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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
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Title: The Case Against the Mfecane.

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THE CASE AGAINST THE MFECANE[1]

by Julian Cobbing

By the 1970s the mfecane had become one of the most widely abused terms in southern African historical literature. Let the reader attempt a simple definition of the mfecane, for instance. This is not such an easy task. From one angle the mfecane was the Nguni diaspora which from the early 1820s took Nguni raiding communities such as the Ndebele, the Ngoni and the Gaza over a huge region of south-central Africa reaching as far north as Lake Tanzania. Africanists stress the positive features of the movement. As Ajayi observed in 1968: 'When we consider all the implications of the expansions of Bantu-speaking peoples there can be no doubt that the theory of stagnation has no basis whatsoever.'[2] A closely related, though different, mfecane centres on Zululand and the figure of Shaka. It has become a revolutionary process internal to Nguni society which leads to the development of the ibutho and the tributary mode of production. Shaka is a heroic figure providing a positive historical example and some self-respect for black South Africans today.[3]

But inside these wider definitions another mfecane more specifically referring to the impact of Nguni raiders (the Nedbele, Hlubi and Ngwane) on the Sotho west of the Drakensberg. This mfecane encompasses a great field of African self-destruction extending from the Limpopo to the Orange. It allegedly depopulated vast areas of what became the Orange Free State, the Transvaal and, with the aid of the Zulu, Natal, which thus lay empty for white expansion. Dispersed African survivors clustered together and in time formed the enclave states of Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana. What Omer-Cooper terms the 'general distribution of white and Bantu landownership' in South Africa was thereby established. On these African-created foundations rose the so-called Bantustans or Homelands of twentieth-century South Africa.[4]

These conceptual contradictions coexist within mfecane theory with contrasting definitions of timing. As an era of history the latter 'trans-orangian' mfecane invariably begins in about 1820 and ends in either 1828 with the departure of the Ngwane, or in the mid-1830s with the arrival of the French missionaries and the Boers.[5] The Zulu-centred mfecane, on the other hand, begins with the career of Dingiswayo at the end of the eighteenth century and often continues until the end of the Zulu kingdom in 1879. Subcontinental mfecanes sometimes continue until the 1890s.[6] In short, there is no one definition of the mfecane. It can refer to people, to an era, to a process of internal

development. It can be constructive, destructive; pro African, anti African; geographically narrow, or subcontinental.

Not all of these contradictions can be resolved. Their existence requires an explanation, since their origins are by now well buried in the historiography. In the first part of this article my intention is to unravel the development of mfecane as it has been handed down in South African historiography. Many writers have had a hand in creating the mfecane. The poor taste of the dish derives from the poor quality of the initial ingredients. In the second part, I suggest some lines of attack on the pillars of mfecane mythology, and leave it to the reader to decide whether the concept is worth salvaging.

THE MFECANE/LIFAQANE IN THE HISTORICAL LITERATURE

Mfecane and lifaqane (or difaqane) are synonyms. The former derives from E.A. Walker's 1928 standardisation of a word which had previously existed in many forms; lifaqane from MacGregor's 1904 standardisation of a Sotho variant current around Morija in the nineteenth century.[7] The word mfecane is of Xhosa origin and emerged into the written traditions in the 1820s along the 'eastern frontier', that is the region between the Fish and the Umzimvubu rivers, today's Ciskei and southern Transkei. Walker's translation, 'the crushing', despite widespread subsequent repetition, is almost certainly an error. Nineteenth-century forms such as fetcani, infanicama, imfetcanie, Il-Fitcanie, fickanees, and others, indicate that it derives from the Xhosa ukufaca meaning 'to be weak; emaciated from hunger'.[8] The primary association with famine must be stressed. Variations all contain the Xhosa 'c' click, which southern Sotho does not possess. The linguistic inference is that the southern Sotho version, lifaqane, derives from the Xhosa original rather than vice-versa. The intermingling of Xhosa and Sotho in the southern Drakensberg and the inter-group raiding between the Caledon and the Kei suggest that the variants may have existed in close proximity. No variant exists in the northern Nguni dialects, for example in Zulu. This explains why none of the historians of the Zulu such as Stuart and Bryant ever used mfecane; an irony in view of Shaka's later elevation into the heart of the mfecane.

The fetcani (emaciated intruders) enter the written records in southern Nguni country in the mid-1820s. At that time the Thembu and Xhosa on both sides of the Kei were under considerable pressure from the British and the Boers to the south-west, from Zulu-driven refugees (amafengu) in the north-east, and from Sotho raiders descending from the Caledon valley to the north-west. These latter raiders the Thembu called fetcani. The first raiders recorded by the whites were those of 1823,[9] although there is nothing to suggest they had not come across on earlier occasions. Further Sotho fetcani attacks on the Thembu took place in 1825 and 1827. One of the leaders was a Sotho chief named Maketa.[10] Fetcani was used to refer either merely to an enemy commando composed of men, or more embracingly to migrant groups including women, children and cattle. It depended on the context. In 1827 the Sotho raiders were joined by Matiwane's Ngwane who descended into the region between the Mbashee and the Umvimvubu and began to terrorise the Thembu. British soldiers, who had been called in to 'protect' the Thembu and prevent them from encroaching south,

routinely confused Sotho, Ngwane and Zulu, referring to all of them as fetcani.[11] But in time the term came to be reserved for the Ngwane alone. The British attack on and dispersal of the Ngwane at Mbolompo in August 1828 became legendary in nineteenth-century Cape history and the term stuck.[12] In traditions of the 1880s fetcani and Ngwane had become synonyms. Matiwane and his fetcani 'hordes' had become execrated half-devil figures.[13] As late as 1930 Soga was still using the term in this purist sense when he referred to 'Ngwana, the progenitor of the Ama-Ngwana tribe, the terrible Mfecane or "freebooters", who destroyed the Hlubi tribe.'[14] Macmillan on the other hand correctly saw no reason to confine fetcani to the Ngwane. His assumption in 1938 that fectani (wandering, destitute people) and amafengu (refugees) were synonyms was a logical though linguistically inaccurate inference in the context of Xhosa country where both words co-existed.[15]

By the 1930s the purist use of fetcani had long been superceded. The first use of the Sotho version lifaqane that I can find is by the French missionary Arbousset in the early 1840s. He used lifaqane as a nickname for the Zulu or Bakoni, 'that is to say, those who hew down ... with the chake, their formidable battle-axe'.[16] Here, 'Zulus' can refer to the Zulu, Ndebele, Hlubi or Ngwane. Early in the twentieth century Ellenberger (one of Arbousset's successors at Morija) and MacGregor significantly embroidered the term.[17] The lifaqane was now not just a reference to people, but to a whole era of southern Sotho history. It centred no longer on the struggle between the Sotho, the Ngwane and the Thembu on the Kei, but on a wider conflict involving the Sotho on the one hand and the Ngwane, now joined by the Ndebele and Hlubi on the other. Other characters in what was now a Caledon valley play were the Tlokwa of Ntatisi and her son, Sekonyela. The era began abruptly in about 1820 with the Nguni invasions from the east, and ended equally abruptly with the departure of Matiwane's Ngwane to the south-east in either 1827 or 1828. It was definable, according to MacGregor, by the bloody and unusual nature of the warfare. Before 1820, so went the allegation, warfare had been the 'ordinary kind of war between settled tribes where only the fighting men go out'. Afterwards it 'was waged by nomadic tribes accompanied on the warpath by their women, children and property.'[18] Part of the plot involved the by now well known 'railway shunting' sequence in which the Hlubi and Ngwane attacked the Tlokwa, the Tlokwa attacked the Fokeng and Hlakoana, and the latter in turn attacked the Tlhaping.[19] The Tlokwa and Sekonyela join Matiwane and his Ngwane as the villains. But there is now a hero: Moshoeshoe. Ellenberger and MacGregor's lifaqane is in essence little more than an epic story centred on Moshoeshoe and his post 1824 citadel of Thaba Bosiu. On the one hand there was Matiwane, 'an absolute fiend in human shape'; on the other: 'In the centre of this seething mass of hate and horror sat Moshesh, like a benevolent eagle on an impregnable eyrie.'[20] The other heroes in this sustained eulogy of the Sotho chief are by implication the French missionaries themselves, Moshoeshoe's sage advisers, whose arrival in 1832 ended the holocaust.

Before their arrival, for example, other characters vital to the production, the cannibals, are said to have terrorised vast districts, eating what the Ngwane and Tlokwa had overlooked. 'These creatures,' wrote Scully, 'were nocturnal in their habits ... Their taste for

human flesh grew until they would eat no other meat.'[21] Ellenberger's methods may be illustrated by reference to his calculation of the number of cannibal victims:

> In our turn, seventy years later, let us endeavour to consider the ravages of these maneaters. Let us estimate the number of cannibals at a minimum, say 4,000. Say each one ate one person a month, and we arrive at a total of 48,000 persons eaten during one year; and during the six worst years, between 1822 and 1828, at the appalling figure of 288,000 people devoured by their fellows. If we allow for those eaten during subsequent years, it is easy to arrive at a total of 300,000.[22]

Fortunately, the arrival of Arbousset and Casalis in 1832 brought the curtain down on the Caledon valley lifaqane. The cannibals soon stopped being cannibals; for the local Africans began a new era of light and progress.

By the turn of the present century a geographical extension of the mfecane had taken place which linked the Caledon valley to the western regions of transorangia, to the Transvaal in the north, as well as to the region between the Tugela and the Pongola rivers in the east. This extension is particularly to be associated with Theal. Although Theal, as far as I am aware, never used the word mfecane, the idea of the mfecane is rooted in his work. In the rather brief sections devoted to African history, Theal goes out of his way to highlight the intertribal slaughter. His intention surfaced (the passage was excised in later editions) in his 1891 History of South Africa. His central claim was that African self destruction made insignificant 'the total loss of human life occasioned by all the wars in South Africa in which Europeans have engaged since first they set foot in the country'.[23] Theal's calculation skills exceeded even those of Ellenberger. The losses of the Tlokwa alone he guessed at 115,000, 'only a small proportion of the loss being from dispersion'.[24] He repeated the claim that these same Tlokwa were personally responsible for the destruction of twenty-eight 'distinct tribes' (including, incidentally, the Ngwato and the Rolong),[25] a figure which is occasionally rounded up to thirty, or even to 'hundreds'.[26] In the pan Caledon region, Theal claimed, 300,000 people had died. East of the Drakensberg, in addition, 'at least half a million had perished'.[27] In 1903 Theal gratuitously doubled the number of deaths 'in the whole of the ravaged country' which now stood at 'nearer two millions than one'.[28] It was a figure which may not have been all that far short of the total African population of the region.

In the era of the union of South Africa, when British soldiers - after crushing African resistance - forcibly united white South Africa, there was a thriving historical industry using Theal and Ellenberger to prove that by 1830 the Orange Free State, the Transvaal and Natal had been entirely or virtually depopulated and that European claims to the land were therefore legitimate.[29] This was the era of the Lagden Commission, the 1913 Natives Land Act and the elaboration of the machinery of land segregation in South Africa.[30] The historians provided the justification for the politicians. In his 1922 Historical Atlas of South Africa, in a map entitled 'The Bantu

Devastation and the Great Trek, 1820-48', Theal's disciple, Walker, shaded in an enormous depopulated zone which covered, in addition to Theal's deserted areas, the whole of the northern Transkei and large areas of eastern Botswana. Variations of this map have been produced on several occasions, even in respectable works of African history.[31] In his 1928 A History of South Africa[32] Walker now coined the term mfecane for the process. In the second edition of the work published in 1940 Walker went further and inserted the word mfecane into the paragraph dealing with Shaka and the 'storm-centre' between the Tugela and the Mkusi. This was the first time that Shaka and the word mfecane had been juxtaposed.[33] It may not be overfanciful to see this step in the context of the European events of 1939 and a comment of Walker's in which the Nguni and the Nazis are cryptically combined:

> The course of events in South Africa throws a revealing light on the working of world-wide forces. Western peoples everywhere are defending their standards of life against spare-living alien folk. They can, if they will[34], see that struggle in all its nakedness in South Africa.

Nevertheless Walker's use of mfecane was unsystematic. The gross-mfecane of the 1960s was still only foreshadowed. Between the 1920s and the early 1960s the linguistic variations of fetcani led separate lives. Some writers, such as Agar-Hamilton, extended Ellenberger's lifaqane into Theal's context of the struggle between the Ndebele and the Boers north of the Vaal river.[35] Others, such as Tabler, used[36] Walker's mfecane, as did Geen; but they were fairly exceptional. Others still used[37] Ellenberger's lifaqane in its narrowly Caledon valley context. There was no agreement. MacMillan had minor reservations about depopulation. The more observant De Kiewiet spoke of transorangia as 'already an area of settlement, of settlement by a great Bantu population. Much of the energy of the Boers was used more against the natives than against Nature.'[38]

Afrikaner writers either ignored Africans altogether, or as yet lacked the sophistication to conceal the conflict between the Boers and Africans who indisputably existed in the paths of their advance.[39] In its earlier stages the mfecane was very much an Englishman's legend. Nor did the historians of the Zulu talk of the mfecane. Mfecane is after all a Xhosa word. Writers on the Zulu tended to isolate Zulu history as an epic separate from the rest of southern Africa. Fynn, Isaacs and Bird did not use the mfecane; neither did Stuart or Bryant; nor did Ritter and the early Becker.[40] Even the appearance of the third edition of Walker's book, now entitled A Hitory of Southern Africa, in 1957 did little to alter the situation. As late as 1960 there was no inevitability that the mfecane would survive.

In the mid-1960s, however, the mfecane underwent its last and most dramatic geographical expansion: from the pan South African region to one which embraced huge areas north of the Limpopo and Zambesi. This turning point in the mfecane's fortunes should be seen against the background of the creation of the new independent African states, the proliferation of African universities and of Africanist studies in Africa, in Europe and the United States, and of the quest for an acceptable African self-image in which the historians were again to play a major part. The book which provided the focus for the

extension was J. D. Omer-Cooper's Zulu-Aftermath, a book significantly subtitled A Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Bantu Africa. Zulu Aftermath is partly a collage of the older views of the mfecane. But as the title suggests, the mfecane (which Omer-Cooper in effect uses as a synonym for the title) is now far more than an era of destruction in African history. It is now a process of profound change within African society. 'The purpose of the present work,' wrote Omer-Cooper,

> is to give an analysis of the movement as a whole; to relate the great chain of wars and migrations to the underlying processes of socio-political change and to attempt an assessment of the significance of the Mfecane in the history of Southern and Central Africa, the way it affected later developments and its enduring importance for an understanding of the contemporary situation.[41]

Thus the evolution of the ibutho amongst the Ngune, the wars between the Zulu and the Ndwandwe, and the rise of the Zulu kingdom are, half a century after Bryant, made integral to the mfecane. Shaka becomes a hero; Mzilikazi a creative state-builder. 'The movement as a whole' is expanded to bring in Swaziland and the career of Mswati, Gazaland and the careers of Soshangane and Mzila, as well as the Ngoni states of Mbelwa and Mpezeni.[42] The validity both of these conceptual and geographical expansions and of their linkage to the original concepts of the mfecane has so far remained unremarked.

As to the linkage of the mfecane to 'an understanding of the contemporary situation,' Omer-Cooper's analysis is (unsurprisingly) subjective. It is also highly contradictory. In the one direction, 'the traditions of the Mfecane have retained their fascination because they provide a bulwark of self-respect, a shield against the crippling sense of inferiority encouraged by the authority structure of white-dominated society.'[43] Whereas in the other, 'the battles and massacres of the Mfecane ... account for the general distribution of white and Bantu landownership [in South Africa today].'[44] The latter is a claim few Africans would accept.

Omer-Cooper's two claims for the mfecane have in turn underpinned two incompatible mfecane traditions in the 1970s. The more liberal of these traditions is located mainly in Europe, the United States and in the South African English-speaking universities. It would be tedious to list the historians of Africa who have adopted Omer-Cooper's idea of the mfecane as a positive revolutionary idea. Before 1966 and the publication of Zulu Aftermath general text books on African history had not yet picked up the mfecane.[45] By 1970 it was being integrated in virtually all of them. July's oversimplifications is typical. 'The driving force,' he wrote, 'was land hunger caused by population pressure among migrating cattle keepers and the vehicle was the military outburst known as the Zulu (sic) Mfecane.'[46] In 1969 Leonard Thompson discussed the difaqane in the influential Oxford History of South Africa.[47] W.F. Lye has built an academic career on the mfecane: he wavers between Ellenberger's older version in which Matiwane and Mzilikazi are denigrated and the newer one in which they are talented state-builders.[48] R. Kent Rasmussen in an analysis of the early Ndebele state[49] describes the Ndebele in an unambiguously positive manner. During the early 1970s a generation of students within and

without southern Africa (including myself) wrote theses in which, while we questioned much, the status of the mfecane was taken for granted. Scholars annotating the James Stuart papers (a unique collection of traditions on the early Zulu) use the mfecane as a central idea in the footnotes, whereas it is conspicuously absent in Stuart's texts.[50] This footnote-text dichotomy is found in several other works.[51] In South Africa the mfecane has become a shorthand term to describe virtually the entire history of South Africa's black population in the nineteenth century. In at least one South African university the mfecane has become the title of a separate third-year paper, paralleling another dealing essentially with white history.

But Omer-Cooper founded a second tradition. This is now well rooted in South Africa's schools and in the Afrikaner universities. This tradition springs from Omer-Cooper's linkage of the mfecane with the creation of the 'Homeland' system which the Nationalist government was refining in South Africa during the 1960s. Once again, historians were at hand knowingly or unknowingly prepared to legitimate the eviction of Africans into the 'Homelands' by tinkering with the past. F.A. van Jaarsveld for instance welcomed Omer-Cooper's analysis with unconcealed delight.[52] On its base he came to three linked conclusions:

1. 'The white states which arose out of the trek were each centred on areas particularly heavily devastated by the Mfecane.'

2. 'By 1836 the Bantu population of South Africa was arranged in the shape of a horseshoe ... with a vacuum of empty space in between.'

3. 'The present-day Bantu homelands were already present in embryo arranged in this horseshoe.'

These premises van Jaarsveld uses to demonstrate to his readers the smooth continuity in South African history:

> From the time of earliest contact a policy of territorial separation had been followed. This policy was directly responsible for the creation of the Bantu's own homelands which were reserved for them by law during the 19th and 20th centuries.[53]

The twentieth century has thus merely legalised a nineteenth-century position created by the Africans themselves.

It is unlikely that this variant of mfecane propaganda has many adherents outside South Africa. In South Africa it is not only central to some University courses, but is being pumped daily into school children of all race groups. South African school children are fed on a mixed diet of Theal, Ellenberger, Walker and Omer-Cooper brought up to date by usually Afrikaner writers who heavily underline the destructive nature of Walker's 'spare-living alien folk'. The old favourites are all there. Kratz and Trengove in their school textbook describe how when the Voortrekkers crossed the Orange in the 1830s 'the Zulus (sic) had swept the country clean of human inhabitants.[54] According to Boyce, 'hundreds of small tribes had been massacred ... while skeletons littered the veld.'[55] A neat twist by

Van Schoor et al was to convert the Voortrekkes into kindly policemen who 'helped to bring an end to the murder and slaughter of the Difaqane, and offering some remnants of the Bantu peoples the opportunity of restoration and development.'[56] Smit, Kreuser and Vlok follow van Jaarsveld and in a section entitled 'The Results of the Mfekane' inform their standard eight readers how these remnants were 'spread across South Africa in a horse shoe formation ... This redistribution formed the basis for the present-day bantu homelands.'[57] By the beginning of the 1980s the mfecane meant very different things to African university students north of the Zambesi and to schoolchildren south of the Limpopo.

Today, then, the mfecane has come a long way from the fetcani raiders of the 1820s. The mfecane is mainly an historiographical development of the twentieth century which has been closely interwoven with the growth of white history. Somewhat chimerically it has since the 1960s been adapted and extended by writers sympathetic to the African past. The two approaches often exist side by side, unnoticed, in the same text. Geographically the mfecane has undergone a four stage expansion. It began in the 1820s as a narrowly eastern frontier concept as a reference to Sotho and Ngwane raiders on the Thembu. It was extended into the Caledon valley by Ellenberger and MacGregor, where it brought in the Tlokwa, the Hlubi and Ndebele, and centred on the heroic careers of Moshoeshoe and the French missionaries. It was taken into the Transvaal, Natal and Zululand by Theal and Walker. Finally it was exported north of the Limpopo and Zambesi by Omer-Cooper. Semantically mfecane has undergone a parallel expansion. In the first place fetcani referred to people. By the early twentieth century lifaqane had become an era of southern Sotho history. By the 1960s the mfecane began to refer in addition to a revolutionary process of socio-political change within Nguni society. Today the multi-concept of the mfecane has divided into two separate streams. The one is Africanist, and stresses the dynamism and creativeness of the southern African past. The other is at home in South Africa and racist. It links the alleged excesses of the mfecane to the creation and legitimisation of the South African system of territorial apartheid.

SOME SHORTCOMINGS OF THE MFECANE

There is not necessarily anything unacceptable about a concept that evolves a century after the events to which it alludes. Nor is it necessarily the case that an expansion in meaning of an earlier concept invalidates it. But the mfecane is too deeply flawed for it to continue as an acceptable axiom. For one thing, the factual foundations on which it is built - especially those of Theal and Ellenberger - are those of shifting sands. Rasmussen's remark about the Ndebele almost certainly applies more strongly still to the Ngwane, the Hlubi and Tlokwa. 'One could adduce,' he wrote, 'examples of false associations between almost every possible combination of unrelated events between 1828 and 1832. Untold violence has been done to the correct sequence of events, making intelligent interpretations nearly impossible.'[58] Accurate data, however, was never absolutely essential in a concept which rapidly became a device of propaganda. The idea of the mfecane was evolved at the beginning of this century to help historians to evade an analysis of the confrontations between

the races in nineteenth-century South Africa. While black self-destruction was heavily over-exposed, often on the flimsiest of evidence, the impact of British and Boer expansion on African societies was systematically downplayed, usually by ignoring it altogether. The mfecane was a parallel form of historical apartheid.

In the brief space available I wish only to suggest strategies of counter-attack for those who might wish to pursue the matter further. The questions I have concentrated on (there are several others) are these. Can one accept Ellenberger and MacGregor's version of the Caledon valley lifaqane? Were the 'enclave states' Basutoland (now Lesotho), Bechuanaland (now Botswana) and Swaziland created by the mfecane? Did the mfecane depopulate the vast areas it is alleged to have done? And what is the validity of fusing Ellenberger's lifaqane with the 'revolution' amongst the northern Nguni at the beginning of the nineteenth century?

How valid is Ellenberger and MacGregor's contention that the lifaqane was an era of unparalleled darkness in southern Sotho history that began with the Hlubi incursions of 1820-2 and ended with the departure of the Ngwane in 1827-8? It is worth noting that the Hlubi occupation lasted for only three or four years and that the Ngwane remained in the region for another two or three. this is a rather short time for the middle era of anybody's history. The Hlubi and Ngwane, moveover, moved into a region on the upper Caledon[59] which had for several centuries seen a Sotho-Nguni interaction. The combination of famine and of Nguni encroachments may have been uncomfortable, but it was very likely not unprecedented. What was unprecedented were the attacks of the 'Griqua'[60] who were beginning to attack into the Caledon at the turn of the 1820s.[61] The Griqua were the advance guard of the advancing whites of the Cape. It is very difficult to disentangle the efficacy of the Griqua and the Ngwane as destabilising influences in the Caledon during the 1820s. It is certain though that in the longer term the Cape driven Griqua posed the greater threat. Matiwane's Ngwane were gone from the Caledon by late 1827.[62] But the problems for the southern Sotho if anything increased between 1828 and the mid-1830s. Recent writers have recognised this without drawing the necessary conclusion. The problem is skirted around by extending the chronology of the lifaqane until 1835-6. As Sanders noted: 'For Moshoeshoe and his followers the eclipse of the Kora [in 1836] may be said to mark the close of the lifaqane.' Yet the inference is inescapable. If the Cape originating Griqua, or Khoi peoples driven north by Cape advancement, constitute the latter part of the lifaqane,[63] the idea of a purely African caused lifaqane becomes untenable.

The omission of the Griqua from, or their fusion into the lifaqane is frequently accompanied by a hyperbolic description of the impact of the Ngwane in the mid-1820s. In view of the crimes pinned on the Ngwane, it is remarkable how little we know about them. Not even the dates of their arrival in and departure from the Caledon are known with any precision.[64] Ngwane relationships with Moshoeshoe's Mokoteli appear to have been relatively peaceable, until the war of c. 1827 in which 'the Ngwane were routed'.[65] It is more difficult to pin the devastations on the Ndebele or the Zulu. Ellenberger's account of the Zulu invasion of the Caledon in 1826 is not generally accepted.[66] Ndebele raids in c. 1827[67] and again in 1831 had a meagre impact.

Moshoeshoe's defeat of the Ndebele in 1831 was, as with his earlier defeat of Matiwane, accounted a major success.[68]

Can one turn the Tlokwa into the region's other main destabilisers, as Ellenberger does? As noted, the Tlokwa leader, Sekonyela, served like Matiwane as a villainous foil for the hero of the missionaries, Moshoeshoe.[69] But we know practically nothing about Sekonyela's early career, and the accounts of Tlokwa devastations are almost certainly exaggerated as well.[70] Marion How has shown how the long alleged Tlokwa attack on Dithakong in 1823 did not take place.[71] The allegations of Tlokwa maraudings as far south as the Orange River seem to me to be open to question. The Moshoeshoe biased accounts have turned the Tlokwa skirmishes with the Mokoteli in 1822-4 into bloody battles, illustrating MacGregor's claim of a generic difference between warfare after 1820 and that before. But accounts of the fighting seem to refer to quite 'normal' inter-Sotho conflicts, as the title of one of them, 'the battle of the pots', implies.[72] It thus still has to be demonstrated that the scale of warfare underwent a dramatic change in the 1820s. Much of the violence that there was was inflicted by Sotho on Sotho. Significantly, the Sotho raids on the Tembu in the early and mid-1820s; and the Mokoteli attacks on the Thembu in 1828 and 1829 are conveniently omitted from definitions of the lifaqane.[73] This is ironic since fetcani originally referred to just such Sotho raiders.[74]

Two other peculiarities of the 1820s need to be examined. The one is the abnormally frequent visitations of drought and famine. The other is that for the first time Europeans were on hand to describe, exaggerate and misunderstand events. Early traveller and missionary writings contain innumerable references to a long period of drought at the turn of the 1820s, succeeded by other unusually dry periods later in the 1820s.[75] Crops failed, pastures dried up, and sometimes whole groups of people either starved or were compelled to move in search of better grazing. The initial incursions of the Hlubi may have been caused by this as much as by pressures from the Zulu. Fetcani and famine were originally near synonyms; yet it was this definition which was omitted by the later lifaqane theorists. Famine and Nguni raids were not unprecedented. What was (besides the Griqua), was the missionary presence to write it down, often emotively, with little regard paid to the credentials of the informants, and with the subvert intention to depict the pre-missionary era as one of darkness in contrast to the new era dawning of Europrean enlightment. Ideas of the lifaqane tell us as much about the missionaries, perhaps more, than about the 1820s in African history.

Since it was the successive invasions of the Griqua and the Boers that were to hem the southern Sotho into the mountains of the south-west Drakensberg, Omer-Cooper's claim that Basutoland owed its origins to the mfecane cannot be accepted.[76] The Nguni intruders had departed the Caledon by 1828. Despite certain attempts at detecting a new form of Sotho political organisation in the area by the late 1820s,[77] by 1830 no significant structural changes had yet taken place in southern Sotho society. The revolutionary concentration of population within the single chieftaincy and the vastly wider powers of Moshoeshoe compared to those of his ancestors accumulated as a result of Boer land pressures in the 1830s and 1840s. It was Moshoeshoe's acceptance of the missionaries and his courting of British protection which was,

for the Sotho, revolutionary, and which helped him forge out of the growing regional disaster of white land seizures a new type of African state. Even Moshoeshoe had no answer to the reunited Boers of the 1860s. Only fortuitous British aid in 1868 and again in 1910 prevented the absorption of Basutoland into the Union of South Africa,[78] as happened to the Zulu. It can safely be said that Matiwane did not father Lesotho.

With less plausibility still can Mzilikazi be regarded as a parent of Bechuanaland. Few historians now follow Walker and Agar-Hamilton in depicting[79] the Ndebele migration across the Transvaal as purely destructive. Far from destroying Sotho civilisation,[80] the Ndebele established a new type of amalgamated Nguni-Sotho state. Reports of the Ndebele between 1829 and 1836[81] are of a flourishing, well-administered, grain-growing people. Sotho chieftaincies - Hurutshe, Rolong, Ngwaketse and so on - continued to exist. Some, such as Moritsane's Taung and dissident Hurutshe groups, counterattacked[82] the Ndebele frequently, not always without success. The Ndebele displaced and absorbed; they did not exterminate. In the north[83] the Ndebele impact on the Pedi and the Venda was negligible. As in the Caledon, the Sotho problems in transorangia were compounded seriously by the penetration of first the Griqua, later the Boers from the south. The latter brought with them the beginnings of a new economic order in contradistinction to the Ndebele. Revolutionary new alliances began,[84] as some Sotho groups allied with the advancing Griqua and Boers,[85] others joining the Ndebele for security. A Griqua-Sotho alliance pushed Mzilikazi north of the Vaal in 1827-8;[86] a Boer-Griqua-Sotho alliance ejected him from the Marico in 1837-8.[87] North of the Limpopo the Ndebele were never able to dominate the Nwato of Sekgoma and Khama. The later claims by Mzilikazi of overlordship over the Kgatla and Ngwaketse in southern Bechuanaland should be interpreted[88] as diplomatic posturing. Bechuanaland did not emerge from the mfecane, in short, but in the aftermath of the discovery of gold in the Tai valley and diamonds along the Harts in the 1860s. The contest between the English and the Boers for control of this vast land and mineral wealth produced the Bechuanaland Protectorate of the 1890s. Only the resistance of the Tswana chiefs prevented its incorporation into Rhodesia.

The third 'enclave state', Swaziland, fits even less comfortably into mfecane theory, even if - unjustifiably, as I argue below - one centres the mfecane on Shaka. The ancestors of the Swazi had separated from the Ndwandwe in the Polgola valley well by the middle of the eighteenth century. From a vantage point in what is today southern Swaziland they were only remotely involved[89] in the Zulu-Ndwandwe struggle of c 1812-26. Zulu attacks on Sobhuza's Ngwane were ineffective. As late as 1840, twelve years after the conclusion of Ellenberger's lifaqane, there was difficulty in detecting a Swazi state. The major process of Swazi state formation took place in the 1840s and 1850s. It was Mswati who ruled after 1846 who gave his name to and provided most of the structural definition of the kingdom. Like the Ndebele, the Swazi were a fusion of Sotho and Nguni peoples in an area in which such interaction had been taking place for at least two centuries. As with Basutoland and Bechuanaland, Swaziland was a product of a clash of African state-building with the new circumstances created by Boer, English, and - in Swaziland's case - Portuguese expansion.[90] Swaziland disappeared in the Anglo-Boer deals

of the 1890s, to be miraculously salvaged as a result of the unlikely vicissitudes of the white civil war after 1899.[91]

The contention that the enclave states derived from the mfecane is thus untenable. Each, on the contrary, was a product of white expansion. Equally untenable are the allied claims that the mfecane pushed African peoples into a peripheral horse-shoe shaped ring that enclosed a fertile empty arena which thereby lay fortuitously open just in time to receive white migrants. At no time was transorangia empty of people, or anywhere near it. No serious attempt has yet been made to analyse Sotho population densities during the period 1810-28.[92] But the positions of the Kwena, Kgatla, Hurutshe, Taung, Rolong, Ngwaketse can be charted in the 1830s by reference to their contacts with the Griqua, Boers and Ndebele.[93] Displaced peoples were often not displaced far. Others remained in place; others still were absorbed by the Ndebele. After the break-up of the Ndebele kingdom in 1838 a proportion of their Sotho incorporates stayed behind in the Marico valley.[94] These were the sort of peoples De Kieviet had in mind when refusing to accept the yarns of disappearing peoples. In the north and north-east, the Pedi and Venda remained unconquered by the whites until the latter years of the nineteenth century. In the Caledon valley many of Theal and Ellenberger's allegations of population losses, for example of the Tlokwa, are wild exaggerations.[95] Theal's repetition of Chase's estimate of twenty-eight disappearing tribes should be chased from the literature once and for all.[96] This is not to say that the combined impact of famine, invasion and war may not have retarded Sotho population growth in the first third of the nineteenth century. But we badly need a study of the relative effects of war and famine and of their interconnection. Southern transorangia was never heavily populated. San still lived along the Orange;[97] further west there was desert. The southward moving Sotho lived in large settlements leaving wide regions settled only by cattle herds, for reasons about which there is as yet no firm agreement.[98] The early travellers and missionaries were adept at claiming depopulation in areas they had never visited and in attributing it to Zulu raids which had never occurred.[99] Such population there was developed the habit of not displaying itself overgratuitously to Europeans on horseback and armed with guns.

The orthodox view that 'Natal in 1836 was empty save for a few clans huddled round the English traders at Port Natal,' is even further from the truth.[100] These allegations were first made by white landseekers. Several of them claimed that Shaka and/or Dingane had granted them a huge region south of the Tugela, occasionally reaching as far as the Umzimvubu, and that the kings had generously depopulated it for them as well.[101] This profligacy of the the Zulu kings should not be taken too seriously. There are, on the contrary, some indications that the population of Natal may have increased during the Shaka and Dingane era. In the early 1850s, one of the lucky recipients of Shaka's land generosity, Fynn, drew up a list of nearly a hundred Nguni groups known to have been in Natal in 1820. Most of them were still identifiable in 1850.[102] Throughout the reigns of Dingiswayo and Shaka there was a constant flow of people into Natal. The Tuli, Kwela, Mbili and Komo groups, for example, moved into the region around modern Pinetown, pushed south by the Qabe. In the 1820s groups of Qabe themselves moved into Natal, to be followed by others in the

1830s. After the killing of the Mbo chief, Zihlandhlo, in 1830-1, Mbo groups fled into the region south of what was to become Pietermaritzburg, where they found other Nguni *in situ*. Lala groups lived in the coastal belt between the Tugela and the Mkomanzi.[103] Groups of Thembu from north of the Tugela were pushed towards the Umzimkulu; another under Jobe moved into the Pomeroy region of what is now north-western Natal.[104] Putini's Mangwe lived in the Ladysmith area in the 1830s, moving south to Estcourt in 1838-40.[105] We know little as yet of the relationships between the Nguni of Natal and Shaka and Dingane. Whether they were raided by the Zulu (and/or Mpondo), paid tribute, or lived fairly independently is unclear. But that they were there is clear.[106]

More contentious, though still unstudied, are the cannibals. The frequent references to cannibalism in missionary literature and in oral traditions suggest - on the no smoke without fire principle - that cannibalism did occasionally occur, at least in an area touching on the Wilge, Caledon and upper Tugela valleys. But Ellenberger's: 'From small beginnings it spread over the whole country between the Orange and the Vaal, depopulating the land'[107] seems unlikely and certainly needs testing. His methods of calculating the number of cannibal victims, mentioned earlier, are not very advanced. Many of the missionary accounts of cannibal bands feasting have the atmosphere of highly embroidered reports of scenes they had not witnessed. Practically every reference to cannibals in the James Stuart Papers is to the *rumours* of the existence of cannibals, who were never seen by his informants' informants. Several questions need to be asked more insistently than they have hitherto. Why do reports of cannibalism come mainly from the Caledon region?[108] What was the association of cannibalism with famine? Was it a phenomenon just of the 1820s, or did it go back to the great *madlatule* famine of 1799-1803? How frequent was its incidence? Why did the Sotho resort to human flesh when the region contained abundant game? After these questions have been explored, and only then, will it be justifiable to link cannibalism specifically to the invasion of Matiwane and Mpangazitha and to Ellenberger's *lifaqane*. At present these connections are based more on supposition and faith than on fact.

The allegations of genocide attributed to the Ngune and Tlokwa belong in the realms of white *mfecane* propaganda. This propaganda has had the mainly intentional effect of drawing attention away from the far greater violence unleashed by the whites themselves in nineteenth-century southern Africa. The *mfecane* is a distorting lens through which South African history has been fragmented into separated compartments, with a selective focus on black-black interactions. The shattering impact of European militarism on black societies has been blurred or (as in Theal) denied altogether. At any rate it awaits its historian. The *mfecane* is a curtain drawn over some of the key interactions of South African history.

After the arrival of the British at the Cape in 1806 the whites were armed with guns and artillery, possessed sophisticated communication and commissariat systems, had the use of horses and wagons, and clad their soldiers with the excellent and cheap products of the new Lancashire cotton mills. The British armies were backed by a unique industrial revolution which, except in cases of carelessness or parsimony, ensured their easy victory over even the strongest African

societies. The era of Shaka and Dingane, the second to the fifth decades of the nineteenth century, was exactly the era of the unprecedentedly (for Africans) vicious Anglo-Boer attacks into Xhosa territory along the 'eastern frontier'. On the one had there were the relatively ineffectual forays of the Zulu into the northern Transkei. On the other, in the south, began a forty-year assault beginning with the driving of the Xhosa across the Fish River in 1811-12, the seizure in 1819 of Xhosa lands as far as the Keiskamma, and the desperate (for the Xhosa) wars of 1834, 1846 and 1850.[109] It ended for the Xhosa in the catastrophe of the cattle-killing in 1855, and in the complete destruction of their political viability. No serious attempt has yet been made, one notices, to estimate the population losses of the Xhosa as a result of European firepower and a rapidly shrinking land base.

Compare too the relative impact of Matiwane's short stay in the Caledon valley with the effects of the thirty year Boer offensive on the southern Sotho. Or contrast the decade-long battle between the Ndebele and Sotho north of the Vaal with the five hour Boer massacre of the Ndebele in the Mosega basin on 12 January 1837. Consider the relative impact of the Zulu on the Swazi and Mpondo with the smashing of their armies by the Boer commandoes in 1838 and 1839. Mfecane propaganda has long served to conceal this disproportion in the scale of violence in nineteenth-century South Africa. The outer, overpopulated horseshoe of the Africans and white control of the best lands of the Orange Free State, Natal and the Transvaal resulted not from the mfecane but as the purposeful consequence of a century of European violence followed by the formalised land seizures of the twentieth century.

Lastly: how valid is Omer-Cooper's transference of the Zulu 'revolution' into the heart of his analysis of the mfecane? Omer-Cooper's treatment of the Shaka era, qua analysis of the structure of the Zulu kingdom, it must be said, is ordinary. None of the questions as to how, why, when, or indeed if the great changes in Nguni society took place are resolved.[110] This attempt to make the mfecane pivot around Shaka poses certain problems. Some of Shaka's innovations had been implemented elsewhere and earlier. The ibutho for instance was widespread among the northern Nguni before Shaka.[111] In view of our minimal knowledge of pre-1800 Nguni structures, it would at present be hazardous to attempt to date the development of changes which had penetrated the Ndwandwe and the Mthethwa almost certainly well by the end of the eighteenth century. The changes may have been evolutionary over a long period rather than revolutionary and sudden. The Ngwane ancestors of the Swazi broke away from the Ndwandwe in the eighteenth century; as did both Soshagane and Zwangendaba around 1818-22.[112] Mzilikazi's Ndebele were closely connected to the Ndwandwe.[113] Mzilikazi was an innovator parallel to Shaka. They were co-equal state-builders springing from a common and earlier tradition. The inference of this is to extend Omer-Cooper's mfecane north of the Pongola and back to the eighteenth century. But why use the term, one that is already loaded down with other dubious meanings, for developments among the northern Nguni about which our knowledge is so shadowy? Bryant did well without it. Bringing the internal developments in northern Nguni society into the mfecane thus raises the issue of the definition of the mfecane as a datable era of history even more urgently than Ellenberger's Caledon valley usage. If it is impossible

to assign a beginning, it is almost as difficult to define an ending. One cannot end the Zulu mfecane with the assassination of Shaka in 1828 since this leaves out the career of Dingane. We leave the Caledon valley chronologies behind, and, by including Dingane's reign, move into an era when the Zulu were vitally affected by the growing pressures from the whites in the south. Once more it becomes impossible to separate off African history. Omer-Cooper is drawn into bringing the history of the Zulu kingdom right down to 1879 within the mfecane's capacious embrace.[114] But the survival of the Zulu kingdom until then was much influenced by the takeover of the British in Natal in the early 1840s and the British tolerance of its survival. It is even more difficult to draw mfecane end dates for the Ndebele, the Gaza and the Ngoni which do not tautologically merely indicate their overthrow by colonial conquest.

This leaves us with the Nguni diaspora. Obviously the careers of Mzilikazi, Sebetwane, Soshangane, Zwangendaba and the others have a unity. Equally obviously the diaspora was linked to events in northern Nguniland which gave birth to the Zulu kingdom of Shaka. Together this constituted a major episode of south-central African history. Yet the case of retaining the word mfecane to describe them is, in my view, thin. The roots of the nguni revolution and of the migrations go back to before the rise of Shaka. As an era, they only incidentally overlap with the Caledon valley chronology of Ellenberger. And the diaspora was not a purely African movement. The involvement of Mzilikazi with the Griquas and the Boers in the 1820s and 1830s, of the Swazi with the Boers and the Portuguese, of the Gaza with the Portuguese, and of the Ngoni with the Arabs and the Germans illustrate this. By abandoning Ellenberger and Walker's definitions of the mfecane historians could, south of the Limpopo, the more easily examine the interaction of the Nguni raiders with the even more formidable invaders from the Cape. Africanists would be free to assess the impact of the Nguni migrant kingdoms on local peoples, examine the mechanisms of the Nguni state formations, even to draw links between the great Nguni leaders of the past and the problems of the present, without implying an acceptance of the more racist innuendoes of South African mfecane ideology. Historians (if they can be found) could get on with the job of describing the conflict of cultures in nineteenth-century South Africa without being frightened off by the fiction that the hammerlbow of a purely black mfecane created the foundations on which the future South African state was built.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

From their innocent emergence on the eastern frontier in the 1820s, the fetcani, later upgraded into the mfecane (or lifaqane), were press-ganged into serving several not entirely altruistic historical ends. At the turn of the twentieth century the lifaqane evolved as a combined concept glorifying Moshoeshoe at the expense of Matiwane and Sekonyela; and as a self-eulogy by the French missionaries. They turned the 1820s into a hellish inferno the better to contrast the (alleged) peace, security and progress brought by European civilisation. The use of violence in the imposition of the latter was omitted. At about the same time, before and after the Union of South Africa in 1920, other writers, notably Theal and Walker, gave the

shape to a new variant, the mfecane, as a part legitimation of the white conquest of and land seizures from blacks in the nineteenth century. The 1913 Natives Land Act and the mfecane were close companions, the latter describing as self-inflicted what the former took by force. In the 1960s and 1970s the mfecane was updated. Inside South Africa it was adapted to explain the origins, if not the creation of the black homelands, at a time when South Africans badly needed all the help they could get in justifying this process both to an international audience, and to their own up and coming generations. At the same time, bizarrely, historians mainly outside South Africa, not having noticed the use to which the mfecane was being put south of the Limpopo, hitched the mfecane to an alternative history that stressed the glories of the African past and attempted to provide for Africans self-respect and a defence against European suggestions that the African past was sterile, static and barbaric. The racist interpretation has been shielded from view by the Africanist one.

The result must surely bewilder any student who attempts to define the mfecane with any concise coherence. The mfecane is today a thicket of theories past and present, the debris of the former coexisting with the sophistications of the latter. The difficulties of getting to the roots of this muddle have been compounded by the growing legitimation of the mfecane through constant repetition and most people's assumption that this or that strand of the mfecane must have a basis somewhere. Since everyone agrees about it it must be true. Even the best writers have accepted, if not toasted it. The concept covers so much ground that most students approaching the mfecane tend to see only a part rather than the whole. It is either too 'big', or amorphous, or uncontroversial to attract the PhD student.[115] Especially on its home ground in South Africa, where the study of African history is still regarded with suspicion, there are so few historians with the necessary inclination or economic base to study nineteenth-century African history. The few there are, take the mfecane for granted and turn to more fashionable topics to make their careers.

The main interramifying flaws of the mfecane are these. As an era of African history the mfecane does not work. In Ellenberger's Caledon valley version the necessity to bring in the Griqua, driven on by the whites to the south of them, shows that the troubles of the 1820s and early 1830s sprang as much from the Cape as from the Nguni east. In its Zulu-centred version the problems of cause, content and chronology are as yet unresolved. The fusion of the Nguni 'revolution' with Ellenberger's very local, Moshoeshoe-orientated preoccupations is not so uncontroversial as is generally imagined a decade or so after Omer-Cooper's ellisions. It is also an error to attribute the emergence of Basutoland, Swaziland and Bechuanaland to the mfecane. The enclave states were created as a consequence of European expansion. The associated claims that the mfecane depopulated the Orange Free State, the Transvaal and Natal, and that the twentieth-century homelands were fathered by the mfecane are politically inspired lies. Recent white South African versions of the mfecane and Africanist treatments display unbridgable incompatibilities of fact and interpretation. The mfecane's very versatility makes it meaningless. Leaving aside the the post Omer-Cooper Africanist definitions, the historiographical evolution of the mfecane was a selective treatment of the evidence that in the main highlighted the impact of

Africans on Africans which, it was repeatedly affirmed, was purely destructive, and virtually ignored the impact of Europeans on Africans, which was idealised.

We need a careful study of the European mfecane. Black and white history in southern Africa needs urgently to be reintegrated. The alternative path glimpsed by the Kiewiet is still available. Though it was partly buried under the mfecane avalanche of the 1960s it can and should be reopened and further explored.

Some readers, conceivably, may accept some of the above, but argue that the mfecane can be reformed by weeding out the tendentious parts of the theory, leaving the inner idea purged and strong. But what is to remain? One student will reform it this way; another will sandpaper somewhere else. And inside South Africa, mfecane ideology will assuredly continue to be disseminated, dirtying even the purest of reformed mfecanes. The soloution is to leave the mfecane where it evolved and belongs: as a plaything of South African historiographical and political ideology, and to use other terms (Nguni diaspora, Zulu 'revolution', Griqua invasions, clash of cultures, white land seizures) for past events which were caught up in the mfecane net. The time has come for serious students of South African history to drop the mfecane from their historical vocabulary.

SUMMARY

The mfecane (or lifaqane) is essentially a twentieth-century concept that evolved nearly a century after the events wo which it refers occurred. Its general acceptance is even more recent, dating from the publication of Omer-Cooper's Zulu Aftermath in 1966. An analysis of the evolution of the mfecane in South African history - from the fetcani intruders into the Kei region in the 1820s to its adaption by historians, especially in school textbooks, in the 1970s to account for and legitimate the South African 'Homelands' - shows it to be a tendentious, flawed and contradictory concept, that was developed for mainly propagandist reasons. Today it is used contradictorily by Africanists to stress the creativity of the African past, and by white historians in South Africa to highlight its genocidal destuctiveness. There is neither agreement as to which era nor to which geographical arena the mfecane refers. But perhaps the most serious result of mfecane ideology is to downplay the impact of white militarism on and land seizures from African societies in nineteenth-century South Africa. Paradoxically, a concept which since Omer-Cooper appears to bring the African past back into history ends up by even more rigorously isolating it. It is suggested that the use of the word mfecane (in contradistinction to an urgent need to reassess the themes embraced by it) be dropped by all, save those who wish to continue to argue that the unequal land distribution between blacks and whites in today's South Africa originally derived from an orgy of African self-destruction in the 1820s and 1830s which depopulated the Orange Free State, the Transvaal and Natal just in time for the white occupation.

NOTES

1. The etymology of the word is explained in the article. Today mfecane and its southern Sotho variants lifaqane or difaqane are in practice synonyms, though this was not always the case. For clarity I have used the variant mfecane (apparently first used by E.A. Walker in 1928) throughout, except in quotations or where the context dictates.

2. In T.O. Ranger (ed.), Emerging Themes of African History (London, 1968), 193.

3. A major theme in J.D. Omer-Cooper, The Zulu Aftermath. A Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Bantu Africa (London, 1966).

4. Ibid. 5, 180. See also below.

5. This begins with D.F. Ellenberger and J.C. MacGregor's History of the Basuto Ancient and Modern (London, 1912), in which the lifaqane becomes the second or middle era of southern Sotho history lasting roughly a decade. See below, 4.

6. Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, chapters 3, 4 and 5 for example.

7. E.A. Walker, A History of South Africa (1st edition, London, 1928), 210, 226; J.C. MacGregor, Basuto Traditions (Cape Town, 1905), 8, 14, 15 etc.
For earlier references to lifaqane in Sotho missionary literature see L. Thompson, Survival in Two Worlds. Moshoeshoe of Lesotho, 1786-1870 (Oxford, 1975), 33; and P. Sanders, Moshoeshoe, Chief of the Sotho (London, 1975), 27.

8. A. Kropf and R. Godfrey, Kafir-English Dictionary (2nd edition, Lovedale, 1915), 100; and references in the following four footnotes.

9. Rogers to Forbes, 27 May 1825, in G.M. Theal (ed.), Records of the Cape Colony (Cape Town, 1897-1906), Vol. 22, 428-33.

10. W.M. Mackay to Secretary to the Government, 8 August 1827, in Theal (ed.), Records of the Cape Colony, Vol. 34, 463-8.

11. For example, Report by W.B. Dundas of 15 August 1828 in N.J. Van Warmelo, History of Matiwane and the Amangwane Tribe (Pretoria, 1938), 247; W.D. Hammond-Tooke, The Journal of William Shaw (Cape Town, 1972), 132, entry for 19 June 1828.

12. e.g. Hammond-Took (ed.), Journal of William Shaw, 160, entry for 8 May 1829.

13. Platje Mhlanga, 'A Study of Native Wars', Cape Monthly Magazine, New Series, Vol. xiv (Jan.-June 1877), 248-52; Nehemiah Moshesh, 'A Little Light for Basutoland', Cape Monthly Magazine, Vol. 11 (Jan.-June 1880), 221-33, 280-92; Moloja, 'The Story of the

"Fetcani Horde" by One of Themselves', The Cape Quarterly Review, Vols 1-2 (1881-2), 267-75, for example.

14. J.H. Soga, The South-Eastern Bantu (Johannesburg, 1930), 300.

15. W.M. Macmillan in A.P. Newton and E.A. Benians (eds), The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Vol. 8, South Africa, Rhodesia and the Protectorates (Cambridge, 1938), 303.

16. T. Arbousset and F. Daumas, Narrative of an Exploratory Tour to the North East of the colony of the Cape of Good Hope (English edition, Cape Town, 1846), 134.

17. MacGregor, Basuto Traditions; Ellenberger and MacGregor, History of the Basuto. In the latter there is the possibility that it was MacGregor, the translator, who inserted the word lifaqane into the text on pp 117, 122-3.

18. McGregor, Basuto Traditions, 8.

19. For the shunting metaphor see H.M. Hole, The Passing of the Black Kings (London, 1932), 35-6.

20. W.C. Scully, 'Fragments of Native History', The State, Vol. 2, 7-12 (1909), 285, 597. The growing hero-worship of Moshoeshoe between his death in 1870 and the Union would probably repay further study for its important side implications (eg. the anti-Boer tendencies of English historians). And this idealisation continues, as in the recent biographies mentioned.

21. Scully, 'Fragments', 597.

22. Ellenberger and MacGregor, History of the Basuto, 225. Ellenberger's chapter on the cannibals is to be recommended to anyone interested in the mfecane.

23. G.M. Theal, History of South Africa, 1795-1834 (London, 1891), 305.

24. Ibid., 304. This is almost certainly well over the number of Tlokwa in existence in 1820.

25. Ibid., 303. According to W.F. Lye, 'The Distribution of the Sotho Peoples after the Difiqane', in L. Thompson (ed.), African Societies in Southern Africa (London, 1969), 192, this figure passed via an unknown missionary, and J.C. Chase (whose list Lye cites) and Theal into the literature. It has since been monotonously repeated.

26. Scully, 'Fragments', 287; see also the Boyce reference in footnote 55.

27. Theal, History of South Africa (1901), 305.

28. G.M. Theal, History of South Africa 1794-1828 (London, 1903), 389.

29. e.g. J. Bryce, Impressions of South Africa (3rd edition, London, 1899), 86.

30. The connection between the early development of the united apartheid state and the rise of mfecane ideology needs a closer examination than there is space for here.

31. E.A. Walker, An Historical Atlas of South Africa (Oxford, 1922), Map XIV, and commentary of pp 15-16; J.D. Fage, An Atlas of African History (second edition, London, 1978), map 45. The latter map has a string of peoples west of the Vaal and Harts rivers and another east of the Drakensberg, and nothing in between.

32. Walker, History of South Africa (1st edition, 1928), 210.

33. Walker, History of South Africa (2nd edition, London, 1940), 182; see also third edition (1957), 175.

34. Walker, History of South Africa, (2nd edition, 1940), vi.

35. J.A.I. Agar-Hamilton, The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers 1836-58 (Cape Town, c. 1928), 4, where the mythology of the mfecane is neatly paraphrased.

36. E.C. Tabler, The Far Interior: Chronicles of Pioneering in the Matabele and Mashona Countries, 1847-79 (Cape Town, 1955), 183; M.S. Geen, The Making of the Union of South Africa (London, 1946), 93. Both Tabler and Geen repeat Walker's incorrect translation 'the crushing', as have many others since then.

37. e.g. N.C. Pollock and S. Agnew, An Historical Geography of South Africa (London, 1963), 18, 24, etc.

38. MacMillan, in The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Vol. 8, 302; C.W. de Kiewiet, A History of South African Social and Economic (Oxford, 1941), 59.

39. e.g. G.S. Preller, Day-Dawn in South Africa (Pretoria, 1938), who covers Shaka and the Great Trek without mentioning mfecane. Afrikaner writers only woke up to the possibilities of the mfecane in the 1950s.

40. It appears, for example, in neither A.T. Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal (London, 1929), nor in E.A. Ritter, Shaka Zulu. The Rise of the Zulu Empire (London, 1955). Becker uses lifaqane in MacGregor's Caledon valley sense in Path of Blood. The Rise and Conquests of Mzilikazi (Panther edition) (London, 1962), 63, but not in his Rule of Fear. The Life and Times of Dingane (London, 1964).

41. Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, 7.

42. Ibid. Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

43. Ibid. 181.

44. Ibid. 180.

45. e.g. R. Oliver and J.D. Fage, A Short History of Africa (London, 1962); and R.I. Rotberg, A Political History of Tropical Africa (Oxford, 1965) both talk of the Zulu Kingdom and the Nguni migrations without mentioning the mfecane.

46. R.W. July, A History of the African People (London, 1970), 177; see also R. Oliver and A. Atmore, Africa since 1800 (Cambridge, 1967), 55; and J.D. Fage, A History of Africa (London, 1978), 313, the authors by now having consulted Omer-Cooper.

47. L. Thompson and M. Wilson (eds), The Oxford History of South Africa, Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1969), chapter 9. Interestingly Thompson integrates lifaqane into this chapter on the Sotho and the Orange Free State, but neither lifaqane nor mfecane into chapter 8 covering Shaka and the Zulu, thus indicating the optional utility of the term.

48. e.g. W.F. Lye, 'The Difaqane: The Mfecane in the Southern Sotho Afrea, 1822-4' Journal of African History, viii, 1 (1967), 107-31; and Lye, 'The Sotho Wars in the Interior of South Africa, 1822-37', unpublished PhD thesis, UCLA (1969).

49. R.K. Rasmussen, Migrant Kingdom. Mzilikazi's Ndebele in South Africa (Cape Town, 1978). On p. 3 Rasmussen terms the Ndebele a 'major mfecane-spawned migratory state'.

50. C. de B. Webb and J.B. Wright (eds), The James Stuart Archives, 3 Vols. ongoing (Pietermaritzburg, 1976-82).

51. M. Damane and P. Sanders, Lithoko. Sotho Praise-Poems (Oxford, 1974); W.F. Lye (ed.), Andrew Smith's Journal of His Expedition into the Interior of South Africa 1834-36 (Cape Town, 1975), for example.

52. F.A. Van Jaarsveld, From Van Riebeeck to Vorster 1652-1974. An Introduction to the History of the Republic of South Africa (Johannesburg, 1975), 115.

53. Ibid. 115, 134. See also 127. Van Jaarsveld's italics.

54. M.E. Kratz and W.E. Trengove, The People of South Africa (Cape Town, 2nd), 59.

55. A.N. Boyce, Legacy of the Past (Cape Town, 2nd edition, 1969), 139.

56. M.C.E. van Schoor, A.G. Coetzee et al., Senior History for South African Schools. Standard Eight (Cape Town, nd), 86, a line anticipated in Preller, Day-Dawn in South Africa, 200-02.

57. G.J.J. Smit, F.O.A. Kreuser and A.C. Vlok, History for Standard Eight (Cape Town, 3rd edition, 1980), 103. At the end of the section a typical assignment for the children runs: 'On a sketch-map of Southern Africa indicate where the various Bantu tribes were setteld at the end of the Mfekane.' The authors think it important to get this 'straight'.

58. Rasmussen, Migrant Kingdom, 86.

59. Thompson, Survival in Two Worlds, 18-20. Nguni groups such as the Polane and Phuti moved into roughly the same areas of the Caledon and the upper Vaal in about the 17th or 18th centuries as the Hlubi and the Ndebele were to do in the early 1820s.

60. Here, and in the rest of the article, I use Griqua loosely to describe Griqua, Kora, Bastard, Bergenaar and other gun-armed, horse-mounted raiders of mixed white, slave, Xhosa and Khoi descent, moving into the region from the south to west.

61. See Lye, 'Sotho Wars in the Interior of South Africa', chapter 3.

62. See Sanders, Moshoeshoe, 39, for a discussion of the timing. Sanders's conclusion that the Ngwane did not leave the Caledon until 1828 seems to be opposed by the evidence that some Ngwane were already east of the Drakensberg by 1827. See Footnote 10.

63. Sanders, Moshoeshoe, 52. See also pp 27, 59; and Lye, 'Sotho Wars in the Interior of South Africa', 139, 255. The hesitancy over how to incorporate the Griqua into the mfecane seems to be a recent unconscious acknowledgement that the mfecane is a problematic concept.

64. The best tradition is probably that of Msebenzi in van Warmelo, History of Matiwane. The vagueness of the timing in this stands in contrast to the suspicious clarity of some of Ellenberger's traditions.

65. Thompson, Survival in Two Worlds, 51.

66. For example by Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, 142. Msebenzi, in van Warmelo, History of Matiwane, 26-8, 38, 44, mentions only the threat of a Zulu attack in 1827. Becker's Rule of Fear (on Dingane) does not mention it, though Ellenberger has Dingane lead the Zulu attack. In Hill of Destiny. The Life and Times of Moshesh (London, 1969), 65-7, however, Becker has picked up the Ellenberger tradition. Historians of the Sotho have mostly accepted Ellenberger without sufficiently warning the reader of the problems of history in the form of oral traditions.

67. Described in Ellenberger and MacGregor, History of the Basuto, 180-1, but not confirmed with any certainty in Ndebele traditions; see Rasmussen, Migrant Kingdom, 55. Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, 141-2, suggests that the alleged Zulu attack in 1826-7 was a confused reference to an acutal Ndebele raid. Note that in 1826 and 1827 the Zulu were engaged against the Ndwandwe and Khumalo.

68. Becker, Path of Blood, 137-40; Sanders, Moshoeshoe, 44-5.

69. Lye, Andrew Smith's Journal, 88, entry for 6 Nov. 1834, where Smith noted, having just been feted by Moshoeshoe, 'the impressions produced [by Sekonyela] were worse even than we had expected them to be.'

70. For a discussion see Lye, 'Difaqane: The Mfecane in the Southern Sotho Afrea'.

71. M. How, 'An Alibi for Mantatsi', African Studies, xiii (1954), 65-76.

72. None of the descriptions in Thompson, Survival in Two Worlds, 40; Sanders, Moshoeshoe, 33; or Lye, 'Sotho Wars', 84-5, appear to be of anything other than skirmishes.

73. They are mentioned (e.g. Thompson, Survival in Two Worlds, 55), but not as part of the lifaqane.

74. See above p. 5.

75. e.g. Nehemiah Moshesh, 'A Little Light for Basutoland', 283; I. Schapera (ed.), Apprenticeship at Kuruman. Being the Journals and Letters of Robert and Mary Moffat, 1820-8 (London, 1951), 55, 67; Sanders, Moshoeshoe, 33; Webb and Wright (eds), James Stuart Archives, 1,201; 11, 15.

76. Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, 180.

77. Lye, for example, in 'Sotho Wars in the Interior of South Africa', 258, argues in the context of 1828-30: 'The vulnerability of the Sotho assumed that they would fail to retain dominance over their own lands, but would create resistance through the new structures created in their society [by the lifaqane presumably].' But what new structures? Even vaguer is his 'Even less than before the wars, the terms clan or tribe describe the Sotho Chiefdoms which had by then [i.e. by about 1830] become entirely composite societies,' in Thompson (ed.), African Societies in Southern Africa, 205-6. Thompson, in Survival in Two Worlds, 62, writes equally questionably: 'A radical social and economic change had taken place in SeSotho society. The lifaqane had drastically increased the proportion of propertyless men and promoted the concentration of wealth - and hence of clients - in the hands of a few successful men, among whom Moshoeshoe was preeminent'. But without the Griqua and Boers, it

seems certain the Sotho would have reverted (if reversion was necessary) to the structures of pre-1820.

78. Thompson, Survival in Two Worlds, chapter 7; Thompson, in Thompson and Wilson (eds), The Oxford History of South Africa, 11 (Oxford, 1971), 363.

79. It is worth quoting van Jaarsveld's lurid description in From van Riebeeck to Vorster, 112: 'Mzilikazi caused a terrifying massacre of Bantu nations west of the Drakensberg mountains. The territory between the Orange and the Limpopo Rivers became one massive blood bath.' A check in the school textbooks will reveal equally lurid descriptions

80. Rasmussen, Migrant Kingdom, 103; J.R.D. Cobbing, 'The Ndebele under the Khumalos, 1820-96', unpublished PhD thesis, Lancaster University (1976), 32; Lye, in Thompson (ed.), African Societies in Southern Africa, 199.

81. Rasmussen, Migrant Kingdom, chapters 3 and 4; Kotzé, D.J. (ed.), Letters of the American Missionaries, 1835-38 (Cape Town, 1950), 130, Joint Letter to Anderson, 18 August 1836.

82. Cobbing, 'Ndebele under the Khumalos', 29-30. For an account of the relationships between the Ndebele and the Hurutshe in 1831-2 by anti-Ndebele missionaries, see the diary extracts of S. Rolland, J.P. Pellissier, and P. Lemue in R.C. Germond, Chronicles of Basutoland, (Morija, 1967) 76-102.

83. The Pedi wew attacked by the Nguni in the early 1820s, but it is not certain that the attackers were Mzilikazi's Ndebele. Gundwane's Ndebele skirted Venda country between 1838 and 1840, and the Ngoni of Zwangendaba may have passed through Venda territory in the 1820s.

84. Moritsane's Taung, as well as Rolong groups on the middle Vaal and the Modder Rivers joined Jan Bloem junior in his attacks on Mzilikazi during the middle and late 1820s; see P.R. Kirby (ed.), The Diary of Dr Andrew Smith 1834-6, 2 Vols, (Cape Town, 1939-40), I, 378; Rasmussen, Migrant Kingdom, 62-7.

85. As did Nguni. The Sotho divided into Ndebele friendly, those intransijently hostile, and others who were reluctant incorporates, divisions which led to complex interactions about which we as yet know extremely little.

86. Cobbing, 'Ndebele under the Khumalos', 21, 24-6; Rasmussen, Migrant Kingdom, 78-85.

87. Cobbing, 'Ndebele under the Khumalos', 36-9. The older version was that the Ndebele were pushed west and then north by the Zulu, who in fact they learned to handle.

88. Ibid. 323-3.

89. H. Kuper, An African Aristocracy (Oxford, 1947), 11-14.

90. All well analysed in P.L. Bonner, 'The Rise, Consolidation and Disintegration of Dlamini Power in Swaziland between 1820 and 1889', unpublished PhD thesis, London University (1976), chapters 2, 3 and 5.

91. Kuper, African Aristocracy, chapter 3.

92. For an estimate of the situation before 1800 see M. Legassick, 'The Sotho-Tswana Peoples before 1800', in Thompson (ed.), African Societies in Southern Africa, 86-125; see also Lye's chapter in the same book, which is written from an mfecane perspective.

93. There is some material in Rasmussen, Migrant Kingdom, and Cobbing, 'Ndebele under the Khumalos', chapter 1, but this is another job that needs doing.

94. Rasmussen, Migrant Kingdom, 136-7. Other Sotho, however, followed Mzilikazi north.

95. Tlokwa, Hoja, Mokoteli etc. all remained roughly in the areas they had inhabited before 1820, or only moved short distances.

96. Lye, in Thompson (ed.) African Societies in Southern Africa, 192, I feel overequivocates, failing even to point out the error of the claim that the Ngwato had been eliminated.

97. For the killing of the San by the advancing Griqua, see G.W. Stow, The Native Races of South Africa (London, 1905), 393.

98. Discussed by Wilson in Thompson and Wilson (eds), Oxford History of South Africa, I, 139-42, 153-8. The Ndebele have on several occasions been blamed for creating the ruins of Sotho settlements which are scattered over the Transvaal and had been abandoned long before the 1820s, for example in F.W.T. Posselt, Fact and fiction. A Short Account of the Natives of Southern Rhodesia, (Bulawayo, 1935), 165.

99. e.g. Lye, Andrew Smith's Journals, 115, entry for 28 November 1834.

100. Walker, Atlas of South African History, 15. This has already been noted by Shula Marks, Reluctant Rebellion. The 1906-08 Disturbances in Natal (Oxford, 1970), 4: 'That Natal was empty of Africans was always an illusion, though it was one that died hard.' It is very much alive still today.

101. J. Bird, The Annals of Natal 1495-1845, 2 Vols (Cape Town, 1886), 321-3; T.R.H. Davenport and K.S. Hunt, The Right to the Land (Cape Town, 1974).

102. Bird, Annals of Natal, I, 124-53. Fynn heads his section: 'Inhabitants of the Territory ... Before the Extermination of Native Tribes by Chaka.' Fynn's work and credentials are in need of a reassessment.

103. Webb and Wright (eds), The James Stuart Archives, III, 32-43, evidence of Mbovu.

104. Ibid. I, evidence of Lunguza.

105. Ibid. II, 4, evidence of Mabindela.

106. Similar allegations were made by the propagandists of the British South Africa Company about a depopulated belt around the Ndebele kingdom in western Zimbabwe. An examination revealed it was precisely in this belt that tributaries of the Ndebele lived who were seldom molested and who remained close allies of the Ndebele into the era of the white conquest. See Cobbing, 'Ndebele under the Khumalos', chapters 4 and 10. Selous's descriptions of Mashonaland running with blood as a consequence of Ndebele raids are with good reason no longer accepted by Zimbabwean historians.

107. Ellenberger and MacGregor, History of the Basuto, 217.

108. I have never come across references to cannibalism in regions occupied by the Ndebele either north or south of the Limpopo, regions which occasionally experienced similar combinations of famine and war.

109. Well described (to the war of 1846) in J.B. Peires, The House of Phalo (Johannesburg, 1981). Hungry Xhosa were also called fetcani; see Kropf and Godfrey, Kafir-English Dictionary, 100, under i-Faca.

110. Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, chapter 2. Omer-Cooper uncautiously attributes the 'revolution' to overpopulation for which, as L. Thompson in Oxford History of South Africa, I, 341, remarks there is scant evidence. The changes may have been evolutionary over a long period rather than revolutionary and sudden.

111. For some of Zwide's amabutho see Webb and Wright (eds), James Stuart Archives, II, 45, evidence of Madhlebe. Virtually all northern Nguni chiefs had amabutho before Shaka, as noted by Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, 99. Peires, House of Phalo, 139, notes that the 'short stabbing spear' and 'horns and chests' formations were evident in Xhosaland in the 1790s.

112. Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, 447, 458-9; G. Liesegang, 'Aspects of Gaza Nguni History', Rhodesian History, 6 (1975), 2.

113. Ndebele traditions firmly indicate that Mzilikazi's Khumalo resisted incorporation into the Zulu kingdom, a refusal which led to their flight.

114. Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, 46-8.

115. W.F. Lye's 'The Sotho Wars in the Interior of South Africa, 1822-37' is a part exception, but only covers a limited area, and nowhere questions the underlying ideas of the mfecane.