

https://dspace.org/

Conceiving of the Ethiopian movement

Campbell, J.

1987-04
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/8500

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

A F R I C A N S T U D I E S I N S T I T U T E

African Studies Seminar Paper
to be presented in RW
4.00pm APRIL 1[illegible]37

Title: Conceiving of the Ethiopian Movement.

by: Jim Campbell

No. 209

They even despise our creation and say that [they] cannot allow the Book in black hands. I say, let us leave them alo[illegible] (1)

In the early years of the twentieth century, European missions in South Africa were decimated by the spread of 'Ethiopian' Churches, par[illegible]icularly the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Some of the factors which propelled the spread of the American-based AME Church can be glimpsed in microcosm in Kunana, a village in the Western Transvaal. The AME Church first settled in Kunana in 1897 or '98 at the invitation of Aaron Moshette, chief of the Ratlou Rolong. Initially, the invitation reflected no disaffection from the London Missionary Society, which had a church in the village. Rather, it appe[illegible]s that the L.M.S. had stopped servicing the village in 1895, probably due to the shortage of draught following the rinderpest. A local preacher of the L.M.S. did live in the village, but he was not empowered to dispense the sacraments; accordin[illegible] to local tradition, the L.M.S. refused to ordain him because he spoke no Latin. Residents seeking a Christian baptism, marriage or funeral thus had to trek over a hundred miles of sandy, rutted roads to the L.M.S. station at Kanye. Moshette was thus pleased to accept the new church, especially when informed that a minister would be permanently stationed in the village. The Church also apparently opened a school. (2)

Moshette's attachment to the new church seems to have intensified in the following years, particularly in the reconstruction after the Anglo-Boer War. Like chiefs throughout the new Transvaal Colony, Moshette found himself facing a concerted assault on what he took to be his chiefly prerogatives. In 1902, the chief, by all accounts a formidable drinker, was convicted of violating the new colonial liquor laws. A year later, the Transvaal Native Affairs Department prevented him disposing of a portion of his location on the grounds that no title for the land was registered in the records of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek. In 1904,

a native constable stationed by the government in Kunana reported that Moshette was illegally selling wood, presumably to the Kimberley market; the NAD, looking to the possibility of mining in the location and thus anxious to preserve local timber, ordered the chief to desist. Increasingly, Moshette's bitterness focussed on the government constables. He complained they were 'outsiders' (one was Matabele, another Zulu); that they ignored his labour exactions; that they enforced the new pass regulations so zealously that people in the southern portion of his location, which fell in British Bechuanaland, were arrested for venturing to Kunana. One of the constables he had flogged, a decision which did not endear him to the Native Affairs Department, which responded by holding in abeyance his application for a rifle. In 1908, the Department declared that the land would henceforth be held in trust for the tribe by the Commissioner of Native Affairs, a device which firmly established state control over the disposal of land and timber. As a final indignity, the government refused to register the title until Moshette and his people had paid a substantial transfer duty. (3)

In these circumstances, the AME Church in Kunana flowered. As early as 1902, Rev. Moffat of the L.M.S. complained that Marcus Gabashane of the AME Church was illegally solemnising marriages in Kunana, and that he and other ministers of the Church were preaching against the whites. There is reason to attach some credence to the claim. Marcus Gabashane and his son Abel, were Rolong and both were active in the area. Both appear to have preached a millenial version of the AME gospel in which whites would be driven from Africa by a black king, descended of Solomon and Sheba. In the same letter, Moffat complained of chiefs promoting the movement and using their powers to pressure mission loyalists. A few years later, a missionary of the Church of England complained that Moshette, seemingly intent on maintaining an AMEC monopoly, refused to allow him to build a church or school in Kunana location. By 1910, the Native Commissioner at Lichtenburg was warning his superiors of the rapid

spread of 'Ethiopianism' in the area and estimating that fifty per-cent of the natives in his district had already joined. The 'root of this evil,' he added, 'is Kunana Location, where this doctrine reigns supreme.' (4)

The events at Kunana reveal a constellation of elements that recurred in many different settings in the early years of the century: a struggle over control of land; conflict with missionaries and with an increasingly intrusive colonial state; a chief anxious to solidify his authority; and the appearance and spread of independent churches. It is this constellation which this paper examines.

The study is prompted by an apparent deficiency in the literature on South African independent churches. Without meaning to do violence to a quite diverse body of scholarship, much of the historiography on the early Ethiopian churches is preoccupied with assessing Ethiopianism's contribution to a rising tide of African nationalism. This approach has usually been marked by two related assumptions: first, that the Ethiopians drew their constituency primarily from "de-tribalised" Africans who no longer possessed any meaningful allegiance to chiefs; and that the Ethiopian Churches, especially the AME Church, acted as a further solvent on traditional loyalties. Ironically, both beliefs find echoes in contemporary appraisals. It was a commonplace among government officials that the Ethiopian 'ferment' flowed from a new, educated 'class of Natives ... who have not the strong feelings of loyalty to their hereditary Chiefs.' Missionaries generally agreed. The 'quickening power of the Gospel', they believed, had dissolved the timeless tyranny of the chiefs. Ethiopianism represented an 'awakening' into racial 'self-conciousness'; it was evidence of a 'new born [albeit 'mis-directed'] energy' among Africans. (5)

There is some truth here. The AME Church did draw much of its constituency, and most of its leadership, from the educated and "de-

tribalised"; it could, at times, spawn a potent racial nationalism. Yet, as the example of Moshette reminds us, Ethiopianism did not automatically subvert traditional authority. On the contrary, traditional rulers were among the early Ethiopian churches most conspicuous supporters. The list of major and minor chiefs who consorted with the AME Church in the first decade of the century is simply staggering. Among paramounts, it includes Lewanika of the Barotse, Sigcau of the Pondo, Dalindyebo of the Thembu, Lerothodi of the BaSotho, and Khama of the Bamangwato. The list of lesser chiefs is too lengthy to recite; among Tswana chiefs alone it includes Moshette, Pilane, Galiskwe, Samuel Moroka, Moffat Mossou, Montsioa and Robert Moepi.

This paper examines the responses of a number of these chiefs to the arrival of the AME Church. The argument, in bald terms, is that many chiefs found in the church (or forged out of the church) a weapon to resist encroachments on their authority -- encroachments from both internal rivals and from an increasingly intrusive colonial state. The paper is thus concerned to describe a kind of general pattern. At the same time, the examples discussed here may illuminate some of the variables which conditioned the way in which the AME Church was inserted into particular societies. These variables included: the character of previous European missionary activity; the different mechanisms by which traditional authority was expressed and conveyed; the manner in which a society was being incorporated into the broader colonial economy and polity; and previous patterns of factional conflict, particularly along cleavages opened by the process of colonial incorporation.

Before beginning, it is worthwhile briefly to examine the changing relationship between chiefs and European missionaries in the late 19th

century; and to suggest some of the reasons why the AME Church, unlike the mission churches, proved able to accomodate traditional authorities. It is by now a truism in the literature that many chiefs initially welcomed the the arrival of missionaries. Missionaries offered access to valuable skills and technology, most notably medicine and education, and their facility with the ways of the colonisers made them serviceable as intermediaries. Missionaries constantly lamented the fact that the enthusiasm of traditional authorities rarely extended to the religious component of their teaching, yet in general they accepted their contingent status within a chiefdom in order to gain access to the people there. Chiefs, in turn, allowed the missionaries to proselytise, in the belief that their presence on the whole enhanced chiefly authority.

Missionaries and traditional authorities sustained this relationship of convenience with varying degrees of success. Some conflict was inevitable, however, if only because of the collision of distinct hierarchies. Missions possessed structures of authority and hierarchy which bore little relationship to anything in chiefly society. It was not unusual for a particular chiefly faction to coalesce around Christianity; nor was it uncommon for an individual missionary, working on the assumption that African societies were invariably despotic and cruel, to attempt to exercise his authority in a way he took to be chief-like. For all of that, African societies and European missions embodied two conflicting systems of hierarchy, each in its own way all-encompassing. The missionaries, for the most part, wanted it that way. It was an article of missionary faith that conversion would uproot tribal hierarchies, which missionaries blithely presumed to to be offensive to God. Any attempt to accomodate the pre-existing hierarchy within the church was *prima facie* a compromise on Christian standards.

The presence of an alternative and universal Christian hierarchy introduced a new set of tensions into chiefly society. The ability of

commoners and refugees to rise in the ranks of the mission, for example, could invert or subtly subvert prior relationships of patronage and dependence. Such tensions intensified as the process of colonial conquest advanced and missionaries became less dependent on chiefly protection. As Norman Etherington has shown, missions in the late 19th century increasingly became refuges for individuals seeking to evade altogether the exactions of chiefs or patrons. More subtly, the inculcation of new concepts of property and individual autonomy and obligation by the missionaries could erode the very foundation of chiefly authority. A chief in the Kuruman District, for example, re-stocking in the wake of the rinderpest, was convicted of cattle raiding when one of his subjects, a convert of the London Missionary Society, testified against him in the local magistrate's court. The political and cultural dimensions of the case escaped the L.M.S. supervisor, who saw in it only a convert's laudable commitment to truth and private property. The enraged chief's decision to expel the LMS and burn their church to the ground was taken by the missionary as only further proof of the need for a more vigorous colonial policy 'to repress theft and murder.' (6)

Simmering tensions between traditional authorities and missionaries most often exploded over issues of traditional custom and ritual. For the missionaries, custom was anatheme. When missionaries spoke of 'conversion', they spoke not merely of the adoption of a Christian faith but of a complete social and individual transformation -- a transformation symbolised first of all by the abandonment of all 'vestiges of heathenism.' (The 1907 General Missionary Conference listed five such 'vestiges': polygamy, infanticide, circumcision, witch-craft, and beer-drinking.) At the same time, 'conversion' was inextricably bound up with a new set of cultural prescriptions: Christians lived in square houses, cultivated by plough, read their Bibles, and above all delighted in labour for its own sake. So preoccupied were missionaries with working a complete social transformation that they often found little solace even in

evidence of genuine piety among their converts. An LMS missionary, writing in a despondent moment, made the distinction explicit:

> Christianity has undoubtedly a strong hold upon a large number of Bechuanas, and is exerting a certain influence upon their lives. But I fear that it is principally as a *religion* that Christianity has been embraced. Probably it would be difficult to find anywhere a people more entirely devoted to the Christian religion as a creed and as a charm ... It must however, be admitted that the Christianity of Christ and of the New Testament -- that is to say, a Christianity which enters into all the ramifications of domestic life and social relationships [--] is a thing which is rather conspicuous by its absence. Self-denial in any shape or form is a very rare quality among the Bechuanas. The gratification of the appetites and passions of their animal nature is, alas, all too prominent ... (7)

The final comment betrays a significant coupling. For the missionaries, the persistance of custom evidenced a want of individual character. The superior appeal of western cultural patterns was accepted as a given; hence, the failure of converts to completely relinquish their own traditions was proof of an inability to maintain civilised standards, even of an inherent tendency to degenerate. Africans 'wanted to enjoy the blessings of civilisation without its laws'; they were 'inclined to delight in the consolations of the Christian faith without realising the tremendous importance of its moral demands'; they lacked the 'initiative' to see through 'the reconstruction of their social and tribal habits.' (8)

In such circumstances, it became the obligation of the European missionary to eradicate custom, to discipline and control even long-time

converts who were presumed to be unequal to the task of controlling themselves. Ever suspicious of their own handiwork, missionaries scrutinised converts for signs of lapse. Many, in the end, came to preach a gospel which was remarkably unforgiving. They withheld baptism from children born out of wedlock; they expelled women whose husbands took additional wives. Above all, they guarded entrance to the church with unflagging vigilance. Candidates brought forward for baptism by African evangelists faced searching examinations by European superintendents, who invariably turned most away. As one missionary complained: 'Deacons and other prominent members of our church have no hesitation or shame in bringing young men and women forward as fit and proper persons to be received as full members of the church, who cannot read a verse of the New Testament, and are often otherwise utterly unworthy.' (9)

The significant fact, for our purposes, is that missionaries' campaign against heathenism propelled them into conflict with traditional authorities. Ritual and custom were crucial underpinnings of chiefly power. Initiation, polygyny and bridewealth, even beer drinks provided mechanisms for asserting control over labour and accumulation, for concluding alliances, and for lubricating relationships of patronage and clientage. Conflict most often came to a point on the issue of polygyny and bridewealth. While different mission societies adopted different policies toward polygamists, virtually all missionaries were united in their abhorrence of the custom. The *lobola* system was portrayed as a kind of female slavery, as the material basis of African indolence and sexual wantonness. Within chiefly society, on the other hand, *lobola* served as the central prop of generational and chiefly control. Missionaries thus tampered with it at their peril. Among the Pedi, for example, Peter Delius has shown that the presence of the Berlin Mission Society at the capital almost immediately sparked protests from elders who complained that Christianity undermined their control over women. And it was the Society's success among royal wives, crucial markers in the extension of

the paramount's power, that precipitated the conflict which eventually ended with their 'expulsion' by Sekukuni. (10)

Yet as Delius has shown, the removal of the BMS from Sekukuniland was less an expulsion than a conscious decision by the missionaries to draw more closely into the orbit of the Z.A.R. In electing to pursue the business of conversion under the protection of the colonial state rather than the paramountcy, the leaders of the BMS blazed a trail which compatriats in other Southern African mission fields would soon follow. The re-orientation of missionaries in the late 19th century from 'native advocate' to colonial agent has been described elsewhere and needs no recitation here. What is significant here is the degree to which European missionaries became progressively implicated in a campaign to break the power of traditional rulers. In the case of the B.M.S., for example, missionaries enforced with gusto the tax and labour exactions of the Z.A.R. to the exclusion of traditional obligations; the Society's Superintendent went so far as to become a Z.A.R. agent. In both Thembuland and Pondoland, Wesleyan missionaries played a crucial role in providing information and defusing chiefly resistance in the years prior to annexation. In Barotseland, Coillard, head of the Paris Evangelical Mission, importuned the paramount, Lewanika, to accept the dubious protection of the British South Africa Company. Examples could be multiplied. (11)

Such activities reflected the growing conviction of missionaries that the destruction of chiefly authority was a prerequisite to the success of the missionary enterprise. In the words of a BMS journal, quoted by Delius, 'where God's judgement has broken the people politically the seed of evangelism is most conveniently sowed.' Three decades later, Rev. J.S. Moffat, son of the first LMS missionary in Southern Africa and in the 1890s a colonial agent in Bechuanaland, anticipated the destruction of Matabele independence in almost identical terms. Missionaries enjoyed

little success where political institutions were in their 'aboriginal vigour', he wrote; but 'Where there is a measure of disorganisation ... so there is a preparation for the seed of the word.' A colleague in the LMS reached for a similar metaphor. The missions 'will yet bear abundant fruit', he predicted, but only after 'the power of these worthless chieftains is at an end, the tribes as such are broken up and scattered, and each individual is compelled to look to the sweat of his own brow for a livelihood.' (12)

Happily in the case of the Matabele, Moffat and his colleagues lived to see the reckoning. The head of the L.M.S. Matabeleland mission, returning in the wake of the war, ill-disguised his satisfaction. 'The Matabele now exhibit none of their former haughtiness and impudence,' he wrote, adding gratuitously, 'The natives more than ever recognise that the missionaries have been their true friends.' Another returning missionary, whose house had been sacked during the conflict, crowed that the natives 'show the greatest respect for us now. Quite the reverse to what it used to be ... Now they say "All your words have come true."' Such commentators were briefly nonplussed by the Matabeleland rebellion and gratefully extended mission facilities to the British troops dispatched to put down the rebels. The rebellion crushed, they again looked confidently to the harvest. (13)

They were to reap an unexpected harvest. Between 1896 and 1910, the L.M.S. and most other European mission societies experienced not a flood of conversions but a series of bitter secessions. Converts flocked to the new Ethiopian churches, particularly to the AME Church. Within the space of a few years, AME congregations sprouted from the Eastern Cape to Barotseland, choking off European missions planted decades before.

In many cases, the church received the enthusiastic support of local chiefs.

European missionaries often commented on the defection of traditional authorities to the AME church, but they rarely thought the problem through. For the most part, the presence of chiefs in the first ranks of Ethiopianism was merely taken as further proof that the movement represented a reversion to heathenism. Missionaries showed no end of imagination in working variations on the theme of Ethiopian 'indiscipline.' 'The gospel of Ethiopianism', ran one of the more colourful variants,

> presents an emasculated Christ in the centre of a very abbreviated Decalogue. It countenances polygamy and certain other highly undesirable native customs, including the disgusting beer-fests, and, while requiring acquiescence in the narrowest literal interpretation of the first six commandments, regards the remainder as suggestions admirable indeed, but impracticable. (14)

In remarkably short order, the analysis became a kind of cant, confidently repeated by ministers and colonial officials with little or no personal experience of the movement. Thus Coryndon, Administrator for the British South Africa Company in Barotseland, when informed that Lewanika had opened his capital to the AME Church, penned the paramount a stern note: 'The "Ethiopian" is not a good church. You like them because the missionaries are black people and because they talk nicely to you and do not tell you when you do wrong as Mr. Coillard did.' The Ethipians, Coryndon concluded, 'teach you wrong things.' (15)

A number of historians have quite appropriately dug beneath the cant to expose the deeper roots of independency. The pages which follow should in themselves be sufficient to demonstrate that the AME Church's appeal

rested on more than lax standards. Yet one should not dismiss allegations of indiscipline too hastily. Evidence from inside AME congregations is sparse, but from oral testimony and some documentary sources it seems clear that the AME Church was generally more tolerant of traditional ritual and custom then the established churches; and that it did accept into its ranks many individuals who were under discipline in the missions. Jacob Tyeku, for example, was a lay preacher in Herschel district, suspended by the Wesleyans in 1910 for 'persisting in heathen customs by having his sons circumcised.' He was accepted into the AME Church and became a prominent leader in Herschel District. Chief Robert Moepi of the Bakhatla Ba Mocha was a church member and a graduate of the AME Church's Bethel Institute in Cape Town, none of which deterred him from staging great hunts to help bring rain or from perpetuating the custom of circumcision among his people. Motheba Maine, having lost her church rights in the Wesleyan Church when her husband took a second wife, crossed into the AME Church, which she served enthusiastically for the rest of her life. When her sons married, she recruited the wives into the church; when some of her sons took additional wives, these women too were accepted into the church. These are not isolated examples. The weight of the evidence is that on issues of custom -- initiation, polygamy and bridewealth, traditional medicine, paying ritual respect to ancestors -- the AME Church, by European missionaries' standards, was indeed "lax". (16)

It is tempting simply to conclude that the AME Church was better able to adapt to traditional behaviour and belief because its ministers were African. There is much truth here. In the last analysis, European missionaries' preoccupation with eradicating custom reflected less doctrinal considerations than racial and cultural ethnocentrism. Their obsession with control, with defending "standards" even at the expense of effective evangelisation, betrayed a gnawing fear of degeneracy -- in their converts, in the quality of the gospel, in themselves. African

ministers and evangelists, in both established and independent churches, harboured less anxiety. They were better able to disentangle conversion from its cultural accoutrements, to loosen Christianity from its colonial corset. To take only one example: itinerant AME Church ministers regularly preached in private huts, which most European missionaries were loath to do.

The church's relative flexibility in matters of custom also reflected its greater commitment to evangelism. Most European missions, even those with evangelical roots, had come to purvey an astringent, arminian Protestantism in which church membership was a reward for individual regeneracy. In contrast, African Methodism, in both its American and South African incarnations, was an evangelical creed. Church leaders in the early years of the century were fired with an almost millenial vision of redeeming Africa. This fervour was wedded to a classically Methodist structure -- ministers itinerated, held revivals, and accepted converts on a profession of faith. It was not unusual in the church's early days for a travelling minister to baptise two dozen people in a day, more than some mission stations baptised in a decade. The same commitment to evangelisation was evident in the church's policy toward ordinations. European missions, in general, were exceedingly reluctant to entrust the sacraments to African hands. The missionaries of the Free Church of Scotland for example, ordained their first African minister, P.N. Mzimba, in 1875; in 1900, when Mzimba seceded to establish the African Presbyterian Church, the Free Church had ordained only nine other Africans. In contrast, the AME Church's Bishop Turner, in a whirlwind tour in 1898, ordained something over fifty. African evangelists and assistants, long frustrated at the lack of mobility or commitment to evangelisation in the mission churches, flocked to the new church, and many were promptly ordained. The church's policy on ordinations prompted predictable lamentations from European missionaries, but again it was a policy which reflected more than simple opportunism or an indifference

to standards. It was an article of AME faith that the evangelisation of Africa could be carried out only by blacks, and then only if the church possessed sufficient workers to carry the sacraments to the people. The net result of this evangelical commitment was that ministers of the church probably did accept converts still entangled with one another heathenish 'vestige'. And in the case of accessions from other churches, they rarely if ever demanded removal certificates, a device used by the missions to ensure that an individual under discipline in one church could not simply escape to another. (17)

Probably most importantly, the AME Church tended to be more tolerant of local custom and convention because of its de-centralised structure. In the missions, income from the outstations was generally collected in the central coffers of the church, from which European superintendents paid out a small stipend to African assistants. In the AME Church, on the other hand, congregations had almost no financial links with the central church. Ministers and deacons received no stipend from the church, but were entitled to keep most income from their circuit as salary. The result, in terms of church polity, was a kind of dialectic. The Church possessed an episcopacy, and the local Bishop, sent out from America, could exert some control over ministers by appointing them to lucrative or 'dry' circuits. On the ground, however, the church operated congregationally, in that the scope of a minister's authority, not to mention the size of his salary, was effectively determined by the people in the community where he was stationed. It is worth observing in passing how far this basic structural characteristic takes us in explaining the AME Church's extraordinary local diversity, as well as its continuing susceptibility to capture from below. For our immediate purposes, the point is that this de-centralised structure again militated against a too-strict policy in matters of tradition. A newly-arrived minister could quickly find himself hungry if he attempted to enforce rigid strictures against initiation or bridewealth. (18)

All of these characteristics help explain the AME Church's greater ability to accomodate traditional hierarchies. In cultural terms, AME ministers were less threatened by the rituals and customs from which chiefly power flowed; in structural terms, they were of necessity more sensitive to the loyalties and associations of their congregants. And in practical terms, their inability to call on the protection of the colonial state made them unable to set themselves up against chiefly authority in the manner of the Europeans, even had they wished to. On the contrary, and as many chiefs were quick to discern, this new religion could quite easily be coupled to a defense of tradition and traditional authority.

A few chiefs had glimpsed the possibilities of religious independency prior to the arrival of the AME Church. In 1882, a Pondo chief tried briefly to establish an independent Pondoland Methodist Church. And a few years later, the Tile Thembu Church was established under the aegis of the Tembu paramount. As Chris Saunders has shown, Nehemiah Tile's religious movement was from the beginning wedded to a re-assertion of chiefly power. It was Tile's defense of the paramountcy in the years before the annexation of Thembuland that first brought him to the attention of the Cape Native Affairs Department. In fact, it appears that the Wesleyans' decision to discipline Tile followed on a request from the Department, itself evidence of how entangled the Wesleyans had become with the colonial administration. Significantly, issues of custom and chiefly authority intersected in Tile's dismissal from the ministry -- one of the accusations made by his superior was that Tile had donated an ox for sacrifice at the circumcision of Dalindyebo, heir to the paramountcy. (19)

The AME Church drew a more ethnically diverse constituency than the *AmaTile*, but it too often became entwined with the defense of traditional rulers. Probably the most famous case occurred in Barotseland, where the AME Church, at the invitation of the paramount Lewanika, briefly displaced the Paris Evangelical Mission. The episode was notorious in mission circles, because its prime victim was Rev. Francois Coillard, head of the Barotse mission and by 1900 the most famous missionary in Africa. The 1903 secession, led by a former P.E.M. evangelist and coming (inevitably) just 'at the time when we expected the harvest', left Coillard an embittered old man. His death a few months later provided European missions with their first martyr in the battle against Ethiopianism. (20)

T.O. Ranger was the first historian to note the role of the paramount and Lozi aristocracy in the conflict. He suggested, in a seminal article in 1965, that Ethiopianism was a movement of a traditional elite who found themselves indifferently treated by the French missionaries. Conflict centered on the issue of education. Both paramount and aristocracy coveted schools, but they resented the P.E.M.'s insistence that only church-goers' children could attend. Moreover, they objected to a curriculum which emphasised singing and vernacular Bible reading rather than English and industrial and clerical skills -- in short, the skills needed by an elite facing an advancing colonial world. (21)

The schism itself unfolded on almost typological lines. The P.E.M. was established in Barotseland in 1885 under the protection of Lewanika, who was interested primarily in missionary medicine and education. In 1890, the Barotse found themselves in negotiations with the British South Africa Company. Coillard urged Lewanika to accept Company 'protection.' When Willie Mokalapa, a P.E.M. evangelist and an increasingly important counsellor to the paramount, disagreed, Coillard dismissed him. Ultimately the paramount acceded to the Coryndon Concession, but within months he began to cast about for 'new missionaries'. When word of the AME

Church reached Barotseland a few years later, Lewanika put out a call, eventually dispatching Mokalapa to Cape Town to contact the Church. Mokalapa returned a short time later as an ordained minister of the AME Church. (22)

By the standards of the AME Church, Mokalapa was an ideal candidate for ordination. Many AMEC leaders had come to recognise that the business of effective evangelisation required skills other than those sought by European mission societies, and Mokalapa seemed to possess them. He was multi-lingual, independent, accustomed to privation and fired by the dream of African redemption. His close relationship with a heathen chief in the African interior -- proof in itself of his unfitness in the eyes of his European supervisors -- was in the view of the AME Church an excellent credential. The American authorities of the church in Cape Town were no doubt doubly taken when Mokalapa conveyed Lewanika's plea for an industrial school. Industrial education was a central tenet in the African Methodist creed. Much of the church's American leadership, at least in the South, rose from the emergent black middle class of the 1880s and 1890s -- the 'new elite' of the post-Reconstruction era which August Meier has identified as the prime constituency of Booker T. Washington. At the core of this elite's ideology lay a belief in industrial education and in the necessity of developing the economic resources of the black community. Thus an ideology born of accomodation to Southern segregation found an unexpected resonance along the Zambesi. (23)

When Coillard got wind of the planned industrial school, he confronted Lewanika. The paramount sent a stinging reply:

> What do we want with all that rubbish heap of fables that you call the Bible? ... What does your school do for us? ... it is a purposeless and unprofitable folly. What I want is missionaries

> ... who build big workshops and teach us all the trades of the white man ... What I want is carpenters, blacksmiths, armourers, masons ... That's what I want, industrial missionaries; that is what all the chiefs want. We laugh at all the res... (24)

Ultimately, little came of the AME Church's Zambesi mission. For a brief moment, however, it seemed to offer a glimmer of hope to a paramount caught within a tightening colonial noose. The AME Church offered a way to break the missionary monopoly on crucial educational and technological resources, an opportunity, in Ranger's words, to wrest control of the process of 'modernisation' from the hands of Europeans. It is in this context that Lewanika's eventual falling out with the AME Church must be placed. The paramount had long hoped to develop commerce and communications within his realm, but his proposals to both the BSA Company and the P.E.M. went unheeded. In 1905, he dispatched Mokalapa and a Lozi royal back to Cape Town with £700 raised from a tribal levy, with instructions to use the AME Church connection to purchase wagons and boats. The money was delivered into the hands of Rev. A. Henry Attaway, a black American who was in charge of Bethel Institute; its fate thereafter was a matter of some dispute. Neither boats nor wagons were ever delivered. Lewanika, in an uncharacteristic act of clemency, suggested to an extremely repentent Mokalapa that he 'clear out of his country', and the curtain fell on the AME Church in Barotseland. (25)

The AME Church enjoyed greater success in Pondoland. There too, the extension of colonial jurisdiction and the progressive incorporation of the territory into the wider economy had chipped away at the power of the paramountcy. Sigcau, who reigned between 1887 and 1905, was endlessly resourceful in his efforts to defend traditional power and maintain some room for manouevre outside the colonial context. On the diplomatic front, he struggled to circumvent the colonial administration by opening negotiations with the imperial government, and even once with Germany.

Internally, he attempted to 'monopolise the role of intermediary between the administration and the people' by strenuously opposing the appointment of local resident magistrates and location headmen. Most importantly, Sigcau, like Lewanika, strove to wrest control of the process of economic development from European hands. He tried to initiate independent industrial schools; he encouraged the development of local industries -- notably the manufacturing of gunpowder; he granted concessions to exploration companies in an effort to establish mines locally. (The state's abrogation of these lucrative concessions after annexation left Sigcau permanently disaffected.) (26)

Sigcau's embrace of Ethiopianism must be seen as part of his continuing struggle to locate an alternative locus of power outside the colonial context, to find some kind of fulcrum to enhance the political leverage of the paramountcy. A black American church answered his needs handsomely. Like so many of his contemporaries, Sigcau appears to have believed that black Americans possessed fabulous wealth and all the technological mastery of the Europeans. The AME Church thus represented both a cultural referent, pointing a path to development outside of white tutelage, as well as a new conduit to education and skills previously controlled by missionaries. (It is worth observing, in passing, how prominently the belief in black Americans' mastery of the white man's technology featured in the millenial movements that scorched Pondoland in the 1920s.) Sigcau enthusiastically welcomed the first AMEC emissaries to his great place at Quakeni.

The first to arrive was Samson Mtintso, a former Wesleyan ordained by Bishop Turner. Mtintso, judging from surviving correspondence, was exceptionally well-educated, probably at the the Shawberry station in Qumbu District. An Mpondo himself, he settled at the Great Place in about 1898, pointedly neglecting to ask the permission of the local magistrate. There he remained for the next twenty years, establishing schools and serving

as both Royal Chaplain and counsellor. He was apparently untroubled by Sigcau's continuing attachment to the 'vesitiges of heathenism', and laboured unceasingly to promote the paramountcy. According to the Resident Magistrate at Lusikisiki, Mtintso preached self-government and the virtues of making arms from minerals -- presumably a reference to the gunpowder industry. Later, he played a central role in the efforts of both Sigcau and his son Marelane to extend the authority of the paramountcy at the expense of government-appointed headmen. (27)

Mtintso was soon joined at Quakeni by a black American, Conrad Rideout, an attorney and a member of the Arkansas State Legislature during Reconstruction. Rideout was one among a handful of adventurers who responded to the church's call for skilled hands for the African mission. Within months of Rideout's arrival, the Assistant Chief Magistrate of the Transkei was reporting 'signs of restlessness' at Quakeni. Typically, he reached for the agitator theory, oblivious to what his own narrative implied about the direction of the interchange between Sigcau and Rideout.

> On inquiry, I found that [Sigcau] is under the influence of an Ethiopian Missionary -- an American Negro ... who has succeeded in persuading the Chief, that he does not receive the treatment from Government, which such a very important person as the head of the Pondo nation has a right to expect. That the subsidy he receives, is absurdly small, and should be increased to at least four thousand [pounds] a year, and that much more power should be allowed him, with regard to ruling the Pondos, &c.&c.; and he was led to believe that if he would visit England, the Queen would speedily right matters for him. (28)

Equally menacing was the fact that the paramount, encouraged perhaps by Mtintso or Rideout, had decided to send his heir, Marelane, to an AME

college in America for education. The suggestion produced virtual distemper among both colonial officials and white missionaries, who viewed American colleges as a breeding ground for agitators, where unwitting natives imbibed the racial poison so conspicuously absent in South Africa. On Sigcau's death, officials, acting with the support of Mhlanga, the regent, bundled Marelane off to the more temperate climate of Lovedale. (29)

According to Rideout, however, the cornerstone of the church's appeal lay in industrial education. In a series of letters to Turner's *Voice of Missions*, he besought the church to dispatch a doctor, carpenter, blacksmith and practical agriculturalist to Pondoland, where Sigcau had offered 1000 acres for construction of an industrial school. Without such schools, he warned, 'our church will scarcely have the following of a corporal's guard.' Clearly for Sigcau, industrial education had become the resource which would enable the Mpondomise to re-establish control over their own economic life. The paramount's faith in the American connection probably flagged when Rideout departed for Basutoland without having begun the school, but two years later he again extended welcome to a black American, Harry Deane, shipowner, adventurer, and latterly envoy of the AME Church. According to Carol Page, Deane proposed to transport produce from Basutoland -- current residence of Rideout -- down to Port St. Johns, where it would be loaded on to Deane's ships and carried to markets in the Cape. This particular brand of economic nationalism appealed to the paramount, who again offered land, as well as a permit to cut wood, perhaps significant at a time when chiefs and colonial authorities struggled over control of forests. (29)

Again, nothing came of the plan. Deane drifted away. Rideout resurfaced at the court of Lerothodi, paramount of the BaSotho, and later at the capital of Khama in Bechuanaland. Both paramounts had long sought industrial education, and thus responded enthusiastically to Rideout's

offer of schools staffed by American blacks. According to the *Voice of Missions*, Khama offered the AME Church the abandoned L.M.S. station at Palapwe, while Lerothodi proferred a staggering £4000 to construct the school. Both paramounts, however, unlike Lewanika and Sigcau, enjoyed imperial protection as well as unusually equitable relations with European missionaries. When confronted by government officials and European missionaries, both chose the politic course and professed to know nothing about the AME Church. When questioned by the South African Native Affairs Commission, Khama lied blandly: he had 'heard of the name, but so far there are no Ethiopians in my country.' (30)

Ultimately, the idea that the AME Church would liberate traditional rulers from dependence on the colonisers was chimerical. There was however, an additional, internal dimension to the state's assault on traditional authority, and here the AME Church proved a somewhat more effective weapon. Throughout the late 19th century, and particularly after the annexation of the Transkei, the Cape administration installed hundreds of new location headmen. These headmen served as the internal arm of colonialism, collecting taxes, apprehending those who violated new colonial regulations, allocating plots, sometimes even acting as labour recruiters. A number of paramounts and chiefs recognised in the appointments another attempt to break their monopoly on the intermediary role, an increasingly important prop of chiefly power. Sigcau in particular struggled to defend his position. He vainly asserted his right to select candidates, and protested when the area traditionally controlled from the paramountcy was balkanised and divided among government appointees. In one disputed Flagstaff location, according to William Beinart, he resorted to witchcraft accusations and even physical intimidation to try to unseat the government appointee. (31)

The AME Church offered yet another way to hammer the usurpers. Many of the new appointees possessed only the thinnest of traditional credentials; most seem to have been drawn from the mission elite -- in Pondoland, for example, the majority of appointees were Wesleyan. They were thus twice vulnerable to the gospel of Ethiopianism. Sigcau was quick to appreciate their predicament. Using a variant of the paramountcy's time-worn tactic of 'placing out', he encouraged the spread of the AME Church into disputed locations, oftentimes by dispatching the royal chaplain, Mtintso. Under Sigcau's patronage, AME congregations soon sprouted in Maliwa's Location in Flagstaff and in Gqubeni in Lusikisiki, both locations claimed by the paramount. In the latter place, a church was built in spite of the opposition of the local headman Nozozo. Nozozo eventually resorted to charging the builders of the unauthorised church in his location in the magistrate's court. The decision undoubtedly loosened his already tenuous hold on popular loyalties, as Sigcau had no doubt calculated; doubly so when the case was dismissed on a technicality. (32)

Mhlanga, regent on Sigcaus's death, refrained from the tactic, probably because the colonial administration bulked so large in his own claims to authority. He studiously avoided associating himself with the AME Church, and on one occasion warned the administration of Mtintso's unhealthy influence on Marelane. Marelane, on acceding, exhibited no such inhibitions. His tuition at Lovedale had not blinded him to the AME Church's uses in expanding the ambit of the paramountcy. Marelane's gaze fell on Tabankulu District, where he hoped to place one of his sons. Thus in 1914, following a secession from the Wesleyan mission at Cacudu, he dispatched Mtintso to Tabankulu. Mtintso's application for a church site raised howls from the local headman, a Wesleyan, who complained to the administration that Marelane was 'oppressing' him. The Resident Magistrate agreed that the paramount was 'furthering this intrigue,' and the application was refused. A site application was then submitted for

a location nearby under a Sotho headman named Ndlebe. Ndlebe too was reluctant to accede to the request, but as an outsider himself he was apparently less willing to challenge the paramount; in the Resident Magistrate's words, Marelane's 'displeasure he would prefer not to incur.' (33)

Although Sigcau and Marelane were unique in the way they wedded Ethiopianism to the tradition of placing out, they were far from alone in using the movement as a vehicle for reclaiming traditional prerogatives. In Magogong, for example, a remote station of the L.M.S. in British Bechuanaland, the AME Church coalesced around a deposed chief Galiskwe, and his brother Gasilthatiwe. A petition for a church site signed by 140 of the pair's supporters -- most left only their marks -- noted pointedly 'that Our Chief and Headman (who do not hold official Power), have given their consent ... ' Their application, the petitioners added, had been 'treated with silent contempt' by 'the Native Chief holding official power.' According to the local Inspector of Native Locations, the whole scheme was concocted by the 'rebel' chief and his brother, who 'are seeking under the cloak of the AME Church, to regain influence amongst the People.' The site application was apparently refused, though the petitioners signified their intention to erect a church on private land regardless. (34)

Often such conflicts commenced with the opening of schools in opposition to existing mission schools. Education was an arena ideally suited for the Ethiopians' volative mix of tradition and racial self-help. For the government headman, the appearance of an Ethiopian school was a positive menace, for it struck precisely at the point where he was most dependent on European patrons. Moreover, if the new school siphoned off enough children, it could cost the mission school its government grant and possibly close it down, a crushing blow to a headman's prestige. Such a conflict unfolded at lower Izeleni in King Williamstown District. There

the followers of a deceased headman, Pahlana, were enraged to find themselves placed by the government not under Pahlana's son but under Tonyella, an interloper described by an assistant Resident Magistrate as 'an ardent Wesleyan.' About sixty families, led by the son, moved into the AME Church and applied for church and school sites a few paces from the Wesleyan station. Tonyella insisted that their was no room for an additional school, and succeeded in having the application scotched by the administration. (35)

The contradictory position of Tonyella and headmen like him was laid bare by the arrival of an Ethiopian church. A magistrate at Butterworth, having witnessed the spread of Ethiopianism in his own district, explained the headman's dilemma succinctly. Ethiopians, he wrote, first

> go to the Headman and ask his permission [for a church site]... Should the headman refuse his consent or cooperation, as generally happens, the reply is "Ah, you are on the side of the white man, my work lies with my fellow Africans. I will go direct to them without consulting you", and in approaching his fellow Africans the same string is harped upon. (36)

The position was not an enviable one. If a headman granted a site, he alienated patrons in both administration and mission, and effectively underwrote the spread of a doctrine which in its essence denied his right to rule. Yet to refuse the site spawned allegations of collaboration which were virtually impossible to brook. The predicament was further exacerbated by limitations on the headman's authority. While appointed by the government, a headman's authority rested on a degree of popular consent -- consent which could evaporate if the headman identified too closely with the administration. And while a headman could generally prevent the Ethiopians from obtaining a church site in his location, there

was prior to 1914 no statute that prevented ministers of the church from preaching in private huts. The result in such cases was a kind of religious guerilla warfare in the location, with constant sniping over schools, grazing, water, wood -- all the nodes of the headman's power.

Different headmen responded in different ways to the predicament. Most turned to the colonial authorities for assistance, betraying in the process the true source of their authority. A 1901 petition, for example, ostensibly from 'Chiefs, Headmen and leading men' of Willowvale District, urged that the government 'take steps' against the Ethiopians in accordance with the 'universal wishes of our Ministers, Headmen and people.' The petition itself belied their final claim. Others steered a middle course, trying to antagonise neither the Ethiopians nor their colonial masters. A headman at Ndofela in Herschel, for example, granted the AME Church permission to build in his location and later, when challenged by a European missionary, professed to know nothing about it. A few embraced the movement. Enoch Mamba, a headman at Idutywa, invited Charlotte Maxeke and her husband, both recent graduates of the AME Church's Wilberforce University in the United States, to establish a school in his location after a dispute with the Cape administration. Mamba succeeded in playing the Ethiopian card without completely alienating his government patrons, but Lekobo, a headman in Herbert, was less subtle. He welcomed Rev. Moses of the AME Church and informed the grateful residents in his location that they would now no longer be required to pay taxes. Policemen who entered the location would be struck by lightning. The administration hastily appointed a more dependable headman, Andries Jackals. Jackals was a member of the L.M.S. and a native constable, a combination which ensured that, in Herbert at least, the Ethiopian ferment would continue to bubble. (37)

Ultimately, the arrival of the AME Church did not bring the lightning or an end to hut taxes any more than it brought a restoration of tradi-

tional authority. Expectations unleashed by the church's arrival were ground down by the passage of time. The promised industrial schools were never built. For a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways, the church lost the political richness and vitality that characterised it in the early days. Perhaps the transformation was inevitable. As H. Richard Niebhur pointed out so long ago, it is in the nature of sects to congeal into churches. The AME Church, 'the Ethiopian Menace' of 1904, was two decades later widely recognised as 'the most respectable of the churches of purely native origin.' It came in for considerable, if backhanded, praise in the 1925 Native Churches Commission, and a few government officials openly hoped that the proliferating independent churches could be gathered together under its banner. Yet for all its latter-day respectability, the structural characteristics which had made the institution so locally responsive, so susceptible to capture from below, remained in place. Thus the church could still at times become wedded to a reassertion of traditional authority, as William Beinart's recent work on Herschel has clearly shown. And it could still, on occasion, prove the bane of headmen who had become too closely associated with the government. In 1928, a headman in Beaufort West District penned a desperate plea to the local Superintendent of Natives which in every particular could have been written two decades before. He reported 'great disagreement' between himself and 'the people whom you have placed under me as their headman.' 'The cause of this confusion,' he continued, was a newly arrived AME Church minister who had challenged his traditional claim to the location. 'Since his appearance in my place,' he complained, 'I do not understand my people.' (38)