every year, at tax collection time, this process would be repeated. There were to be no lone homesteads, but all settlements had to be concentrated into villages of twenty families or more.

Unauthorised squatting was to be strictly prohibited, and the missionaries were warned against receiving any black on their stations without the permission of the Superintendent of the Royal Reserve.⁷ Even a visitor should be reported if he stayed for more than a week. Ross and the other missionaries were required to keep a register of all the Xhosa families at Pirie, inserting all the births, marriages and deaths, and to submit this register to Chief Commissioner Maclean. On 1 July, Ross reported that there were 50 Xhosa families at Pirie.⁸ Shortly after this, the Mfengu were allowed to settle in the Royal Reserve. They occupied Jaftas, Tyusha and Dwengcwe locations, which had formerly been occupied by the amaHleke people.

⁶. BK 90. J. Maclean to John Ross, 31 July 1853.

⁷. G.H. 8/27, John Maclean to R. Birt, 1 October 1855.

⁸. G.H. 8/24, J. Ayliff to J. Maclean, 1 July 1854.

The survey was delayed by the shortage of surveyors and by the arrival of the German settlers. The surveying department was in Cape Town, and it was only in December 1861 that British Kaffraria obtained its own Surveyor-General. Ross became anxious because Pirie mission was not receiving a title. On 28 October, he wrote to Colonel Maclean complaining that much land which rightfully belonged to Pirie was being alienated to others.⁹ He asked for a surveyor to be sent who would be fully empowered to rectify the boundaries, so that neither through mistake nor through deliberate sinister motives could their right of occupation be disturbed. Eventually five sites with the lot numbers 49, 51, 52, 56 and 218 were allocated to the Free Church of Scotland at Pirie.¹⁰

The mission land was not yet, however, surveyed into individual lots. This measure was pushed on by the missionary Bryce Ross, who wrote to the magistrate at King William's Town on 21 March 1867, stating that the majority at Pirie were willing to pay for the survey of their lands.¹¹ The land was to be held under perpetual quitrent, meaning that the land was not sold but that

⁹. B.H. 8/24, John Ross to J. Maclean, 28 October 1859.

¹⁰. BK 91, J. Ross to J. Maclean, 22 October 1857.

¹¹. BK 92, B. Ross to Magistrate, King William's Town, 27 March 1867.

recipients of grants had to pay the costs of survey and a L1 stamp duty, amounting altogether to less than L3.¹² Each title-holder received a building lot of 56 square rods and 100 square feet and a garden lot of 2 morgen, 500 square rods and 138 square feet. Altogether, there were 218 garden lots and 224 building lots surveyed. Bryce Ross also asked that each title-holder should have the right of access to the commonage, which was the size of 6541 acres.¹³ Title-holders had to pay 2/6d a year for a building lot and 10/- a year for a garden lot. The land was heritable from father to son, but it could not be alienated or sold.

Bryce Ross did not go into details concerning opposition to the survey among the amaHleke. In fact he tried to minimise it, saying that there was a "comparatively small minority" who did not agree to the titles. He claimed that this disagreement was not on account of opposition to the survey, but only out of a fear that they would not be able to fulfil the conditions, such as annual payments.

What makes one think that Bryce Ross is not telling the truth is that there was in fact a vigorous opposition to the survey led by none other than Chief Jwarha himself.

¹². Deeds Office, Bisho, Pirie Land Registers, King William's Town District.

¹³. Ibid.

In June 1866, he put forward a strenuous objection against the surveying policy, pointing out that there was a big difference between his people, the amaHleke, and the mission converts. Chief Jwarha said that:¹⁴

the people of his village are red, that he had hitherto with his people ploughed and sowed a large tract of land in the village, which he finds as being cut up by the surveyor for the natives at the station, that his land has never been used by any other than the people of his village, and that none of them have applied to have it surveyed.

Bryce Ross attempted to discredit Chief Jwarha, alleging that his statement was untrue and designed to mislead those unacquainted with the real facts. He denied that a distinction could be drawn between the amaHleke and the mission converts, and he quoted some statements by Jwarha to the effect that he was a chief living on mission land at Pirie, and that the people of his village were connected with the mission station and the people of Ross.

In fact, Jwarha was so hostile to the survey that when it was implemented on 13 July 1869, he left Pirie in disgust and went to stay with Chief Sandile at Bolo near Stutterheim. He was only persuaded to return in 1872 when his nephew Mabona went to fetch him at the request of Bryce Ross.

¹⁴. MS 7951. Bryce Ross. Draft statement on Pirie and the African, Jwarha, 6 August 1866.

Although Chief Jwarha objected to the survey of his land openly, when he returned in 1872, he found that the land had been surveyed. Jwarha had very good reasons in protesting against survey, as individual tenure compared to traditional communal tenure involved a further diminution in the power of the chief. This arrangement of survey had adverse results of breaking the system of clanship as well as hastening the process of tribal disintegration because quitrent holder was not dependent on any leader for land. Mission land might also lie outside his jurisdiction, and this was burning issue.¹⁵

The supremacy of the British law with missionaries as agents was vividly exposed when the very same chief Jwarha, who allowed John Ross to choose the spot for his mission station in 1830, had to submit a petition on 15 August 1886 to the House of Parliament praying for a small grant in freehold, in consideration of his long and fruitful service. It is of great interest to write that a copy of Commissioner's letter dated 10 August 1888, reflected that the poor chief Jwarha was given three garden lots of six acres each. These were

¹⁵. M. Wilson: A History of South Africa to 1870, p. 263.

also quitrent titles, and conveyed no right of ownership.¹⁶

This action undoubtedly disrupted Jwarha's social and political order and strength. At Pirie as in other mission stations, the land was repossessed for failure to pay annual quitrent for five years. Certain procedures had to be followed before that particular piece of land could be declared derelict. Such procedure among others, included the publication of a piece of land (ground) to be repossessed in the newspapers in circulation at King William's Town division such as Mercury and Kaffrarian Watchman. In one case at the station for instance, it was reported that after every effort had been made year after year to recover the yearly as well as arrear quitrent without any avail, building lot 3 in Block II and a garden lot 176, at Pirie were declared derelict by Government Notice No. 109 of 1893. It was reported further by the civil commissioner that the lots were available for Stock Kleinveldt, whose title deed would be prepared on receipt of the attention for the Secretary for Land and Mines.¹⁷

¹⁶. Land Papers L804, petition addressed to Parliament by a petty chief of the Ngqika tribe, 1886.

¹⁷. L804, Vol. 18, Civil Commissioner's Office, King William's Town, 1895.

A sample of title deeds issued at Pirie towards the end of the nineteenth century can be summarised as follows:

On the 8 August 1875, there was correspondence from the civil commissioner's office in King William's Town, to the Under-Secretary for Agriculture in Cape Town reporting that Rober Tatu had paid sum of f 3-10-0 being survey expenses for building lot no. 8 in Block II and garden lot no. 201, situated at the Pirie mission station. The civil commissioner was therefore requesting that title be issued in favour of the above mentioned applicant.¹⁶

The involvement of the missionaries at their stations in the survey and allocation of land to applicants was strongly exposed in the case of Rara Gantsho who was reported to have paid the sum of two pounds ten shillings for four years quitrent in advance for building lot no. 4 in Block D.D. and garden lot no. 27. In his consideration of the application, the Secretary for Agriculture in his reply dated 5 November 1876, asked the civil commissioner to be good enough to consult the Resident missionary at the Pirie as to the character of the applicant.¹⁷

¹⁶. Ibid.

¹⁷. Ibid.

One of the major conditions and regulations for the granting of land, that neither of the two pieces of land thereby granted should be alienated or transferred to any person unless the consent of the Government had been obtained, was strictly adhered to by the amaHleke tribe. This was vividly demonstrated in the letter from the office of the civil commissioner, King William's Town dated, 29 October 1902 containing the application of the transfer from Klaas Xalisa to Qalanto Vazi. It was stated that:

"Having the honour to forward herewith a letter dated 27, instant, from Messers Innes and Hutton making application for permission to transfer Building lot no. 6, Block AA and garden lot no. 163 at Pirie mission station from Klaas Xalisa to Qalanto Vazi.²⁰

The involvement of the missionaries as agents of the Government was again exposed when it was said in the same return by the civil commissioner that the Transferee was not the owner of any other land and as the Rev J.D. Don under whose charge was the Pirie mission was not aware of any objection to the transfer, would recommend the application for favourable consideration.

Although in Xhosa traditional custom, land could descend from father to son and from generation to generation,

²⁰. Ibid.

the new land tenure policy demanded that the heir get the approval of the government. On the 9 January 1904, application was made for the consent of the Government to the transfer of Building lot 9 Block II and garden lot 200 at the Pirie mission station, from Vatala (deceased) to his son, Holona Vatala, who had been declared heir by the special magistrate under the Native Succession Ordinance. It also contained the words that the applicant "who does not hold any other lots in the location, is recommended by the missionary in charge."²¹

The clan system was stamped out once and for ever in the incorporation of Pirie by the colonial government as the chief was replaced by a white magistrate, land surveyed and distributed among the people, giving them titles to arable holdings and commonage, and placing them entirely under the administration of European officials.

3. Peasantisation at Pirie

In view of the interest that has been aroused by Colin Bundy in his book, The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry, it is necessary to ask whether such a peasant class existed at Pirie.

²¹. Ibid.

Pirie area was always very well-endowed with natural resources thanks to its proximity to water and forest. John Ross early remarked on the agricultural productivity of the district. Crops that were produced were sorghum (Kaffir-corn), maize, wheat, pumpkins, melons, peas and beans. The staple food was milk, prepared in different ways, followed by sorghum and maize. The usual Xhosa arrangements concerning the storage of corn in pits below the ground was also noted by Ross.²²

Like other missionaries, Ross and Mrs Ross wanted to encourage European methods of production and marketing. There were traders in the neighbourhood, even before the arrival of the Ross mission, but they dealt mainly in useless consumer goods. Mrs Ross complained that they "do not seem to encourage the people to purchase useful articles."²³

Instead, they exchanged beads, buttons and brass wire for hides, horns and corn. Mrs Ross introduced the technique of measuring the corn brought for sale, and exchanging it directly for more useful European goods.²⁴

²². G.M.S. Summer Quarterly Intelligence, 1840.

²³. Una Long: Index to Authors of unofficial, privately owned manuscripts, p. 236.

²⁴. G.M.S. Report, June 1832, p. 24.

Although the evidence is limited, there is enough to show that the people of Pirie enjoyed some peasant prosperity in the nineteenth century, despite the setbacks of frontier wars and the Nongqawuse incident. When Sir George Grey proposed to introduce two acre plots in 1856, John Ross condemned such small plots for the reason that many blacks at Pirie were already cultivating double that number of acres, and some were cultivating more than four acres. He said that two acres was insufficient land for blacks who wished to buy clothing, utensils and agricultural implements.²⁵

Statistics for 1880 show that the 807 residents of Pirie location owned 798 cattle, 35 horses, 566 sheep and 110 goats, 6 waggons and 31 ploughs.²⁶ This compares favourably with other locations. The picture of prosperity was also given by Special Magistrate R.J. Dick, when describing his district (including Pirie) to the Cape Government Commission on Native Laws and Customs in 1881. He described the main crops of the area as wheat, forage, potatoes, beans, maize, sorghum, and a little fruit such as peaches and oranges. The main market was King William's Town. After the harvest, some of the landowners earned extra income from transport. A number were also working for local Europeans.

²⁵. MS 7740, J. Ross to Bryce Ross, 19 July 1856.

²⁶. 100-1880, Return of Natives, Stock Division of King William's Town.

Unfortunately, no exact breakdown of figures for Pirie alone is available.

The people were becoming increasingly to adopt European habits in respect of "marriage, dress, square houses, furniture, reading, wagons, ploughs, cooking utensils, and food in the shape of bread, meat, potatoes, coffee, tea, sugar; English language, education, religion, and burial in coffins," according to inspector J.M. Stevenson's evidence in October 1881.²⁷

Both Special Magistrate Dick and inspector Stevenson, whose field of jurisdiction included Pirie, emphasised the fact that individual tenure was a major factor in building up this peasant class. Stevenson wrote that he had observed individual title in operation, and that it worked well. "I approve of natives getting title deeds to their lands, because in that case they would pay more attention to improvements in cultivation, planting orchards, and in building houses".²⁸ Writing in 1888 Dick again praised the value of individual title:

"A slow but yet perceptible improvement is gradually taking place in the condition of the people, more especially amongst the landowners. This class ... are in advance of the tribal or location native. The improvement is principally manifested in the better description of houses and huts they

²⁷. G.4 - 1883, Vol. 11, p. 342.

²⁸. Ibid., p. 141.

dwell in, the style in which they are furnished, the constant use of European clothing, the better education of their children, and in the improved cultivation of their lands, and the production of a much wider range of agricultural produce than hitherto. The red or heathen native ... are slowly progressing; but the circumstances and conditions of tribal life are not favourable to civilising influences, and until the land is held under individual title it is hardly possible for a high standard of civilisation to be reached".²⁹

The chief barrier to further agricultural progress was the shortage of plots. Dick observed in 1881 that "natives are more eager to possess land than formerly". They still did not feature at sales of farms, but where small leases came up for auction, blacks were in the great majority."³⁰ We can suggest that the main reason for the failure of the Pirie peasantry to increase itself was this lack of land. Garden plots did not often come on the market, and there are no cases known of a single man owing more than three plots. In this situation, there was nothing left open for an economically ambitious man to do than to encroach on the commonage. A map of Pirie Location made in March 1933 shows 14 farmers who occupied more than 1 morgen of commonage. One of these, Atwell Matshikwe, owned three plots and was encroaching on an extra three and three-

²⁹. G.3. - 1889, Report of R.S. Dick, p. 18.

³⁰. G.4. - 1883, p. 175.

quarters morgen. His relative, Maboza Matshikwe, owned two plots and encroached on one further morgen. Another peasant who owned three plots was William Kete.³¹

The last description we have of Pirie just before the implementation of betterment still gives the impression of peasant prosperity:

It would appear that the average family is more enlightened and energetic than the average family in the rest of the district. The percentage of good homestead gardens and trees around the residential areas is therefore high.³²

The buildings at Pirie, including not only the school and the church but the private houses as well, were mentioned to be "much better than the average in this district".³³ The 1086 cattle at Pirie were described as "of mixed origin, mainly of the Afrikaner type and, on the average, better than in other King William's Town locations". The 3239 sheep were all Merino sheep "of fair quality and yielding 3 lbs. wool per sheep". The 57 horses were also reported as of "fair quality, hardly and quite suitable as farm horses". Only the 426 goats were regarded as of poor quality.³⁴

³¹. Ciskei Department of Agriculture, Working Plan of the Pirie Location, Zwelitsha, March 1933.

³². Ciskei Department of Agriculture, Betterment Planning Report, Pirie Location No. 4, March 1963, p. 142.

³³. Ibid., p. 6.

³⁴. Ibid., pp. 4, 7.

4. The Betterment Scheme of 1963

Betterment or rehabilitation as it was officially termed referred to

"attempts, started in the 1930's, by successive South African Governments to combat erosion, conserve the environment and improve Agricultural production in the Black reserves".³⁵

Before the introduction of Betterment schemes, in the Ciskei, the management of the commonage was left largely in the hands of the villagers themselves under the chief and headman. They all grazed their stock on the commonage, cut thatching grass and gathered firewood on the commonage portion of the village. The balance of land was sub-divided into garden plots which were allocated to individuals to cultivate.

Betterment planning was obsessed with the concept of bad farming and the innate laziness of Black men, their irrational desire to accumulate cattle and unwillingness to accept crop rotation. These were put forward as the prime reason for the disastrous situation in reserve

³⁵. C.S. de Wet: An analysis of the social and economic consequences of residential relocation arising out of the implementation of an agricultural development in a rural Ciskei Village, Rhodes, 1985, p. 57.

traditional agriculture. The limitation of stock and anti-erosion measures were seen as the ultimate solution to the problem.³⁶

This scheme was effectively applied under guidelines from the Tomlinson Commission which reported in

"1954 ... calling inter alia for the division of location into arable, residential and grazing areas. This division has necessitated people having to move away from their old residential sites - perhaps the strongest grievance people voiced against the implementation of Betterment".³⁷

The grazing camps, into which this land was divided, were fenced and only opened to grazing when the official in charge saw it fit. With the introduction of the scheme it was argued that the traditionalistic system of land tenure was not conducive to agricultural development. It was on this basis that the division of the land, the culling of stock were seen as the solution to the problems. Ironically, the solution could not work as it failed to take the

"political and economic factors that had forced reserve agriculture to deteriorate into consideration".³⁸

³⁶. J. Yawitch: Betterment. The myth of homeland agriculture, Johannesburg, 1982, p. 10.

³⁷. C.J. de Wet: Analysis of the social and economic consequences, p. 171.

³⁸. J. Yawitch: Betterment, p. 10.

At Pirie, as in other villages throughout South Arica, an Ad Hoc Committee under the authority of the Chief Native Commissioner for Ciskei to plan this location was appointed in terms of the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner's Minute No. (49) No. 2/11/2 dated the 5 January 1959.³⁹

This committee consisted of messers J.G. Pike, the Bantu Affairs Commissioner of King William's Town, A.O. Eksteen, Regional Engineer, H.R. Mayne, Principal Agricultural officer, G.W. Wolvaard, Senior Agricultural Officer, and Mr le Grange, an Agricultural Officer who visited Pirie on the 19, 20 and 24 November 1962 and present their report on 4 March, 1963.⁴⁰

The recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee covered several areas: re-allocation of lands, division of the commonage into cattle camps; culling of cattle, and the creation of new residential villages. In order to understand the discussion, the reader should consult the accompanying map.

In its re-allocation of the land programme, this committee recommended that five sites, totalling to about 80 morgen, numbered 49, 51, 52, 56 and 218, be

³⁹. File No. (49) No. 2/11/3/52. King William's Town, 14 March 1963. Reclamation Planning Department. Pirie location No. 4, King William's Town, p. 1.

⁴⁰. Ibid.

retained by the Bantu Presbyterian church as they were originally allocated to the Free Church of Scotland when the area was surveyed in 1869. Another piece of land was according to this committee, to be declared as Hoho and Kwelerana reserved forests with the sizes 80 and 22 morgen respectively.⁴¹

Although the committee concluded that no re-allocation of the garden lots could be done at Pirie as 207 owners, owing 210 plots with an average of three morgen, were held under quitrent title system as far back as 1869, it recommended that certain lands be withdrawn from cultivation on account of erosion and situation. It also added that the owners of these fields at Hleke section (R1) numbered from 19 to 126 should be compensated with the virgin ground available within arable Block A.⁴²

It was further recommended by this committee that fields numbered 127, 128, 129, 57 and 195 at Pirie Central (R2), and Mzintshane (R5) sections also be declared unsuitable for cultivation and its owners be compensated accordingly from available land marked AA, BB, CC and DD next to the arable block E and EE, next to lot 44 and mission lot number 51. It was also suggested that each

⁴¹. Ibid., p. 26.

⁴². Ibid., p. 13.

of these compensating lots which was to be 3 morgen in extent, should be surveyed by a Departmental Government surveyor so that owners could obtain titles to such grounds.⁴³

Regarding the division of the grazing into camps, the committee recommended that grazing camps be allocated in proportion to the number of landowners in each of Pirie Villages which were as follows:⁴⁴

<u>VILLAGE</u>	<u>NO. OF LANDOWNERS</u>
1. Hleke (Mpundu or Nkosiyane)	70
2. Pirie Central	72
3. Mzintshane	35
4. Kwelerana	<u>30</u>
	<u>207</u>

The sizes of camps divided according to the proposed proportion for each village were to be as follows:

1. Hleke (R1)	676 morgen
2. Pirie Central and Mzintshane	1001
3. Kwelerana	299

⁴³. Ibid.

⁴⁴. Ibid.

These camps were also numbered as follows:⁴⁵

HLEKE

Camps	Morgen
H. 1	167
H. 2	166
H. 3	169
H. 4	<u>174</u>
	<u>676</u>

CENTRAL AND MZINTSHANE

Camps	Morgen
M. 1	238
M. 2	252
M. 3	252
M. 4 (A)	125
M. 4 (B)	44
M. 4 (C)	<u>90</u>
	<u>1001</u>

KWELERANA

Camp	Morgen
K. 1	79
K. 2	80
K. 3	70
K. 4	<u>70</u>
	<u>299</u>

It was also stated specifically in this document that, camps numbered H.4, M.4 (A), M.4 (B), M.4 (C) and H.4 be consolidated into one camp and should either be grazed by or closed to all stock at the same time. This

⁴⁵. Ibid., p. 8.

committee also emphasized that subdividing fences could be erected at a later stage if considered necessary. It was also pointed out clearly that, in the eve of subdividing fences being erected, camp No. H.4 could fall in the Hleke ward. In the same light, the recommendation continued, that Mzintshane section would graze in camp no. 4(c) at the same time as stock from mission section were grazing in camps Number M.4 (A) and M.4 (B).

A particularly difficult case arose in camp number M.4 (C), where there was a cement brick house with four rooms and a verandah belonging to Malford Vani. The estimated value of this house was about R400. The Ad Hoc Committee recommended that the house remain where it was and that a 1.8 site be demarcated which should be fenced in by the owner. It also added that, an additional 1/8 morgen kraal site in Mzintshane (R5) residential area be allocated to Melford Vani which he could use for kraaling his livestock as such stock would not be able to move to and from his residential site when camp No. M.4 (C) was closed.⁴⁵

Culling of cattle which was one of the most hated features of all Betterment schemes does not seem to have been implemented at Pirie, though the committee did recommend that such stock should be reduced over

⁴⁵. Ibid., p. 17.

a period of three years to the assessed carrying capacity of the location which was 1449 cattle units.

It also pointed out that, if stock belonging to non-landowners or squatters was got rid of, there could be very little culling to do.⁴⁶

It suffices to write that it was recommended that cattle units for the three wards would be as follows:⁴⁷

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Hleke | 490 cattle units |
| 2. Mission and Mzintshane | 749 cattle units |
| 3. Kwelerana | 210 cattle units |

Coming to residential areas, it is important to report that, when land surveying was started in the area in 1869, each garden lot was issued together with a residential site which was about 56 sq roods and 100 sq ft in size. Over a period of many years a large number of families had moved away from Pirie Central and built near their arable lands. The committee urged that all landowners residing outside of Pirie Central should relinquish their surveyed sites at Pirie Central and be issued with new 1.4 morgen sites in the proposed residential areas. These sites were to be surveyed by the Department land surveyor so that a new title land be given. It was recommended further that sites belonging

⁴⁶. Ibid., p. 23.

⁴⁷. Ibid.

to the landowners at Pirie Central be increased to 1/4 morgen where possible and surveyed so that a new title could be given. Provision was also made for eligible squatters as they were to receive 1/8 morgen site each under certificates of occupation. Squatters most eligible were those resulted from population explosion through birth rate. After getting married, younger sons in the family had to leave their homesteads with elder sons.

All homesteads on the commonage had to be moved into proposed residential areas and that compensation be paid for the moving of 80 square homes and 349 huts. According to Mhlambeli Somnhonho, one of the informants directly affected by this removal, people did not all move at the same time because they did not have the money or things to build with. Some people had to sell stock to raise the necessary money for building. His family which was compensated with only R25, moved to the present site at Mzintshane in 1964.⁴⁸

The estimated costs for the whole exercise were also given by the Ad Hoc Committee. This was as its members claimed, based on the accepted guide (Secretary for

⁴⁸. Mhlambeli Somnhonho (born 1925), Mzintshane, 5 June 1988.

Bantu Administration and Developments minute No. 26/423/22) dated the 28 July, 1958 which was as follows:⁴⁷

<u>SQUARE HOUSE</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>VALUE</u>
6	I	R110
36	II	R473
23	III	R224
<u>15</u>	IV	<u>R 86</u>
<u>80</u>		<u>R898</u>
 <u>HUTS</u>		
43	I	R382-00
158	II	R1045-50
107	III	R500-00
41	IV	<u>R136-50</u>
	Sub Total	R2064-00
	Total	R2962-00

Ultimately, the people of Pirie had no say in the Betterment affair. The Bantu Affairs Commissioner had the vested powers to institute the Betterment scheme, whether the people liked it or not. Although the Ad Hoc Committee even remarked that good co-operation was

⁴⁷. File No. (49), p. 19.

expected "as a large section of the residents have been anxious to have their locations rehabilitated for many years."⁵⁰

Oral interviews revealed that Betterment scheme was never voluntarily accepted at Pirie. An informant, Mehlo Khunce of Mpundu section of Pirie, maintained that many meetings were held, attended by villagers of all Hleke areas where Betterment (Trust) was rejected. He emphasized that Betterment was implemented with the aid of the threat of force as the magistrate told them that they would lose the Qongwe stream if they objected the scheme. We had to accept the 'Trust' because our cattle would have no water to drink.⁵¹

The strongest grievance presented by another oral informant was that they were moved away from their big residential sites to smaller ones, and their fields, which were situated on relatively fertile portion, were changed into camps and they were compensated with others very close to Hoho forest, where their crops are easily destroyed by forest pigs (Iingulube).⁵²

⁵⁰. Ciskei Department of Agriculture, Reclamation Planning Report, Pirie Location, 14 March 1963, p. 2.

⁵¹. Mehlo Khunce (born 1902), Pirie, 6 June 1988.

⁵². Kaizer Ngcamlela (born about 1921), Pirie, 6 June 1988.

Oral evidences also expressing misgivings about Betterment scheme, said that it was reluctantly accepted at the third meeting of its kind held at Headman Howard Vazi's Inkundla, where Government Officials presented favourable conditions of Betterment scheme such as that they would all have to stay in one place so that the cattle could have grazing camps, and so that their children could go to school. Nevertheless, Thozamile Fali did not perceive Betterment in a totally negative way as he also reported that his request to have his field re-allocated in another area as it was completely eroded, was granted.⁵³

The inaccuracy of the remark that Pirie residents have been anxious to have their location rehabilitated was also exposed by the fact that members of the Ad Hoc Committee were all white Government Officials only. Signatories in the names of Howard Vazi, Village Headman, together with Luke Tsheke and Walter Vazi were only cited as 'Bantu observers'.⁵⁴

⁵³. Solomon Thozamile Fali, (born 28 December 1925), Mzintshane, 5 June 1988.

⁵⁴. Ciskei Department of Agriculture, Reclamation Planning Report, p. 2.

CHAPTER IVTHE BLACK VOICE IN CHURCH AND SCHOOL (1897-1967)1. Joseph Williams

The Missionaries were too few in number to preach Christianity all by themselves. They had difficulty in speaking Xhosa, and even the Glasgow Missionary Society Directors admitted that white missionaries did not understand Xhosa behaviour very well.¹ It was therefore decided to make use of Native Agents, sometimes called "catechists" or "native assistants". Another factor was that these native exhorters were not very expensive compared to missionaries. For example, the first appointees earned only £5 a year.

The first Native Agent to be appointed was Noyi, better known by his baptismal name of Robert Balfour. Noyi was a convert of Ntsik'ana and a sincere believer in Christianity. But because he could not read and write, he had low status among the missionaries. For example, Professor Williams calls him "a man of limited talents", and refers to all the Native Agents as poor material.² Yet it is clear from the writings of the Reverend John Knox Bokwe that Noyi Robert Balfour and the other early Native Agents were highly regarded by the Xhosa.³

¹. D. Williams: "Missionaries," pp. 202-9.

². Ibid., 203, 207.

³. J.K. Bokwe: Ntsikana, Lovedale, 1914.

The Native Agent at Pirie was baptised Joseph Williams after a London Missionary Society who had died in 1818. We do not know his original Xhosa name, but we do know that he was born around 1800 near the site of Lovedale Mission.⁴ He was converted to Christianity by the prophet Ntsikana. After Ntsikana's death he obeyed his instructions to go the missionaries. He was baptised in about 1826 and became the third Native Agent of the Glasgow Missionaries. His salary was paid by the ladies of Greenock in Scotland. Ross described his duties as follows:

"Besides reading portions of the Scripture to the people, he also catechises, exhorts and addresses them ... he is greatly esteemed for his faithfulness, persevering deligence, and propriety of conduct, in all of which he has set an example to all around him".⁵

There can be no doubting Joseph William's devotion to Christianity and to the Pirie mission. While Ross was sitting comfortably at home, Joseph was doing his rounds in distant villages spreading the unpopular message of Christianity. Even when several of his children died, his faith in God never wavered.

⁴. GMS Quarterly Intelligence, Summer 1840, p. 1.

⁵. Ibid., p. 2.

Despite all these outstanding qualities, it is clear that Ross did not regard Joseph Williams as his equal. In the same quotation quoted above, Ross remarked that "his talents are moderate". This probably refers to the fact that Joseph Williams could not write or speak English properly, although he could read well enough to read from the Scriptures while he was preaching in the villages. As far as the Glasgow missionaries were concerned, love of God was not enough to qualify as a minister.

The fact is that the Presbyterian Church was slow to ordain black ministers. Tiyo Soga was the first (1856), but it took nearly twenty years before the next Presbyterian Ministers (E. Makiwane and P.J. Mzimba) were ordained in 1875. This slow rate of progress compares unfavourably with other mission churches, such as the Methodist Church. It is no wonder that blacks were getting very frustrated. Many of them were solid Christians from the spiritual point of view, but because they lacked a formal European education they were contemptuously relegated to secondrate junior posts.

The case of the Ntsikana family is a good example of this. Ntsikana was the prophet of Christianity among the Xhosa, and before he died he had recommended the people to follow the missionaries. But when his grand-

son William Kobe Ntsikana settled at Pirie his special gifts were not recognised by the Rosses. We know from his writings that W.K. Ntsikana was a talented historian and a keen conservator of the spiritual heritage of his father. He was a great man among the Xhosa, but among the missionaries he had to be satisfied with the rank of school teacher and elder.⁶

2. The Church Split at Pirie after the death of Bryce Ross

Bryce Ross, as already discussed, succeeded his father John Ross, in doing missionary service at Pirie mission until he died in December 1897. Even before his death, the Presbytery of the Free Church in Scotland had decided that he would not be replaced by a white minister. After his death, the Presbytery of Kaffraria, not accepting the decision of replacing him by a black minister, wrote to the Presbytery of the Church of Scotland in Scotland requesting a white missionary to succeed him. But this request was refused by Scotland because:

⁶. S.E.K. Mqhayi, John Knox Bokwe, Lovedale, 1925, p. 30.

"their finances will not admit and it has been their avowed policy for more than 25 years that there should not be a European missionary at Pirie.⁷

Still concerned with this authority vacuum at Pirie, the Church of Scotland in Scotland recommended that the Rev. W. Stuart of Burnshill should act for both Burnshill and Pirie. It added that a fully ordained black pastor be appointed for each of Burnshill and Pirie stations. In letter written to J. Lennox on the 24 October 1904, G. Smith from Edinburgh explained fully the decision not to appoint a white successor to Bryce Ross. He emphasized the fact that:

"Native probationers should be called. This is due to Lovedale Theological department and students, to their fellow countrymen, and to the church".⁸

The unwillingness of the Synod of Kaffraria to appoint a black minister in the place of Dr Bryce Ross at Pirie led to a crisis which erupted when the synod failed to appoint Burnet Gaba as the first black minister of Pirie, a position held for many years by Dr Bryce Ross. Burnet and Ntsikana Gaba were the two eldest sons of William Kobe Ntsikana and therefore the great-grandsons of Saint Ntsikana (d. 1822). Their father William Kobe

⁷. Lennox Paper Pirie Affair 3/6. Minute of Committee of Church of Scotland in Scotland.

⁸. Lennox Paper 1/6, G. Smith, Edinburgh write to J. Lennox, 29 October 1904.

Ntsikana, being one of the Xhosa educated elite had in his days taken an active role in the Eastern Cape Church life and politics. In the 1890's he had been an executive member and president of the Native Educational Association, and a prime mover in founding the South African Native Congress. As a congress official he had helped to launch Izwi Labantu as their mouthpiece. He was an elder of the Pirie mission and a teacher of many years standing, the first African one at Pirie.⁹

Burnet and Ntsikana (Nguna) just like their father, also held high positions in the society of the time. After matriculating at Lovedale they had both continued with theological studies at the seminary and had been admitted as probationers under the Synod of Kaffraria in 1905.¹⁰

Resenting the steps taken by the Synod of Kaffraria against the appointment of a black minister at Pirie despite the policy of the mother church in Scotland, these Gaba brothers managed to take advantage of the confusion which had arisen among the Church of Scotland in Scotland concerning the Union of the Free Church of

⁹. J. Hodgson: "Ntsikana: History and Symbol Studies in a Process of Religious change among Xhosa-speaking people." Ph.D thesis, University of Cape Town, 1985, p. 267.

¹⁰. J. Hodgson: "Ntsikana," p. 266.

Scotland and the United Presbyterian church of Scotland. These two churches had merged in 1900 to form the United Free Church of Scotland.¹¹

However, a minority group consisting of 24 ministers in the church refused to join the Union in Scotland. This group which sometimes called itself the Twenty Four was called the "Wee Frees" by its hostile opponents. It called itself the legal Free Church of Scotland and claimed legal rights to all the property that the old Free Church had possessed before the Union.

In 1904, the legal claims of the "Wee Frees" were upheld by the House of Lords, but in 1905 a special act of the British Parliament set up a royal commission to allocate the disputed church properties between the "Wee Frees" and the United Presbyterian Church. Although the end result of the royal commission was to prove disappointing to the "Wee Frees", in the short term the expectation was aroused in South Africa that the United Presbyterian claims to their South African mission properties had been invalidated.¹²

¹¹. J. McCracken: The Pirie Free Church in Southern Africa, 1930-1980, (n.d.).

¹². J.H.S. Burleigh: A Church History of Scotland (Oxford, 1960), pp. 367-369.

Burnet Gaba, who was at that time minister of the Free Church at Burnshill, saw his opportunity. According to his daughter, Mrs Virginia Nompilo Tabata, he had a dream which he interpreted as God calling him to revive the fire which had died under Ntaba ka Ndoda. This meant to him leaving the white church in order to build his own family church named after Saint Ntsikana. That is the oral tradition. In fact, Burnet did not begin by immediately starting his own church. He began by breaking away from the United Free Church in the name of the "Wee Frees".¹³

He wrote a letter to Scotland which appeared in the Glasgow Herald of 22 November 1906, claiming that he was a faithful adherent of the old Free Church of Scotland and therefore protesting against the Union. He gave reasons that he regarded the purity of worship authorized by Twenty Four as the correct Calvinistic system of doctrine. He wrote that he saw the Wee Frees as standing on behalf of the great fundamental principles of the Word of God in its integrity and fulness.¹⁴

The Synod of Kaffraria first learnt of this through a newspaper report and took great exception, justifiably too, as Burnet was still on their payroll. As the Wee

¹³. Interview with Mrs Tabata, Duncan Village, East London, 3 November 1987.

¹⁴. Lennox Papers, Pirie Affairs, 3/6. The Case of Mr Burnet Gaba in Glasgow Herald of 22 November 1906.

Frees had agreed to appoint Burnet as a probationer at his request, when confronted with this rumour by the Presbytery of Kaffraria, he replied by tendering his resignation. The Synod of the Kaffraria refused to accept his resignation as it felt that he had violated the vows he made when he was licenced. Nevertheless, the Presbytery withdrew his licence and appointed the Rev. E. Makiwane and Mr Ntintili to intimate to the congregation at Pirie what had been done.¹⁵

Regarding the Gaba family and the church dispute, Burnet in his separatist movement was followed by his brother Ntsikana. Ntsikana Gaba identified himself with the Wee Free movement claiming that he did so on doctrinal grounds and that it was not an "Ethiopian-Mzimba affair".

Rev. D.L. Erskine on the other hand, alleged that Ntsikana Gaba was just as deeply involved in the Mzimba movement as his brother Burnet. He further accused Ntsikana of having underhand correspondence with the Wee Frees while still professing loyalty to the Presbytery of Kaffraria. Erskine concluded by stating that the movement from the beginning associated and identified with Mzimba.¹⁶

¹⁵. Ibid.

¹⁶. Lennox Papers, Pirie Affairs 6/6, D.L. Erskine to J. Lennox, 24 January 1907. Rev. P.J. Mzimba had broken away from the Church of Scotland in 1897.

Another reason for Ntsikana Gaba's dissatisfaction was that the Presbytery of Kaffraria had decided on 4 March 1906 to send him to Port Elizabeth. The tone of the letter written by Ntsikana expressed that he was unhappy with both the new appointment as well as its stipend of £50 per annum. Ntsikana also felt that

"his junior status would be a disadvantage in competing with other churches and he wished to be ordained".¹⁷

After some hesitation, Ntsikana decided to take up the new appointment, but when he reached Lovedale to pursue the matter, he got information to the effect that he had ceased to be in their employment. He was very angry about this and therefore protested against the decision of the Presbytery and demanded "justice". He returned to his post at Zoutpansberg in the Transvaal but decided to submit his resignation as a member of the United Free Church of Scotland. In this resignation letter he told the clerk of the Synod of Kaffraria that he had attached himself to the legal Free Church to which denomination his sympathies were really inclined.¹⁸

¹⁷. J. Hodgson: "Ntsikana", p. 267.

¹⁸. Lennox Papers 2/6, Ntsikana Gaba to J. Lennox, Transvaal, 22 February 1907.

The Gaba family with its movement claiming to be doctrinal rather than political or ethical was strongly attacked even by the fellow blacks in the mission work. This was reflected by the contents of the letter written by Reverend John Knox Bokwe to J. Lennox related to Ntsikana's resignation. Bokwe demanded that Ntsikana be recalled immediately in order to enquire concerning the meaning of his underhand and disloyal correspondence with another church. Bokwe remarked that leniency had been grossly abused in cases beginning with Mzimba onwards. He concluded that it was about time to be stiffer where right and justice was on their side.¹⁹

The climax of the confusion, resulting from the Union in Scotland followed by the great feud between the Gaba family on one side and the Synod of Kaffraria on the other, was the sending out to South Africa of two deputies, Principal J. McCulloch and Reverend John Macleod, by the struggling Wee Frees in August 1907. They refused to meet with the Synod of Kaffraria but instead set up an independent Presbytery of Kaffraria. Burnet and Ntsikana were ordained as pastors for Pirie and Burnshill respectively, holding services for the time being in homes.

¹⁹. Ibid., Knox Bokwe to J. Lennox, Ugie, 25 February 1907.

At Pirie, for example, the first service of Burnet's Free Church were held in the home of Galanto Vazi, the headman of Pirie village, who had followed the Gaba family in their breaking from the old Free Church.²⁰

Meanwhile the United Presbyterian Church anxious to rescue Pirie mission from the "Wee Frees" belatedly sent it a white missionary, Reverend Robert Godfrey who arrived in 1908. Godfrey's report for 1908 shows just how far opposition to the Presbyterian Church had gone.

In my first tour of district I saw a most pitiable state of affairs. Rival services were being held in huts not far from our churches, the intensity of feeling between the rival camps was sapping the foundation of all Christian life. At Knox, our former friends who have meanwhile left us, held their services in the open air close to the church while I was conducting the services inside the building.

At the beginning of 1908, rival schools also became a feature of the existing agitation, these had already been opened in two locations, Whiteville and Tyusha, and our schools had been closed in both instances. Two other rival schools, Jaftas and Rankine started in January, and reduced our numbers to vanishing point, but in neither case did the new rival schools lead to the closing of ours.²¹

It can be seen from this extract that the struggle had spilled over from the churches to include the schools as well. For the time being, Godfrey had to admit himself

²⁰. Interview with Obet Vazi, 24 May 1986.

²¹. MS B721 Cory Library, R. Godfrey, Pirie Report 1908,

beaten with the adults and he concentrated his attention on the schools.

Meanwhile, the Reverend Alexander Dewar, who was sent to Pirie as missionary by the Scottish "Wee Frees", had disappointed the Gaba brothers. The royal commission on the property of the Free Church did not live up to their expectations. In desperation, the "Wee Free" Commissioners offered to give up all their claims elsewhere in South Africa in exchange for full possession of Pirie, their biggest stronghold. But this offer was turned down by the United Presbyterian Church commissioners.²²

Dissent soon broke out between Dewar and the Gabas. When the decision of the commission with regard to the Pirie church properties became known, this was a severe disappointment to the "Wee Free" supporters. Dewar apparently asked the Gabas to "go North", but they refused.²³ By April 1911, the Dewar faction and the Gaba faction were holding Sabbath services in different houses. On one occasion, at Burnshill, there was a noisy altercation between the two groups coming almost to blows.²⁴

²². J. McCracken, The Past History of the Pirie Mission, p. 5.

²³. Lennox Papers, Pirie Affairs 4/6, R. Godfrey to J. Lennox, 3 May 1910.

²⁴. Lennox Papers, Pirie Affairs, 4/6 R. Fini to J. Lennox, 4 May 1917 Gqumashe.

Shortly thereafter, Burnett Gaba broke away from the "Wee Frees" to find his own church, the Ntsikana memorial or Thwathwa church. This established branches at Cradock, Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, Grahamstown, Queenstown and at Nomgwadla, three miles distant from Pirie. An evangelist was put in charge of each group. Burnet would go the rounds once a quarter to collect their money and hold communion service.²⁵

Once a year at Easter time, members from all the different Ntsikana Memorial Church branches came together at Pirie for a special memorial celebration. Prominent families in the congregation were Qalanto Vazi's, Cwili, Nana Mtyingwane and Gxoyiya. Congregation remained small due to lack of funds.²⁶

Around 1943, Burnet raised the money for a tombstone for Ntsikana's grave at Thwathwa. He was assisted by the Hleke people at Pirie, the "headman being a close friend who gave him two sheep." The tombstone is a black marble and is at the head of a large concrete slab. The inscription reads: "Isikhumbuzo Sika Ntsikana Senziwe

²⁵. J. Hodgson: "Ntsikana," p. 270.

²⁶. Interview with Nompilo Tabata, Duncan Village location, East London, 3 November 1987.

lusapho lwakhe name Hleke (The memorial of Ntsikana by his grandchildren and the Hleke tribe)²⁷. When Burnet died in 1951 the Thwathwa Memorial Church in Pirie did in fact die with him, and so did most of the branches.

Reverend Dewar's "Wee Free" congregation survived Burnet's departure intact. With regard to appointing black ministers, their record was no better than that of the United Presbyterian Church. Of the various black ministers appointed, only Reverend Zokobe Taho of Knox district held his position for a significant period of time. Nevertheless the "Wee Frees" established congregations in every one of Pirie's seven areas, and many leading families adhere to them even today. After 1900 an iron church was built at Pirie. This served the congregation for many years but unfortunately was built on a private site. When later the owner required his site:

"We were forced to apply for one which we obtained and it was decided that the building to be erected should be called "The Ross-Erskine Memorial Church". This is where we are meeting today".²⁸

²⁷. J. Hodgson: "Ntsikana", p. 283.

²⁸. J. McCracken; The past History of the Pirie Mission, p. 8.

The conflict at the beginning of the 20th century as exposed in the above discussions could be seen as a growing attitude of colour consciousness on the part of the enlightened blacks who sought to liberate themselves from the nineteenth century missionaries. The actions of separatist movements such as Mzimba's, originated out of a desire on the part of some sections of the christianized blacks to be freed from control of European Churches.

Events at Pirie were not isolated, as other black members of the old Free Church sought to take advantage of the "Wee Free break-away. At nearby Burnshill, two young Blacks rang the bell and preached from the pulpit. At Somerville in the Transkei, certain black congregants, acting in the name of the Wee Frees, distracted the minister and seized the church buildings.²⁹

The fact that salaries of black pastors had to be raised locally whereas their same white counterparts were paid directly from Scotland added to the troubles which existed at Pirie. This was followed by a sharp decline in the Black Church revenue during this period of the Union. To the enlightened members of the struggling Free Church together with their followers, the governing

²⁹. Lennox Papers, Pirie Affairs, Letterbook of the Presbytery of Kaffraria, 31 April 1906.

consideration was that the two communities, that is black and white, were so far apart in christian growth and experience. They feared that in an incorporating union the "Native church would be overshadowed and dwarfed".³⁰

Even those who declined to follow Burnet into the "Wee Frees" and remained loyal to the United Free Church were affected by the desire to have more authority and independence. Godfrey, the United Free Church Minister at Pirie, reported that, just after he had constituted a meeting, John Makubalo rose up proposing that they should go home as it was wet. The strength of the conflict was reflected when Rev. Godfrey wrote that he had refused the proposal as he could no longer tolerate having more than one day's fighting in the month. It seemed strange that:

they refused to let me read the minute. Four months have now passed without the January minute being confirmed. I hardly expect that we will do anything for some months yet. One section of the people has refused to give any collections for the Native Ministers Fund. Similar action preceded the split led by the Gabas, and it may indicate that they are going to hive off.³¹

³⁰. J. Lennox: The Story of our Missions, p. 82.

³¹. Lennox Papers 4/6 Rev. R. Godfrey to Lennox, 6 June 1911.

Despite the fears of Godfrey, the dissidents remained in the United Free Church. Nevertheless, Pirie remained badly split between supporters of the United Free Church and supporters of the "Wee Frees". The hostility between these was such that by June 1911, Rev. Godfrey deemed any co-operation, even on religious grounds, out of the question.³²

As the following table demonstrate, support for the two major churches is almost evenly divided geographically speaking.

	United Free Church	Free Church	Mzimba	Thwathwa
1. Pirie	X	X		X
2. Jaftas	X	X		
3. Mure	X	X		
4. Rankine	X	X		
5. Tyusha	X	X	X	
6. Blair Helen	X	X	X	
7. Whiteville	X	X	X	

³². Lennox Papers, 4/6 Rev. Godfrey to J. Lennox, 14 October 1914.

3. The Church in the twentieth century

In the organization of the United Free Church in 1923, which became the Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa the Presbytery remained the upper body of all the congregations within the church. Among the major roles of the Presbytery are the building up of churches, the training and the appointing of ministers. The headquarters of the Bantu Presbyterian Church, called the Reformed Presbyterian Church of South Africa since 1923 are at Umtata in the Republic of Transkei.

Each congregation has an ordained minister assisted by deacons and elders, though in some cases, a minister is placed in charge of more than one station according to the availability of funds. Both deacons and elders have the responsibility of organizing and looking after church finances, as well as attending to discipline and spiritual welfare of the church.

Procedure in meetings of the Deacons Court followed by the mission church in the 19th century was adopted by the black Presbyterian church in the 20th century. Proceedings in these meetings show that Black ministers with their church councillors had been successfully detribalised as they like their white predecessors, strongly condemned the observing of traditional customs

by their congregants. This adverse attitude was for instance vividly exposed in the minutes of the Deacons Court meeting held on the 20 September 1924 where Rev.C. Koti sat with the following elders:- Gantsho, Kweqa, Mgxwati, Makumbalo, Ngaki and Mgcuwa. In that meeting where Gantsho acted as secretary, Bakiwe Tsheke appeared and was warned against undergoing "Ntonjane". In another meeting also held at Pirie on the 27 January 1933, Klaas Ngamlana also appeared before the Deacons Court members. He came to request the meeting to consider his reinstatement as a church member after having been excommunicated for brewing Xhosa beer in respect of his late ancestors.³³

Another related case of despising culture by Black Church Office bearers at Pirie was revealed at the meeting of 28 October 1927. It transpired from this meeting that Mrs Ngubelanga of Jaftas outstation, through the instructions of a witchdoctor, brewed Xhosa traditional beer and slaughter a goat in the hope of saving her son from a certain illness. On the basis of this evidence, Mrs Ngubelanga was suspended for six-months.³⁴

³³. Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa, Pirie, Deacons Court Minutes of 22 September 1929 and 27 January 1933.

³⁴. Ibid., 28 October 1927.

An appeal, made and signed by 118 members of the United Free Church at Pirie, lodged against Alexander Mabona, one of the elders and a claimant to the amaHleke chieftainship, proved further, the success of the missionaries in injecting in the black, the spirit of undermining their culture.

These detribalized members of the Hleke clan stated unequivocally that they did not like the behaviour of Alexander Mabona, who was still following heathen customs. Amongst other accusations against Alexander Mabona was that he being an elder, had acted as Noma-zaba-zaku (go between) in marriage negotiations where he even carried a bottle of brandy himself. In this case, he was being accused of having involved himself in the negotiations of the marriage of a girl who had eloped with Somnhonho's son. It was alleged that the marriage arrangements were carried according to full heathen practices as Somnhonho himself, an Imbongi and a councillor of Chief Sandile, was never converted.³⁵

In the same document Alexander Mabona was also accused of having attended a certain Mfula's red "Kafir" marriage. It was said further that he did not only dance there, but even demanded at the ceremony, a piece

³⁵. Lennox Papers Pirie Affairs, J. Lennox to R. Godfrey, 19 July 1912.

of meat called "Inxaxheba" to which traditionally he had no legitimate right hence he was challenged by another man who claimed to have the right to inxaxheba.³⁶

Before signing the minute of appeal, these christianized Hleke people, reiterated that Alexander Mabona had participated in the works of darkness and yet he could return from

"participating in heathenism and handle the communion vessels. We undermentioned communicants feel that we cannot receive the communion from the hands of the elder."³⁷

The first ten signatories of that letter of appeal were Qalanto Vazi, Stocke Mgcuwa, Rweqana Kwankwa, William Gobile, David Kleinveldt, Cunning Matshikwe, Mamase Sijika, Melani Sonka, Robert Tatu and Ebba Beuzana.³⁸

The above-discussed cases showed abundantly clear that converted Xhosa of Pirie were even against the Xhosa belief that:

"death among the Xhosa does not mean extinction. The soul lives on and the continuity of the family is preserved, and the spirits of the departed have direct communication with the living, who ministers to the wants of the departed."³⁹

³⁶. Ibid.

³⁷. Lennox Papers, Pirie Affairs, 5/6, J. Lennox to R. Godfrey, 19 July 1912.

³⁸. Ibid.

³⁹. D. Williams: "Missionaries", p. 295.

It is also important to mention in passing that by 1900, it had become customary to hold the women's prayer on Thursdays. When in 1923 the Bantu Presbyterian Church was made a full Grown daughter managing her own affairs by the Mother Church, a request was made to the moderator. Rev. W. Stuart, by those women who were delegates to this Assembly that they should have a properly constituted body in accordance with church rules which should meet at the same time and place with the General Assembly, but should have its own officials. The following were elected:

Mrs P.L. Hunter	:	President
Mrs T.B. Soga	:	Vice President
Mrs Coventry	:	Secretary
Mrs Dambuza	:	Treasurer ⁴⁰

As has been mentioned, even those black Christians who remained loyal to the United Free Church desired an African mother than a missionary church. This issue became pressing when the Scottish Church raised the question of the Synod of Kaffraria joining up with the white Presbyterian Church of South Africa. African ministers felt that they would be dominated by the white Assembly. Two deputies from Scotland came out in 1920,

⁴⁰. Biography of Miss Helen Blair, Lovedale Press.

and found that the black ministers and elders were "unanimous in their demand for this independent church of their own."⁴¹

The general feeling at the conference was for a "Native church which would be self-supporting and self-governing, in a federal relationship with the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. On the 4 July, 1923, the

Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa was founded. This church was intended to be independent and autonomous, working in close and friendly relationship with the United Free Church of Scotland. It was to be free to develop its own genius and face its tasks."⁴²

The ultimate goal of the establishment of the Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa, must have been a self-supporting and fully independent church where people would have to face up their own responsibility in matters like taking over the training and the support of their own ministers. The first moderator of the General

⁴¹. D.E. Burchell, "The Origins of the Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa", S.A. Historical Journal, IX (1977), p. 39.

⁴². R.H.W. Shepherd: Lovedale, South Africa, p. 246.

Assembly was the Rev. William Stuart, the veteran missionary of Burnshill. The roll of the Assembly was in 1923 as follows:

Ordained missionaries and pastors	
(majority of these were Blacks)	- 48
Elders and deacons	- 22 000
People in preparation for admission	- 1 824
Day schools connected with the church	- 385
No. of pupils	- 24 000 ⁴³

The Presbytery continued to keep a watchful eye on the distribution of labour. Ministers assisted by members of Deacons Court and elders were expected to operate to a regular programme of visitation. The Presbytery acted in a judicial capacity investigating cases of alleged unsatisfactory behaviour.

The fact that the Bantu Presbyterian Church of S.A. also enjoyed financial support from Scotland and for years after its inception was clearly shown by Pirie Mission Deacon's Court in a letter they received from Mr Chalmers, dated 30 May 1930, asking this body to submit the name of an Evangelist if any, as there were funds from Scotland to assist. The first Evangelist at Pirie was S.R. Gantsho, appointed on 19 November 1932 earning L4 a quarter.⁴⁴

⁴³. R.H.W. Shepherd: Lovedale, South Africa, p. 343.

⁴⁴. Pirie Bantu Presbyterian Church, Minute Book, 30 May 1930.

Nevertheless, the Pirie people were unable to pay the costs of a full-time minister. In a meeting held on the 2 October 1936, the Pirie session resolved that due to insufficient funds, the Assembly should be requested to appoint a minister for Pirie station on a temporary basis as the congregation was still owing Rev. N. Matshikwe who had been transferred to another circuit an arrear stipend of forty pounds, eighty shillings and sixpence. This must have been one of the factors which led the Presbytery of Ciskei, to resolve in settling a white minister, Rev. J. Auld, at Pirie (1938).

4. Educational Developments at Pirie

Although Pirie was once one of the main centres of western education in the Ciskei region, it declined very much relative to other centres such as Lovedale and Healdtown, during the Ross period. We have already seen that the emphasis was on the girls' school to the exclusion of the boys, and that even with the girls, Miss Blair was more concerned with Bible education rather than with education as such. With the collapse of the Ross mission after the death of Bryce Ross, education was left in the hands of the state.

By 1900 throughout South Africa, a state system of education was long in existence, and these schools had found their place in the national system without losing their definitely christian character. Schools at Pirie as in other areas in South Africa were owned and staffed by the missions, but they were under government control on the secular side and their headmasters were now, in almost every instance, Xhosa. They were now attended both by christian and non-christian children. The separation between church and state in relation to education was well illustrated for Pirie in 1938, when Reverend Auld reported that the Education Department had debarred teachers from attending church meetings during school hours.⁴⁵

But the state did not provide sufficient funds for good education to take place. The onus was on the people themselves, poor as they were, to provide money for education. And so we read, for instance, that on 17 March 1944 the teachers of Pirie Bantu Community School held a concert to raise funds for the school building.⁴⁶ Even in Pirie Central, education only went up to standard six.

⁴⁵. Pirie Bantu Presbyterian Church Minute Book, 23 July 1944.

⁴⁶. Pirie Bantu Presbyterian Church of S.A., Minute Book, 27 April 1944.

In many Pirie Mission outstations there were no schools at all, for it was almost impossible for the residents with the help of the church to maintain them except where the government was to pay the teacher. Correspondence between Reverend T. Fetsha, manager of schools and Mr A.W. Lister, Inspector of schools based in King William's Town dated 21-9-1953, that residents of Mzintshane outstation had long felt the need of an establishment of an infant school in their midst. In the motivation of this application, Reverend Fetsha stated that the children of the place had suffered for many years owing to the distances they had to travel in attending the neighbouring schools. It was disclosed that owing to this difficulty they had already started this school as from the beginning of the year accommodating scholars in a rondavel that had been kindly offered by one of the residents, Mr Douglas Mpongwana Vazi. It was added that the school curriculum was to be extended only up to standard two class and beyond this class, pupils would be transferred to Nomgwadla Congregational Higher Mission School, about five kilometres from Mzintshane location.

This situation was far from satisfactory, and it helps to explain the positive reception which many Pirie residents felt towards Bantu Education. As Hyslop has

pointed out, "there is a prevalent myth that the missionary education system was a smoothly functioning one which was wantonly destroyed by the imposition of the Bantu Education system ... But by the 1940s, the mission system was breaking down at all levels ... Simply, the resources of the missions were insufficient for the educational task which they were addressing."⁴⁷

With the passing of Bantu Education Act in 1953, control of schools at Pirie as was the case throughout South Africa was transferred from the mission society and Provincial department to the Central Government in Pretoria. Even after this centralisation, state financial support towards education at Pirie was too insufficient as schools could only be built on the unfair Rand for Rand system of subsidisation. According to this policy affecting rural areas only, the residents of Pirie had to struggle to build a certain number of school classrooms according to approved standards before the Government would erect additional classrooms of the same number. This differential treatment of "black education" (where the per capita expenditure on black pupils was one-tenth of that of whites) was a retarding factor",⁴⁸

⁴⁷. J. Hyslop: "Food, authority and politics: Student riots in South Africa 1945-1976", Africa Perspective, New Series, Vol. I (June 1987), p. 11.

⁴⁸. C. de Wet and S. Bekker: Rural Development in South Africa. Rhodes University, 1985, p. 53.

Troubles and unrests which plagued the whole of South Africa during the late fifties with the implementation of Bantu Education were never conspicuous at Pirie. In an interview with a retired former teacher and Principal of Pirie mission school for many years, Thandabantu Lennox Gantsho, though giving full credit to Ross family for the education of the area, expressed a positive opinion about the introduction of Bantu Education as he said categorically that it gave a chance to the amaHleke people to be more involved in the education of their children.⁴⁹ Great demand for education in the area despite the financial burden which confronted them was further highlighted in the correspondence between Reverend C. Jonas of Pirie Mission, and the inspector of schools in King William's Town dated 18 September 1953. In this letter, Reverend Jonas on behalf of the Hleke people, was motivating an application for the establishment of the secondary school at Pirie. Admitting that the old stone boarding house building was no longer suitable for repairs as even its foundation was gradually sinking, it was stated that their chief aim was to secure a site for a community secondary school, to raise enough funds to buy bricks, windows and contractors labour, and to use the flooring and ceiling boards, roofing iron and doors from the stone building which had to be pulled down. The material to be used from:

⁴⁹. Lennox Thandabantu Gantsho (Born 1909), Pirie, 26 October 1987.

"the stone building will eliminate the cost of erection of the new building. The community is very zealous about the Ross Secondary School. They would rather wait for the grant fully prepared for it.⁵⁰

Another interview with a retired former school Board Secretary in charge of Pirie schools from 1 June 1955, showed that the people of Pirie were granted permission to accommodate the Ross Secondary School at the old Boarding House temporarily. An alarming state of affairs was that even the salary of its first teacher, M. Sidzatane had to be the burden of the community as the state would not secure this until a properly structure was erected by the people accompanied by good reports showing enough enrolment and regular attendance of scholars. But the inability of the people of Pirie to raise money for the erection of a secondary school building on a proper site, according to this informant, led to the sudden closure of the school by the Government in 1961.⁵¹

This meant that Pirie scholars after passing standard six had to leave their homes for schools in urban areas such as Forbes Grant in King William's Town. Nevertheless, it is gratifying to write that Pirie today, is by

⁵⁰. C. Jonas to Inspector of school, King William's Town Re - Ross Secondary School, Ciskei Education Department, Bisho, 18 September 1953.

⁵¹. Joseph Green Luxolo Jojozi (born 20 May 1914), Dimbaza 6 June 1988.

the standards of unprivileged South African blacks, one of the flourishing centres of education in Diskei. There are two secondary schools called Mitshiza and amahleke situated at Pirie Central and Mzintshane Village respectively.

CHAPTER V

THE HEADMAN SYSTEM AND THE RESTORATION OF THE HLEKE CHIEFTAINSHIP1. The Pirie Village Management Board

Because Chief Jwarha was not sympathetic to individual title and also because of 1880 he was considerably advanced in years, it became the practice while he was still alive to appoint a headman. The headman was a Government servant, and received a salary of between 10 shillings and £ 1 sterling a month. The process by which such headmen were appointed, and the powers which they had is well explained by Special Magistrate R.J. Dick before the Cape Commission on Native Laws and Customs in 1881. Dick's area of authority included Pirie Mission.

3107. Who selects these headmen here? - Myself and the chief of the tribe. The death of a headman is reported. I then send for the chief, who attends with, perhaps two of his councillors and advisers. They submit a name, or perhaps a couple of names, and then go away. If I do not know the man personally I make myself acquainted with him or find out all about him, and if I am satisfied with the selection I submit the name to the Government ...

3109. What are the powers of these headmen? - As far as we are concerned they hold only powers under their own laws. He is the first court in the village, and frequently hears and determines a good many cases which never come before me ... The headman's duty is to report anything arising in the village, to assist in the collection of taxes, to notify the arrival of strangers, the erection of huts, to assist in the tracing of theft, and to bring defaulters into court.¹

¹. G.4. of 1883. Cape of Good Hope. Report and Proceedings of the Government Commission on Native Laws and Customs.

It can be seen from this that the powers of the headman correspond in many ways to that of a chief. The exact relationship between chief and headman at Pirie in Jwarah's time is very unclear, but it is most probable that Chief Jwarha being old and beaten over the titles issue, his authority was easily brushed aside by the government, the headman and the missionary, Bryce Ross.

In 1888 a Village Management Board was created at Pirie under the provisions of the Village Management Act, Number 29 of 1881. According to this Act, the lead was taken by the Magistrate, who framed a list of the registered voters, resident within the boundaries of the village. These voters met once a year to elect a Management Board consisting of three members. The three elected members chose a chairman from among themselves.

The Village Management Board was to hold monthly meetings, and to keep minutes of them, also proper accounts which had to be submitted to the Magistrate. They had the right to levy rates of not more than 3d. in the ~~+~~ sterling. But they were not paid for their duties, and any Board member who wanted to do business with the Board was compelled to resign first.

In addition to these general rules, which applied to all Village Management Boards including Pirie, there were special regulations, which applied to Pirie alone. The text of the "

Rules and Regulations for the Management of the Village of Pirie" is given in full in the Appendix, but to understand how the system worked, it is necessary to give a summary of them over here.²

Most of the regulations deal with control over the commonage. Strangers were not allowed to graze their stock on the commonage without written permission of the Board, and even then they had to specify the numbers of their stock and to pay a monthly fee. Written permission of the Board was also required for the erection of huts or cattle-kraals on the commonage. Ploughing or tilling on the commonage was not allowed. The Board was responsible for the erection of beacons and the clearing of burrweed. The regulations also protected the landowner from the intrusion onto his land of other people's cattle and pigs.

Other regulations dealt with issues of public health, particularly with regard to water. No one was allowed to commit a nuisance in a public place, or to wash clothes in water used for drinking. No cattle or small stock were to trespass on enclosed dams, wells or fountains. Owners of dead animals were compelled to remove their carcasses promptly, and the Board was empowered to isolate or destroy animals suffering from infectious diseases.

². Government Notice 80 of 1880.

Regulations Numbers XXVI and XXVII clearly reveal the missionary influence behind such a Village Management Board. They are worth quoting at length:

XXVI. No person shall be allowed to take part in, or be present at any promiscuous gathering met for the purpose of disorderly night singing or beer drinking, within the bounds of this village ... *

XXVII. No person shall be allowed within the limits of this village or boundaries of the location to practice or take part in any heathen custom of a revolting nature or injurious to public morality, such as "amasutu abakweta", or assemblages of circumcised boys, "intlombe", or nocturnal dancing with hideous music, "ukuxentsa", or dancing for witch-doctors, "intonjane", or lewd singing and dancing upon a girl attaining the age of puberty, "ukuqala", or smearing all over with red clay.³

Persons breaking these bye-laws were to be fined 2/6d each, and the owner of the land where the offence was committed was to be fined 5/-. No records survive to inform us whether these bye-laws were ever enforced or not.

But even more dangerous to the amaHleke people were regulations which deprived them of the free access which they deserved to gather wood in the Pirie bush. The crucial regulation, Number XIX, read as follows:

No one, except a member of the Board, and for public purposes, shall cut down any timber tree - such as yellowwood, sneezewood, wild chestnut, white pear, red pear, assegaiwood, mnonono - on the

³. PAS 2/261, Cape Archives, Correspondence File.

commonage, unless it be wagon wood, for the repair of a wagon broken down. No one shall cut down any wood for sale off the commonage: and for the cutting of wood for private purposes other than the abovementioned, the sanction of the Board must be first hand and obtained.⁴

Under regulations Number XX, even dry wood from fallen timber trees could not be collected. It had to be taken to a proper place by authority of the board, sawn into planks and there sold.

It would appear, however, that these regulations were interpreted by the amaHleke to give the Village Management Board full control over all the forests on the commonage, including both reserved and unreserved species. They therefore rejected the attempts of the Forest Department to impose curbs on them.

This made the Forestry Department to complain in 1913, arguing that the Village Management Board had exceeded its powers in framing these regulations and threatening to cancel them. After much deliberate delaying the Village Management Board was forced to accept new regulations, Numbers XVIII to XX, covering not only timber trees but also the removal of "firewood, brushwood and grass" from the commonage. Such removal was for home use only - the intention being to deprive the amaHleke of supplementing their incomes by the

⁴. Ibid.

sale of wood. The Board retained the power to grant licenses for cutting were now subject to the regulations of the Forest Department. Police and Forest Officers were empowered to demand licenses on the spot from anyone they found cutting or removing wood from the commonage.⁵

Unfortunately, there is no set of records which deals with the affairs of the Pirie Village Management Board. We do not even have a record which could tell us the names of the different chairmen. The only statistic that we have comes from 1913, when it was mentioned that there were 65 voters, of whom only one (the missionary) was a European.⁶ It is clear, however, that the Board could not simply do what it liked concerning the enforcement of the above rules and regulations because it had to be responsive to the desires of the people. Some time around 1900 Alexander Mabona, who was then the Chairman of the Board, employed a man to patrol and river banks and protect the river from pollution by washing of clothes, use as a latrine and so on. But the women were so angry about this interference with their habits, that they induced their husbands to vote against him and he was not re-elected in the next election.⁷

⁵. Ibid.

⁶. Ibid.

⁷. L 84A, Cape Archive, Correspondence File.

We can see that the Board did not safeguard the water supply and the forest trees, according to the wishes of the Government. In fact, this was not entirely their fault since they did try to use teachers, for example, to persuade the people to use the river correctly. They were aware of the health hazards involved, and complained themselves about clothes infected with fever that had been taken to the river and washed.⁸ But they were bound by the will of the people.

Consequently, because they were not fulfilling their expected duties, the Government complained about them. On 17 June 1913 Downey, the Magistrate of King William's Town, wrote a letter complaining that he had always had the greatest difficulty getting information from the Board. They had only once levied a rate, and that was in 1894. Every year, he had to send their financial statement back to them for correction.⁹

He therefore suggested that the Board should be abolished and that the area should come under the direct control of the Divisional Council. He had similar complaints about the Hanover and Mnxesha Village Management Boards in his district. He said that these Boards were, in general, unstable and lacked the power to enforce their decisions. However, in

⁸. Ibid.

⁹. PAS 2/261, Magistrate of King William's Town to Provincial Secretary.

a later letter he wrote that he had reconsidered the matter. Although the Boards did not successfully carry out the functions for which they had been created, they were the only recognised authority, and "its abolition would mean in the event of an epidemic occurring or questions regarding commonage arising, that the Administration would have no person or body to deal with".¹⁰

As time passed, the Cape liberal peasant-orientated optimism which had led to setting up the Village Management Boards faded away. The Ciskei came to be regarded as a problem area by the Native Affairs Department, and in 1921 T. Norton, was appointed as the first Ciskei Native Commissioner. Norton immediately took steps to clean up the Ciskei, and to remodel it on the lines of Transkeian "indirect rule". By Proclamation 100 of 1921, the Village Management Board of Pirie, together with those of Healdtown, Hackney, Lesseyton and Mgwali, was abolished.¹¹

2. The Hleke Chieftainship Dispute

The first headman to be appointed according to the system of headmanship was Ngweni Kopo who is mentioned as headman of

¹⁰. PAS 2/261, Magistrate of King William's Town to Provincial Secretary, 11 August 1913.

¹¹. Province of the Cape of Good Hope Official Gazette, 3 June 1921.

Pirie in a Government Commission of 1882, although we do not know exactly when he assumed the headmanship.¹²

Ngweni Kopo who was not a Tshawe, according to one informant, Mchithwa Piyo, was in 1905 succeeded as Pirie headman by Robert Thathu, his son in law. Another informant, former headman of Pirie Howard Vazi, emphasized the fact that, Thathu's appointment had nothing to do with his relationship with Ngweni Kopo. Howard said Robert Thathu was elected by the Hleke people mainly because, despite his ability, and charisma, he belonged to the Tshawe group of Kwankwa, the rightful heir to the Hleke chieftainship.

Thathu's period of headmanship coincided with the period when the Hleke chieftainship was in abeyance.¹³

Robert Thathu was in 1924 succeeded by another Tshawe, Galanto Vazi, whose position as headman was later inherited in 1948 by his son, Howard. Mchithwa Piyo in an interview mentioned that Galanto Vazi was a second choice as the majority of the Hleke people, who wanted Alexander Mabona, were disappointed when his daughters declined the offer because of old age.¹⁴ Howard Vazi had a long period of headmanship as it started in

¹². G. 90 of 1882, p. 24.

¹³. (i) Albert Mchithwa Piyo, (born 12 March 1907), Pirie, 26 October 1981).
(ii) Howard Vazi (born 21 July 1911) Pirie, 26 October 1987.

¹⁴. Albert Mchithwa Piyo, interview.

1948 until his retirement in 1978. It is also worth mentioning that the headman of Pirie were assisted by sub-headman in each of the villages. During his period, Howard Vazi was assisted by Curtis Vazi, Brownlee Bashe and Jongilanga Tsheke at Mzintshane, Hleke (Mpundu), and Kwelerana respectively.¹⁵

In 1899 chief Jwarha Bini died at nearly a hundred years of age. Notwithstanding the fact that he had four wives, he died without leaving any male descendant. This, together with other social and political factors of the century, led to the fact that the tribe was without a chief for nearly seventy years.

Although in theory, rules of succession were clear that is, the heir should always be the eldest son in the Great House, in practice there was frequently uncertainty. Traditionally, should a chief leave no male descendants by any of his wives, the chieftom should be passed to the line of his next brother in the house, and failing an heir in this house as well, the succession passed to the next house, and so on until the heir had been found. The rightful heir was always the living man next in order of seniority to the chief. Despite the fact that the seniority unquestionably shifted to Khwankwa's descendents, for an unknown reason, Hleke tribesmen would not speak the truth as to which one of Khwankwa's three wives was the principal one, namely, Nomsa, Nomanto and Nocefu.¹⁶

¹⁵. Howard Vazi, interview.

¹⁶. W. Hammond-Tooke: The tribes of King William's Town District, p. 122.

The practice of polygamy by chief Jwarha, with its attendant complications of ranking, gave dispute about succession to the chieftainship, like in many tribes of the nineteenth century, the conflict between rival claimants to the succession nearly resulted in a civil war and a split in the tribe. In a civil case between Alexander Mabona and Robert Thathu held on 14 May 1913, the former, being grandson of Khwankwa claimed that he had been appointed by chief Jwarha on his deathbed to look after the family of amaHleke. This claim was objected by other members of the tribe who maintained that Jwarha had adopted Henesi, grandson of Tshetshe, and placed him as heir in the Great House. Appearing before the judges in the same case, Zono Busoshe, testified that his father was the eldest son of Khwankwa and, he, though he had no desire to claim the chieftainship, was his eldest son. Zono instead emphasized that Jwarha before he died only expressed his wish for Henesi to work for him but never formally called the chieftdom together and appointed him the heir.

In the civil case Alexander Mabona was suing Robert Thathu who as Headman of Pirie since 1905 had been looking after Jwarha's estate. In the indictment claiming the property as the heir, he also urged that Thathu be removed from the Great place. The case was dismissed by the Native Commissioner.¹⁷

¹⁷. Ibid., p. 122.

The first initiative to be taken by the Hleke people in an attempt to restore their chieftainship appeared in a correspondence signed by Modesai Kwankwa, Douglas Vazi and Isaac Vauntyi to C.N. Lever, the Native Commissioner based in King William's Town dated 5 May 1935. The division among the Hleke people was also strongly suggested in this letter as the signature mentioned were requesting the commissioner to authorize their Headman, Qalanto Vazi to convene a meeting at Pirie in connection with the successor of the late Chief Jwarha Bini. They confessed that to them, the chieftainship of a Hleke was an important matter but to their surprise, Qalanto had repeatedly refused their request to convene a meeting hence they were appealing to the commissioner.¹⁶ Lack of cooperation between these Hleke people and their Headman might have been one of the major contributory factors to another delay of ten years before chieftainship was claimed again. In his letter of reply dated 9 July 1935, Lever informed the complainants that the chieftainship of the tribe in question was not an official one, and he therefore was not disposed to instruct the headman to call a meeting. Lever did, however, advise them to establish the fact that this tribe was of a recognised unit of importance, by setting out its origin, and the genealogy of the chieftainship.¹⁷

¹⁶. Magistrate Zwelitsha, The amaHleke of Pirie, File.

¹⁷. Ibid.

In a letter to the Native Commissioner dated 21 October 1935, Alexander Mabona reiterated his claim by requesting him to investigate the situation surrounding the amaHleke chieftainship. He stated that he had explained to the amaHleke tribe that he was the legitimate heir to chiefdom because chief Jwarha was fetched from Bolo near Stutterheim at the instruction of Dr Bryce Ross by his own father Mabona. He continued emphatically that Dr Bryce Ross, a missionary at Pirie selected his father because he knew that he was the chief's next successor. It was on these grounds that after Mabona's death, he, himself assisted Jwarha in all the affairs of the nation. Alexander Mabona concluded his letter by mentioning that some members of the tribe had been suggesting that the matter be put before Archie Velile Sandile, the paramount chief of the amaRarabe, but with no avail due to differences and prejudice among amaHleke.²⁰ In a letter of reply signed by C.N.J. Lever, Native Commissioner, dated 2 December 1935, Alexander Mabona was referred to the court decision of 1913 which finally dismissed and disposed of his claim to the chiefdom. He was clearly told that no useful purpose would be served by constant revival of the matter and also advised to desist from the practise of pretender to rights which he never had.²¹

²⁰. Ibid.

²¹. Ibid.

Again in May 1946 representatives who later appeared to be opposing Alexander Mabona led by B.B. Xiniwe to the Native Commissioner for the resuscitation of the Hleke chiefdom but they received the following reply dated 23 May 1946 that:

"I wish to point out that Chief Jwara Bini died in 1899, and that 36 years afterwards, viz, in 1935, representations are made for the first time for the appointment of a successor, and upon receiving an unfortunate reply from the Native Commissioner, 11 years are again allowed to elapse before I am approached".²²

The Native Commissioner closed doors for further negotiations completely when he pointed out in the same letter of reply that it did not appear as if the matter was considered of much importance by the tribe. He added that he could not find any record that the Hleke tribe was ever recognised by the Government and therefore was not prepared to do anything in the matter.²³ Another minute written by the Native Commissioner, King William's Town still regarding the chiefdom of the amaHleke tribe dated 10 December 1946 advised the Chief Native Commissioner, King William's Town that a meeting of the tribe concerned was held at Pirie on the 29 ultimo where two claimants appeared. The Chief Native Commissioner was being informed that, in that particular meeting, S..R. Gantsho, one of the prominent members of the

²². W. Hammond-Tooke: The tribes of King William's Town, p. 122.

²³. Magistrate, Zwelitsha, the amaHleke of Pirie, File.

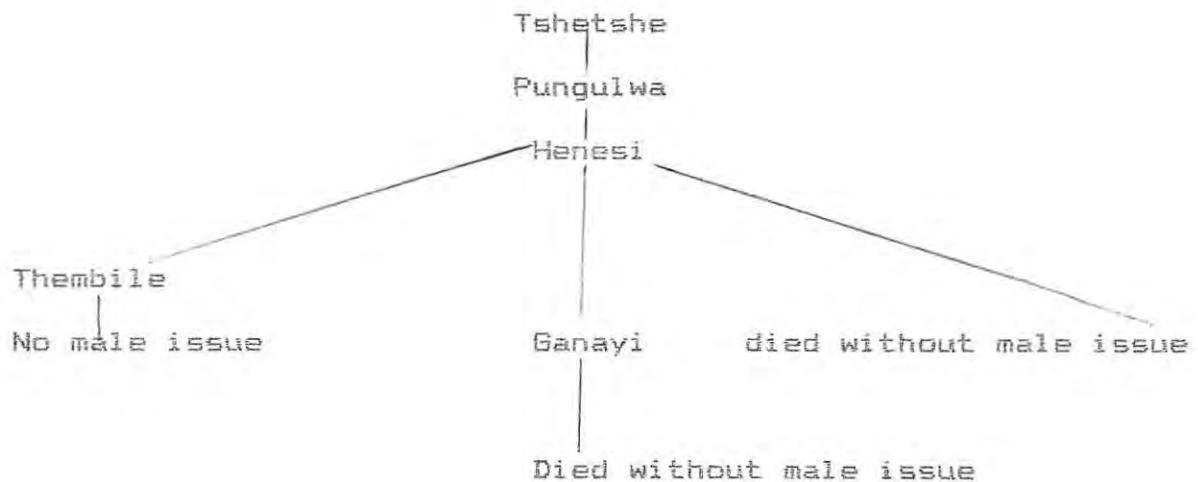
tribe, testified that ever since the death of Chief Jwarha in 1899, no chief had been appointed and as as tribe they wished that a chief for them be appointed. Gantsho revealed that there were two Great Houses, the first one being that of Jwarha with no male issue while Khwankwa being the second house had a male offspring. He emphasized that the seniority had to be shifted unquestionably to Khwankwa's descendants. He pointed out clearly that the rightful heir was Dick Gcabe. Other councillors who corroborated Gantsho according to commissioner's report, were Isaac Vantyi and Douglas Mpongwana Vazi. They concurred that they wanted Gcabe Busoshe, as his grandfather Busoshe was the son by Nomsa, the first wife.²⁴ Qalanto Vazi, the village headman disputed the fact that Busoshe was son by the first wife. In his objection he stated that the chief son by a concubine does not have the right to succeed, even if there are no legitimate descendants. In the columns of "Imvo ZabaNtsundu" of 29 February 1964, Sogwali kaNtaba wrote quoting Qalanto Vazi as saying that none of the three wives of Khwankwa was legally married according to Xhosa tradition but Nomanto was the greatest concubine followed by Nomsa and Nocefu respectively.²⁵

Qalanto Vazi claimed that the heir of Khwankwa was Maqombo, his son by the first wife.

²⁴. Ibid.

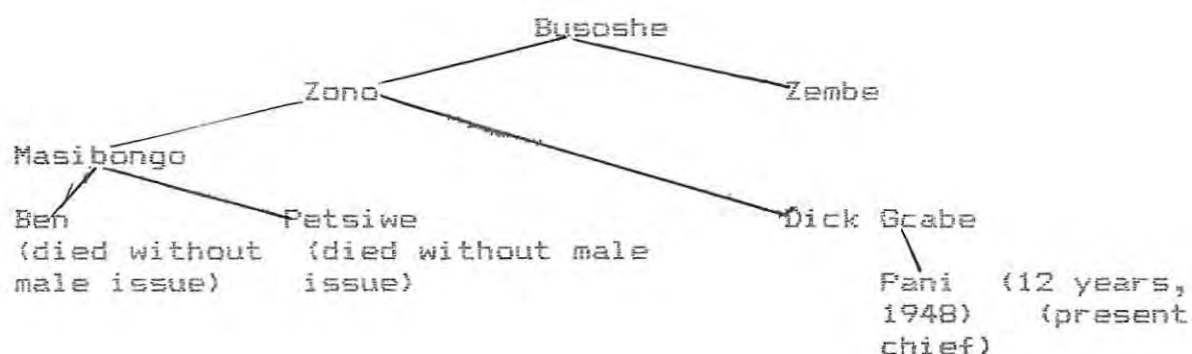
²⁵. Imvo, ZabaNtsundu, 29 February 1964.

In a number of attempts to trace the heir of amaHleke tribe the Native Commissioner on the 19 August 1947 communicated with the magistrate of the District of Kentani, Transkei seeking the whereabouts as well as any other information related to Henesi, who was said to have been adopted by the late chief Jwarha Bini on his death bed. It was said that he left for Transkei during the time of redwater epidemic and had never been heard of since. Genealogical tree of Henesi Pungulwa, given by Makabuye Hedesesi of Kentani was on 16 September 1947, submitted to Native Commissioner of King William's Town as follows:²⁶



In trying to establish the legitimate successor, another skeleton of genealogy of the Hleke royal family was on 28-1-1948 submitted to Native Commissioner, King William's Town by Isaac Vantyi, Douglas Vazi and Sepango Gantsho as follows:

²⁶. Magistrate, Zwelitsha, the amaHleke of Pirie, File.



A letter by the Native Commissioner of King William's Town to his counterpart at Springs dated 17 March 1947, was one of the attempts to trace the legitimate heir to the amaHleke chiefdom. This correspondence revealed that during the year 1943, a certain Xhosa named Cantwell Khwankwa died at Springs. The contents of the letter expressed the Commissioner's anxiety to know whether Cantwell was a married man, and if so, whether by Xhosa custom or Christian rites. This high official also wanted to ascertain as to whether Cantwell left any issues and if possible their whereabouts. A reply to this letter dated 2 May 1947 expressed regret in informing that Cantwell Khwankwa died in 1943.²⁷

Another correspondence endeavouring to trace the heir dated 3 July 1947 was written to the Native Commissioner of Johannesburg requesting him to elicit information required, from Magoma Mabona, said to be employed as a clerk at the City Deep Mine. A prompt reply from Johannesburg containing a

²⁷. Ibid.

statement made by Maqoma Mabona at the office of the Native Commissioner, dated 25 July 1947 was received by the office of his counterpart in King William's Town. In his affidavit Maqoma declared that the late Cantwell Mabona was his eldest brother who died at Grey hospital, King William's Town, in February 1943. He added that Cantwell was married by Christian rites, to Mimmie Mabona (nee Gcukumani) at Johannesburg leaving two children of that wedlock namely Walter Themba, who was about 27 years of age in 1947, residing in Cape Town. His second child was Mpilisi who was about 25 years working in Johannesburg.²⁸

In 1948 the tribe was still divided. One section with Isaac Vantyi, Douglas Vazi and Sepango Gantsho insisted in claiming that only descendants of Busoshe were eligible for succession. Another group with Galanto Vazi and Alexander Mabona maintained that the descendants of Mabona should inherit the chieftdom. The claim that chief Jwarha adopted Henesi fell away as the genealogical tree showed that he died without issue. The controversy without any doubt did contribute to the delay in appointing a chief until such time that the tribe agreed as to who the rightful heir was.

Another meeting was held at the Native Commissioner's office in King William's Town, 23 May 1948 where 33 members of the amaHleke were present. Douglas Vazi, the first speaker of

²⁸. Ibid.

the delegation reported concerning a meeting at which the Great, Right-hand and the Xiba houses were present. It was decided that Dick Gcabe Busoshe should be the chief of the amaHleke tribe. He proceeded emotionally that they had that day brought him to the Native Commissioner. Douglas Vazi was supported by Luke Tsheke who introduced himself as a member of the Right-hand House of the amaHleke tribe. It became clear that those who objected to Dick Busoshe's appointment were in the minority, with Maqoma Mabona and Qalanto Vazi, worth mentioning. In his objection, Qalanto Vazi stated that those who were for Dick were the same men who took Alexander Mabona to the Great Place at Cwaru. He drew attention of the meeting to the fact that Alexander Mabona, on big traditional occasions of the tribe was always addressed in a ceremonial manner with /Ah/ Dilizintaba, as his chief name. Qalanto thus concluded that Alexander's sons, not Busoshe's were the heirs.²⁹

The matter was left in abeyance for many years until the government in 1955 introduced the Bantu Authorities Act which advocated establishment of Bantu Tribal Authorities and said to bestow privileges to the black people. Correspondence between the Chief Native Commissioner and the local Native Commissioner dated 16 November 1955 indicated that the long question of the chieftainship of the amaHleke tribe was still receiving attention. In this minute, R.A. Bowen the Native

²⁹. Imvo ZabaNtsundu: 18 January, 1964.

Commissioner, informed his superior that he had duly addressed a meeting of the amaHleke at upper Izeli on the 14 instant, at which over hundred people were present including the headmen of Kwelerana, Jaftas, Pirie, Donnington, Tyusha and Izeli locations. He pointed out that he had at that meeting fully explained the Act and regulation regarding Bantu Authorities to them and indicated the necessity for people to arrive at an agreement on the subject of the chieftainship as directed "by the secretary for Native Affairs in his minute No. 24/41 dated 18 May 1948."³⁰

The presence of Headman from Jaftas, Donnington, Tyusha and Izeli locations which are now occupied by the Mfengu people also demonstrated that these areas originally belonged to amaHleke tribe but the Mfengu were allowed to settle in them as a reward for services rendered during the frontier wars. Monica Wilson says the Xhosa lost the greater part of their land to the whites, a little to the coloured people, and some to the Mfengu refugees, who became allies of the whites.³¹

After a period of more than ten years, a meeting to discuss the long outstanding and controversial issue of the chiefdom of the amaHleke was held at Pirie on 14 January 1966. About two hundred and four members of the tribe were present. Howard Vazi, the headman of the village, Isaac Sangatsha

³⁰. Magistrate, Zwelitsha, amaHleke of Pirie, File.

³¹. M. Wilson: A History of South Africa to 1870, p. 252.

representing the paramount chief Sandile and S. Maneli from the office of Bantu Affairs Commissioner who acted as interpreter deserve mentioning. One of the old members of the Great House of Hleke who had been present in all negotiations as far back as 1935 by the name of Douglas Mpongwana Vazi was the first speaker at this meeting. Douglas, obviously exhausted by this national issue told the gathering that the Tshawe clan had discussed the matter thoroughly and decided that Pani Busoshe, the great grandson of Busoshe should be appointed chief of amaHleke tribe.³² The first speaker was strongly opposed by Maqoma Mabona who claimed to be the descendent of the Great House. He reiterated that the house of Mabona should be recognised, not that of Busoshe. An article written by Maqoma and published in the King William's Town Mercury of 20 February 1956 quoted him as saying that, as chief Jwarha had no male issue, the next house in the line of succession was that of Khwankwa to which he belonged.³³ In a further attempt to re-affirm his claim, he stated that his elder brother was late Cantwell Mabona who had two sons namely, Themba and Mpilisi. Themba was in Cape Town and had never been to Pirie. He was born in Johannesburg, married a coloured woman and classified himself coloured too, he continued. Another speaker supporting the claimants in favour of Pani Busoshe was Scotland Vantyi.³⁴

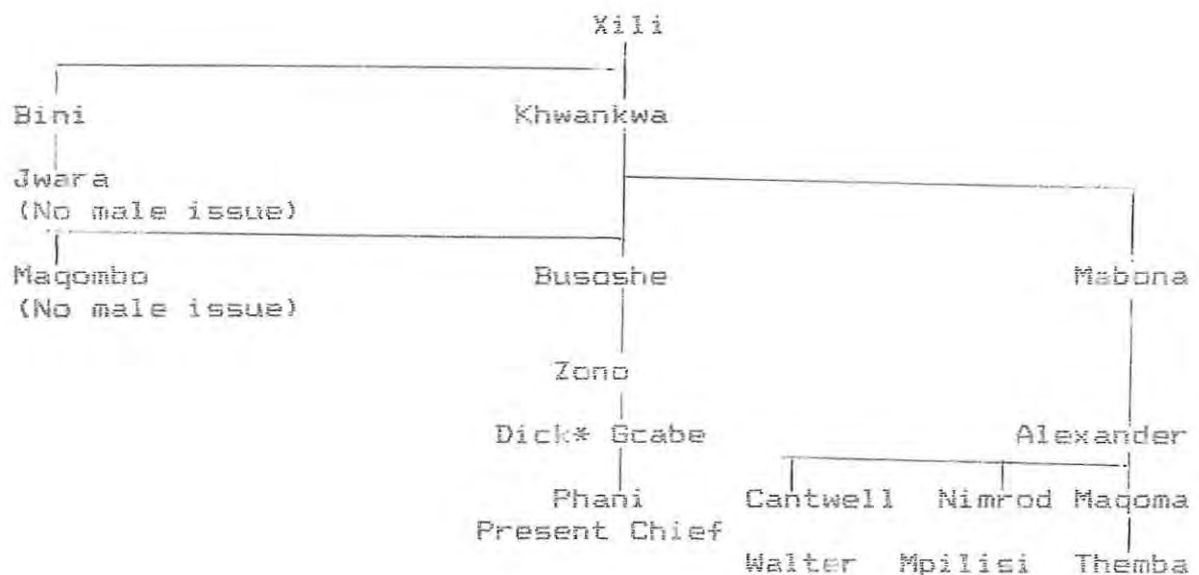
³². Imvo ZabaNtsundu, 5 February 1966.

³³. Magistrate, Zwelitsha, amaHleke of Pirie, File.

³⁴. Imvo ZabaNtsundu, 5 February 1966.

All members of the tribe present at the meeting with the exception of Maqoma Mabona and Goliath Skritshi, agreed in favour of Pani Busoshe. As a result of this important meeting the Great Place was erected at Mzintshane location, at Pani's father's surveyed land and building site of which his widowed mother was exercising usufruct. He was installed on the 23 March 1967 with Commissioner-General of the Xhosa unit conducting the ceremony while a paper tracing the early history of the tribe was presented by chief S.M. Burns-Ncamashe.³⁵

GENEALOGY OF THE CHIEFS OF AMAHLEKE



³⁵. Ibid.

CHAPTER VICONCLUSIONS

This thesis has related the story of the amaHleke and Pirie Mission. It was undertaken in the first instance as a result of my curiosity about my birthplace and my people. But I hope that this history will also have some wider relevance as an example of the history of a mission village in the Ciskei.

It is well-known that the Ciskei was one of the most heavily missioned areas of South Africa. First came the missionaries, and then followed the "civilising" policies of Sir George Grey and the Cape liberals. Pirie especially suffered from these policies as it was entirely dominated by the Ross family for the whole of the nineteenth century. The amaHleke people greatly resisted missionary policies, but, on account of the situation caused by the Frontier Wars, they were left with no alternative but to accept the mission.

Many changes were imposed on the amaHleke. These included the fields of religion, education, culture and land tenure. Despite their resistance, the amaHleke did change under the missionary influence. They accepted many of the Christian teachings, and they also became peasants in the Colonial economy.

But it cannot be said that the Ross mission was a success. In fact, Pirie began to change as soon as Bryce Ross died. The revolt of the Gaba brothers against white domination in the church clearly showed that blacks were not going to be pushed around any more. The Village Management Board, another example of Cape liberal policies, collapsed and was eventually replaced by a chief. The positive response of the people to Bantu Education is yet another sign of the failure of missionary efforts.

This history closes in 1967 with the resuscitation of the Hleke chieftainship. Great changes have affected the Ciskei since then, and Pirie has naturally also been affected. That is a story for future historians to write. I hope, however, that what I have written will make some contribution to clearing up the ignorance concerning the history of amaHleke and Pirie Mission, and to instilling in our people some knowledge and inspiration of their past.

APPENDIXGOVERNMENT GAZETTE - 3 FEBRUARY 1888GOVERNMENT NOTICE - No. 80, 188.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Cape Town,

Cape of Good Hope, 30th January 1888.

His Excellency the Governor, with the advice of the Executive Council, has been pleased to approve of the subjoined Regulations, framed by the Board of Management, Pirie Village, District of King Williams Town, under the provisions of the "Villages Management Act, 1881".

JOHN TUDHAGE

Colonial Secretary

Rules and Regulations for the Management of the Village of Pirie, in the Division of King William's Town.

I. The Board of Management shall meet for the dispatch of business on the first Friday in each month.

II. The Chairman may at any time summon a special meeting of the Board, by notice under his hand, setting forth the object for which such special meeting is called; and the Chairman shall similarly summon a special meeting on receipt of a requisition signed by either of the other members of the

Board, setting forth the business on account of which such special meeting is required; but at no such special meeting shall any business be considered unless the same shall have been set forth in the notice calling such meeting.

III. Agents of the mission carried on in the village bona fide tenants of mission lands, owners of a garden and building lot, who have not leased the same, hires and lessees of an entire and individual garden and building lot holding the written sanction of Government for occupation thereof, shall be allowed to depasture and belonging to them, or in their custody, on the commonage.

IV. Any person resident within the bounds of the location or village, and not possessing the several qualifications set forth in the 3rd section hereof, shall be charged for grazing on the commonage at the rate of 6d. per month per head of horned cattle, horses, or sheep, and 3d. per month per head for goats; and all such persons shall notify to the Board the number of their grazing stock, from time to time.

V. All stock, the property of other than the persons mentioned in the 3rd and 4th sections hereof, found trespassing on the commonage, shall be seized, and a fine of 2d. per head for horses and horned cattle, 3d. for goats, and 1d for sheep, imposed; and if such fine be not paid within 2

hours from seizure of the same, all such stock shall be impounded, and dealt with under the "Pound Ordinance", 16 of 1817.

VI. Stock, the property of other than the persons mentioned in the 3rd and 4th sections hereof, shall be allowed on the commonage only with the written consent of the Board, who shall make such charges for the grazing of the same as they shall from time to time think fit; but the Board shall allow no such stock on the commonage in the time of drought.

VII. All pigs, not being confined, found or allowed to run about the village or commonage, shall be seized, and the owner fined 2s. 6d.

VIII. Stock passing from one place to another, wagons laden with produce going to and returning from market, and carries loading or unloading at the village, shall be allowed free grazing for 24 hours; and visitors to the village and those attending church shall be allowed free grazing.

IX. The Board shall promptly use all lawful means to prevent the sanction of Government to the purchase, hire, or lease of any land whatever within the boundaries of this village or location, except to duly approved applicants; also to take up and bring to justice any person found selling any intoxicating drink of any kind within the bounds of this village.

X. No kraal or fold of any kind shall be erected in any street, nor shall any rubbish be deposited thereon; nor shall any person erect any house, hut, kraal, fold, or any other obstruction on the commonage, without the express written permission of the Board first had and obtained; such permission, however, shall be granted to owners of garden and building lots only, and such erection shall be permitted only within fifty yards of the owner's lot. Any person infringing this bye-law shall be fined to an amount not exceeding £1 sterling, and the hut, kraal, or other obstruction shall be destroyed; and any hut, kraal, or other obstruction, at present existing on the commonage shall, within two months from the date of approval of these Regulations, be removed by the owner thereof, failing which it shall be lawful for the Board to cause the same to be removed or destroyed, and any expense incurred by the Board in such removal or destruction shall be recoverable from such owner.

XI Occupiers of land, whether their own, hired or leased, shall be obliged to keep their land free from burr-weed; should the occupier fail to do so, after receiving three weeks notice from the Board, his or her land shall be cleared of burr-weed by the Board at the occupier's expense.

XII. Burr-weed on the streets and commonage to be cleared by the Board.

XIII. The inhabitants shall, through the Board, have proper beacons erected for their commonage; and owners or occupants of landed property shall have beacons erected for such property, failing to do which within one month after being duly warned, they shall be fined L1 each.

XIV. In cases where it is doubtful whether beacons are in their proper places, recourse shall be had to the Government headmen of the village, who shall take requisite measures to ascertain whether such beacons are in their proper places or not, and all expenses incurred in connection therewith shall be borne by the occupant.

XV. No one shall be allowed to pasture his cattle on the margin of cultivated land.

XVI. The practice of turning cattle indiscriminately into fields or gardens as soon as reaped, shall be disallowed. Should cattle be so turned into any field or garden, the owner or occupier of such land may seize or impound them, as in the case of trespass.

XVII. No person shall plough or till on the commonage, under a penalty of 5s. for the first offence.

XVIII. No person shall kindle a fire or set fire to the grass on the commonage, or cut down or injure any tree or

wood in any coppice, or on the banks of any stream or rivulet, or round any fountain, well, or dam, or in any mimosa ground, except in such cases as shall be deemed right by the Board, under a penalty of L1 for the first offence.

XIX. No one, except a member of the Board, and for public purpose, shall cut down any timber tree - such as yellowwood, sneezewood, ironwood, wild chestnut, white pear, red pear, assegaiwood, mnonono - on the commonage, unless it be wagon wood, for the repair of a wagon broken down. No one shall cut down any wood for sale off the commonage; and for the cutting of wood for private purposes other than the abovementioned, the sanction of the Board must be first had and obtained.

XX. All timber trees that have fallen or that have become dry, or whatever has been taken from thieves, shall be taken, by authority of the Board, to a proper place, and there sawn into planks or prepared in any other manner deemed fit, and sold to any party, except the thieves, and the necessary expense incurred shall be defrayed out of the proceeds of sale. A portion of the wood sawn into planks, however, shall be reserved to be sold to any of the inhabitants requiring coffins.

XXI. Every carcass on the street, square, or commonage, shall be removed immediately by the owner or party in charge

of the animal to a place appointed by the Board. On his failing to do so, he shall be liable to a fine not exceeding L3, and the carcass shall be removed by the Board at his expense.

XXII. When any animal, not confined, shall be found to be suffering from any contagious disease, the Board shall be empowered to take such steps as they may deem necessary, either by isolation, destruction, or otherwise, to prevent the spread of such disease.

XXIII. The Government Headman or the Chairman of the Board, shall see to it that any one committing a nuisance on any road, street, or public square, or defiling, or washing any clothes or other articles in any well, dam, or fountain, whether public or private, the water of which is used for drinking purposes by the inhabitants, be taken up and dealt with according to the Police Offences Act.

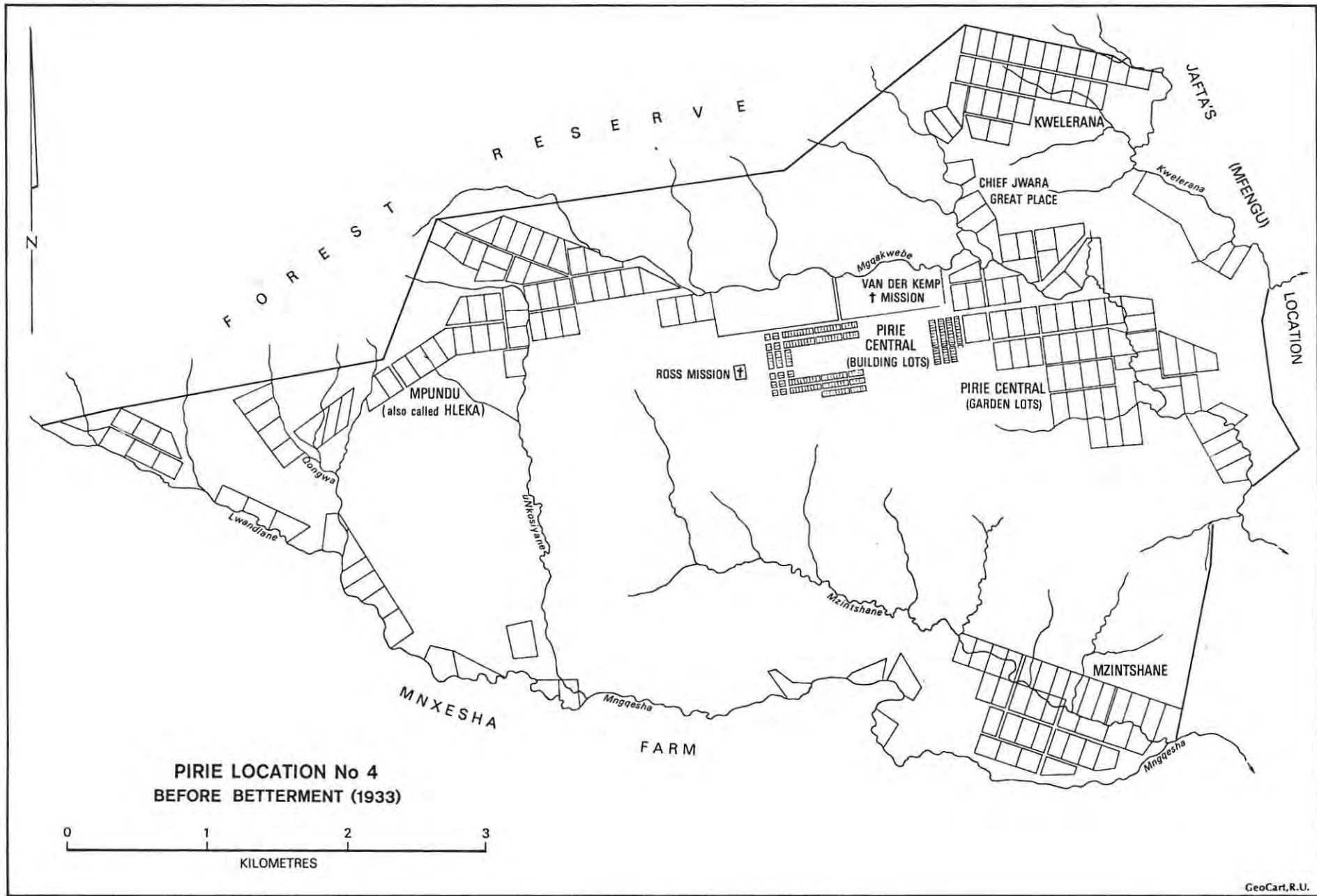
XXIV. If any cattle, sheep, goats, horses, asses, or mules, trespass in any enclosed dam, well, or fountain, the owner or custodian of the same shall be liable to a fine not exceeding L3, and such animals may be seized and impounded.

XXV. The Government Headman or the Chairman the Board shall see to it that any person found drunk, disorderly, or using foul, insulting, or abusive language and creating a

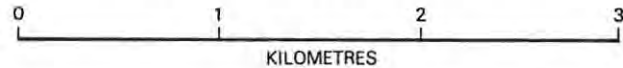
disturbance, or indecently exposing his or her person, within the limits of the limits of this village, be taken to and dealt with according to the Police Offences Act.

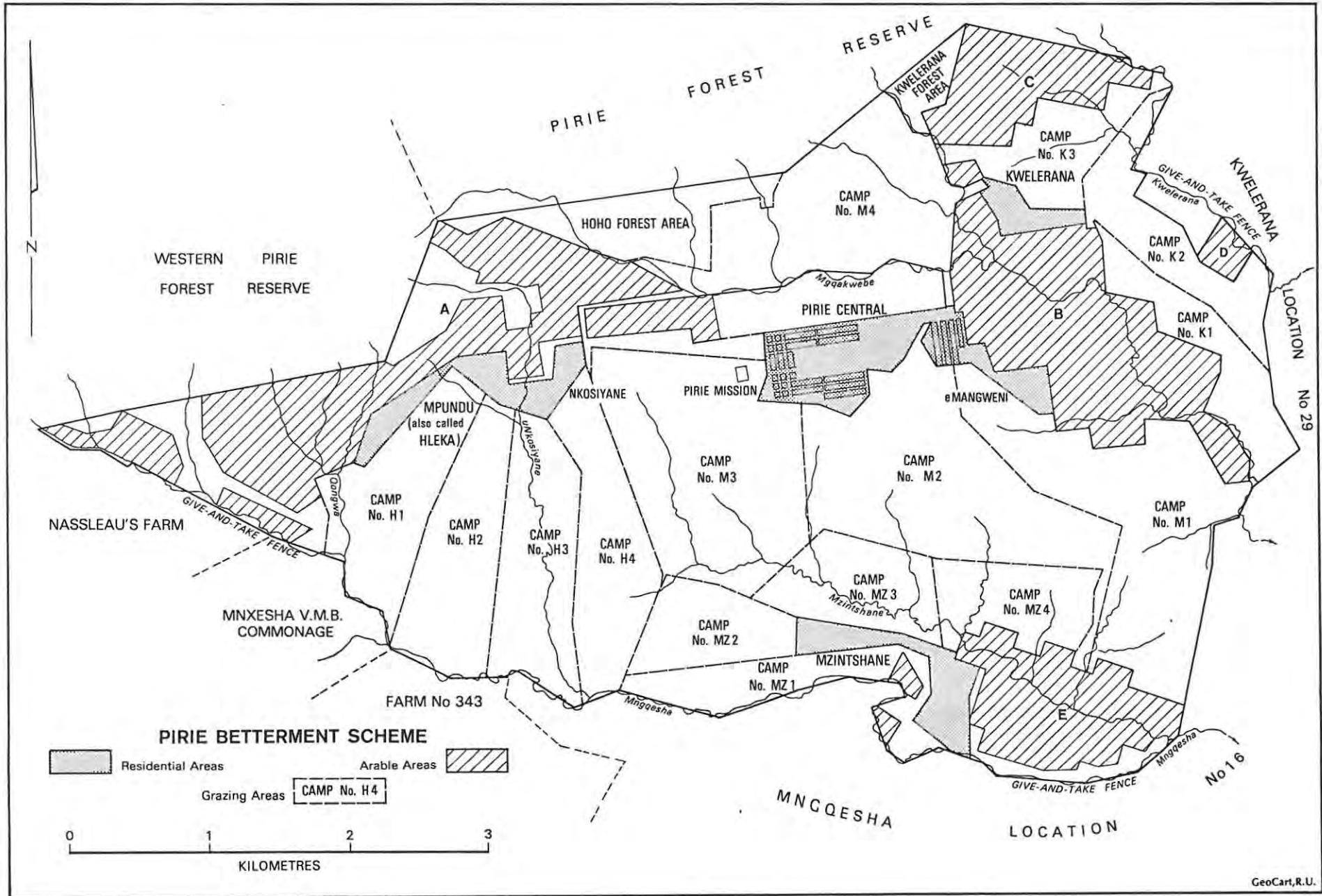
XXVI. No person shall be allowed to take part in, or at present at, any promiscuous gathering met for the purpose of disorderly night singing or beer drinking, within the bounds of this village; and every person contravening the bye-law shall be liable to a fine of 2s. 6d., and the occupier of the ground whereon such party shall have taken place if with his consent, shall be liable to a fine of 5s.

XXVII. No person shall be allowed within the lines of this village or boundaries of the location to practise on any part in any heathen custom of a revolting nature or in acceptable to public morality, such as "amasutu abakweta", assemblages of circumcised boys, "intlombe", or nocturnal dancing with hideous music, "ukuxentsa", or dancing for witch-doctors, "intonjane", or lewd singing and dancing upon a girl attaining the age of puberty, "ukuqala", or smearing the body all over with red clay. Every person contravening this bye-law shall be liable a fine of 2s. 6d.; and the occupier of the ground where such practices shall have taken place, if with his consent shall be liable to a fine of 5s.



PIRIE LOCATION No 4
BEFORE BETTERMENT (1933)





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MS	8721	R. Godfrey, Pirie report 1908, 02 January 1909.
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