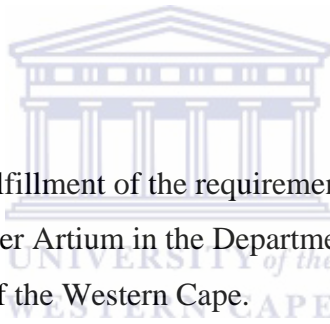


Producing Sarhili: the colonial archive and the biographical limits of writing a history of a nineteenth century Xhosa king.

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Artium in the Department of History, University of the Western Cape.

Date Submitted: 30 August 2009

Plagiarism Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that is my own work, that it has not submitted for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

_____ Date _____

Virgil Charles Slade



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Like the subject of this dissertation, I often found myself trapped in very unexpected ways and there is no way that I would have emerged from this project with any degree of success if it were not for the contributions many different people made to this project throughout its three year lifespan.

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I spent nearly seven months at the National Archives in Cape Town. I want to express my appreciation to all the staff at this institution, with a special mention to Kenny. Thank you

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I realise that my passion for my subject matter must have made laborious reading at times so I want to firstly, sympathise with my external examiners Profs. Alan Kirkaldy and Jacob Tropp for having to wade their way through this dissertation. Secondly, I want to thank them for their fair and insightful evaluations of my thesis. I appreciate that they have conducted such a close reading of my work and were so gentle in their critique.

This thesis almost failed to see the light of day due to a virus a picked up on my machine playing online poker. The lesson has been learnt and I will confine my poker exploits to the actual table. However, even though I lost everything from my laptop, the various hard copies I had made throughout its lifespan were converted into an electronic once again. Being a bona fide technophobe, I have no idea of what that entailed so you can imagine my gratitude to my sister, Lana Daniels, and my good friend at the Mayibuye Archive, Andre Mohammed for restoring my thesis to its electronic form. Thank you.

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Lastly, to my son Nicholas: now for number four my boy! You inspire me more than I thought possible before you came into life. As always, everything I do, I do it for you. I love you my boy.



Photograph 1



Photograph 2



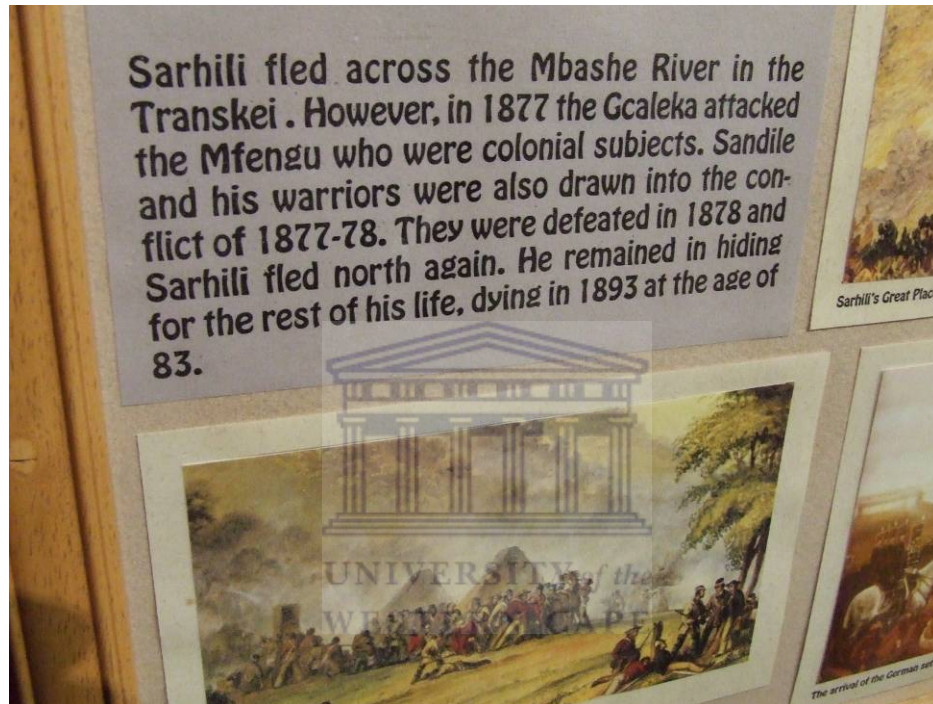
Photograph 3

South Africa.
People, depending on their particular social, economic, cultural and political background, will perceive and record what they see around them differently. Historians are also influenced by their own world views. This exhibition relies mostly on quotes, pictures and objects to tell a story. It is merely a stepping-stone for your own interpretation.

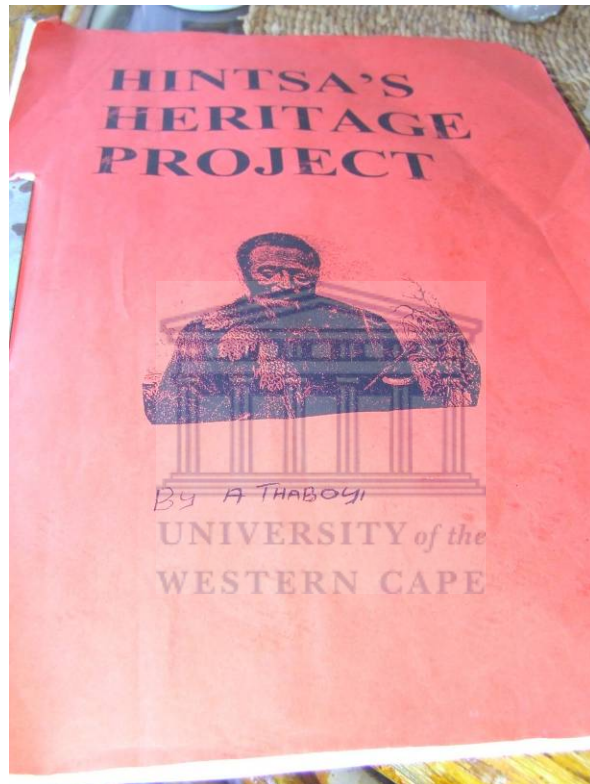
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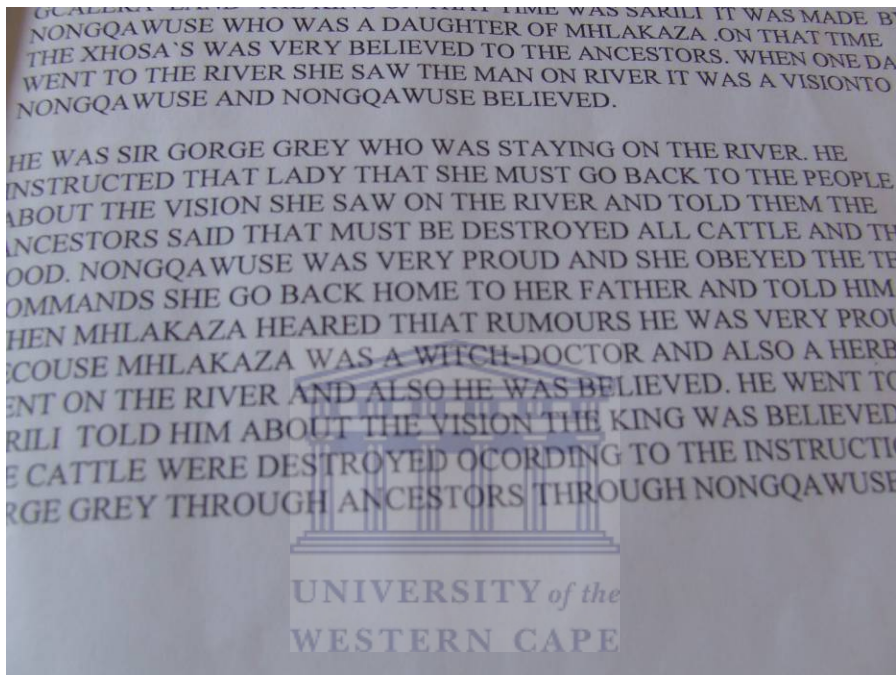
Photograph 5



Photograph 6



Photograph 7



Photograph 8

Introduction- The Last King of the amaXhosa¹

‘Kreli’s² [Sarhili’s] influence over the AmaXhosa is such, that place him where you will, he is able to make himself felt as if he was actually in the midst of them. For fifty years Kreli has stood up against the advancing tide and battled with it. The wars he has bravely fought, his personal hair breadth escapes, his wisdom and eloquence in council and his consummate skill in diplomacy cling to him like moss to a tree about the old chieftain, and make of him, even in adversity, the central figure of the Kaffir political stage³.’

This is the manner in which I first encountered the ambiguous figure of the Xhosa chief, Sarhili, filtered from the colonial archive. The description of Sarhili is drawn from a colonial correspondence by Bomvanaland magistrate W. E. Stanford that points to long prehistory of the last paramount chief of the Xhosa as he tried to withstand the onslaught of British colonialism. Stanford draws our attention to the figure of Sarhili who is portrayed in the colonial archive in disparate characterisations that catapulted the king to the most important person on the Xhosa political stage. Even when the Xhosa paramount was outmanouvred politically and utterly obliterated militarily, no amount of colonial intervention seemed to displace him from the centre of the Eastern Cape political stage. The ambiguous nature of the Xhosa chief as he is depicted in the colonial archive is related very directly in the way that he enters and exits this archive. There is so much controversy that surrounds the last paramount chief of the Xhosa that even his birth date

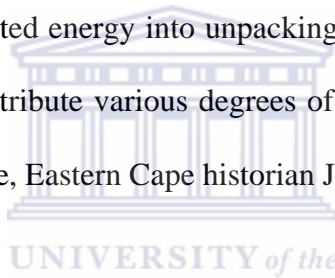
¹ Whereas it can be argued that a royal lineage has continued after the death of Sarhili, he was the last paramount chief of the Xhosa who could, for the most part of his life, make decisions that were independent of colonial intervention.

² ‘Kreli’ is the name by which Sarhili is referred to in the colonial correspondence letters.

³ G. 19-, 1886, p. 9: Stanford’s Memo, 19 May 1885.

is shrouded in controversy.⁴ The year of his birth is a source of much uncertainty, even among subsequent historians who have consulted the same colonial sources. My interest in Sarhili was sparked by this seemingly inconsequential detail. As the research unfolded I learnt that it was symptomatic of a broader crisis of evidence about the Eastern Cape.

Besides the difficulty in discerning the history of Sarhili, I was initially drawn to his biography because of the choices he was confronted with during the cattle killing episode of 1856-7. I was especially interested in how the historian comes to know what lay behind Sarhili's judgments given the intervening force of the colonial archive. After all, most historians who have devoted energy into unpacking this millenarian moment in the Eastern Cape historiography attribute various degrees of responsibility at the feet of the paramount. Briefly, for example, Eastern Cape historian Jeff Peires tells us:



“When Nongqawuse ‘showed’ the King [Sarhili] his lost son [Bomela], Sarhili was captivated. From that time onwards, he was responsible for driving the movement forward, even when it was weak and flagging from its own failures. As one old councilor put it ‘the whole movement [was] Kreli’s [Sarhili’s], and so resolute was he in carrying it out that he would not permit no one to reason with him on the subject’.”⁵

However, this event was but a morsel in a rich feast of life led by the Xhosa king and this thesis will endeavour to highlight other fateful moments in both his childhood and his reign as paramount, as these are woven through the colonial archive. What is revealed is

⁴ This controversy will be unpacked at length later in this thesis.

⁵ Jeff Peires, The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Cattle Killing Movement of 1856-57, (Ravan Press: Johannesburg, 1989), p. 314.

a problem for the biography of Sarhili and the approaches to evidence of the colonial archive. It is only in this respect that we might understand his emergence as a historical subject.

Unfortunately, the historiography of the Eastern Cape in the 1800s has tended to focus mostly on the cattle-killing episode when dealing with the life of the Xhosa king. The reality remains that the cattle-killing event was an episodic moment in the life of the Xhosa paramount chief. This thesis will endeavour to highlight other fateful moments in his childhood and his reign as paramount, as well as his mediated existence in the administrative policies of colonial rule. We may inquire why such an influential role-player has not been the subject of major biographical study in South African historiography. After all, biographical work has been produced on two other Xhosa chiefs of the same era, both underlings to Sarhili.⁶ This oversight prompted me to retrace Sarhili's footsteps in the colonial correspondence of those resident in the Eastern Cape in the 1800s. In the process I found myself increasingly trapped by the colonial archive as Sarhili himself was increasingly overdetermined by the modes of administrative decree in the Eastern Cape.

⁶ Johannes Meintjes wrote a biographical work on the Ngqika chief Sandile and Timothy Stapleton produced a similar piece of literature on the life of Sandile's half brother Maqoma. Both chiefs were of Sarhili's generation. Johannes Meintjes, Sandile: The Fall of the Xhosa Nation, (Bulphin: Cape Town, 1961), Timothy Stapleton, Maqoma: Xhosa Resistance to Colonial Advance 1798-1873, (Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1994). One of the key texts of political history in South Africa makes the most peripheral mention of Sarhili. See Edward Roux, Time Longer than Rope, (Madisson, University of Wisconsin Press, 1964). Similarly, several key nationalists texts for example, Nelson Mandela, The Long Walk to Freedom, (Abacus: London, 1994) refer to Hintsisa, Sandile and even Ngangelizwe but Sarhili is not mentioned at all.

Entrapment of the Unwilling Prisoners

I have chosen to refer to my time spent at the archive as being ‘trapped’ purposely as this entrapment manifested itself on multiple grounds. Firstly, and more obviously, the entrapment makes reference to the fact that I would be unable to write this thesis without spending the time necessary doing the research in the archive where Sarhili is featured most prominently. In other words, I had to subject myself to the racial slurs that are prevalent in these letters as well as the superior manner in which the British presented themselves. Irrespective of how offensive I found these correspondences to be, I had to endure them as this was a major primary source available to me and as such I could not write the thesis without ploughing through them.

The second aspect of my entrapment refers specifically to the fact that I would only be subjected to the colonial view of events unfolding in the Eastern Cape. The figure of Sarhili was largely a product of administration of resident magistracies and colonial officials rather than local knowledges.⁷ Thus, assuming that there was another version, the colonial archive would be a deterrent to accessing it. Even letters written to the colonial government by the various Xhosa chiefs were mediated by colonial administrators who offered help to chiefs who could not write. Colonial magistrates or residents were often called upon to perform dictations and translations to the bulk of chiefly communication with colonial officialdom. It seems safe to assume that the agency

⁷ In his introduction to his book about Maqoma, Stapleton also laments the lack of oral sources as a means of juxtaposing the content of the colonial archive. Timothy Stapleton, Maqoma: Xhosa Resistance to Colonial Advance 1798-1873, (Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1994). The oral history that I encountered of the Xhosa paramount seems even more at odds with the limited regimes of truth that do reside in the archive. As such, Sarhili’s story has to be told through the mediated representation offered in the colonial archive. The problems found with the Xhosa oral tradition will be dealt with in a more detailed manner in chapter 6 of this dissertation.

of the chiefs of the time was limited as their words were mediated by those who were taking their land and attempting to change the structure of their society.

The third aspect of my entrapment relates to the manner in which I had to deal with the validity of the sources found in the archive. As alluded to earlier, the body of evidence available in the colonial archive is written from one defined perspective, that is from the perspective of colonial authorities who had a very particular world view. This world view would involve the crushing of any Xhosa resistance to the process of colonization. However, a close reading of these materials allows the historian to uncover the contradictory manner in which these authors depict both the Xhosa people, but more specifically the paramount Sarhili. It was these contradictory accounts of the chief that caused me to remain trapped in the often overstated claims of colonial officials for longer than initially planned as I had to try to make sense of the countless contradictions I found therein. It was at this point that I realized that I was not the only unwilling prisoner of the colonial archive. The subject of Sarhili will forever be mediated by the colonial archive as he has no other voice with which to speak. But his entrapment is more definitive than mine as everything we learn about him is in direct relation to what the colonial agenda was at any given time. In other words, the archival depiction of the Xhosa king varies in relation to his relationship with the colonial authorities and how his behaviour corresponded with the needs of the colonial state.

As I was increasingly entangled in the net of colonial deception and its intricate webs of representation, I realized that I was captured by the archive in a fourth and most profound

way. This entrapment involves the way the colonial archive operates. The colonial archive is not merely a body of literature that is kept together in a specific location. By virtue of its irrevocable links to the Enlightenment, the colonial archive has been strategically placed as the hegemonic source of historical research. In other words, in order to have any historical writings taken seriously by other scholars, the historian has no recourse but to make extensive reference to the colonial archive. The problem arises from the fact that the archive has found itself a source of constant contradictions throughout my research. It is therefore puzzling that in postcolonial South Africa that the colonial archive has not been placed under the same rigorous investigation as have other forms of sources in the moment of writing history. After all, the colonial archive is regarded as the hegemonic source that serves as the barometer for legitimacy. It therefore became apparent that in order to decide what to do with the differing accounts of 'truth' I found within its midst, I had to understand the way in which this apparatus of unrivalled authority operated. It would appear that I was not the only one grappling with this problem.

The Nature of the Beast

Historian Premesh Lalu writes that in order to fully understand the manner in which the colonial archive functions it is necessary to unpack the principles upon which it operates. He agrees with me in terms of the hegemonic nature of the colonial archive in garnering any kind of authority in the discipline of history.⁸ Lalu points out that this source claims for itself the ultimate authority as regards 'regimes of truths' and in order to understand its operationality, directs us to the work of Luise White. White argues that 'lies' are

⁸ Premesh Lalu, In the Event of History, unpublished manuscript.

negotiated forms of information. She states that this negotiation occurs with a specific target audience and gains acceptance in that it overlaps with specific regimes of truth.⁹ In other words, an untrue story gains acceptance with a specific audience if it appears feasible in relation to known regimes of truths. As such, we have to investigate all forms of information that makes these claims i.e. being a regime of truth. I would argue that as historians this is especially true in terms of the colonial archive as it constitutes the hegemonic source from which historical writings emanate. This is an argument that finds resonance with the work of cultural theorist Michel De Certeau.

Michel De Certeau implores historians to ‘prowl’ the archive by creating new ways of investigating its contents.¹⁰ He argues that in order to uncover regimes of truth we need to think of the archive in terms of knowledge production and not necessarily as sites of knowledge. The implication of this perspective is that though the colonial archive postures as being as the haven for regimes of truths, this simply is not the case. The anthropologist Anne Stoler endorses this view. Stoler writes that by viewing the colonial archive in this way we are not trying to eliminate it as a source, but rather seeking to open a pathway with which the historian is able to uncover the conditions under which the information found within the colonial archive stores is produced. Stoler postulates that unless the colonial archive is subjected to this type of interrogation it will remain a ‘history of the present’ as it remains unchallenged and therefore dictates authenticity.¹¹

⁹ Luise White, “Telling More: Lies, Secrets and History” in History and Theory, Volume 39, No. 4 (December, 2000), pp. 11-22.

¹⁰ Michel De Certeau, ‘The Historiographic Operation’, in The Writing of History, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1985).

¹¹ Anne Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance: On the Content, in the Form”, in Carolyn Hamilton (ed.), Refiguring the Archive, (David Phillip: Cape Town, 2002), p. 84.

Furthermore, this interrogation forces the historian to take into consideration the social and political factors that were at work when this ‘knowledge’ was produced therefore ensuring that a clearer picture emerges about what constitutes regimes of truth and how they are constituted. This approach is pivotal if the hegemonic nature of the colonial archive as source is to be challenged and its claims of framing historical narration debunked.

In order for us to delve even deeper into the mechanics of the colonial archive, Lalu suggests the work of Nicholas Dirks as the vehicle with which to traverse the journey. Dirks writes that colonialism is an ‘independent subject’ and should not merely be studied in historical terms but also as a ‘cultural vehicle of control’.¹² In other words, Dirks urges us to understand that the event of colonisation was not merely an attempt to control the wealth of another country, but also control the way it thought about itself. This tactic of the colonial state would then serve to limit the ways in which the subject could discern the true nature of the colonial archive as deconstruction would curtail the manner in which the subject was allowed to think. This colonisation therefore sought to set the parameters about what one could say, and equally important, what one could not.

French philosopher Michel Foucault describes the archive as ‘the law of what can be said’.¹³ The colonial archive is a reflection of this ‘cultural vehicle of control’ as the colonizers made the decisions about what material was allowed through its portholes and

¹² Nicholas Dirks, “Colonialism and Culture” in Dirks (ed.), *Colonialism and Culture*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 11.

¹³ Michel Foucault, *The archeology of knowledge and the discourse on language*, translated by A. Sheridan, (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), p. 130.

what was discarded. As such, it becomes imperative not only to investigate the ‘regimes of truth’ that supposedly abound within its precincts but also what it is that the colonial archive is attempting to control. That the colonial state created its archive it is reasonable to suggest that it would ensure that its content would serve to validate its own power. Therefore, it calls into serious doubt the validity of the supposed regimes of truth that are accepted to reside in its organisation. This form of dissection of the colonial archive is vital in South Africa as this same archive is still regarded as being hegemonic and until this dominance is challenged, the colonial archive will seemingly continue to dictate what can be written and what cannot. The problem arises from the fact that the colonial archive continues to seep into the postapartheid state in the same manner as it upheld colonial discourse. As such, successive states that emerge from the shadow of colonial officialdom fail to dismantle the apparatus that endorses its validity. This validity can be expressed in terms of national boundaries, disputed territory or the political system more generally. In postapartheid South Africa, the colonial archive presents an informational discourse to implement policy.

Along the Grain

It is rather easier to pontificate the problems that exist within the colonial archive as opposed to offering an alternative manner in which to work within its constraints. A popular term has emerged in history whereby scholars attend to the problem of the archive by reading it ‘against the grain’. The implication of this approach is that the scholar writes histories from the ‘bottom-up’. In other words, the focus of the research shifts from the colonial archive to oral and resistance histories. However, this approach

presupposes a truth before the scholar even starts their research and no guarantee exists that this presupposition is enveloped in regimes of truth. In other words, the historian has already made judgments about regimes of truth before even investigating what evidence exists within the colonial archive.

Anne Stoler suggests that we read ‘along the grain’.¹⁴ This scholastic strategy makes no assumptions about presumed regimes of truths and allows the historian to expose the way in which the colonial archive operates as a matter of knowledge and power. This understanding is pivotal as it accentuates the differentiation between regimes of truth and state propaganda. This is the tactical approach this thesis will adopt as it will encompass stepping outside of the colonial archive in a manner that does not deprive this thesis of the authenticity that is associated with working inside of its parameters. In other words, this thesis is not limited to conventional treatments of the colonial archive even though it offers a reading and a rearrangement of that archive as it relates to Sarhili. In this way it challenges the formation of the archive and its knowledge production and its relation to power. Furthermore, this dissertation will be working against the widely held view of the king as despotic, or in its nationalistic counter-narrative, as hyper-masculine. These constructions flow from the logic of the colonial archive. Therefore this thesis will not only be concerned with rendering a biography of Sarhili, but perhaps, more importantly, investigate the forces at work in the colonial archive when evidence appears in this archive that does not resound as regimes of truth. With this tactical approach in mind, I

¹⁴ Anne Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance: On the Content, in the Form”, in Carolyn Hamilton (ed.), Refiguring the Archive, (David Phillip: Cape Town, 2002).

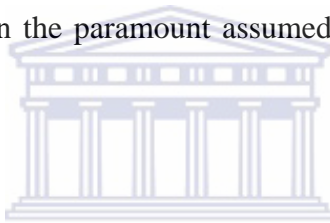
have no option but to view secondary sources relating to Sarhili critically for they would have based their accounts on the evidence retrieved from the colonial archive.

Chapter Outline

The natural approach to any biography would be to create a chronological order and proceed through the subject's life focusing on the major events in his or her life. But this would be impossible for one whose very birth is a matter of uncertainty. Sarhili is also not covered extensively in colonial correspondence and he seeps in and out of the colonial archive throughout the 1800's but is not consistently approached. As such, this thesis will scrutinize his seemingly haphazard appearance in the colonial archive in the nineteenth century. There are two reasons for adopting this approach. Firstly, Sarhili is portrayed differently at different times in the colonial archive. These characterizations range from blood-hungry savage to consummate diplomat and almost everything in between. Secondly, by tracing these changing perceptions in the colonial archive we are able to trace the different political and social climates that existed in the Eastern Cape during the nineteenth century and establish which, if any, regimes of truth were in operation at these specific times in the colonial archive. This approach will allow for both critical reflection of biographical detail of the paramount chief's life as well as providing space in which to place the colonial archive under critical scrutiny.

The first chapter of my thesis will highlight the controversial nature of the Xhosa king Sarhili. The most simple of details, his birth year, is disputed among historians as no consensus has been reached about the year in which the paramount chief of the Gcaleka

was born. In chapter 1, I will outline the colonial archive's investment in the relationship that Sarhili had with father, Hintsa, and the implications that this relationship had on his reign as king. The Xhosa king had a very different rapport with his mother, Nomsa. This was to have its own ramifications for the future king of the amaXhosa. Sarhili became a somewhat reluctant king, ironically and allegedly at the hands of the British. This chapter will give an overview of the first ten years of his reign with particular emphasis on unpacking the issues that the new paramount faced and trying to uncover the motives behind the decisions he took. Sarhili struggled to assert his authority as the new king of the amaXhosa and this chapter will attempt to untangle the intrigue that dominated the Xhosa political landscape when the paramount assumed the throne, or at least how the British produced the narrative.



By 1845, Sarhili had managed to emerge from the shadow of his father, Hintsa. He had moved his Great Place away from Butterworth and had re-established it at Hohita. This chapter will investigate the tactics the paramount supposedly employed in order to assert himself as the king of the amaXhosa. The Rharhabe went to war with the colony in 1846. This frontier war, commonly referred to as the War of the Axe, would see the paramount entrench his reputation as a consummate diplomat. The Xhosa king opted for the Gcaleka to remain neutral during this war although he offered support to Rharhabe warriors as well as allegedly providing haven for their cattle. This chapter will illustrate how this decision was to enhance the authority Sarhili had built up since the death of his father and also how he was able to circumvent any colonial sanction that may have served to undermine the power he had acquired since 1835. In 1850, another conflict was

sparked between the colonial military and the Rharhabe when the colonial authorities deposed Sandile, the paramount chief of the Ngqika. This war, known as the Mlanjeni War, was to see Sarhili once again decline from forming an alliance with the Rharhabe. Unfortunately for Sarhili and the Gcaleka, the decision to remain neutral backfired on the Xhosa king in a number of ways. This chapter will investigate not only the manner in which the non-participation in the war proved detrimental to this faction, but also how it was to impact on the cattle-killing episode of 1856-57.

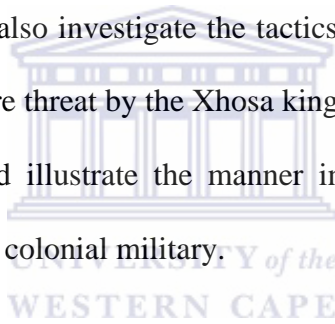
I will investigate the cattle-killing episode of 1856-57 in the third chapter of this dissertation. I am particularly interested in the role the paramount played in this millenarian movement. While I will give a brief description of the prophecy itself, I will focus more on the conditions that prevailed in the Eastern Cape that predisposed the widespread acceptance of this divination and the manner in which these circumstances may have affected Sarhili's endorsement of the movement. Most of the existing historiography depicts the Xhosa king as having a genuine belief in the prophecy. I intend to juxtapose this argument with my own understanding of the paramount's thinking when he chose to back the movement. A pivotal aspect of this chapter will be to endeavour to understand how the colonial archive wants us to rationalize his support of the mass slaughter. I will conclude this chapter by investigating the consequences of the cattle-killing for the amaXhosa in general, but particularly for Sarhili.

Sarhili was forced into exile out from Gcalekaland by the colonial authorities after the cattle-killing. The initial focus the fourth chapter of this thesis will centre on the Xhosa

king's repatriation to Gcalekaland. This discussion will attempt to isolate the colonial reasoning behind allowing Sarhili to maintain his independence from British rule as well as investigating the logic in dividing Gcalekaland in the specific manner that the colonial authorities did. I discovered that the period immediately after repatriation of the Gcaleka paramount chief coincides with a time that Sarhili is largely absent as a subject of the colonial archive for extended periods of time. I will attempt to decipher why the most powerful chief in the Eastern Cape is literally ignored by the colonial archive during this period of his life.

Following his repatriation to Gcalekaland, Sarhili set about restoring the influence and power he wielded prior to the cattle-killing and this chapter of my thesis will expose the strategies the paramount employed to facilitate this goal. These strategies would ultimately prove costly for the Xhosa king because as these ploys bore fruit, the British became increasingly concerned about the threat he might pose to the colony. The colonial archive pays close attention between the relationship that developed between Sarhili and the Thembu paramount chief, Ngangelizwe, and how Gcaleka-Thembu interaction was to prove costly to the Xhosa king. It would appear, if one is to give credence to reports in the colonial archive, that the relationship between the two paramount chiefs were strained following the resettlement of the Xhosa king in Gcalekaland. The archive reports that Sarhili had attempted to forge an alliance with the Thembu paramount, in order to ease this tension by encouraging a marriage between Ngangelizwe and his daughter

Nomkhafulo.¹⁵ This union backfired on the Gcaleka paramount chief as his daughter was to return to her father's compound after less than two years of marriage to Ngangelizwe alleging that the Thembu paramount was physically abusive towards her. This thesis will investigate Sarhili's responses to these allegations and how these reactions were to affect Thembu-Gcaleka relations, as well as the manner in which the colonial authorities dealt with the situation. Sarhili chose not to punish the Thembu military at that time; however, this was to occur later in the decade at the behest of the Bomvana chief Moni. The Ngangelizwe-Nomkhafulo episode provides the reader with a rare insight into the manner in which the paramount tended to arbitrate in gendered relations that will be unpacked in this chapter. This chapter will also investigate the tactics employed by the colonial state in order to ensure that any future threat by the Xhosa king could be effectively curtailed. I will detail these strategies and illustrate the manner in which these ploys ultimately forced Sarhili into war with the colonial military.



The colonial archive will lead us to believe that the Xhosa king was very reticent about the military capabilities of the colonial state and that he consequently shied away from any aggression against it. This would, in part, explain his reluctance to support the Rharhabe in the two previous frontier wars. However, in this, the fifth chapter of my dissertation, the Gcaleka went to war against the colony, commonly known as the Ngcayecibi War. The colonial archive claims that the Xhosa king lost control of the Gcaleka and implies that the war would have taken place irrespective of the paramount's

¹⁵. Michael Spicer, 'The War of Ngcayecibi 1877-78', (MA. Thesis: Rhodes University, 1978), p.13. Spicer argues that one of the main problems that existed between Ngangelizwe and Sarhili was that both paramount chiefs were actively campaigning to increase the influence they had. As land resources were becoming increasingly scarce, so this rivalry intensified.

sanction. I will explore these claims in this chapter. This chapter will also investigate the manner in which the paramount was marginalised by both the Gcaleka and colonial strategy. This war provides a clear insight into the leadership style of the Xhosa king as was as giving us further insights into the way in which he made decisions on behalf of his people.

The Ngcayecibi War had dire consequences for both the Gcaleka and their paramount chief. Sarhili was to lose his independence from British rule, which he would never regain again. The Gcaleka would lose all their land and be displaced throughout the Eastern Cape. The Xhosa king would be forced into exile for the second time during his reign and his return to the political stage would forever be mediated by a colonial servant in the person of a British appointed magistrate. Struggle as he did, Sarhili was unable to re-establish the power and influence that accompanied his station and this period of his life was a constant battle of wits with various colonial authorities for small gains of power that could not return the Xhosa king to his former glories. I will highlight in this chapter these small struggles that would ultimately leave the Xhosa king a broken man by the time of his death. As was the case of his life, even his death is shrouded in controversy, as historians have been unable to agree on his death year.

The final chapter of my thesis will focus on the representations I have encountered of the Xhosa king. I have lamented, throughout this dissertation, about the manner in which the paramount has been portrayed in the various sources. Initially, I will investigate how Sarhili has been depicted by other authors, museum exhibitions and by the Xhosa oral

tradition. Sarhili is nearly absent from nationalistic rhetoric and as such it is important that when he appears in the public sphere that he is portrayed in a manner that takes into account the process of knowledge production as exists in the colonial archive. The Xhosa oral tradition does not really draw its narrative from the colonial archive. It does however provide a problematic of its own. For example, Sarhili is depicted in this source as virtually blameless for the role he played in the cattle-killing by that seems to be trapped in counter-colonial prose. This chapter will seek to dissect this problematic. Having attempted to dispel some of the portrayals of the Xhosa king, I will introduce new ways of thinking about Sarhili that takes into account the operationality of the colonial archive as well as counter-colonial rhetoric.



Chapter 1- How a Wanderer Became a King

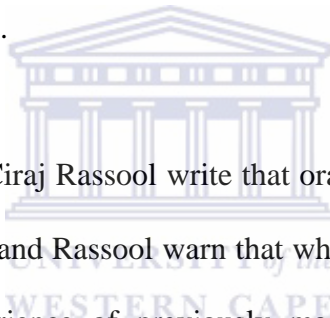
‘Truth is not always so much as the rationalization of the past, as the demands of the present’.¹

This chapter traces the life of the paramount chief of the Xhosa, Sarhili, from his birth up to the point that he established his own great place at Hohita having acceded to the Xhosa throne. I will shed light on the year of his birth, as it is a source of much conjecture in the Eastern Cape historiography. The colonial archive would lead us to believe that Sarhili had a strained relationship with his father, Hintsisa. Sarhili was Hintsisa’s ‘great son’ and as such it was his birthright to succeed his father as the paramount chief of the Gcaleka and the new Xhosa king. This chapter will also unravel the events that led to that succession and the manner in which it impacted on Sarhili in terms of both his decision-making processes as well as his future dealings with the British. This father-son relationship offers us a more intimate understanding of the pressures Sarhili was faced with after the death of Hintsisa. Sarhili struggled to assert himself as the new Xhosa king. In essence, I am interested in the reasons why he toiled to establish his influence as his father’s successor.

It would be obvious that the writer of a biographical work should to be able to provide the reader with at least the birth year of his chosen subject at the start of the biography. After all, most biographies run in chronological order and as such it would seem the

¹ Sheila Boniface Davies, ‘Raising the Dead: The Xhosa Cattle-Killing and the Mhlakaza-Goliath Delusion’ in the Journal of Southern African Studies. Volume 33 (1), March 2007, p. 57.

obvious place to start.² However, in the case of Sarhili, this has proven a difficult task. Two of the most important historians of the nineteenth century Eastern Cape, Jeff Peires and Noel Mostert agree that 1809 is the year that Sarhili was born.³ It would seem however that both oral history as well as the Albany Museum in Grahamstown, dispute this postulation. On a recent research trip to the Eastern Cape, I visited the grave of Sarhili in Tsholorha. In the inscription of his tombstone, erected in 1985 by his great-great grandson, Xoliliwe Sigcawu, Sarhili is said to have been born in 1820.⁴ This grave site is ‘protected’ by a local chief, but the chief’s uncle, Nomatoto, provided information regarding the nineteenth century. He was adamant that Sarhili was indeed born in 1820 as this is what oral history dictates.



Historians Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rassool write that oral history is often described as a ‘history from below’. Minkley and Rassool warn that while oral history is often regarded as ‘giving voice to the experience of previously marginal groups,’⁵ that it is also associated with problems that the historian has to take into consideration. They write:

‘Human memory is given to error, misconception, elision, distortion and downright fabrication.’⁶

² See Ciraj Rassool, The individual, auto/biography and South African history, (PhD thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2004) for a discussion of the process of biography writing.

³ Noel Mostert, ‘Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa’s Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People’, (Jonathan Cape: London, 1992), p. xiv and Jeff Peires, ‘House of Phalo’, (Ravan: Johannesburg, 1981).

⁴ See photograph no. 1 as attached in the appendices. This photo was taken on 3 September 2007.

⁵ Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rassool, ‘Orality, Memory and Social History in South Africa’ in Negotiating the Past in South Africa: The Making of Memory in South Africa, S. Nuttall and C. Coetzee (eds.), (Johannesburg), p. 90.

⁶ Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rassool, ‘Orality, Memory and Social History in South Africa’ in Negotiating the Past in South Africa: The Making of Memory in South Africa, S. Nuttall and C. Coetzee (eds.), (Johannesburg), p. 91.

It is therefore difficult to attach any ‘truth’ to this representation in oral history as firstly, Nomatoto’s testimony is not based on his own living memory but rather on the transference of trans-generational information. Also, in attempting to ascertain the year in which the future Xhosa king was born through the use of oral history, one must remember that the date is based on the Gregorian calendar, which was not used by the Xhosa at the time. After all, the year 1820 was a concept of time that would not have been one that was used by the Xhosa people at that instance. As such, it is unlikely to be accurate.

The dates provided by the Albany Museum are even more confusing. In the one exhibit, Sarhili is said to have died in 1893 at the age of 83 years.⁷ Therefore it places his birth in 1809 or 1810. However, two exhibits further into the hall, Sarhili is listed as having been born in 1815 and having died in 1892.⁸ The same researchers have compiled the information upon which this exhibition has been based. In other words, either these same investigators could not reach consensus about the year the paramount was born and decided to place both dates in the public domain, or alternatively, they remain blissfully unaware of the contradiction. Assuming that the researchers could not reach consensus about the birth year of Sarhili, then it serves to illustrate the conundrum I find myself in when attempting to provide one for the purposes of this thesis.

⁷ See photograph no. 5 taken on 5 September 2007 in appendices.

⁸ See photograph no. 6 taken on 5 September 2007 in appendices.

The museum as an institution is a design of the colonial archive. This institution is depicted to the public as being concerned with the preservation of artifacts and as a site of knowledge. The inability of the museum to provide a definitive year for Sarhili's birth is indicative of the issues faced by the colonial archive in dealing with the paramount. Throughout the archive Sarhili is depicted in different ways and, at times, he disappears all together. In essence, the colonial archive is unsure of the best way to portray the paramount and therefore explains the inconsistency in the manner with which he is dealt with. Being an institution designed by the colonial archive, it should not be surprising that in this instance the colonial archive is supported in its inconsistency by the museum. This inability of the colonial archive to remain consistent is worth considering further.

1.1 Nomsa and Hintsa

The earliest mention I could find in the colonial records of Sarhili is linked to his father Hintsa. Hintsa was the paramount chief of the Xhosa prior to Sarhili succeeding him as well as being the great chief of the Gcaleka. He had many wives but took his great wife from the Bomvana people in order to consolidate his alliance with their chief Moni. His great wife's name was Nomsa and she bore Hintsa his great son Sarhili (his heir). According to Canadian historian Tim Stapleton, in his biographical account of the Ngqika chief Maqoma, Nomsa was exiled from Hintsa's great place in the 1820s.⁹ The details of this exile remain sketchy, although it appears as if Nomsa had acquired a close relationship with the missionaries at the mission station in Butterworth, established by

⁹ Timothy Stapleton, Maqoma: Xhosa Resistance to Colonial Advance 1798-1873, (Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1994), p. 67.

John Ayliff.¹⁰ Hintsa is understood to have been very suspicious of missionaries following the death of two minor chiefs who died shortly after having dinner with Ayliff at the missionary station at Butterworth. Mostert also alleges that Nomsa saved Ayliff's life by warning him that her husband intended to have him killed for the role he was playing in hostilities between the Gcaleka and the Mfengu.¹¹ Mostert bases this allegation on entries in the colonial archive. However, bearing in mind the nature of this historical source, it is possible that this explanation for Nomsa's absence could be without substance.

John Soga, a Xhosa historian who wrote in the 1930's, notes that the initiation ceremony of male Xhosas is very specific in terms of the role that the initiate's mother plays. In order for Sarhili to undergo this rite of passage it was ordained by tradition that his mother be present at their homestead in order to perform her duties. As such, Nomsa was to prepare Sarhili's food for him while he was in 'isolation.'¹² As a result of her absence from the royal house, the initiation of Sarhili was delayed until 1834. Stapleton writes that Hintsa's counselors employed the help of Maqoma to mediate between Hintsa and Nomsa in order to ensure that the heir apparent to the Xhosa paramouncy could complete his initiation.¹³ The colonial archive suggests that this rite of passage only took place in 1834, a year before the death of Hintsa.

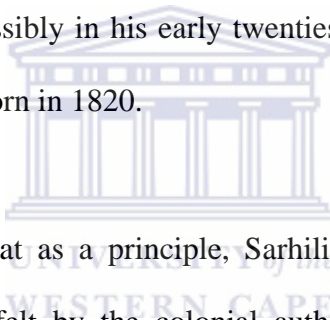
¹⁰ See John Ayliff, The History of the Abombo, (Butterworth: Gazette, 1912) for details of the creation of this missionary station.

¹¹ Noel Mostert, Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), p. 698

¹² John Soga, The AmaXhosa: Life and Customs, (Alice: Lovedale Press, 1931), p. 7.

¹³ Timothy Stapleton, Maqoma: Xhosa Resistance to Colonial Advance 1798-1873, (Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1994), p. 68.

If Sarhili had only undergone his rite of passage in 1834 it casts further doubt on the assertion by oral historian, Nomatoto, that the future Xhosa king was only born in 1820. It is documented in the colonial archive that Nomsa was exiled from the royal household in the 1820's and because of this exile Sarhili could not undergo his initiation. In other words his initiation was delayed. Soga relates that Xhosa boys tended to enter this journey into manhood in the late teenage years. If Sarhili was forced to await his mother's return, it implies that he would be older than the average Xhosa youth who undertook this rite of passage. Sarhili is reported to have completed his initiation in 1834, a process that lasted between three and six months. It is therefore likely that he would be in his late teenage years or possibly in his early twenties thus making it highly unlikely that the paramount chief was born in 1820.



It is important to highlight that as a principle, Sarhili is only mentioned in colonial correspondence when it was felt by the colonial authorities that he was influencing matters on the frontier. This was a trend that spanned throughout his life. No colonial official, or subject for that matter,¹⁴ felt it necessary to document his life unless his actions were perceived to have an affect on the colony itself. Whereas both oral and colonial sources date the birth year of Hintsas as 1793, Sarhili is not as straightforward. Until he enters the political stage in 1834, very little is known about the Gcaleka heir apparent as he only started participating in the politics of his people after his initiation.

¹⁴ There were newspapers that reported on Sarhili and these reporters, like Robert Godlonton for example, were not necessarily colonial officials.

However, whereas it is difficult to trace the exact year that he is born, it seems far more likely to have been in 1809 than 1820.¹⁵

One could argue that this disparity is more a reflection on the accuracy, or lack thereof, of Xhosa oral history than a function of the colonial archive as there would appear no direct benefit for the colonial archive to provide inaccurate information regarding Sarhili at this time. We may, however, take seriously Stoler's advice for scholars to investigate the process of knowledge production within the colonial archive. The disparity in the Xhosa oral tradition is able to help the scholar understand the colonial archive, as opposed to dispute it. After all, bearing in mind that Sarhili was a non-entity as a political role player on the frontier until 1834-5, it served no political or social purpose for the colonial archive to represent him in any predetermined way. In other words, Sarhili was not regarded as a threat to the colony as this point in his life and therefore it was not necessary for the colonial propaganda machine to engulf his life yet. The more threatened the state feels by an event or an individual, the deeper the scholar needs to delve in order to understand the factors influencing the production of knowledge in the colonial archive. In so doing, we may say that that birth dates are not mere points of departure in historical biography, but, as in the case of Sarhili, deeply political motivations for particular constructions of the subject of colonial domination.

¹⁵ See Noel Mostert, *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), p. xiv and photograph no. 1 (Inscription on tombstone) in appendices for verification of this congruency.

1.2 Fathers and Sons

‘Today you are circumcised, but we don’t know you because you have always been a wanderer- the son of a captain should sit by his father and mother, to hear and ask, but you don’t know the place of your father.’¹⁶

It would appear from this statement that Sarhili and his father did not have a very good relationship. Peires writes in *‘House of Phalo’* that it was common place for chiefs and their sons to have strained relationships. He also states that these sons would tend to have a closer relationship with their mothers. He justifies this statement in terms of succession struggles that may involve both father and son.¹⁷ Peires states that the Xhosa political stage was filled with intrigue in that being the heir to any specific chieftaincy was not a guarantee that the chief-in-waiting would necessarily succeed his father. It was not uncommon for councilors to seize power or for fathers to renounce the right their sons had to the chieftaincy.

Hintsa likens Sarhili to a wanderer in this speech he delivers at the final initiation ceremony held to herald Sarhili’s entrance into manhood. In front of his entire people, Hintsa saw fit to berate his son about his behaviour during his childhood. The archive states that Nomsa had been absent since ‘some time in the 1820’s’. It can therefore be argued that since Sarhili’s mother was in exile he thought it more beneficial for himself to stay out of his father’s way in order not to jeopardize his birthright, i.e. his right to

¹⁶ MS 15, 544 John Ayliff, WMMS Journal, 14 July 1835.

¹⁷ Jeff Peires, *‘House of Phalo’*, (Ravan: Johannesburg, 1981), p. 28.

succeed his father as paramount. This is pure speculation, although it is a feasible explanation for Sarhili's absence from the royal court. This, I would argue, is exactly the point. As soon as Sarhili, the 'crown prince' of the Xhosa people enters the political stage, doubt is shed by the archive on his ability as a leader by that archive. The quote that prefaces this section is taken from missionary John Ayliff's diary. It would be very unlikely that these were the only words that Hintsa spoke to his son in front of his entire people. In the course of my research I have encountered the same quote in numerous other historical works.¹⁸ Sarhili had not even properly entered Xhosa adulthood and already he became a target for the colonial archive. The quote makes it seem as if Sarhili had not learnt how to govern in the accepted Xhosa way, that is at the feet of his father.

Whether this point of contention between father and son is a reflection of the reality of the time is not of consequence. The most consequential aspect of the colonial archive focusing on this extract of the speech was the part of the speech that was omitted from the archive. Harry Smith, still serving as a military commander under the leadership of Sir Benjamin D'Urban, describes Hintsa as being a 'very eloquent man' whom he regarded as a good orator.¹⁹ Throughout his autobiography, Smith was extremely loath to confer any compliment on the 'natives' he came into contact with²⁰. Bearing in mind that it would not have been an everyday occurrence for an heir to the paramount chief to have undergone his passage into adulthood, it is therefore very unlikely that Hintsa's speech

¹⁸ This quote appears in Jeff Peires, *The House of Phalo*, also Noel Mostert, *Frontiers* as well as in John Milton, *The Edges of War*.

¹⁹ Harry Smith, *The Autobiography of Harry Smith*, G.C. Moore Smith (ed.), (London, 1903) Volume II, p. 353.

²⁰ Harry Smith had served the British Empire in New Zealand as well and was equally scathing of the Maoris from the region. He was convinced that they were savages, like the amaXhosa, and regarded it as the duty of the Empire to save them with Christianity.

would only have served to berate his son without offering some words of encouragement as well. As such, it would not seem likely that this quotation would have been the extent of Hintsá's speech to his son in front of his people. Yet this is the part of the oration that the colonial archive focuses its attention on. It therefore becomes clear that in terms of working in the colonial archive the historian has to be equally aware what is included as well as excluded. It served the state to include that part of Hintsá's speech that put Sarhili in a bad light in the archive. This was not the last time that it happened.

1.3 The Death of Hintsá

The next time Sarhili appears in the colonial archive is again in relation to his father. In 1835, after war broke out on the frontier, Hintsá decided to enter the military camp of Benjamin D'Urban in order to negotiate a peace.²¹ Hintsá had remained 'neutral' during this conflict. However, D'Urban had found reason to declare war on the Gcaleka, even though the colony had been under attack from the Ngqika chiefs, led by Tyali and Maqoma. Consequently, D'Urban crossed the Great Kei River thereby entering Gcalekaland.²² This declaration of war caused Hintsá to enter D'Urban's camp in order to re-establish peace. Along with about forty other supporters, Hintsá took Sarhili and one of his chief counselors and brother, Bhurhu, with him to sue for peace. D'Urban decided to demand 50000 head of cattle and 1000 horses in war reparations from the Xhosa people. Hintsá, in turn, sent out word to move the cattle as far eastwards as they could and advised Maqoma and Tyali to remain stationed in the Amathole Mountains where the British could not get to them. The Xhosa paramount had got these messages out of the

²¹ John Milton, *The Edges of War. A History of Frontier Wars (1702-1878)*. (Cape Town: Juta, 1983), p. 136.

²² Jeff Peires, *The Dead will Arise: Nongqawuse and the great Xhosa cattle-killing movement of 1856-57*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), pp. 84-85.

camp under the pretence of sending out orders to round up the livestock as to settle the Xhosa war reparations.²³

In the interim, another crisis reared its head in Gcalekaland. The Mfengu, who supposedly trace their origins to Natal, had arrived in the Eastern Cape earlier in the century.²⁴ These refugees had no recourse to land in the region and arrived with no cattle yet Hintsá decided to grant them both commodities and thus they were allowed to settle in the region. The crisis arose in the area when the Mfengu decided to turn their backs on their Gcaleka hosts and join forces with the British. This defection was undertaken under the tutelage of Reverend John Ayliff, who had found the Mfengu the most pliable people in the Eastern Cape to the gospel taught by the missionaries.²⁵ There were two problems with this decision that caused conflict between the Gcaleka and Mfengu. Firstly, the Mfengu were not Xhosas yet Hintsá had granted them refuge after they had allegedly fled from Natal. It would therefore be understandable for the Gcaleka to feel betrayed by the Mfengu and consequently view the defection as a sign of disloyalty towards their paramount. This caused tensions to flare between the two factions.

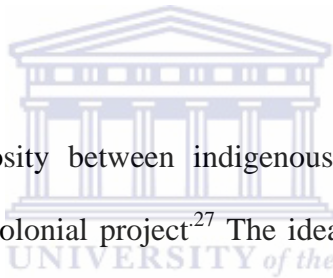
The second issue raised by the Mfengu defection was that they were used by the Gcaleka as herdsman thereby looking after Gcaleka cattle. However, the Mfengu wanted to retreat out of Gcalekaland and take Gcaleka cattle in their care with them to the colony.

²³ This entire episode is mapped out in Premesh Lalu, "The Grammar of Domination and the Subjection of Agency: Colonial Texts and Modes of Evidence", in *History and Theory*. December 2000, Volume 39 (4), pp. 53-56.

²⁴ There is a debate in historical circle if the Mfecane, as fairly widely accepted, caused the exile of the Mfengu or if slave trading in Natal caused this diaspora. This debate will not feature in this dissertation.

²⁵ Noel Mostert, '*Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People*', (Jonathan Cape: London, 1992), pp.608-610. This alliance between the Mfengu and the British could account to the continued representation in the colonial archive as victims.

Bearing in mind that the amaXhosa regarded cattle as their wealth, this want of the Mfengu was bound to create trouble between the two factions. As a result, D'Urban received several reports that the Gcaleka had started killing Mfengu that happened to coincide with the time that D'Urban had declared war on the Gcaleka. At the time hundreds of Mfengu had joined the ranks of the British military and thus it does not seem surprising that it brought about hostilities between the two groupings. In order to cease the killing of the Mfengu, D'Urban threatened to hang Hintsa, Sarhili and Bhurhu from the 'nearest tree unless these killings stopped'.²⁶ Hintsa sent out word to stop the killings and consequently the Mfengu were allowed to leave Gcalekaland with an estimated 18000 head of Gcaleka cattle.



This tactic of creating animosity between indigenous ethnic groups is one that is synonymous with the British colonial project.²⁷ The idea of this concept was to cripple any indigenous resistance by playing off one ethnic grouping against the other. The successful implementation of this ploy resulted in less revolt against the colonial state and therefore an easier task of governing the local peoples. It should be unsurprising that the colonial archive is littered with correspondence that alluded to ethnic tensions between the different groupings in the Eastern Cape. The colonial authorities in the Eastern Cape were aware that tensions existed between the Mfengu and the Gcaleka. However, this dissertation calls into question whether the extent of these tensions are accurately depicted in colonial correspondence. Prior to the detention of Hintsa in the British military camp, any tensions between these two groups are not prominent in the

²⁶ Harry Smith, *The Autobiography of Harry Smith*, G.C. Moore Smith (ed.), (London, 1903) Volume II, p.381

²⁷ This tactic is referred to as 'divide-and-rule' and was one of the classic ploys used by the British colonial authorities to subdue the indigenous populations of their various colonies.

colonial archive.²⁸ However, these tensions came to a boil when the Mfengu decided to throw in their lot as allies of the British. The colonial archive did not reflect on the complicity of the British in this change of attitude but rather focused on the issues that supposedly existed between these two ethnic groups prior to the defection of the Mfengu.

Having averted this potential death, Hintsa was still faced with the prospect of the massive war reparations D'Urban had sued him for. At this point in time, after having been threatened with a noose, Hintsa may have been aware that he was a prisoner of war. Having already sent word that the British were not to be paid any reparations, Hintsa had to find a way to regain his freedom. This is where the story becomes complicated. Hintsa volunteered to assist in the gathering of cattle to settle the Xhosa war debt with the British and was accompanied by Harry Smith and a military force on horseback to facilitate this payment. As insurance, Hintsa left Sarhili and Bhurhu in the British camp as a sign of good faith. The killing of Hintsa is a much debated one in South African historiography and not really central to this thesis. Its broad outlines may nevertheless be recalled for the argument on the colonial archive. Basically, there is the archival version that states that Hintsa was killed while trying to escape from the British military escort. The contradictory version of this history sees writers like Zakes Mda accuse D 'Urban of murdering the Xhosa paramount.²⁹ One aspect of the opposing versions that has remained consistent is that after Hintsa was killed soldiers in the military convoy accompanying him cut off both his ears, thereby leading to a humanitarian outcry in Britain. In order to

²⁸ The most prominent entries in the colonial archive prior to 1835 centred around the Rharhabe, the ethnic group that presented the British with the greatest military threat. The 'conflict' between the Mfengu and the Gcaleka does not warrant much mention.

²⁹ Zakes Mda, *The Heart of Redness*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 86.

counteract these protestations, the British authorities decided to conduct a ‘commission of enquiry’ into Hintsas’s death.

Premesh Lalu writes that D’Urban instituted a military court of inquiry on 15 July 1836.³⁰ Claims had been made by witness statements that Hintsas had been killed while begging for his life. However, Lalu states that the mandate of this inquiry was not to ascertain whether or not this was indeed the case. In other words, the military court of inquiry was not instituted to pass judgment on whether Hintsas was murdered or not. Instead, the inquiry was to investigate whether or not the Xhosa king’s body had been posthumously mutilated. Lalu asserts that this inquiry was commissioned in response to ‘accusations by humanitarian campaigners and public debate in newspapers’³¹ about the defiling of Hintsas’s dead body. Therefore the claims that Hintsas died while begging for his life would not be subject to investigation. In his account of the inquiry, Lalu points out that it is imperative to highlight the manner in which testimony was verified or rejected. Validity of evidence was measured by what witnesses actually saw as opposed to what they heard. To illustrate this point, Lalu examines the testimony of Klaas, a member of the Corp Guide, who was with the Smith party that killed Hintsas. Klaas states that he heard Hintsas call for mercy. Instead of unpacking this claim Klaas made, the inquiry was interested in what he actually saw:

³⁰ Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsas: Postapartheid South Africa and the shape of recurring pasts*, (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008), p. 28

³¹ Premesh Lalu, “The Grammar of Domination and the Subjection of Agency: Colonial Texts and Modes of Evidence”, in *History and Theory*. December 2000, Volume 39 (4), p. 61.

Commissioner: If you were so far off as not to know who was pursuing him (Hints), how do you know that it was Mr. Southey who shot him?

Klaas: I did not see him, I only heard it was him.³²

As Klaas did not see anything, he was not regarded as a credible witness as the case of murder was not investigated even though Klaas claims to have heard Hints surrender. Lalu points out that this testimony is found right at the beginning of the archival arrangement and therefore becomes the referent for the rest of the record. Therefore, any testimony based on what a specific witness heard was disregarded. Instead, credibility was attached to testimony by Ayliff who claimed that Hints wanted to use the missionary station in Butterworth as the launching pad for attacks on the colony. Therefore, instead of defending the actions of government servants (soldiers), the state was able to launch a counter-offensive to divert attention to the alleged intentions of Hints. Consequently, the state could squash the rumours that Hints was mutilated and therefore allay the protestations of the humanitarian campaigners in the colony as those who witnessed the mutilation would not testify against themselves.

This is a very important formulation in the life of this dissertation. Lalu points out how this military commission of inquiry operates to support the state. Social theorist Ian Hacking contends that colonial commissions were used by the state to ‘help determine the character of social facts and produce new truths as they produced new social identities.’ Although Hacking does not make specific reference to the workings of a military commission of inquiry, he does generalize in terms of commissions born out of

³² Premesh Lalu, “The Grammar of Domination and the Subjection of Agency: Colonial Texts and Modes of Evidence”, in *History and Theory*. December 2000, Volume 39 (4), pp. 63-64.

the colonial state.³³ As such, his observations are not only valid, I will argue, but pivotal in understanding the production of knowledge in the colonial archive. Theorist Anne Stoler argues that ‘nowhere is history-making work more evident in the form of commission of inquiry or state commission’.³⁴ Stoler argues that the commission allows the historian insight into the method of knowledge production in the colonial archive and therefore provides the scholar with a unique opportunity to understand how the archive operates. Hacking contributes to this understanding by illustrating the manner in which the commission of inquiry serves the state.

Firstly, commissions of enquiry are essentially ‘tactics of delay’. They allow the authorities time to decide on the best policy to adopt in terms of the crisis they are facing. The second purpose of such a commission is to ensure that the state is seen to be acting in relation to some form of irregularity or other, thus another form of delay. Thirdly, and most importantly, commissions of enquiry are given enhanced status as they imply a thorough investigation the result of which is the ‘production of new truths as they produced new social realities’. Hacking therefore argues that the findings of such an enquiry is often not congruent with reality and instead allows for those investigating its findings to understand the workings of the colonial archive in terms of knowledge production.³⁵ Needless to say, the findings of the commission of enquiry into Hints’s death returned with findings that absolved its participants thereby alleviating any pressure

³³ Ian Hacking, ‘How should we do the history of statistics?’ in The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality. Eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), p. 181.

³⁴ Anne Stoler, ‘Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance’ in Refiguring the Archive. p. 95.

³⁵ Ian Hacking, ‘How should we do the history of statistics?’, in The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality. eds. Graham Burchell, Cohn Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), p. 181.

that humanitarian groups within Britain had placed on the state. Noel Mostert writes that the personal correspondences of D'Urban, among others, did not correspond with the findings of the commission.³⁶ Thus the archive was able to protect the state.

Much is written later in Sarhili's life by the colonial archive about the effect that Hintsá's death had on the new king of the Xhosas. He is described as being deeply suspicious of the British and does not trust them. Some accounts even accuse of Sarhili of hatred towards white people. These claims will be investigated later in the thesis.

1.4 The King is Dead, Long Live the King

Sarhili was not kept captive long and by September 1835, peace was established in the Eastern Cape. The Mfengu were given land between the Great Kei River and the colony, essentially serving as a buffer between the Gcaleka and the colony. However, things did not go well for Sarhili as the new paramount. The cattle that had been taken by the Mfengu across the Kei had mostly belonged to his father and had been given to them in trust. As such, when he returned to Butterworth he found that his herd had been greatly depleted. The power he expected to wield as king of the Xhosa was also greatly depleted as his father's two great councilors, Kwasa and Runeyi. Due to the fact that the war had caused strain on the cattle stock of all the Xhosa elite, Sarhili found no assistance from the likes of his senior relatives like Bhurhu. Peires writes that Sarhili was unable to under the coronation ceremony that befitted a paramount as Kwasa and Runeyi halted these

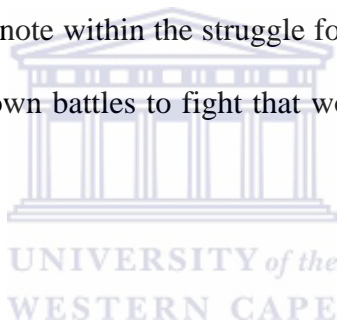
³⁶ Noel Mostert, *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People*, (Jonathan Cape: London, 1992), pp. 606-608.

proceedings from being instigated. Instead Peires writes that Sarhili decided that if he remained at Hintsa's Great Place and did not gain his own cattle, he would never receive the respect becoming of his station. To emphasize the lack of respect that Sarhili was subjected to, a lesser Gcaleka chief, Gxaba, decided that this was an opportune time to increase his own independence. In a show of defiance, he informed the Great Place that he had requested a missionary to be stationed with him. The proper etiquette demanded that he first gain permission from the paramount before making such a request.³⁷

Sarhili needed land and cattle to gain the respect he needed and to this end he decided to attack the Sotho and failed in his attempts to do so. To worsen matters, lesser chiefs had succeeded in this task prior to him. In 1839, Sarhili decided to move inland to the White Kei stating that his father had lived there and he wished to do the same. The problem was that the Thembu had taken possession of this land and refused to give it up. It must be stated at this point that Sarhili was fairly new at being a chief and was up against more experienced tacticians as well as chiefs that had been in their positions for a longer time thereby having had more time to form alliances with their neighbours. A year later Sarhili was forced to retreat back towards the coast as an alliance between the Thembu, Mpondo and Bhaca ended their engagement with the Gcaleka by leaving the paramount in total defeat. Sarhili was not prepared to give up and re-launched an offensive on the Thembu in 1843 and by January of 1844 he had defeated the alliance that had embarrassed him. He was able to establish his Great Place at Hohita, which was in the middle of disputed territory and was paid a large war compensation by the alliance in livestock.

³⁷ This entire episode is unpacked in Jeff Peires, The House Of Phalo, (Ravan Press: Johannesburg, 1981), p. 45.

The manner in which the colonial archive recorded this part of Sarhili's life is again indicative of its process of knowledge production. I would argue that the colonial officials had to have been aware of the struggles that Sarhili faced after his father's death, especially in terms of asserting his authority as the new Xhosa king. It would seem as if Sarhili was not perceived as a threat to the stability of the frontier and therefore accounts for his sporadic appearance within the colonial archive. At that time, the Ngqika remained the greatest threat to the colony, and as such, Maqoma and his fellow chiefs continue to dominate the colonial correspondence found in the archive. At this point of his life, Sarhili remained a footnote within the struggle for colonial state formation in the Eastern Cape. Sarhili had his own battles to fight that would not affect the colony. This was soon to change.



Chapter 2 – War and Power

‘Kreli, [Sarhili] from his Eyre beyond the Kei, cannot have remained unaware of this change of front on the part of his lesser brethren, and this, together with the strongly decentralizing policy of the Governor, must surely have given him food for thought’.¹

At this point in the thesis, Sarhili had established his Great Place at Hohita in the Eastern Cape. He had procured cattle from the Thembu and seemingly moved out of the shadow of his father. This chapter will trace his journey through two frontier wars and the tactics the paramount chief of the Gcaleka adopted when faced with these conflicts. Particular attention will be devoted to the times that Sarhili appears in the colonial archive as well as the manner in which he is characterised. Equally important, this chapter will investigate why he is absent from the record for periods of time as well. This part of Sarhili’s life was when he was at the height of his influence among the amaXhosa and this chapter will not only illustrate how the Xhosa king was able to extend the power he wielded but also detail how the British were able to slowly erode his authority.

The War of the Axe

In 1846, war broke out between the British and the Rharhabe.² The Rharhabe resided to the west of the Great Kei River and comprised the Ngqika and the Ndlambe clans. The

¹ Eileen D’Altera, An investigation into the circumstances relating to the Cattle-Killing Delusion in Kaffraria, 1856-1857, (M.A. Thesis: Rhodes University, 1932), p. 38.

² It is not within the scope of this dissertation to go into detail about the origins of this war. The war will be seen strictly through the eyes of the paramount with special focus on his approach to the conflict as well as

Gcaleka were not involved in this war, but Sarhili decided to adopt a different strategy from that attributed to Hintsá. Whereas Hintsá had presumably opted for neutrality, Sarhili instead offered his country as a haven to Rharhabe warriors and livestock during the war. Even though Sarhili had offered assistance to the Rharhabe, he did not declare war on the colony.³ This political decision was to have lasting repercussions for the paramount.

Firstly, this form of diplomacy ensured that the Gcaleka did not get involved in a drawn-out conflict that would have depleted their livestock and military. It must be remembered that Sarhili was still establishing himself as a chief and had struggled to gain the territory and livestock he now controlled. As such, it would seem unlikely that he would jeopardize his struggle by engaging the colony in a war that could potentially nullify his gains of the last ten years. Secondly, Sarhili gained increased popularity amongst the Xhosa as he was providing a safe haven for the cattle and warriors of the Rharhabe. The Xhosa regarded their chiefs as ‘father figures’ and thus Sarhili’s indirect support of the Rharhabe chiefs would meet with the approval of the larger Xhosa polity. To further understand this we might consider the representation of Sarhili given by Andries Stockenstrom, the commandant General of the Burgher Forces. The most impressive part of the political decisions Sarhili made at this time was that he ensured that the colonial authorities could not justify any form of reparation from the paramount.

the manner in which this approach affected both his relationships with the people and also the colonial authorities.

³ John Milton, The Edges of War: A History of Frontier Wars (1782-1878), (Cape Town: Juta and Co, 1983), p. 167.

Stockenstrom represented the colonial government in an expedition into Gcalekaland in order to obtain ‘satisfaction’ on a few points.⁴ Stockenstrom stated that as paramount chief of the Xhosa, Sarhili had ‘allowed’ the rogue chiefs to make war on the colony and as such shoulder some of the responsibility. However, the colony had entered into treaties with these chiefs prior to the war and this was done independently from the paramount. Sarhili pointed out this disparity to Stockenstrom who consequently lost all currency in the negotiations. As wily as Sarhili had been in these negotiations, he made a compromise that would later prove costly for him and the Gcaleka. The Xhosa king agreed to Stockenstrom’s demand that he ‘undertake to be responsible for the future as Paramount Chief of Kafirland [sic], provided he be acknowledged and countenanced as such by the said government [British colonial government]’.⁵

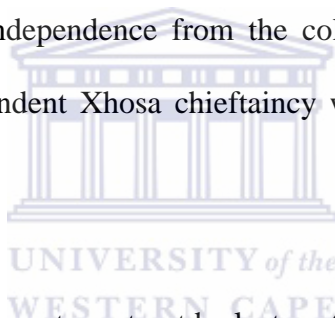
It is my postulation that Stockenstrom, realizing that he could not justify any reparations from the Xhosa king, did the next best thing. It must be remembered that Sarhili has struggled to assert himself in his new station and as such, the offer made by the general of the Burgher Forces would mean that he would gain the recognition of the colonial state as the Xhosa king. I would argue that this possibility would in all probability have clouded the judgment of the paramount when he accepted these terms as Sarhili was renowned for his knowledge in the manner in the amaXhosa society functioned. The Xhosa king would have been aware that if any other clan opted to wage war against the British he would be powerless to prevent them from doing so. Furthermore, the political structure of that

⁴ The term satisfaction is a euphemism meaning that Stockenstrom wanted Sarhili to take responsibility for the actions of the Rharhabe.

⁵ John Milton, The Edges of War: A History of Frontier Wars (1782-1878), (Cape Town: Juta and Co, 1983), pp. 165-167.

society would have meant that, save for the Gcaleka, any other clan could attack the colony without the blessing of the paramount. What Sarhili had agreed to in reality was to accept some level of responsibility for any hostilities between any amaXhosa clan and the colonial state.

Even though Sarhili had won part of this diplomatic battle with the British the losses to the Rharhabe were far more dramatic. The colonial forces won the war and the direct consequence of this victory was that the land to the west of the Great Kei River was ceded to the colony and became known as British Kaffraria. Sandile, the paramount chief of the Ngqika, had lost his independence from the colonial authorities. As such, the Gcaleka were the only independent Xhosa chieftaincy west of the Mbashe River with Sarhili as its paramount chief.⁶

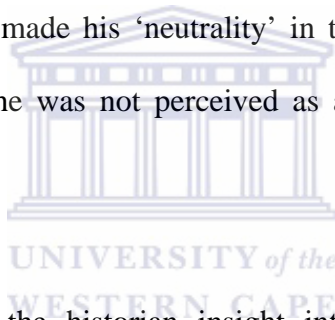


The importance of this development must not be lost on the reader. British Kaffraria was under the control of the colony as resident magistrates were placed with the individual chiefs, thereby diminishing their power. Sarhili, on the other hand, was independent of any such colonial control and consequently represented the greatest threat to the colony. It therefore became imperative for the colonial archive to depict him in a manner that would justify future treatment from the state. Also, because Sarhili was allegedly the greatest threat to the security of the colony it made sense for the colonial authorities to track his movements more closely in order to be prepared for any future hostilities that

⁶ The Bomvana and Thembu still maintained their independence from the colonial state. The geographical positioning of these two clans in the Eastern Cape meant that Gcalekaland effectively served as a buffer between themselves and the British. They had not been given any reason to oppose the British incursion into the Eastern Cape yet and as such did not have any grievance with the colonial state. However, this was to change.

may emanate from Gcalekaland. It therefore comes as no surprise that the paramount features more prominently in colonial correspondence in the aftermath of the War of the Axe.

An argument can be made that the war was the reason why Sarhili was largely absent from the colonial archive in the late 1840's. This is precisely my point as this argument fits snugly with my position that the level of threat perceived by the state dictates the prominence an individual enjoys in the colonial archive. Consequently, the Rharhabe chiefs enjoyed prominence during the war as they provided the most pertinent threat to the colonial state. Sarhili had made his 'neutrality' in the war abundantly clear to the British thereby ensuring that he was not perceived as a danger to the security of the colony.



This episode serves to give the historian insight into the leadership style of the paramount. In his consequent encounters with the British, Sarhili employed the same principles in adopting strategies to maintain Gcaleka independence and preserve his own power. Sarhili opted to remain 'neutral' in order to safeguard his gains of the previous decade. If he had opted to face the British military and had lost, he was likely to lose most of the inroads he had made for himself since the death of Hintsu. The assistance he offered to the warring Rharhabe chiefs was a ploy to gain in stature in the eyes of the amaXhosa. This is a pattern that will continue to repeat itself throughout the course of his leadership.

By the beginning of 1850, the chiefs who had succumbed to the British in the War of the Axe were feeling the effect of the new dispensation that was controlling their people. In order to diminish the threat posed by the warring chiefs of the War of the Axe, the British had decided to place magistrates with these chiefs.⁷ The magistrate was to perform the same judicial duties that were previously the domain of the chief. The idea was to decrease the amount of authority the chief could wield amongst his people thereby reducing the likelihood of encountering more resistance from that particular clan in the future. However, whereas a chief could not act in a unilateral manner, the magistrate did not have to consult with anyone about the specific rulings he made. The chief, in turn, became a salaried employee of the colonial state who earned an income from the government every month. Thus the only manner in which the chief could exert control over his people was via the system of pastoral patronage. By this I mean that the chief maintained control over his subjects by supplying his people with cattle that they looked after on behalf of the chief.

As stated earlier in this dissertation, the Xhosa measured their wealth in terms of the number of cattle they owned.⁸ Most of the cattle in any particular clan would belong to the chief. As such, the chief would entrust the care of most of his cattle to his people. In other words, the chief would 'lease' his cattle to his people and while under their supervision; the caregivers would be able to utilize the milk of the beasts. However,

⁷ This is a classic British colonial ploy of indirect rule. It was employed all over its colonies in the hope to appease the natives in the area. The chiefs stayed in 'power' yet were unable to make any important decisions.

⁸ See Jeff Peires, The House of Phalo, (Ravan: Johannesburg, 1981), p.40 for more discussion on the importance of cattle to the Xhosa.

commoners were not allowed to slaughter as this was the sole duty of the aristocrats.⁹ In addition, the chief and the caregiver of the cattle would share any calves produced by the cattle during this custodial time. In this way, the chief could maintain the loyalty of his people.

The British must have understood this system of patronage and were aware of how dissidents in the system were uprooted from the society. Peires writes that if a commoner was to get too powerful in terms of the number of cattle he owned, this commoner was often accused of witchcraft and if he was found guilty by a diviner of dark practice, his cattle was forfeited to the chief. This process is referred to by Peires as ‘smelling out’.¹⁰ This was also used a way for chiefs to discipline those maverick subjects who did not follow chiefly authority. When the magistrates took over the judicial duties of the chiefs, one of the first practices banned by the British was that of ‘smelling out’. At the time, Harry Smith justified the decision to ban this practice in order to facilitate an easier transition towards Christianity as this was the great project that is ‘the saving of the savages from themselves’. However, we know better.

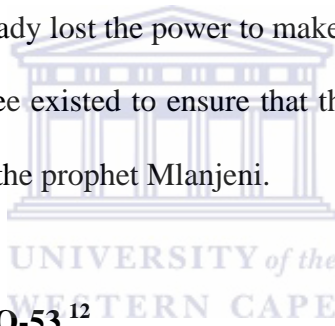
Whereas Christianity may have provided a smokescreen the real purpose of this law to ban the ‘smelling out’ of witches was to diminish the power of the chief. The punishment the colonial authorities decided to dispense for ‘smelling out’ of witches was the death penalty. Stapleton writes that magistrates also outlawed the payment of bridewealth via

⁹ A. A. Balkena, (ed.), Ludwig Albertis Account of the Tribal Life and Customs of the Xhosa, (Cape Town, 1948), p. 23.

¹⁰ Jeff Peires, House of Phalo, (Ravan: Johannesburg, 1981), p. 87.

cattle.¹¹ The consequence of this law was that society could not maintain the grip it had over the behaviour of young men as they no longer needed cattle to get married. Thus the influence of the chief was compromised even further.

At this time in the Eastern Cape, we had a situation whereby, with the exception of Sarhili, the powers of all the other Xhosa chiefs, west of the Mbashe River, had been significantly eroded. In some ways, this made the subjected chiefs more dangerous to the state than Sarhili as they found themselves with a fraction of the power that their birthrights guaranteed them. As such, they did not have as much to lose as Sarhili did in the event of war. They had already lost the power to make the judicial decisions on behalf of their people and no guarantee existed to ensure that this represented the limit of their loss of power. Stage left, enter the prophet Mlanjeni.



The War of the Mianjeni 1850-53.¹²

The British policy of 'indirect rule' meant that the only means 'deposed' chiefs had of regaining their old power would be to overthrow the new dispensation. It was highly unlikely that this could happen through diplomatic means as the British had been striving for more than 50 years to erode the power of the chiefs. It does not seem logical that the colonial authorities would simply concede the gains of the last frontier war at the mere

¹¹ Timothy Stapleton, 'They no longer care for their chiefs', in *International Journal for Historical Studies*, pp. 383-392.

¹² I have decided to expound more on the build up to this conflict as Sarhili is often accused of being 'superstitious' by the archive as well as other authors. See Jeff Peires, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-57*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), and also Noel Mostert, *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992). It is pointless to debate this issue unless one is able to offer evidence of Sarhili not placing his trust in the words of a diviner. The build up to this war is one such time.

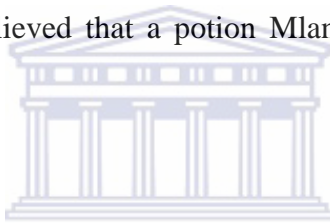
behest of those chiefs who were affected by the arrival of the resident magistrates. The only feasible manner in which this power could be returned was via armed resistance. It did not take long for this option to be explored.

The Eastern Cape was crippled by a severe drought in 1850.¹³ In accordance with the pastoral patronage practices of the 1800's, the chiefs 'recalled' their cattle from the people. Therefore, the resource of milk becomes less accessible to the commoners who tended to depend on agricultural pursuits for the survival. Thereby, the removal of access to milk in the midst of a drought that would ensure little, or no, harvest placed most commoners in potentially life threatening peril. In August 1850, colonial correspondence start making reference to a young Ndlambe man named Mlanjeni who had been employed in the colony before returning to his village. He claimed to be in communication with the spirits of the ancestors and preached a message of purity. The purity he made reference to included the abandonment of all forms of witchcraft. This included charms, 'ubuthi'¹⁴, which supposedly not only bewitched people but also that guarded individuals from witchcraft. This fitted in snugly with Governor Smith's decree that all smelling out practices were outlawed as Mlanjeni preached that those accused of witchcraft were to be left unharmed. However, the impurity Mlanjeni referred to, included the British as he viewed them as being impure.

¹³ Noel Mostert, Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), p. 993.

¹⁴ Ubuthi is the Xhosa word for the charms they supposedly find in their treatment of a bewitched person and could also include potions. See John Soga, The AmaXhosa: Life and Customs, (Alice: Lovedale Press, 1931), p. 35.

With time, so Mlanjeni's words spread as he started predicting that the removal of impurities in Xhosa life would be accompanied by a delivering of them from their present plight. The prophecy Mlanjeni taught was that if the Xhosa people rid themselves of their impurities then they would be delivered from both the drought and the British. Mostert finds it difficult to isolate why Mlanjeni was so readily accepted by his people but argues that it was probably a combination of the drought and the desire of the people to be rid of colonial rule.¹⁵ Mlanjeni was then summoned to appear before Commissioner John Maclean but chose instead to evade the colonial officers sent to collect him. This enhanced Mlanjeni's reputation amongst the amaXhosa. This reputation became so powerful that many Xhosa believed that a potion Mlanjeni brewed would make them invulnerable to British bullets.



Bearing in mind the strain being felt by the chiefs in his region, Mlanjeni was welcomed into the Ngqika elite by Sandile and Maqoma due to the widespread belief in his potions by the people.¹⁶ The Ngqika elite needed for their people to want to go to war in order for it to be successful and the emergence of Mlanjeni had provided their people with confidence to take up armed resistance against the British. However, as Mlanjeni had advocated that purity as opposed to warfare would rid the country of the British, the chiefs at the onset of hostilities forced him into obscurity. He had served his purpose as he had provided the warriors with their invulnerability potion.

¹⁵ Noel Mostert, *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), p. 999.

¹⁶ It would seem that this potion made the warriors believe that were impervious to British bullets. As such it makes sense that Sandile and Maqoma, both of whom supposedly wanting to go to war with the British, would welcome the diviner into their midst.

Sarhili is not really featured at this time in the archive. It should not really be surprising as Mlanjeni provided the real threat to the colonial state and as such its archive reflected that sense. However, it is of great importance to watch the way in which the archive involves the Xhosa paramount chief in the conflict that was inevitably in the brewing.

In October of 1850, both Maqoma and Sandile attended a meeting with George Mackinnon, chief commissioner of British Kaffraria, in which Maqoma reassured the chief commissioner that the Ngqika would not go to war as there was no food to sustain both the people and his warriors.¹⁷ The early summer rains of 1850 alleviated the drought and Harry Smith decided to call a meeting of the Ngqika chiefs which Sandile and Maqoma omitted to attend. Consequently, Smith saw fit to depose Sandile as chief of the Ngqika and placed Charles Brownlee in his stead. Both Smith and Mackinnon were unaware of the severity of this affront made on the Ngqika as well as the desecration of Tyali's grave and consequently they did not expect any attack on the colony by this clan. However, on Christmas day of 1850, this notion was dispelled as the Ngqika attacked a colonial force in the Boma pass of the Amathole Mountains led by Mackinnon.¹⁸ The war was to last for twenty-seven months. Sarhili, we learn from Milton and Mostert, had decided to remain neutral in this war.¹⁹ Whereas the war started in the Amathole Mountains, it spread eastwards up to Sarhili's northern frontier and therefore increased

¹⁷ This would have made sense to Smith and Mackinnon as no precedent existed on the frontier that the amaXhosa attacked when in the grips of drought.

¹⁸ Robert Godlonton and E. Irving, Narrative of the Kaffir War 1850-1852, (Cape Town, 1962), p. 105. Godlonton's text was deeply implicated in a settler claim over colonial authority. See P. Lalu, Deaths of Hintsu, (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008), Chapter 3. However, Lalu perhaps overstates the complicity of the text.

¹⁹ See Noel Mostert, Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992) and John Milton, The Edges of War: A History of Frontier Wars (1782-1878), (Cape Town: Juta and Co, 1983).

the likelihood of his involvement. However, the paramount resisted any attempts by fellow Gcalekas to get involved in the conflict.²⁰ Irrespective of the paramount's decision to remain neutral in the conflict, in the words of Noel Mostert:

'If the Ngqikas had their own special villain so did the British and colonial forces. It was the Xhosa paramount, Sarhili [Sarhili], whose Gcaleka nation beyond the Kei as always was suspected of being inactive collusion with the Ngqika.'²¹

Even though no evidence was uncovered by the British to support a claim that the paramount was in collusion with the Ngqika chiefs, the colonial authorities decided to launch two attacks across the Kei River.²² In the course of these excursions, the colonial forces not only burnt down the Great Place of the paramount, but they also accumulatively raided over 40 000 head of Gcaleka cattle.²³ Bearing in mind the role cattle played in Xhosa society at the time, it is hardly surprising that Stapleton writes that Sarhili lost some popular support from his people at this time as he had allowed the colonial forces to take more than 40 000 Gcaleka cattle without retaliation.²⁴

²⁰ This claim is disputed in Clifton Crais, White supremacy and black resistance in pre-industrial South Africa: The making of the colonial order in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1992), p. 179. Crais does not give any details about Sarhili's involvement in the war and mentions it offhandedly, providing no references.

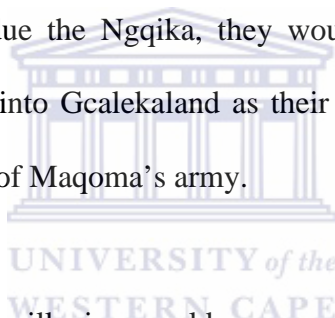
²¹ Noel Mostert, Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), p. 1152.

²² It is apparent that the colonial state viewed it as inconsequential whether or not it had procured any evidence that Sarhili, or the Gcaleka, had been involved in the war. No evidence, other than colonial speculation, is present in the archive.

²³ C. C. Saunders, The Annexation of the Transkeian Territories, 1872 –1895 with special reference to the British and Cape Policy, (D. Phil Thesis: Oxford University, 1972), p. 35.

²⁴ Timothy Stapleton, Magoma: Xhosa Resistance to Colonial Advance 1798-1873, (Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1994), p. 78.

The colony had no concrete evidence in order to justify an attack on Sarhili yet the colonial armies burnt down Hohita and took thousands of head of cattle. However, one must remember that in his meeting with Andries Stockenstrom in 1846, Sarhili agreed to accept responsibility for the actions of the amaXhosa. I think that it is useful to think of this procurement of Gcaleka cattle by the colonial military in the following ways: Firstly, at the time of raids, the war was being won by the British and as such they were able to divert their forces to across the Kei in a cursory sortie. Sarhili had made his position abundantly clear. He had no interest in a military conflict with the British and as such it was a relatively safe gamble undertaken by Smith to get cattle to feed his army. If the British had been able to subdue the Ngqika, they would not have had the resources available to conduct the raids into Gcalekaland as their armed forces would have been required to repel the attentions of Maqoma's army.



Secondly, the sheer scale of the pillaging would go some way to offsetting the cost of the war. Another probable reason for the raids was that the British probably realized that the resistance offered by the Ngqika was dwindling and as such Sarhili remained as the last threat to the stability of the frontier that it had created. It would therefore be a sound tactic to reinforce on Sarhili the military superiority that the colonials had over the Gcaleka. Had Sarhili allied himself to the Ngqika at the start of the conflict, this superiority would have been tested more severely. However, he opted not to take this course of action.

Thirdly, as stated before, the British understood the value attached to cattle by the Xhosa and as such it would be a good ploy to undermine the authority of the paramount to

extract from his person part of the currency that he employed to guarantee the patronage of his people. In other words, by taking so many head of cattle, the British were able to undermine the resource by which Sarhili ensured the support of his people. Most importantly, in terms of this thesis, if the colonial archive did not contrive to implicate Sarhili in the war, my argument about the nature of the archive would be placed under extreme pressure. If indeed, as I have stated, the colonial archive serves as an apparatus to preserve the power of the colonial state, it would be vital to guarantee that any threat to that state, as Sarhili undoubtedly was perceived to be, was portrayed in specific ways. The fact that this depiction is not consistent with reality is of no consequence as far as the archive is concerned.²⁵ The only thing that matters is that the state has to be able to justify its actions. Sarhili had entered into an agreement with Stockenstrom but it seems naïve to argue that the colonial authorities were unaware of the mechanics of the amaXhosa political system and the limitations it placed on the Xhosa king in terms of controlling other clans. This knowledge of the Xhosa political system was not utilized by the colonial state therefore allowing it to justify the raid on Sarhili. No evidence exists in the colonial archive that Sarhili had sanctioned the war or made any contribution to the Rharhabe cause but the mere suspicion of collusion was regarded as being sufficient to authorize such an expropriation. Therefore the archive is not interested, at this particular time, in the necessity of evidence, but is rather more concerned with the perception of threat. It rationalizes this perception, and presents it as is satisfactory defense for the pillages of livestock from the Gcaleka as well as the destruction of Hohita.

²⁵ This is a theme that is recurrent in the colonial archive. The goalposts keep moving in relation to the needs of the state in terms of its preservation.

The one aspect of the colonial archive during this time period that struck me very deeply was its resourcefulness. Straight after the initial attack on Mackinnon in the Amathole Mountains, Smith is quoted in the colonial archive as wanting to revert back to a system of chiefly rule that would be independent once more from the interference of magistrates. In a conversation with John Maclean, Smith stated that the country was in such disarray that he 'intended to acquaint the chiefs that henceforth they should govern their people to their own laws and customs'.²⁶ After all, it was Smith who had authorized the deposition of Sandile as the Great Chief of the Ngqika. This statement is first revealed in the archive six years later. The precursor to this statement asserts that Smith was lacking 'clear thinking and cool'²⁷ and is therefore meant to account for the fact that he was prepared to renege on his previous ruling as regards the form of government the amaXhosa would be subjected to. In other words, had Smith been of sound mind, this suggestion would not have been made. Evidently, Smith had even informed chiefs Toyise and Mhala of this change of heart. It is obvious though, why this change of mind by Governor Smith is kept out of the archive for six years.

It is my contention that the consequences of reverting back to independent chiefly rule would have been disastrous for the colonial state. The British were engaged in their eighth war on the eastern frontier and were still trying to assert their authority over the amaXhosa. However, considerable gains had been made. Besides the territory that it had conquered from the Xhosa, the colonial state had been able, via the preceding frontier

²⁶ John Maclean, Compendium of Kafirs Laws and Customs, (Cape Town, 1866), State Library Reprint, Pretoria 1968, p. 74.

²⁷ Noel Mostert, Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), p. 1073.

war in 1846, to place magistrates with the defeated chiefs. Sarhili was the exception to this rule. Therefore, at least theoretically,²⁸ the colony would be able to control the people easier. The idea was that magistrates were responsible for the application of law, thereby diminishing the power of the chief and enhancing the power of the state. Furthermore, the colonial conjecture entailed that the presence of the rightful authority, the chief, amongst the people would serve to legitimize the role of the magistrate, thereby placating the populous.

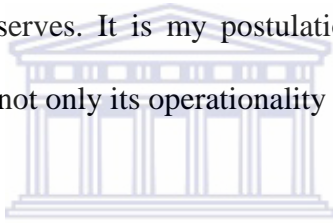
The proposal made by Smith would undermine the control that the state would be able to exert on these Xhosa subjects. Every colonial state is distinguished by the fact that it attempts to control its subjects in every aspect of their lives.²⁹ This proposal would cause the exact opposite, as control would be sacrificed as opposed to be enhanced. It is therefore no coincidence that this report took all of six years to surface in the colonial archive after control over the dissident chiefs had been restored. Also, the manner in which it appears in the records is indicative of the value placed on it by the colonial archive. It is mentioned offhandedly and the archive moves in haste. This type of omission, initially, and subsequent inclusion, tells the reader more about the operationality of the archive than it does of the subject it excludes then includes. Smith is represented in a very specific manner- he is accused of being panic stricken as well as lacking clear thinking. In other words, Smith had to be in some state of irrationality if he was seriously considering the implementation of this reversal of policy. How else can the

²⁸ I insist on ‘theoretically’ as this form of indirect rule was employed in all British colonial states under the premise that it would make the natives easier to control. However, in practice, every colonial state had its subjects rebel against this form of control.

²⁹ The apartheid government who attempted to control every aspect of the lives of its subjects best illustrates this phenomenon.

archive account for one of its own contradicting one of the principles that defines the state that it represents?

This episode in the Eastern Cape historiography may seem insignificant at first glance but it is of utmost importance to recognize the complicity in the relationship that exists between the colonial archive and the state that it supports. The manner in which Smith is treated by the archive allows the reader a unique insight into its knowledge production. The unique nature of this insight stems from the fact that the colonial archive cannot justify why this statement was excluded for the length of time it was other than to offer protection to the state that it serves. It is my postulation that this moment in history exposes the colonial archive in not only its operationality but also its politics.



Before moving to the next major episode in the life of the paramount, it is important to review the gains and losses he had made in the near twenty years since his father's death.

The colonial archive is unclear about the power struggle that developed between Sarhili and the chief councilors of father after the death of Hintsu.³⁰ It is therefore difficult to review this part of his reign as paramount chief. However, it is important to note that this form of struggle would probably have meant that Sarhili would have been concentrating on cementing his status as paramount chief. As such, it is less likely that the British would consider him a danger to the security of the colony. Furthermore, the likes of Maqoma and Tyali were occupying any security concerns the British may have had. Therefore, in line with my premise that Sarhili features strongly in the colonial archive

³⁰ Alan Lester, Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in 19th Century South Africa and Britain, (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 124.

when he represents a perceived danger by the colonial state, not much appears in the archive detailing Sarhili's power struggle with the former councilors of his father.

Irrespective of the interference Sarhili faced from Hintsa's old councilors, the archive makes repeated reference to the reverence with which his subjects regarded him. Peires describes the Xhosa regent as:

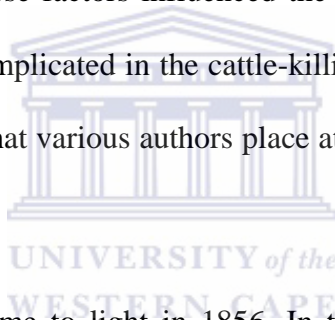
'A master of Xhosa style oratory, etiquette and court ceremonial, celebrated for his knowledge of custom and precedent, Sarhili was respected by all the other chiefs, who were guided by him in matters concerning law and ritual, who regarded him as the epitome and model of Xhosa chieftainship. By the force of his personality and the subtlety of his diplomacy, Sarhili imparted a certain degree of unity to the vast, decentralized Xhosa kingdom'.³¹

Sarhili had gained prestige amongst the Xhosa for his diplomatic skills during the War of the Axe when he was able to provide indirect support to the warring chiefs without incurring the wrath of the colony. However, some of the prestige he had gained via offering assistance to the Ngqika chiefs in the War of the Axe was lost during the Mlanjeni War. Sarhili had failed to react to unprovoked attacks from the colonial forces and allowed them to rustle more than 40 000 head of Gcaleka cattle. On a personal front, Sarhili had taken his great wife, Nohute, already but was unable to produce a male heir. The sons that had produced up until this time had died, including his great son, Nonqano. Nonqano had died at the age of twelve in July of 1853. The 1850's were to prove a troublesome decade for the paramount.

³¹ Jeff Peires, The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-57, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), pp. 81-2.

Chapter 3- The Suicide of the Xhosa Nation

At the end of the Mlanjeni War, Sarhili felt pressure from unexpected sources. Having allowed the colonial military to pillage more than 40 000 head of Gcaleka cattle, the paramount was faced with the disapproval of his people for allowing this appropriation of livestock by the colonial military to go ahead unchallenged by the Gcaleka army. This situation was further exacerbated when in 1854 the outbreak of lungsickness in the Eastern Cape saw livestock numbers depleted even more. This chapter will examine how these issues influenced the relationship that the paramount had with his subjects, and more particularly, how these factors influenced the widespread belief in the cattle-killing prophecy. Sarhili was implicated in the cattle-killing and this chapter investigates the varying degrees of blame that various authors place at the feet of the paramount chief of the Gcaleka.



The cattle-killing prophecy came to light in 1856. In this chapter, I will give a brief synopsis of what this prophecy entailed and how it came about that Sarhili decided to give it his support. I have alluded to the importance that cattle played in the cultural and political lives of the amaXhosa in previous chapters so this mass culling will be the focus of this entire chapter. I will pay particular attention to the reasons that Sarhili gave his blessing to this millenarian movement as well as trying to understand what consequences that this wholesale slaughter had for the amaXhosa in general, and Sarhili in particular. My main line of argument is that Sarhili's involvement in the cattle-killing should be understood in relation to the 'class rebellion' that segments of the Gcaleka appear to have been waging against the paramount. I argue that this 'uprising', coupled with the

insecurities that Sarhili may have been suffering from as a result of his not having undergone the coronation ceremonies associated with his station as Xhosa king, were significant contributories to his bowing to the pressures that many Gcaleka were placing him under. Essentially, it is my contention, that Sarhili endorsed the mass slaughter to accommodate popular opinion among his subjects and thereby maintain his influence and power.

The ‘Cattle Cancer’- Lungsickness

After the end of the War of the Mlanjeni in March 1853, it did not take long for the next tragedy to befall the Xhosa people. In the same year, the first outbreak of lungsickness was reported in the colony. Peires traces the origin of this illness from a Dutch boat that docked at Mossel Bay with cattle aboard carrying the illness.¹ With the subsequent migration of people to the east, this disease was carried to the Eastern Cape. Briefly, lungsickness is a disease that affects the lungs of the cattle and slowly kills the beast internally. During its incubation period it was impossible to detect until it was too late. Furthermore, it was an infectious disease that spread on contact of one beast with another. Therefore, by the time a beast had been detected as having the disease, it would have already passed it on to another beast. At the time, no cure existed for the condition and once a beast contracted the disease it was doomed to death. The only thing the owner of the beast could do to try to contain the pandemic was to isolate the affected animal(s) from the rest of the herd and kill it/them. Having just endured the rigours of war as well as drought the residents of the Eastern Cape had this pandemic to deal with.

¹ Jeff Peires, The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-57, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), p. 70.

It would take until early in 1856 for this illness to reach the herds in Gcalekaland. By August of 1856 the herds at Hohita, Sarhili's great place, had become infected.² The slaughter of cattle was reserved for aristocrats and was not the domain of commoners. The outbreak of lungsickness was responsible for changing this as commoners culled beasts as soon as the illness was diagnosed. In other words, it became commonplace for the masses to slaughter. The relaxation of this societal taboo was to prove significant later in the decade.

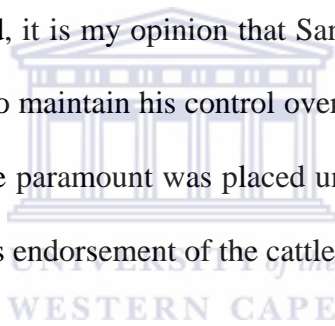
The effect of this lungsickness was detrimental to Sarhili. Sarhili had lost support from some of his subjects due to his non-action against the British during the War of the Mlanjeni when the colonial military forces raided thousands of heads of Gcaleka cattle. The pandemic got to Gcalekaland as well and thus caused the death of cattle in the region. The mathematics was simple. The fewer the number of cattle that were under the control of a chief, the less influential he became amongst his people. It became increasingly difficult for young men to gain access to sufficient cattle in order to get married. Therefore, the worth of young eligible women also diminished as fewer cattle were available to potential suitors. It is possible then to conclude that the society in question was in crisis.

Self-Inflicted Genocide

Although this thesis is not directly related to the cattle-killing movement, it is necessary to think about it in relation to Sarhili. This millenarian event in the historiography of the

² GH 8/49, J. Maclean to C. Brownlee, 25 August 1856.

Eastern Cape remains contentious amongst historians but I am not really interested in involving myself in these debates. These debates surrounding the cattle-killing episode are complex in terms of the amount of information required in order to place the reader in a position to make a judgment call. This falls outside the scope of my dissertation. Instead, in this section, I will provide an overview of the events leading up to, as well as the actual culling of livestock with particular focus being placed on the role played by the king of the amaXhosa. Several authors have argued that Sarhili's endorsement of the cattle-killing stemmed from his belief in the prophecy.³ The colonial archive attributed the 'chiefly plot'⁴ as Sarhili's motive for supporting the slaughter. I argue that both these assertions are incorrect. Instead, it is my opinion that Sarhili opted to give his support to the millenarian event in order to maintain his control over the amaXhosa. In this section I will highlight the strain that the paramount was placed under by his people and how this pressure was responsible for his endorsement of the cattle-killing.



My earliest encounter with Sarhili, prior to writing this dissertation, was in relation to the cattle killing and I have always wondered about his motives for endorsing this movement. Therefore, what follows is a discussion of the possible reasons for the endorsement the paramount provided to the movement. I will also trace the manner in which the colonial archive provides a different rationale to account for Sarhili's involvement in the movement. Eileen D'Altera Dowsley, a historian writing in the 1930's, sets the tone for my discussion of the Xhosa king when she remarks that:

³ See, among others, Jeff Peires, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-57*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), Noel Mostert, *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992).

⁴ This plot will be explained and explored later in the chapter.

'Kreli [Sarhili] had ample opportunity of seeing the hold [colonial] authorities had gained by adopting Grey's⁵ pension system. He probably realised from the moment of its introduction that it was likely to have a subversive effect on his influence'.⁶

The story of the cattle-killing is often told in rather predictable narrative terms. Nongqawuse, an orphaned girl, lived on the banks of the Gxara River with her uncle Mhlakaza. Her uncle was a diviner and rumoured to be the same Willem Goliat that had traveled the Eastern Cape with missionary, Nathaniel J. Merriman, preaching the gospel. The major work published on this episode of Xhosa history, *'The Dead Will Arise'*, regards the two people as being the same man. Recently, this postulation has come under review.⁷ Nongqawuse is said to have gone down to the river in April 1856, after dispersing birds from her uncle's cornfields, to refresh herself. Nongqawuse was around fifteen years old at the time and was accompanied by her cousin Nombanda, who was much younger. Legend dictates that as they were refreshing themselves at a pool in the river, two mysterious strangers appeared alongside them and addressed them by their names. These strangers identified themselves as men who had died long before this incident and proceeded to inform the girls that a resurrection would be taking place in the near future.

⁵ George Grey had succeeded Harry Smith as governor. The pension system that Dowsley refers to is the salaries that were paid to chiefs that had magistrates dealing with matters judicial with their people. This system decreased the influence of the relative chiefs as well as Sarhili over the Xhosa polity.

⁶ Eileen D'Altera Dowsley, *'An investigation into the circumstances relating to the Cattle-Killing delusion in Kaffraria 1856-1857'*, (M.A. Thesis, Rhodes University, 1932), p.38.

⁷ See for example, Sheila Boniface Davies, 'Raising the Dead: The Xhosa Killing and the Mhlakaza-Goliat Delusion' in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Volume 33 (1), March 2007 and Helen Bradford, 'Women, gender and colonialism: Rethinking the history of the British Cape Colony and its frontier zones', *Journal of African history*, 37 (1996).

This resurrection would include all the Xhosa ancestors that had died before. However, in order to facilitate this resurrection, it was imperative that the Xhosa people to kill all the cattle they possessed. In addition, the instruction was that all agricultural activity was to cease with immediate effect, the implication of which was that no sowing was to take place. Existing corn in storage was to be scattered or consumed and all forms of witchcraft had to be abandoned. The 'new people' as they later became styled, were a pure people and they would return to the Eastern Cape and bring with them pure cattle.

Along with the promise of cattle, the new people would ensure that the British would be driven 'into the sea'. Nongqawuse was also instructed to inform the people that they were to prepare for the resurrection by building new kraals in which to house the new cattle, new bins in which to store the pure corn as well as build new houses in which to lodge the new people. The charge laid at the feet of the Xhosa was that the people had allowed witchcraft and the British to pollute their way of life. Initially, the people ridiculed Nongqawuse but she returned from the river again with the instruction from the strangers to bring Mhlakaza with her the next time she came. Mhlakaza accompanied his niece to the river at the appointed time but was unable to see or hear the strangers and was forced to receive the message of resurrection via the medium of Nongqawuse, who claimed to see and hear the strangers. The same message was issued again and Mhlakaza was commanded to inform Sarhili and the other chiefs of the instruction.⁸

⁸ John Milton, *The Edges of War: A History of Frontier Wars (1702-1878)*, (Juta, Cape Town, 1983), pp. 223-234.

This was a vision that caused more than 40 000 Xhosas to die of starvation.⁹ On the surface, it seems ludicrous to imagine that a pastoral people like the Xhosa would willingly go about mindlessly slaughtering the very resource that ensured their survival. Much has been written on the reasons why this movement enjoyed such widespread support. But I am concerned with the reasoning behind supporting the movement as relates to the paramount chief. This is one of the pearls of wisdom that Sarhili was supposedly left with from his father during his initiation ceremony celebrations and of particular interest when viewed in relation to the cattle-killing.

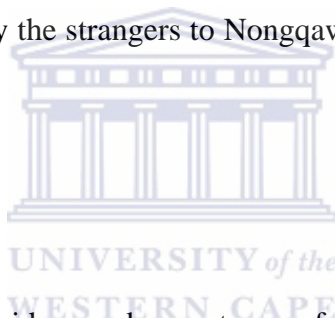
‘Love your cattle. My people love me because I love my cattle, therefore you must love your cattle as I have done’.¹⁰

The implication of this statement was that if Sarhili did not love his cattle as Hintsas did then his people would not love him the same way as they had his father. I have made repeated reference to the importance cattle played in the life of the Xhosa, at that particular time, yet here an unmarried young woman was prophesying that all cattle be slaughtered in order for the Xhosa to get back all they had lost at the hands of the British, and she received the endorsement of the most influential individual in her culture, Sarhili. By allegedly endorsing the cattle killing Sarhili was, in effect, surrendering the commodity that allowed him to control his people. What would prompt a king to sever the aorta that pumped the lifeblood into his reign?

⁹ The figure varies in different publications but Peires regards 40 000 as a conservative estimate.

¹⁰ Hintsas to Sarhili during one of his initiation celebrations in MS 15, 429, J. Ayliff (30 July 1835) in Cory Library.

A possible answer to this conundrum could perhaps be found in the outbreak of lung sickness that entered the region as early as 1853 but had only reached Gcalekaland shortly before the prophecy of Nongqawuse. It is possible to argue that Sarhili did not see his herds surviving the epidemic and as such welcomed the prophecy. However, the Ngqika had not felt the impact of the epidemic yet Sarhili sent word to them to also kill their cattle. If lung sickness was the main motivation in the paramount's decision to join the movement it does not explain why he ordered the slaughter of beasts in other regions of the Eastern Cape who had not been affected by the disease. I would contend that the principal contribution of lung sickness to the cattle killing movement was that it added credibility to the claim made by the strangers to Nongqawuse that the cattle of the Xhosa were 'impure'.



Class Rebellion

Timothy Stapleton views the widespread acceptance of the prophecy as indicative of a rebellion against the ruling class of Xhosa society. Stapleton points out that Sarhili had sentenced a number of Gcaleka to death prior to the prophecy for killing their cattle that had not been infected by lung sickness. He also makes reference to the fact that many women had failed to sow prior to getting this order from the paramount. As such, these Gcaleka were not perturbed by the ruling made by the paramount and were acting independently of his orders. It was unheard of for commoners to slaughter cattle or for the instruction to sow to go unheeded prior to this time.¹¹

¹¹ Timothy Stapleton, 'They no longer care about their chiefs', in International Journal of African Historical Studies, (Boston University, African Studies Centre), p. 384.

John Soga writes that Sarhili decided to join the movement because he was afraid that if he did not support the cattle killing, he would lose the popular support of Gcalekas, many of whom had already heeded the call of the prophecy prior to the killing order from the paramount.¹² Sheila Boniface Davies views the rebellion as one of women who were defying a society that marginalized them.¹³ Each of these scholars has provided us with elements of rebellion that in fact was, in their view, taking place in Gcalekaland at the time.

It is my contention that it is imperative to think about this class rebellion in relation to the paramount. Sarhili was not allowed to undergo the ceremonies that were associated with a Xhosa paramount due to the intervention of some of Hintsa's senior councilors. As such, it would not be surprising if he suffered sufficiently from the resultant insecurities to the point that his judgment could become clouded when he dealt with the issues surrounding the cattle killing movement. This insecurity would have been compounded when Sarhili suffered a loss of popularity following the Mlanjeni War as a result of his lack of reaction to colonial excursions into Gcalekaland. 1853 saw the Eastern Cape in the grips of another drought that resulted in the customary recall of the royal herd to Hohita by the paramount, even though this practice was the norm. This would have served to further alienate subjects from the Xhosa king. It should therefore not be

¹² John Soga, The AmaXhosa: Life and Customs, (Alice: Lovedale Press, 1931), pp. 122-123.

¹³ Sheila Boniface Davies, 'Raising the Dead: The Xhosa Killing and the Mhlakaza-Goliat Delusion' in Journal of Southern African Studies, Volume 33 (1), March 2007, p. 27.

surprising that the unsanctioned killing of healthy cattle would have been indicative to the insecure mind of the Xhosa king that he was losing control of his people.

The rebellion of the Gcaleka was not confined to Gcaleka protocol related to cattle. The decision of women not to sow meant that the peasantry in his society would suffer in the coming year and this too would weigh heavily on his mind. By all accounts in the colonial record, Sarhili was deeply concerned about the welfare of his people. As such, one might assume that a lack of agricultural endeavour would trouble him, as the consequence of such an action would mean that the majority of his subjects would suffer from hunger after the next harvest. In her dissertation, Dowsley writes that ‘with a few notable exceptions, women were the vehement supporters of the delusion’.¹⁴

Dowsley thereby adds weight to the argument made by Davies that this was indeed a women’s revolution. A piece of colonial correspondence from Charles Brownlee to John Maclean reads:

‘The women are now the strongest supporters of the delusion. Most of the men who have cultivated have had to break up their ground themselves, and when the husbands insisted they should take a part, they have left and gone to their parents’.¹⁵

Although the colonial archive did not record it as such, I would argue that the response that Sarhili had to the movement was indicative of a leader trying to maintain his power.

¹⁴ Eileen D’Altera Dowsley, ‘An investigation into the circumstances relating to the Cattle-Killing delusion in Kaffraria 1856-1857’, (M.A. Thesis, Rhodes University, 1932), p.38.

¹⁵ GH 8/30, C. Brownlee to J. Maclean, 7 December 1856.

The paramount chief of the Gcaleka realised that his subjects were overruling customary protocol. Sarhili seems to have concluded that unless he adhered to popular consensus about the cattle-killing he was at risk of his rule been undermined by his people. By endorsing the slaughter, Sarhili played a major role in the death of thousands of his subjects as many slaughtered on his instruction. As such, the extent of the genocide can be directly linked to his desire to preserve his power and influence. The most important point here stems from the motive of his endorsement as opposed to its consequence. To give this perspective more weight, it is important to note a message sent from Sarhili to Maqoma urging him to join the cattle killing 'in order to preserve the aristocracy.'¹⁶ Maqoma and Sarhili had a good relationship and as such it is unlikely that Sarhili would concoct such a story in order to get Maqoma to support the movement. Furthermore, Maqoma was not threatened in terms of his place in the Ngqika hierarchy. Hence, we might infer that the message sent by Sarhili to Maqoma did accurately reflect Sarhili's perception of reality.

Another trend that is recurrent in the colonial archive is that Sarhili genuinely believed the prophecy. Historian, Michael Spicer, best illustrates this trend when he writes in his thesis about the Ngqayecibi War:

'Sarhili fostered the Cattle-Killing, almost certainly in a genuine belief in the prophesies of Mhlakaza and Nongqawuse'.¹⁷

¹⁶ Timothy Stapleton, Maqoma, p. 181. Timothy Stapleton, Maqoma: Xhosa Resistance to Colonial Advance 1798-1873, (Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1994), p. 181.

¹⁷ Michael Spicer, 'The War of Ngqayecibi 1877-78', (MA. Thesis: Rhodes University, 1978), p. v.

Much is made of his relationships with diviners in his childhood and the effect it would have had on his worldview as an adult.¹⁸ The idea of 'life after death' is not foreign to the Xhosa worldview of the time. Diviners of the age were said to die and then resurrect in order to gain the powers that they had. However, Peires contends that as a concept, though, no precedent existed for the type of 'mass resurrection' that Nongqawuse was prophesying.¹⁹ Thus, Sarhili had some perspective when dealing with these prophecies. However, in order to investigate such a claim, one needs to look at other occasions when Sarhili was faced with similar decisions based on the supernatural.

I disagree with these sentiments as, while Sarhili did place value in the opinions of the diviners that he consulted with, the decision he made to endorse the cattle-killing was not made on the basis of his religious beliefs. Instead, it is imperative, when investigating such a claim, to remember that Sarhili was faced with the evidence of an unmarried woman who claimed to hear and see people that nobody else, including the diviner Mhlakaza, could. Mlanjeni was someone that Sarhili could see and hear and had gained a reputation for perplexing the colonial police with his ability to slip through their net. He preached a similar message to Nongqawuse, that of purity. The difference between the two prophets was simple: As far as I could gather, there is no evidence that Mlanjeni advocated the wholesale slaughter of one of the main forms of sustenance to the people.

¹⁸ John Soga, *The AmaXhosa: Life and Customs*, (Alice: Lovedale Press, 1931) also highlights the relationship that Sarhili had with diviners. He argues that the paramount was reliant on the judgment of these diviners as a result of the influence that they had over him as a boy.

¹⁹ Jeff Peires, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-57*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), p.125.

Mianjeni campaigned for the Xhosa to remain separated from the British as the diviner regarded them as being impure.²⁰ This sentiment of cultural purity is one that resonated with Sarhili as he was said to be scathing of Xhosa who wore western style clothing. Yet, when Mlanjeni provided a potion that was supposedly able to protect its user from British bullets, Sarhili was not interested. He steered away from war. It is my opinion that this hardly seems the actions of one driven by superstition and deeply influenced by the magic of a seer or diviner. The reality of the British military superiority was sobering enough for Sarhili that he was not prepared to entertain the notion of this protective potion as the key to military success. This leads one to conclude that Sarhili was a pragmatist and realized the limitations of the Xhosa military in relation to its colonial counterparts. If this was the case, what would justify the notion that this pragmatism would be abandoned as a result of the rambling of a young girl demanding that he kill all the cattle he owned? Nongqawuse expected him to order that no sowing should take place and that he should order all his subjects to slaughter their beasts as well. It is therefore my argument that although it is impossible to ascertain conclusively that Sarhili believed the prophecy, it seems highly unlikely. It is important to make the distinction that while he supported the movement, it does not necessarily imply that he believed in the prophecy.

²⁰ I find it interesting how often the concept of cultural or ethnic 'purity' becomes relevant before a genocide takes place. Sarhili is very belligerent in his insistence on 'traditional dress' as opposed to western style clothing

‘The Chiefly Plot’- The Mother of Colonial Invention²¹

He [Sarhili] said it was his intention to make war with the English, that he killed his cattle as to have none to guard, and therefore have more available to fight, that he did not see the use of cultivating crops that the white man would only burn down’.²²

The common explanation in the colonial archive for the cattle-killing episode was that Sarhili was trying to force his people into war. The quote above is an example of the kind of dispatch that riddles the archive. George Grey and Charles Brownlee were convinced that the cattle-killing was part of a great chiefly plot whereby Sarhili, and those chiefs that heeded his command to slaughter, would ensure the culling of all the beasts in their domain in order for their people to starve. When their subjects realized that starvation was a reality, the chiefs would then lead this hungry mass of people in an all out assault on the colony. Grey repeatedly sent word to Sarhili to stop the killing or bear the consequences of his actions. Sarhili, we learn, ignored Grey’s threats and carried on imploring the culling of the livestock. No concrete evidence exists within the archive of such a plot other than the ever present ‘trustworthy native’. However, this was the explanation that endured during the actual event.

The manner in which the colonial archive deals with the cattle-killing is in keeping with its overriding premise, that is, to protect the colonial state. Sarhili was at the centre of this

²¹ I have decided to give this sub-heading its own explanation as the ‘chiefly plot’ was the most commonly held view of the colonial authorities for explaining the cattle-killing. By unpacking it in detail, we are once more able to access the knowledge production processes that abide within the confines of the colonial archive.

²² GH 8/30, Information communicated to the Chief Commissioner, 8 December 1856

movement and therefore necessitated the creation of an angle that would benefit the colonial state. Even though all the records existed in the archive, the state chose not to highlight the fact that Sarhili was losing control of his people. It is not easy to account for this omission by the archive although two feasible arguments seem possible. Firstly, even though colonial officials could encourage the deposition of Sarhili as a result of popular rebellion among the Gcaleka, the last time it attempted to depose a chief it resulted in a twenty month long war (the Mlanjeni War). As a result, one could argue that the colonial authorities were rather reticent about repeating the mistake.²³ To follow this argument to its logical end then, the archive ignored the evidence as the colonial state was wary about interfering or getting involved within the realms of the Xhosa political stage.

Another viable assertion is that the colonial authorities did not know how to respond to this unprecedented development. As a result, it can be argued that the colonial officials chose adopt a 'worst-case scenario' approach. Bearing in mind that the colonial officialdom were at a complete loss to explain the millenarian event, this approach would allow the colonial state to be prepared for any eventuality that the cattle-killing movement might present. The worst of these possibilities would seem to be that the Xhosa chiefs were trying to force their subjects into a war with the British. Whatever the thinking was, the colonial government depicted Sarhili as being the architect of a plot to overthrow the colony. In my estimation, the advantages of this portrayal were numerous.

²³ This was the case with the War of the Mianjeni when the colonial state decided to depose Sandile as chief of the Ngqikas.

Firstly, it absolved the colonial state of having to provide aid to those who inevitably would suffer from starvation as their plight was a direct result from a desire to make war against it. After all, the state could claim that the Xhosa were starving as a result of their chiefs conspiring to force them into war with the colony and as such they had no responsibility to feed those dying of hunger.²⁴ Secondly, Sarhili would remain a villain to the colonials thereby ensuring that whatever treatment he was subjected to after the slaughter would be regarded as justifiable. However, I think that, most importantly, this implosion of Xhosa society suited the colonial authorities as the mass starvation of the Xhosa would mean that they would weaken themselves beyond repair and therefore be able to provide the state with the commodities they most sought after- more land for the settlers, a weakened Gcaleka and cheap labour. In other words, by merely preparing for a possible invasion, the colonial authorities only had to let events run their course and then they would be able to access the resources they sought as well as gain comfort in the knowledge that the threat posed by Sarhili to the colony would have diminished significantly. Bearing in mind that the colonial archive is one of many apparatuses the colonial state employed to ensure its own welfare, it makes sense that the role of Sarhili was portrayed in this manner. The cattle- killing episode was like manner from colonial heaven as it enabled the British to implement the indirect rule its colonial model favoured.

The Consequences of the Cattle-Killing.

The consequences for the Xhosa people of the cattle killing movement were more severe than any of the frontier wars that preceded it. It is estimated by some historians that more

²⁴ The colonial state is not renowned for its humanitarian principles yet it would still have to rationalize its reluctance to provide any aide to a starving people.

than 40 000 people²⁵ lost their lives and at least 30 000 Xhosa were displaced from their homes in a desperate scramble to avoid starvation. This would have represented close to 70% of the population that was estimated to have resided in British Kaffraria and Gcalekaland. The imposition of European settlers in the Eastern Cape as well as losses in the frontier wars had ensured that land was at a premium for a pastoral like the amaXhosa. The aftermath of the millenarian movement saw the Xhosa people lose in excess of 600 000 hectares of the land they resided in prior to the movement. Sarhili was to lose two-thirds of his land. However, the losses were even more critical than these statistics reveal.

The cultural integrity of the amaXhosa lay shattered. Cattle played an integral role in the cultural life of the Xhosa and this resource was all but extinguished. However, the cultural loss suffered by the Xhosa was not limited to the loss of cattle. The structure of Xhosa society would never be the same as the colonial authorities were in the strongest possible position to enforce whatever new system of government they desired. Naturally, the implication of this statement is that the millenarian movement also destroyed the political integrity of the Xhosa chiefs. The Xhosa chiefs had no political currency left to negotiate with and were forced to accept terms as laid down by the colony. Likewise, no military strength was available to the leaders of these indigenous people and thus Governor Grey was left with no opposition to his forces and thus could do as he saw fit.²⁶

²⁵ Scholars like Mostert and Peires regard this estimate as a conservative one.

²⁶ John Milton, *The Edges of War: A History of Frontier Wars (1702-1878)*, (Juta, Cape Town, 1983), pp. 235-245.

The colonial farmers and traders in the colony had always agitated for government to assist in providing them with cheap labour. Furthermore, the construction of roads and railways also left the colonial authorities in need of such a labour force. The fact that most Xhosas were starving by the middle of 1857 meant that this problem was to be alleviated for the European presence in the Eastern Cape. The farmers and industrialists could pay the workers what they wanted to since no real alternative existed for the amaXhosa. Thus the very structure of Xhosa society was compromised. Prior to the cattle the Mfengu provided killing the majority of the colonial workforce. After the slaughter, subsistence farming was replaced by wage labour for a large percentage of Xhosa people. Peires estimates that 30 000 people were displaced after the culling with the greater majority of these seeking refuge within the colony.²⁷ The consequences were just as dire for the paramount chief of the Xhosa people.

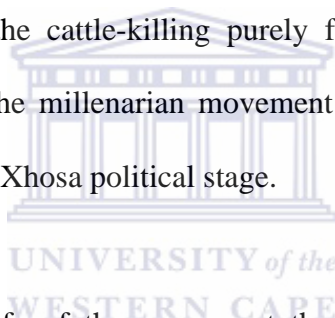
‘My opinion is that Kreli [Sarhili] cannot recover his power, and although he is reconciled with the unbelievers, not able to do mischief... You have him in your power to do as you like with him... You can take his whole country with a force of 100 men for the whole country is almost desolate’,²⁸

In October 1857, Sarhili wrote to Grey via Crouch in order to beseech (begging seems too light a word) the governor to come to his aide, and that of his people. However, the colonial government, in the form of Grey, realized that this was the great opportunity to crush the Xhosa with the minimum of effort. As such, this aide was not forthcoming.

²⁷ Jeff Peires, The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-57, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), p. 321.

²⁸ John Milton, The Edges of War: A History of Frontier Wars (1702-1878), (Cape Town: Juta, 1983), p. 251

Instead, Grey issued orders to Walter Currie, the Commander of the Frontier Armed and Mounted Police, to capture the paramount or 'drive him so far away that would never be heard from again'.²⁹ Thus, in February 1858, Sarhili was forced to flee Gcalekaland and take up residence in Bomvanaland, on the eastern side of Mbashe River. Peires claims that not many of his followers were able to stay with Sarhili in this new location as it was not be able to provide sufficient food for many people.³⁰ Sarhili was now a chief on foreign land without his people. However, he was still the paramount chief of the Gcaleka and king of the amaXhosa. This status quo must not be lost on the reader. While the cattle-killing was devastating for his subjects, Sarhili had not been ousted from his station. If one was to view the cattle-killing purely from that perspective, then the paramount's endorsement of the millenarian movement had been a successful ploy in maintaining his position on the Xhosa political stage.



This chapter has traced the life of the paramount through the horrors of his people committing what was tantamount to a self inflicted genocide. I have investigated the different explanations offered by other scholars as well as the colonial archive to account for Sarhili's endorsement of cattle-killing. However, it remains my position that the paramount supported the movement as a result of the erosion of Gcaleka protocol that was threatening to undermine his reign. Sarhili was forced into exile by the colonial military and no longer had any land. Most of his people have either died or has been displaced from Gcalekaland. Sarhili was a king that had lost his kingdom.

²⁹ John Milton, *The Edges of War: A History of Frontier Wars (1702-1878)*, (Juta, Cape Town, 1983), pp. 241-242.

³⁰ Jeff Peires, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-57*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), pp. 332-334.

Chapter 4 – The Politics of the Margin

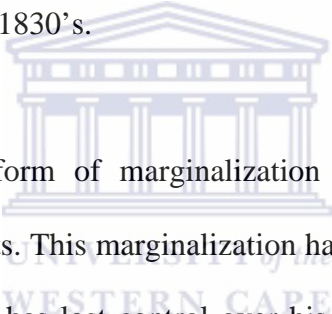
Towards the end of the cattle-killing episode, Sarhili was forced to flee the area designated as Gcalekaland by the colonial armed forces. He took up residence across the Mbashe River in Bomvanaland. This chapter will describe the return of the Xhosa king to Gcalekaland as well as the new borders that emerged. This period of the paramount's life is perhaps best characterized by the different ways in which he was marginalized by different forces in the region. This marginalization manifested itself on different levels. Firstly, the paramount was placed on the outer margins of the colonial archive for the better part of ten years following the cattle-killing. It is my opinion that this exclusion was a direct result of the particular perception that colonial officials had of the paramount. After the cattle-killing, Sarhili was not perceived to pose any menace to the frontier and this is reflected in the sporadic mention of his activities in the Eastern Cape until 1872 when the Gcaleka invaded Thembuland.

The second way in which Sarhili was marginalized is directly related to the manner in which the colonial authorities allowed him to return to Gcalekaland. Sarhili was offered approximately one third of the land that had previously comprised his country¹. However, this reduction in land was only a part of the policy of isolation that the colonial state adopted. Sarhili was resettled in Gcalekaland in such a way that he was virtually surrounded by 'hostile' neighbours. The new boundaries that the colonial state had

¹ C.C. Saunders, The Annexation of the Transkeian Territories 1872 to 1895 with special reference to British and Cape Policy, (D.Phil Thesis, Oxford, 1972), pp 41-46.

designed ensured that Sarhili only had the Bomvana as potential allies on its borders while he was geographically separated from the friendly Ngqika.

The third aspect of Sarhili's marginalization stemmed from the protection that his neighbours would eventually receive from the British. This was a significant political ploy adopted by the colonialists as it ensured that while Sarhili remained independent from British authority, it was nearly impossible for him to increase his sphere of influence. This colonial ploy served to discourage any military incursions that the Gcaleka might feel inclined to instigate. The Mfengu had enjoyed colonial protection since their defection during the 1830's.



Perhaps the most important form of marginalization that Sarhili was subjected to originated from his own subjects. This marginalization had resulted when the Xhosa king came to the realization that he has lost control over his people. According to Michael Spicer, by 1877, many Gcaleka were agitating for war against the Mfengu.² Sarhili knew that the British military would intervene if the Gcaleka attacked the Mfengu and wanted to avoid any such conflict. It appears that the paramount was aware that the Gcaleka would ultimately lose the independence if they engaged in warfare with the colonial army. However, by September of 1877, the paramount seems to have come to the realisation that his subjects had it impossible for him to avert any war against the Mfengu³. The Tsonyana Gcaleka, under the leadership of Maphasa, had decided to accept British authority, thereby turning their backs to the Xhosa king. Sarhili was placed in an

² Michael Spicer, 'The War of Ngcayecibi 1877-78', (MA. Thesis: Rhodes University, 1978), pp. 128-129.

³ C. 1961, Encl. No. 43: Statement of West Fynn to Frere, 29 September 1877.

unenviable position where he had to know that even if he did not endorse the war, it would still happen.

This part of the dissertation will trace the relationships Sarhili developed with his neighbours as well as the manner in which the colonial authorities sought to influence these relationships. In essence, this chapter provides a build up to the only war Sarhili led his people into, the War of Ngcayecibi in 1877.

Returning from Exile - Sarhili Rebuilds his Empire

Governor Grey had to justify sending Sarhili into exile with the colonial office in London. He claimed that Sarhili was at the heart of the 'chiefly plot'⁴ to force the Xhosa people into war with the colony. Although the paramount was unable to provide any threat to the colony, John Milton argues that Grey had a greater scheme whereby he wanted to establish European settlers in Gcalekaland. In order to facilitate this plan, Grey ordered the exile of the Xhosa king effectively leaving the land unoccupied.⁵ However, before Grey could put this plan into action Sir Philip Wodehouse replaced him as governor.

Wodehouse was aware that it was the desire of some of those British already settled in the Eastern Cape to receive property in Gcalekaland. However, he was ordered by the British government to refrain from doing so if annexing Gcalekaland meant that military

⁴ Even though no aggression was shown to the colony during the cattle killing, the governor was still able to justify to government the banishment of Sarhili based on the 'chiefly plot'

⁵ John Milton, 'The Edges of War: A History of Frontier Wars (1702-1878)', (Juta, Cape Town, 1983), p. 249.

expenditure would be increased as a result. Wodehouse consequently desisted from seizing the land. Commander Currie was still in the province at the time and still in charge of the armed forces of the colony. He wanted to seize Gcalekaland and was looking for an excuse to do so. However, when he sounded the alarm, in May 1864, for a supposed attack emanating from the paramount, he found that Wodehouse was not as eager to confiscate Gcalekaland as his predecessor Grey was. Instead, Wodehouse sent J.C. Warner as a special envoy to visit Sarhili in order to ascertain his circumstances.⁶ Warner returned with the following report:

‘It is impossible for him [reference to Sarhili] and his people to subsist much longer in the miserable hole to which they had been banished. It would be lesser of two evils to give Kreli [Sarhili] back a portion of his country.’⁷

After due consideration, Wodehouse decided to heed the advice of his envoy and returned to the paramount the southern region of Gcalekaland, which comprised approximately one third of his old land mass. The news was taken to Sarhili in early September and his people started moving early the next month thus ending almost seven years in exile. The settlers lambasted this decision. However, the colonial authorities decide that they wanted the other parts of Gcalekaland to serve as a buffer to prevent Gcaleka expansion and consequently offered the land to Sandile. The great chief of the Ngqika refused the land that the Mfengu gleefully accepted. It is important to recall that the colonial archive highlights the strained relationship between the Mfengu and the Gcaleka. This new

⁶ This entire episode is unpacked in John Milton, *‘The Edges of War: A History of Frontier Wars (1702-1878)’*, (Juta, Cape Town, 1983), p. 250.

⁷ John Milton, *‘The Edges of War: A History of Frontier Wars (1702-1878)’*, (Juta, Cape Town, 1983), p. 250.

arrangement saw the Mfengu becoming the neighbours of the Gcaleka as well as owning a large portion of land that previously belonged to Sarhili's people.⁸

At first glance, this entire process would appear uncharacteristic of the colonial state. Sarhili was crippled in Bomvanaland. To return some of his old land to him would mean that he could potentially develop into his influence in the region sufficiently to threaten the peace on the frontier. It therefore seems odd that the government would sanction the reinstatement of Sarhili in Gcalekaland. Even more peculiar is the manner in which the land was returned. Sarhili had no diplomatic currency with which to negotiate with the British yet he was merely subjected to a loss of territory but the Gcaleka would not have their autonomy compromised by British indirect rule. The colonial authorities had not utilized the opportunity to place a magistrate with the paramount to handle legal matters. Instead, Sarhili remained independent from the colonial state. It is highly unlikely that he would have turned down these terms had it been offered him by Governor Wodehouse. Yet, no attempt was made ensure that Sarhili was limited in terms of the influence he could exert on the Gcaleka as well as the Xhosa polity at large. Why had the British not driven a harder bargain with the Xhosa king? The answer, it seems, is simple.

An invitation was extended in the introduction of the dissertation to investigate the operations of the colonial archive. I have depicted the manner in which this centre of knowledge production is managed in order to maintain the power of the colonial state. The land Sarhili previously occupied was in demand by the settlers in the colony. Due to

⁸ It is important at this point to become cognisant of the fact that the Mfengu now had a greater portion of Gcalekaland than the Gcaleka did.

the pressure the British were under in colonial India, it was not in the interest of the state to become more involved, militarily that is, than was necessary in the Eastern Cape. The colonial state would have authorized the distribution of Gcalekaland amongst the settlers if it was not going to place further strain on their military resources. It appears plausible to assume that Wodehouse felt that the introduction of 'white settlers' into the region would imply a necessary increase of the colonial military presence.⁹ As such, the land was not distributed amongst them. Gcalekaland remained an open space of acreage in a situation where land was becoming an increasingly sought after commodity. This put pressure on the state to act. As such, it was decided to return the land to the indigenous people of the area in a very specific way.

Although the colonial archive highlights the role played by Warner in his report to Wodehouse, it is my surmise that the entire decision seems to have been governed by the principle of least resistance. C.C. Saunders argues that one of the reasons George Grey lost his post as governor was because of his reluctance (or refusal) to release some of the armed forces at his disposal to supplement the colonial efforts in India. As such, Wodehouse had to ensure that he could release the forces required abroad.¹⁰ To this end, he returned a third of the land to the Gcaleka and reinstated the Mfengu as a buffer between the colony and the Gcaleka. In this way he presumably solved both issues. The

⁹ Noel Mostert, *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), p. 999.

¹⁰ C.C. Saunders, *The Annexation of the Transkeian Territories 1872 to 1895 with special reference to British and Cape Policy*, (D.Phil Thesis, Oxford, 1972), pp 41- 42. Saunders argues that Wodehouse also potentially ran the risk of being replaced as governor unless he could properly justify the reason for not deploying of his armed forces to India.

Mfengu would effectively serve as a supplementary force to the colonial military that would be weakened in the event of partial deployment to the Asian subcontinent. By adopting this strategy, Wodehouse would feel secure enough to dispatch the forces demanded in India. This would serve to explain the reason why land was returned to the paramount chief. But why would the colonial authorities not ensure that they might always undermine the authority of Sarhili by placing a magistrate with him? Only one feasible answer presents itself.

It is my argument that throughout the archive, Sarhili is only present when it was perceived by the colonial authorities that he represented a threat to the colonial state. The five years following his reintroduction into Gcalekaland saw Sarhili virtually disappear from the archive until his alliance with Ngangelizwe, the Thembu paramount chief, took strain. In other words, the state did not foresee Sarhili becoming a danger to the colony after the losses he and his people incurred as a result of their involvement in the cattle-killing. The absence of the paramount from the archive at this time is indicative of the non-threatening manner in which he was regarded by the state. He was portrayed as struggling to survive and not involved in any military operation against the colony. When Currie attempted to invent such a threat, he was quickly restrained by the governor and the colonial state. Whereas in the past these fabrications or rumours were regarded as sufficient to justify military intervention,¹¹ the needs of the colony dictated that the colonial authorities did not create a crisis of their own making. It is therefore my postulation that Sarhili was not subjected to a magistrate as he was not regarded as a risk

¹¹ This is illustrated in the Mianjeni War when Sarhili was raided on suspicion that he was involved in the Ngqika war effort.

to the stability of the frontier. It is also possible to understand this decision in relation to the Mlanjeni War of 1850.

The Mlanjeni War had tested the resources of the government and had been provoked by the decision of Harry Smith to depose Sandile as the chief of the Ngqika. It was possible that Wodehouse was not prepared to risk similar response from the Gcaleka. After all, Wodehouse was very conscious of the needs of the Empire in India. In other words, the decision to reinstate Sarhili in Gcalekaland, without the presence of a magistrate in his region, was made in this manner to best suit the specific purposes of the colonial state at that time, that is to refrain from any decision that may have antagonized the indigenous people. Michael W. Spicer, a historian writing in the 1970's, best illustrates this point when he refers to a colonial correspondence between A. Bissett, a British magistrate in Fingoland, and the Colonial Secretary. Bissett gives his take on having two supposedly antagonistic factions like the Mfengu and Gcaleka as neighbours:

‘The government should keep up until a fitting time, without causing a rupture, the old animosity between Kafir [Xhosa] and Fingo [Mfengu], and this has been effectively done by the latter being put in possession of the country that was formerly “Rhili’s” [Sarhili’s]... for many years the Kafirs [sic] will require a watchful policy, and if they are to fight, it is better they do so with the Fingo first.’¹²

This quotation sums up the attitude of the state. The decisions surrounding the resettlement of Gcalekaland were made to accommodate the policies of government and not its subjects. The Mfengu were being used as a means to provide added security to the

¹² Michael Spicer, ‘The War of Ngqayecibi 1877-78’, (MA. Thesis: Rhodes University, 1978), p. 10

colony. The colonial state had purposefully handed large tracts of Gcalekaland to the Mfengu in order to help ensure that whatever hostility existed between the two clans was perpetuated.

Sarhili and Ngangelizwe

Gcalekaland, as it was reconfigured by colonial decree, was virtually surrounded by hostile neighbours. To the west of the region was Fingoland,¹³ the land granted to the Mfengu by Governor Wodehouse. The Thembus were situated to the north of the Gcaleka and the south was bordered by the Indian Ocean. The only friendly neighbours were found to the east where the Bomvana resided under chief Moni. The new Gcalekaland also bordered the Idutywa Reserve on its western frontier. This region, the Reserve, was essentially a source of wage labour for the colony and was heterogeneous in terms of its population demographic. In other words, the Idutywa Reserve was inhabited by people from the different clans in the Eastern Cape. This thesis has already documented the messy relations that existed between the Gcaleka and the Mfengu. The Thembus also had their own disagreements with the Gcaleka.

As noted in chapter one, when Sarhili decided to leave Butterworth after the death of Hintsu, he attempted to gain land and cattle from, amongst others, the Thembu. He eventually succeeded in 1843. The Thembu had not participated in the cattle killing. As a result, in the diaspora that occurred after the slaughter, many Gcaleka settled in Thembuland, much to the chagrin of their Great Chief, Ngangelizwe. Land was at a

¹³ Fingoland was the name designated by the colonial authorities to describe the territory given to the Mfengu after the cattle killing i.e. a portion of Sarhili's former territory.

premium in this region of the Eastern Cape as well and as such an influx of people from other clans was not welcomed. The Bomvana had facilitated Sarhili's exile and chief Moni still acknowledged the subject status of his people to the paramount.¹⁴

In 1863 Ngangelizwe came to power as the paramount chief of the Thembu. He immediately set about attempting to increase his influence in the area and wanted to bring the Bomvana under his influence. However, it would appear as if Moni was only prepared to be subject to Sarhili. By the time Sarhili resettled in southern Gcalekaland late in 1865, the situation between the Gcaleka living in Thembuland and the Thembu was becoming increasingly tense. Sarhili attempted to create an alliance with Ngangelizwe by sanctioning the marriage between the Thembu paramount, and his daughter, Nomkhafulo, in May 1866.¹⁵ It was common practice amongst the Xhosa that this type of marriage was arranged in order to create alliances between clans. However, by 1870, all thoughts of an alliance were discarded by the Gcaleka.

A central matter to the collapse of any alliance between the Thembu and the Gcaleka was the case of Nomkhafulo. This case went to the heart of the mores that defined gendered relations amongst the amaXhosa. Nomkhafulo returned to her father in 1870 accusing Ngangelizwe of 'ill treatment'.¹⁶ It was unheard of that someone of Nomkhafulo's social

¹⁴ G.M. Theal, *A History of South Africa*, Volume X, (Cape Town: Struik, 1964), p. 145. I realise the problematic in referencing Theal as a source but it is equally important to note that these postulation made by Theal seems to be consistent with Sarhili's actions in the mid 1870's when he came to the aide of the Bomvana chief against Ngangelizwe. This episode will be detailed later in the chapter.

¹⁵ Jeff Peires, *'House of Phalo- a history of the Xhosa people in the days of their independence'*, (Ravan: Johannesburg, 1981), pp. 76-77.

¹⁶ F. Brownlee, *The Transkeian Native Territories: Historical Records*. (Alice: Lovedale Press, 1923), pp. 28-29.

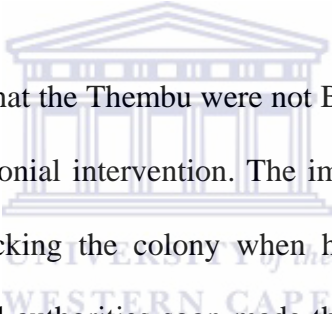
stature should be ill-treated and as such both Sarhili, and his clan regarded the behaviour of the Thembu chief with great disdain. Ngangelizwe was aware that his conduct was sufficient to justify the Gcaleka going to war with the Thembu. As a result, Ngangelizwe called on the colonial authorities to intervene and mediate the situation as he probably realized that he would not be able to offer much resistance to an attack from the Gcaleka. The colonial authorities responded by sending E. B. Chalmers as resident¹⁷ to Ngangelizwe and it was this resident who was to adjudicate the matter between the two chiefs. Chalmers decided that Ngangelizwe was to pay Sarhili 40 head of cattle in reparation for his treatment of the Gcaleka princess. The fine was regarded by Sarhili, and the Gcaleka, as insulting as the injured party came from the household of the paramount. However, Sarhili decided to accept the ruling as he did not want to compromise his relationship with the government.¹⁸ It must be mentioned at this juncture that Sarhili was in continuous negotiation with colonial authorities to procure more land. Up until this point, Sarhili had his requests ignored.

Ngangelizwe's tactic of involving colonial mediation succeeded in alleviating the pressure that he had been placed under by the Gcaleka. This development allowed the Thembu paramount to turn his attention eastwards, to the Bomvana. The colonial archive is littered with entries of cattle stealing between the two factions. However, by 1872 it had become increasingly worse. In September of that year, a serious incursion was made by the Thembu into Bomvanaland resulting in the wholesale theft of cattle. Moni decided

¹⁷ A 'resident' refers to a colonial official placed with a particular chief to report to the state the happenings of that specific clan as it related to the colony. However, the resident was not the same as a magistrate as he had no judicial power

¹⁸ G 21, Ayliff to S.N.A, 2 February 1875.

to call on Sarhili to avail himself of the Bomvana people. The paramount chief had two options. He could call on colonial mediation or take matters into his own hands. As paramount, calling for colonial intervention would put further pressure on his status as Xhosa king. Moni regarded himself as subject to Sarhili and not the colonial state and therefore a request to the government to arbitrate would potentially jeopardize the influence of the paramount. However, military action could lead to severe censure from the colonial authorities. Sarhili chose the second option. In October 1872, Sarhili proceeded into Thembuland and administered a crushing defeat on the Thembu chief, burning down his great place.¹⁹



It is important to note the fact that the Thembu were not British subjects and as such their chiefs were independent of colonial intervention. The implication of this differentiation was that Sarhili was not attacking the colony when he launched his assault on the Thembu. However, the colonial authorities soon made their presence felt in this dispute when they ordered Sarhili to return to his land. Sarhili heeded this order but caused the colonial state to rethink their policy about relations between the two factions. Although any conflict between the two clans would not affect the state directly it could serve to destabilize the region thereby drawing the colony into the dispute. Consequently, the colonial authorities decided to reassess their policy for the region by extending their influence in the region. As a result, the requisite Commission of Inquiry was held, and an offer was made to Ngangelizwe to accept British protection. This would imply a loss of

¹⁹ H.A. 95, No. 69: Report of the Edmonstone Commission, 30 December 1872.

independence of the Thembu people, and after much deliberation, the Thembu chief declined the offer.²⁰ Three years later, Ngangelizwe received this letter from Brownlee:

‘Three years ago Kreli [Sarhili] defeated you in a war, which had been brought about by your own misconduct, he laid claim to land from which he had driven you. The government objected to Kreli’s [Sarhili’s] taking possession of this land which he claimed by right of conquest, which he would be occupying today if we had not interfered.’²¹

If nothing else emerged from this commission, it allowed those studying the colonial archive another perspective on its workings. The commission found that the ‘rashness of Ngangelizwe’s actions’²² were to blame for the dispute. However, instead of censoring the instigator of the conflict, the commission recommended that the state provide him with protection against Sarhili. In essence, the commission was ensuring that the interests of the state were safeguarded. Sarhili was attempting to get more land and his influence was growing. It would appear that the colonial state perceived Sarhili a threat to the colony again. The Gcaleka incursion into Thembuland had served to demonstrate their military dominance over their northern neighbours. As such, it was in the interest of the state to help the weaker faction subdue the stronger one in order to curtail any increase in the power Sarhili wielded. The commission also ruled that none of the usual etiquette was applied in terms of military defeat. Ngangelizwe was not made to pay any form of reparation. Also, the ‘spoils of victory’ were waived as far as territory was concerned as

²⁰ H.A. Averill, Conflict and Confrontation: A Study of Colonial Pressure on the native lands on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony 1874-1883, (M.A. Thesis, Queens University, 1971).

²¹ CMT 1/1, C Brownlee to Ngangelizwe, 11 August 1875.

²² H.A. 95, No. 69: Report of the Edmonstone Commission, 30 December 1872, p. 30.

Sarhili had to withdraw from the Thembuland.²³ Interestingly enough, the Gcaleka also had historical claim to the land they annexed but this assertion also met with dismissal from the commission. This historical claim will be investigated later in the chapter.

It is necessary to attempt to understand why Sarhili attacked the Thembu at the behest of Moni, but requested the intervention of the colonial authorities when Nomkhafulo was ill-treated at the hands of Ngangelizwe. It appears that the same need for preservation of power drove the paramount in both these decisions. Sarhili realized that if he did not deal with the Thembu after Moni's request for assistance, he would in all probability lose the Bomvana as subjects as this faction would turn to the colonial authorities for intervention. In the case of the royal princess, Sarhili could refrain from attacking the Thembu chief without losing too much face and as such, he chose the safe option. Consequently, Sarhili chose to avoid a direct clash with the Thembu as Ngangelizwe had turned to the government for mediation. The possibility existed that if the paramount did not accept the judgment passed down by Chalmers he could have faced the wrath of the colony. Thus, choosing the safe option was a means of ensuring that he could preserve the power he wielded. At the end of this episode the British decided to place James Ayliff as a resident with the Gcaleka chief as continued conflict between the two clans could potentially endanger the peace of the frontier.

It is my argument that the victory of the Gcaleka over the Thembu had several significant corollaries for the Sarhili. In many ways, the Gcaleka victory over the Thembu was the

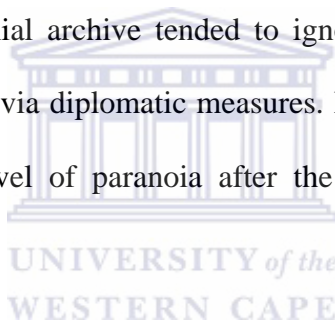
²³ The British had similar rules regarding 'spoils of war' as the Xhosa yet even though the commission found that Ngangelizwe was responsible for the military action taken against him he was not made to forfeit land as was the accepted practice

beginning of the end of Gcaleka independence. After the cattle-killing episode, Sarhili had been dismissed as a potential threat to the state by the colonial authorities. However, having remained below the colonial radar for more than a decade, Sarhili was able to sweep aside the Thembu easily, a clan that was relatively unaffected by the mass slaughter in 1856-57. This victory would have left the state under no illusions that the paramount chief had once again mobilised a sufficient force around him to be a threat to colony. Furthermore, the manner in which the victory was executed highlighted to the Gcaleka the colonial military's inability to intervene effectively in clan warfare. As such, the victory over the Thembu was responsible for many Gcaleka thinking that the colonial authorities would not be able to intervene if they attacked the Mfengu. The greatest impact of this victory, in my opinion, was that this military success may have created an incorrect perception amongst some Gcaleka that the colony would not get involved in clan warfare in the future. Therefore, if the Gcaleka were to attack only other non-British targets, they would be spared the wrath of the colonial military. It was this misperception that ultimately forced Sarhili into war with the colony as among his people the belief was strong that the colonial military would not assist the Mfengu if the Gcaleka attacked them. This new confidence of the Gcaleka is best illustrated in the words of W. R. D. Fynn, the resident with Moni:

'In reference to Kreli's [Sarhili's] bearing towards the Fingoes [Mfengu]- I notice that since he gained his victory over Ngangelizwe, he and his people openly say that they are not afraid to fight any native tribe. I have also remarked that at any gathering of Fingoes [Mfengu] and Gcalekas in shops or elsewhere, the Gcalekas invariably end their arguments by telling the Fingoes [Mfengu] that they will serve them the same way they did the

Temboes [Thembu]- and drive them out the land the government lent them.’²⁴

This quotation clearly illustrates the manner in which the colonial archive produced knowledge. Sarhili had obeyed the colonial state’s decree that he should withdraw his army from Thembuland. I find it interesting that even when the paramount attempted to placate the colonial government’s demand, the colonial archive continued to find ways of implicating the Gcaleka in destabilizing the region. Sarhili had made his desire for more land very clear to the colonial officials that he had dealings with. Equally, the paramount had demonstrated on several occasions a willingness to use diplomatic means to fulfill this need. However, the colonial archive tended to ignore the willingness that Sarhili showed to resolve most issues via diplomatic measures. Instead, the tone of the colonial archive seems to reflect a level of paranoia after the ease with which the Gcaleka defeated the Thembu.



Sarhili was faced with another crisis involving the Thembu three years later. On 31 July 1875, Chalmers informed Brownlee that the waiting maid to Nomkhafulo, Nongxokozela, was suspected to have been murdered at the hands of Ngangelizwe.²⁵ It would appear that a Mfengu chief, Menziwe, had taken up residence in Thembuland earlier in the decade, had reported Ngangelizwe’s misconduct.²⁶ Menziwe had fought against the Gcaleka incursion in 1872 but had informed Ngangelizwe that his continual political blunders would force Menziwe to remain neutral in any ensuing hostilities in the

²⁴ Transkeian Resident’s Letterbook: W.R.D. Fynn to S.N.A., 27 April 1873.

²⁵ CMT 1/1, E.B. Chalmers to C. Brownlee, 31 July 1875.

²⁶ NA 153: Cummings to S. N. A. 3 August 1875

future. This angered the Thembu chief who forced the exile of Menziwe to Idutywa.²⁷ At this juncture, Ngangelizwe had reported Nongxokela ill, and she died as a result of her ill-health. However, Menziwe raised the alarm that the waiting maid had died as a result of the ill treatment of the Thembu chief. Sarhili decided to report the incident to Ayliff in order to allow the colonial authorities to mediate the issue. As per usual, the state instituted a commission of enquiry that was headed by Chalmers. In his report he found that:

‘It appears that both by chief Ngangelizwe and by his orders the deceased was ill-treated in the most brutal and unprovoked way, and that such beating and ill-treatment in all probability, resulted in her death. Under the circumstances, Kreli [Sarhili] undoubtedly has a right to redress; and as government has been appealed to, and looking at the consequences that might arrive from declining to interfere, it cannot pass the matter over. It is therefore considered that Ngangelizwe must pay Kreli [Sarhili] 200 head of cattle and forfeit his government salary for one year.’²⁸

Nongxokozela had decided to remain in Thembuland after the departure of Nomkhafulo and served as a concubine for Ngangelizwe.²⁹ Sarhili had given strict instruction to hold off his warriors in order for the commission to do its work. This decision was likely to have incensed the Gcaleka on two counts. Firstly, a fine in cattle would not affect the Thembu chief personally as he could merely confiscate the beasts from his people. Secondly, with the amount of cattle thieving prevalent between the two clans, it would be

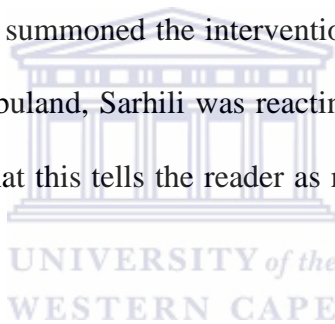
²⁷ NA 153: Cummings to S. N. A. 3 August 1875.

²⁸ CMT 1/1, E. B. Chalmers to C. Brownlee, 9 September 1875.

²⁹ N.A. 153: Ayliff to S.N.A., 9 July 1875.

easy for Ngangelizwe have given Sarhili his own cattle.³⁰ The Gcaleka chief eventually decided to accept the fine but was aggravated by the fact that a number of the cattle died on the way to Gcalekaland from lungsickness.³¹

It is interesting to scrutinize the manner in which the Xhosa king dealt with issues regarding women. In a brief pen sketch of Sarhili, Peires writes that the paramount was an 'uninhibited lover of women'.³² However, it would seem that on each occasion that women were at the centre of a dispute, Sarhili did not act.³³ In both the episodes mentioned in this chapter, involving Nomkhafulo and Nongxokozela, Sarhili did not get involved militarily. Instead, he summoned the intervention of the colonial authorities. In the case of the raid into Thembuland, Sarhili was reacting to a request by the Bomvana chief Moni. It is my opinion that this tells the reader as much about Sarhili as it does of the society in which he lived.



It does not appear as if Sarhili's decisions to allow the colonial authorities to deal with the issues surrounding the women affected the way he was perceived by the amaXhosa. As such, it seems reasonable to assume that less pressure would come to bear on the paramount to take military action when women were involved in specific disputes. Sarhili could therefore use such disputes as test cases to ascertain the manner in which the colonial authorities would adjudicate his grievances. This would account for his decisions

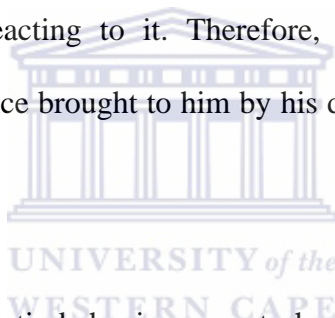
³⁰ N.A. 153: Ayliff to S.N.A., 9 July 1875.

³¹ F. Brownlee, *The Transkeian Native Territories: Historical Records*. (Lovedale, 1923), p. 3.

³² Jeff Peires, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Cattle Killing Movement of 1856-57*, (Ravan Press: Johannesburg, 1989), p. 82

³³ I do not include Nongqawuse in this as I do not want to get involved in the debates surrounding the cattle-killing that does not pertain to Sarhili.

to involve state authorities in these two specific cases. However, it is possible to make an argument that Sarhili was not prepared to compromise his influence or power in order to avenge the treatment of two of his female subjects. After all, by involving the state in these disputes, he was taking a safe option that could not compromise his authority. It would have been possible to contradict this argument if Sarhili had not decided to request colonial intervention after the treatment received by Nongxokozela as one could argue that the paramount was afraid of the colonial military. However, Sarhili made the choice to put his grievance to the colony and as such his response to the dispute was, initially, without colonial interference. In other words, the paramount initiated colonial interference as opposed to reacting to it. Therefore, it is obvious that he made a distinction between the grievance brought to him by his daughter and that highlighted by Moni.

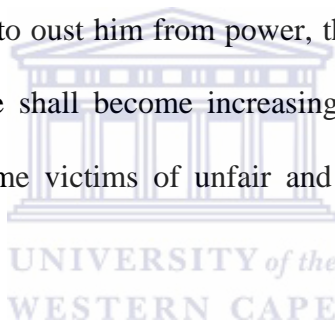


Ngangelizwe's increasingly erratic behaviour was to have undesirable repercussions for both himself and Sarhili. The British began to regard his continued role as paramount chief of the Thembu as untenable to the maintenance of peace in the region. T.H. Bowker had succeeded Currie as the commander of the colonial armed forces. He approached Brownlee to authorize the annexation of Thembuland by the government as well as the deposing of Ngangelizwe as the Thembu paramount. Brownlee was prepared to authorize the appropriation of the territory, as long as 'no pressure was been brought to bear on the Thembu'.³⁴ On 14 December 1875 negotiations were concluded with the Thembu and Ngangelizwe was deposed. The colonial government expected the decision to eject

³⁴ Michael Spicer, 'The War of Ngcayecibi 1877-78', (MA. Thesis: Rhodes University, 1978), p. 36. In his footnote, Spicer states that the nature of Bowker's patrols in Thembuland made it impossible for the Thembu not to feel pressured.

Ngangelizwe to be welcomed by the Thembu. The colonial archive characterized his behaviour as becoming responsible for the repeated exposure of his people to the wrath of the Gcaleka. However, this move was met with widespread opposition and eventually the Thembu paramount was reinstated. Sarhili found himself surrounded by government supported neighbours, save for the Bomvana to his east.

It is interesting to note that the official reason given for the deposing of Ngangelizwe was that he had supposedly beaten his wife Nosepessi.³⁵ When Sarhili was involved, the Thembu paramount was only punished with fines in terms of livestock. However, when it was in the interest of the state to oust him from power, the penalty became more severe. As this chapter moves on, we shall become increasingly aware of the way in which Sarhili and the Gcaleka become victims of unfair and inconsistent judgments by the colonial authorities.



Again we see the colonial archive at work. It is my argument that the colonial authorities could not depose Ngangelizwe, even though their own commission of inquiry had found him at fault in his dealings with Sarhili. Doing so would have meant that they would have had to make concessions to the Gcaleka paramount that would have served to increase his power. In other words, any attempt to depose Ngangelizwe at the time would have forced government to admit to Sarhili the extent to which the Thembu paramount was at fault in the conflict. The consequence of this acknowledgement would have been that Sarhili would have had his land claim entertained. Instead, a reason needed to present itself,

³⁵ G. 39- 1876, pp. 18-22, Probart to S.N.A., 16 February 1876.

independent of Ngangelizwe' s relationship with Sarhili that was sufficient to justify removing the Thembu chief from power.

Spicer describes the charges laid against Ngangelizwe as 'trumped up'³⁶ but is not interested in investigating why this is the case. He prefers to view the charges made by the colonial state in terms of evidence and then makes a judgment. At no point is he interested in trying to uncover the motivation behind this obvious lack of fairness. He views the relationship that the colony had with Ngangelizwe simply from the perspective of 'maintaining the peace in the region'.³⁷ He does not investigate the motives of the colonial state in terms of either their relationship with Sarhili or how it would affect the future relationship the colonial authorities would have with the deposed Thembu paramount. It is my argument that herein lays the challenge for the historian when dealing with the colonial archive. Whereas it is relatively simple to discern the inaccuracies and inconsistencies buried in the colonial archive, it is not enough to simply point them out. The historian must uncover why these 'untruths' are resident in the hegemonic source of historical writing. Spicer shows no interest in the knowledge production at work in the archive and is content to merely point out the discrepancies as they present themselves. Having omitted to investigate the operationality of the colonial archive in that moment Spicer is not able to read 'along the grain' of the archive and his work will remain entrapped by its mechanics. The trumped up charges that Ngangelizwe faced did serve to usurp him from power and also address concerns that the colonial state had about the Xhosa king.

³⁶ Michael Spicer, 'The War of Ngcayecibi 1877-78', (MA. Thesis: Rhodes University, 1978), p. 37.

³⁷ Michael Spicer, 'The War of Ngcayecibi 1877-78', (MA. Thesis: Rhodes University, 1978), p. 38.

Spicer is also guilty of ignoring the gender dynamics of his argument. Ngangelizwe had a history of abusing women. In his thesis, Spicer notes that some of the ill feeling between the Gcaleka and the Thembu was resultant from the treatment that Ngangelizwe subjected Nomkhafulo and Nongxokozela to while they stayed in his compound. When the colonial state decided to depose the Thembu paramount, Spicer argues that the charges of physical abuse of Nonpessi were ‘trumped up’. It would seem that Spicer has totally ignored the history of the Thembu chief, as he had already been found guilty of abuse twice in his past. Perhaps, Spicer was so interested in producing a resistance narrative that he allowed his judgment in gendered relations to be clouded.

Land and the Ncehana Valley

The state had become increasingly concerned with Sarhili’s re-emergence as a danger to the peace on the frontier. His military superiority to the Thembu meant that he would be able to overrun this clan and subject them to his rule, thereby increasing his already threatening power. Until the Thembu accepted British protection, making them subjects of the colony, the colonial authorities did not have any legal recourse to interfere with the relationship with the two factions. However, after annexing Thembuland and incorporating the territory into that of the Empire, the colonial authorities were now able to ensure that Sarhili could not expand his power through war with the Thembu. These were the motives that drove the decision to remove Ngangelizwe from power.

Since the return of the Gcaleka from exile, Sarhili had been agitating for more land.

During the 1872 foray into Thembuland, two Thembu chiefs residing in the Ncehana Valley, Bacela and Mlatha, left the area. Sarhili claimed that he had given these chiefs the land when they came to the area as refugees from the Mpondo.³⁸ The 1872 conflict had denuded this valley of its Thembu residents. Geographically, the Ncehana Valley borders Bomvanaland, Thembuland and also Gcalekaland. Both Moni and Sarhili instructed their people to build kraals in the area that had been left vacant. Sarhili felt that he had legal recourse to reclaim the land as he had handed it to the Thembu. Furthermore, Sarhili regarded the Ncehana Valley as spoils of war. The fact that Moni was also placing Bomvana in the Valley did not cause the paramount concern as these newcomers were also subject to his authority. However, in 1874 Bacela returned to the valley. He was one of the most vehement advocates of accepting British protection and called on government to mediate the boundaries of the three territories. The government appointed Mr. S.A. Probart to handle the dispute on their behalf. However, drawing on a statement made by Brownlee in 1873, it was easy to predict the manner in which this dispute would be settled: 'Our policy is to prevent the extension of Kreli's [Sarhili's] power'.³⁹

In February 1876 Probart hosted a conference with all the interested parties. However, it was only in October of that year that a decision was rendered. When Sarhili was informed of the new parameters set by Probart, the colonial archive reports that he responded as follows:

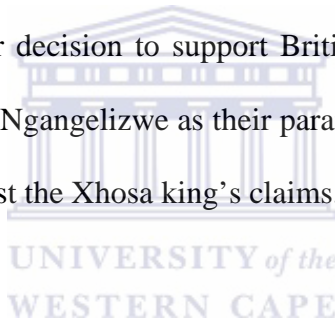
'Of what have I been guilty that Government should treat me in this manner? I listened to the word of the Government in returning to my

³⁸ N. A. 154: W. Fynn to S.N.A., 20 October 1876.

³⁹ CMT 1/1, E. B. Chalmers to C. Brownlee, 24 December 1873.

country after the war with the Thembu, then according to the rules of warfare (Kaffir and English) I would have been justified in obtaining a portion of Gangelizwe's [Ngangelizwe's] country, as it was mine by conquest. Am I now merely to look on and see my country cut off and given to the Thembus and say nothing?⁴⁰

The colonial archive, in terms of the rules of war (Xhosa and British), would be forced to support Sarhili in his bid to procure a part of Thembuland as a result of his victory. However, this was not in the interest of the state and as such the colonial archive had to find a way to justify not upholding Sarhili's demand. To make matters more desperate for the British was that Thembu-Gcaleka tensions had eased to such a degree that many Thembu were reassessing their decision to support British control of their country and were agitating for the return of Ngangelizwe as their paramount chief. In other words, the state was under pressure to resist the Xhosa king's claims.



By May of 1876, newspapers in the Eastern Cape were regularly carrying stories of a war plot against the colony implicating Sarhili, Ngangelizwe and a minor Thembu chief, Mathanzima.⁴¹ The archive was filled with reports at that time accusing various chiefs, but always inclusive of Sarhili, as being on the verge of attacking the colony. West Fynn, a frontiersman and supposed friend of Sarhili made light of these claims:

'I cannot see how it could be possible for Kreli [Sarhili] to combine with the other tribes against the Govt. [sic] when his own tribe would not be unanimous, as a very bitter feeling between Maphasa and Kreli [Sarhili]

⁴⁰ N. A. 154, W. Fynn to S.N.A, 20 October 1876.

⁴¹ Merriman Papers, No. 13, Molteno to Merriman, 5 September 1876.

exists and great portion of the Chief Sibozo (Nzabele's) tribe sympathise with Maphasa and Kreli [Sarhili] is aware of it.'⁴²

Brownlee investigated these claims but continuously found that no such plot existed. However, in terms of the European settlers in the colony, the damage was done. Sarhili had always been viewed with great suspicion and these persistent rumours served to fuel this distrust. It would be difficult for the government to award more land to Sarhili without incurring the derision of its subjects on the frontier. Thus the rumours that are so extensively documented in the colonial archive served their purpose; they allowed the state to justify not awarding Sarhili the land that was rightfully his. Furthermore, the awarding of the disputed territory to the Thembu could appease the resistance that had emerged within the Thembu regarding the ousting of Ngangelizwe. This is exactly the course of action taken by the colonial government. Not only was Sarhili not awarded territory in the Ncehana Valley but the new boundary line cut into land that was already his. In other words, after Probart's investigation, Sarhili had less land than before the colonial decision arrived.⁴³ In response Sarhili is reported to have told his councilors: 'I am sick and tired of being hunted by the English and prefer to die instead'.⁴⁴

To ensure the loyalty of Thembu, the government reinstated Ngangelizwe the following month thereby eliminating the cause of most of their dissatisfaction.⁴⁵ The colonial authorities remained acutely aware of the consequences that Sandile's deposing had in 1850 and therefore could not allow the antagonistic feelings of the Thembu to go

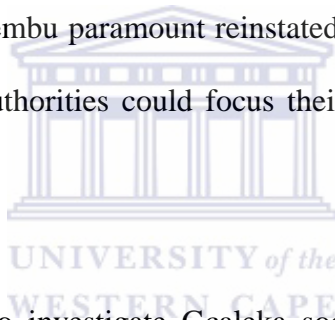
⁴² N.A. 154: West Fynn to S.N.A., 22 July 1876. The differences between Sarhili and Maphasa are unpacked later in the chapter.

⁴³ N.A. 399: Cumming and Wright to S.N.A., 15 October 1876.

⁴⁴ N.A. 154: West Fynn to S.N.A., 22 July 1876.

⁴⁵ N.A. 294: C. Mills to S.N.A., 29 November 1876.

unchecked.⁴⁶ It is my view that the reappointment of Ngangelizwe was as a diplomatic masterstroke by the colonial authorities. Firstly, they had soothed the greatest grievance that the Thembu had against the government in that their chief was made to flee his own country. Secondly, the colonial state had given the Ncehana Valley back to the Thembu and as such demonstrated to the Thembu the benefits of aligning themselves with the British. This meant that Sarhili was not awarded any additional territory, thereby contributing to the colonial policy of limiting the authority of the Xhosa king. Thirdly, Ngangelizwe was now well aware of how precarious his position as paramount of the Thembu was and as such would be far more pliable to the policy of the state. Finally, and most importantly, with the Thembu paramount reinstated and the people more pliable to British control, the colonial authorities could focus their attention across the border to Gcalekaland.



It is important at this point to investigate Gcaleka society more closely as this will highlight what the British were scrutinizing once the Thembu grievances had been appeased. The Gcaleka lacked political homogeneity. There were different factions within the clan that had differing political beliefs. On the one end of the spectrum was the peace party, led by Bhotomane, Sarhili's chief councilor. This faction included Maphasa, who was the chief of the Tsonyana (this clan had been agitating for independence from Sarhili for a long time.)⁴⁷ However, within this faction there were also divisions. Bhotomane was a traditionalist who wanted to see the autonomy of the Gcaleka maintained and viewed war as a potential threat to that autonomy. Maphasa, on the other

⁴⁶ This is dealt with in Chapter two of this thesis when Sandile's deposition ended up with the British having to engage in a three-year war with the Rharhabe.

⁴⁷ Transkeian Resident's Notebook: W.R.D. Fynn to S.N.A., 31 July 1872.

hand expressed the political desire to accept British control of the Gcaleka. It was Maphasa's contention that the Gcaleka would benefit more from aligning themselves with the colonials, than opposing them. He used the example of the Mfengu to illustrate his point. It is often claimed that this clan had arrived in the Eastern Cape as refugees of the Mfecane but now owned cattle and occupied more land than the Gcaleka⁴⁸. Conversely, the other end of the spectrum included men like Runeyi and Qaza, who was renowned by the people as great warriors and were also councilors to the paramount.⁴⁹ They believed in Gcaleka independence and were prepared to go to war to preserve it. In the middle of this political spectrum stood the paramount chief of the Xhosa:

‘Sarhili fought a losing battle with expanding white rule. A consummate diplomatist and ardent nationalist, Sarhili sought to maintain Gcaleka independence without ever directly clashing with the whites’.⁵⁰

Sarhili was as much opposed to losing Gcaleka independence as Runeyi. However, he realized the perils of war with colony and as such wanted to avoid that eventuality at all costs. The problem Sarhili therefore faced was that he had to find ways of mediating these diverse political ideologies in a manner that would not cause those who had been overruled to act against the consensus.

I think that the best way to understand developments in the Eastern Cape after the reappointment of Ngangelizwe is as follows: My reading of the colonial archive reflects that the colonial authorities embarked on a mission to isolate the Gcaleka paramount in

⁴⁸ This view is contested by Alan Webster. See Alan Webster, ‘Unmasking the Fingo: the 1835 war revisited’, in C. Hamilton (ed.), The mfecane aftermath: reconstructive debates in southern African History, (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1995).

⁴⁹ C. Brownlee Memo, May 1878, p. 217.

⁵⁰ Michael Spicer, ‘The War of Ngqayecibi 1877-78’, (MA. Thesis: Rhodes University, 1978), p. vi

order to constrict the power and influence that he could wield. They set about this task in a variety of ways. Brownlee appointed his brother in law, T. A. Cummings, as the resident magistrate of Idutywa Reserve.⁵¹ The reserve, although heterogeneous, had the Gcaleka comprise almost fifty percent of its population. Frontiersman West Fynn regarded Cummings as no political match for the Xhosa king, but it appears that he got his own back with the judgments he rendered:

‘His judgments were severe when Gcalekas were involved as he had to deal with being outwitted by an uneducated native [in reference to Sarhili] and Kreli [Sarhili] accuses him of deliberate vindictiveness’.⁵²

The Gcaleka living in Idutywa looked to Sarhili to intervene in the rulings of Cummings. The paramount proved unsuccessful in meeting this expectation. It is my view that the idea that Brownlee had in appointing his brother in law at Idutywa was to illustrate to the Gcaleka residing there the relative powerlessness of the Gcaleka chief. Brownlee was also aware of the political rifts within the Gcaleka clan and consequently offered salaries to Maphasa and Sarhili’s estranged son Dalasile.⁵³ This is a classic British colonial tactic of divide-and-rule.

Sarhili Under Siege

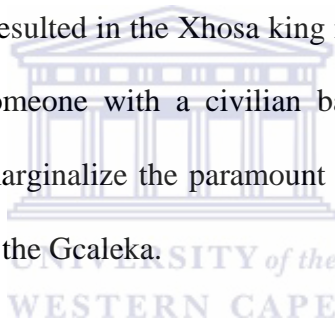
Lungsickness reappeared in 1876 and Sarhili wanted to isolate his herds in order to prevent them from contracting the disease and requested more land from the colonial state. Brownlee ensured that this request was turned down. Sarhili even requested a farm

⁵¹ N.A. 294: C. Mills to S.N.A, 18 March 1876.

⁵² N.A. 155: West Fynn to S.N.A, 10 July 1876.

⁵³ C 1748, End. 2 No.50, Brownlee Memo on Transkeian Affairs, 14 July 1876.

that he would hire in the colony to place his cattle, but this appeal also met with rejection from the colonial authorities. It was also decided by Brownlee to place a new resident with Sarhili. This man was Colonel John Eustace, who had a military background.⁵⁴ The significance of this appointment cannot be underestimated as all previous residents placed by the government were frontier men who understood how the system worked. Eustace was a military man who had no idea about the way the colonial system operated in the Eastern Cape. Consequently, he would not be of much assistance to Sarhili. Brownlee must have been cognisant of the fact that Sarhili had a distrust of the British military, especially in lieu of the treatment his father Hintsu received in 1835. This ploy, in all probability, would have resulted in the Xhosa king not being able to utilize Eustace as effectively as he would someone with a civilian background. I would argue that Brownlee was attempting to marginalize the paramount in an attempt to pressurize him into accepting British rule over the Gcaleka.



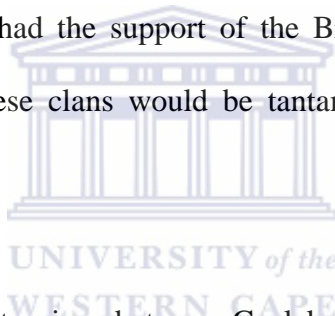
The paramount would probably have been aware of the increasing manner in which the colonial authorities were marginalizing his influence in the region. It is my position that the pressure exerted on the Xhosa king led to his decision to attempt to reassert his authority among the amaXhosa. In 1877, Sarhili decided that he wanted to undergo the traditional coronation ceremonies that he was denied in 1835.⁵⁵ However, a couple of factors seem to have caused the ceremony to be abandoned. Firstly, it was felt that the regency might make Sarhili want to prove himself in war. As previously mentioned, the peace faction in the Gcaleka clan had many powerful men in its bosom, with Sarhili's

⁵⁴ CMT 1/1, C. Brownlee to E.B. Chalmers, 19 April 1873.

⁵⁵ C. 1961, Enc1. No.43: Report of West Fynn to Frere, 29 September 1877.

chief councilor Bhotomane being its main antagonist. As such, some of his chief councilors advised the paramount against such a course of action.

Secondly, it was felt that the ceremony caused ill fate to befall the individual that underwent its rigours. This is best illustrated in the fact that Hintsá died a mere two years after Hintsá was inaugurated. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it was felt that the chance existed that the Mfengu and Thembu regents would not attend the ceremony and as such cause an affront to the paramount that he would have to avenge through war.⁵⁶ It is apparent that the Gcaleka was stronger militarily than either of these two clans. However, both these peoples had the support of the British government and as such, declaring war on either these clans would be tantamount to declaring war on the colony.



It must be noted that apparent tensions between Gcaleka and Mfengu did not lessen but rather grew more intense. In the representations available in the colonial archive, the Gcaleka still felt resentment towards the Mfengu because they had joined forces with the British in 1835, as well as the fact that they occupied a large portion of Gcalekaland. The Mfengu, on the other hand, were well aware of the military supremacy that the Gcaleka enjoyed over them. However, they were conscious of the fact that if the Gcaleka attacked them that the British would declare war on the Gcaleka. After all, on the previous occasions the British military got involved with the Gcaleka, the Mfengu had always

⁵⁶ John Soga, The AmaXhosa: Life and Customs, (Alice: Lovedale Press, 1931), pp. 99-102.

benefited.⁵⁷ It would therefore make sense for the Mfengu to assume that if the Gcaleka attacked them that this trend would continue. The result of this expectation was that the Mfengu ‘took malicious delight in rubbing salt in the wounds of Gcaleka resentment’.⁵⁸

The Wedding that started a War

Sarhili only ever declared war on the colony once and it was catalyzed by a wedding. This chapter has already alluded to the supposed tensions that existed between the Mfengu and the Gcaleka. The story of this wedding does differ in detail but the main outlines remain consistent.⁵⁹ On 3 August 1877, a Mfengu man, Ngcayecibi, was celebrating the wedding of his son with a beer drink at his headman’s kraal near Butterworth that is, in Fingoland. A group of Tsonyana Gcaleka, including lesser chiefs Mxoli and Fihla, attended the celebrations.⁶⁰ Guests started leaving when the beer was finished. However, Mxoli accused Ngcayecibi of hoarding beer and refused to leave. The nineteenth century Eastern Cape Mfengu had a reputation of being ‘tight’ with their beer and thus this statement by Mxoli was regarded by his hosts as insulting.⁶¹ Another Gcaleka informed Mxoli that the beer indeed had been finished which resulted in the chief striking the man. A brawl ensued which resulted in the outnumbered Gcaleka being driven across the Gcuwa River, the boundary between Gcalekaland and Fingoland. As a

⁵⁷ As alluded to already in this thesis, in 1835, the Mfengu got land from the British as well as the cattle they were tending for the Gcaleka. In the Mlanjeni War, they received some of the 40 000 head of cattle that Harry Smith raided from the Gcaleka. In 1862, they were awarded large parts of Gcalekaland after the cattle killing once Sarhili had been exiled to Bomvanaland.

⁵⁸ Michael Spicer, ‘The War of Ngcayecibi 1877-78’, (MA. Thesis: Rhodes University, 1978), p. 67.

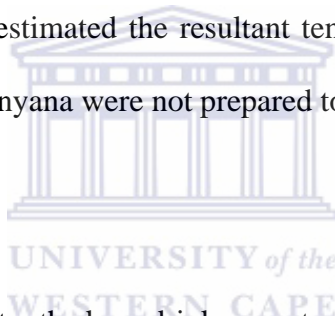
⁵⁹ The differences in detail do not really reflect any underlying subtext as regards the role of the colonial archive and as such these details will not be reflected upon. The fact that the state did conduct a commission of enquiry that was eventually abandoned meant that it was unnecessary for the colonial authorities to produce any specific script for the events that unfolded from the beer drink.

⁶⁰ John Soga, The South Eastern Bantu, (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1930). Pp. 255-56.

⁶¹ C. 1961, End. No.83: Eustace to Frere, 18 August 1877.

result of the brawl, Mxoli and Fihla were severely beaten and one of their party had been killed.⁶²

As noted earlier in this chapter, it was unheard of for the personage of a chief to be physically assaulted. The incident was immediately reported to the resident's⁶³ office, but Eustace was on safari. Instead West Fynn, who counted himself as one of the few Europeans to befriend Sarhili, went to investigate in the stead of the Gcaleka resident and reported his findings to the resident magistrate of the Mfengu, John Ayliff.⁶⁴ Fynn did not envisage further hostilities and left matters in the hands of the magistrate. However, it would appear that Fynn underestimated the resultant tensions between the two factions and it would seem as if the Tsonyana were not prepared to entrust this matter in the hands of a colonial official.



On 8 August 1877, five days after the beer drink, reports contained in the colonial archive suggest that under the leadership of Maphasa and Xhoxho, Sarhili's brother, the Tsonyana carried out retaliatory strikes all along the Gcuwa River.⁶⁵ This raid was reported to the colonial authorities and Brownlee decreed that the Tsonyana were to return all the livestock they had looted and retreat from the Gcuwa River with their warriors. Brownlee decided to post a troop of policemen, under the leadership of Inspector E. B. Chalmers, on the border to deter hostilities between the two clans.⁶⁶

⁶² West Fynn, *The '77 War*, (East London, 1911), pp 1-2.

⁶³ It must be noted that at this time the colonial authorities had placed a resident with Sarhili who had to report on the Gcaleka to the resident magistrate of Transkei. At that time Sarhili was not subjected to any magistrate and was independent of that form of colonial intervention in Gcalekaland.

⁶⁴ C.1961, End. No. 83: Eustace to Frere, 18 August 1877.

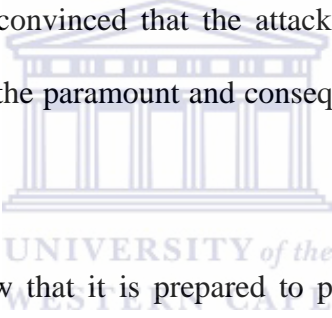
⁶⁵ West Fynn, *The '77 War*, (East London, 1911), p. 2.

⁶⁶ G. 17, J. Ayliff to S.N.A, 12 August 1877.

However, in the time it took for the troop to arrive, cursory sorties took place with both sides crossing the river and pillaging livestock. The situation was especially intense at Idutywa where the heterogeneous population was in constant inter-factional conflict.⁶⁷

The Betrayal of Sarhili

This turn of events provided the colonial state with an opportunity to further besiege the embattled Gcaleka people. Already, the state had contrived to ensure that the Gcaleka were disadvantaged in any legal dispute that arose within their jurisdiction. The Gcaleka had invaded Fingoland and made themselves guilty of attacking subjects of the Crown. The colonial authorities were convinced that the attack by Xhoxho and Maphasa had transpired with the sanction of the paramount and consequently Ayliff wrote accordingly to Brownlee:



‘Government should show that it is prepared to protect British subjects and to put down with a strong arm if necessary such overbearing attempts to take the law into his own hands of Kreli [Sarhili] or any native chief.’⁶⁸

The decision to post the troop to Fingoland was communicated to Sarhili by Fynn who tried to explain that their function was to maintain peace. Sarhili, in turn, voiced his reservations about the presence of this colonial force stating that they would serve to inflame the situation even more.⁶⁹ Sarhili’s prognosis turned out to be accurate as the Mfengu responded to the presence of this force by taunting their Gcaleka neighbours:

⁶⁷ G.17, J. Ayliff to S.N.A., 11 August 1877.

⁶⁸ G. 17, J. Ayliff to S.N.A., 18 August 1877.

⁶⁹ C. 1961, Encl. 3 No. 58: Eustace to Brownlee, 25 August 1877.

‘Since the coming of the police the Fingoes had threatened them [the Gcaleka] with vengeance saying their fathers had come, and were going to drive them into the sea.’⁷⁰

On 22 August 1877, a policeman and two others, unprovoked, fired shots into the hut of a Gcaleka man on the other side of the river. This incident caused the Gcaleka warriors to start gathering at the house of the man in preparation for a retaliatory attack. By 24 August a full scale clash had occurred outside Butterworth before the Gcaleka withdrew back across the river, in order to prepare for the next sortie.⁷¹ Sarhili had received an indication of this conflict and sent two of his councilors to West Fynn with instructions to get word to Xhoxho to stop fighting. Xhoxho adhered to this instruction and the conflict was halted even though Maphasa was reported by Fynn to have been reluctant to do so. It would seem that the casualty list for the Gcaleka in this incursion was somewhere between nine and twenty four ⁷², a number that Sarhili felt was too high.⁷³ The feelings of the paramount are best summed up in his own words: ‘That so many sons and fathers should be killed by these Fingo dogs should not be tolerated’.⁷⁴

On 25 August the war cry was sounded throughout Gcalekaland to prepare for retribution. Fynn writes that he rode to Hohita himself to ascertain the seriousness of this development. He remarks that not only were the Gcaleka warriors adorned in war paint in the form of a black mark on their foreheads but also Sarhili and his councilors, who were sifting together. Fynn decided to try and avert war by sharing with the paramount a piece

⁷⁰ C. 1961, Encl. 3 No. 29: Eustace to Brownlee, 29 August 1877.

⁷¹ C. 1961, End. 3 No. 58: Eustace to Brownlee, 22 August 1877.

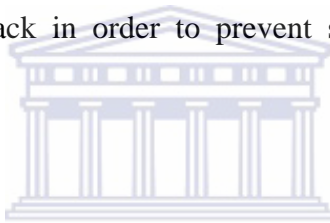
⁷² This number varies in the different publications. However, nine would still represent a substantial loss of life at the time bearing in mind that no official war had been declared.

⁷³ George McCall Theal, *History of South Africa. Volume X*, (Cape Town: Struik, 1964), p. 56.

⁷⁴ West Fynn, *The '77 War*, (East London, 1911), p. 27.

of information that had recently come to his knowledge. This frontiersman informed the paramount that Maphasa, the chief of the Tsonyana, had recently come to see him requesting Fynn to arrange a pass granting his people protection by the British in case of war.⁷⁵

It would appear that Fynn had a keen sense of Sarhili's desire to keep the Gcaleka united. If Fynn is to be believed, he had purposely informed the Xhosa king of Maphasa's impending defection in order to convince Sarhili to call off an impending attack on the Mfengu. The Tsonyana, led by Maphasa, were a minority sub clan of the Gcaleka. Why would Sarhili abandon an attack in order to prevent such a small proportion of his subjects in the fold?



The relationship between Sarhili and Maphasa was strained since the Tsonyana chief refused to join the raid on the Thembu in 1872. Maphasa was a vocal proponent advocating for the Gcaleka to submit to British rule. However, following the wedding at Ngcayecibi, Maphasa had been a main instigator in the running battles with the Mfengu, who were already British subjects. It is therefore very conceivable that this news would be come as a considerable shock to the paramount. The implication of a defection by Maphasa to the British was that the Gcaleka would become a divided people and Sarhili wanted to keep his clan in tact. It is my argument that Sarhili was not prepared to have his sphere of influence diminished and consequently decided to recede from attacking the Mfengu in order to maintain the loyalty of a minority group within his people. This

⁷⁵ West Fynn, *The '77 War*, (East London, 1911), p. 6.

decision made by the paramount conveys to the reader more evidence that Sarhili was a chief that made decisions that maintained or enhanced his power.

It seems possible to assume that the proposed treachery of Maphasa would have left the paramount in a precarious position. After all, the conflict with the Mfengu had reached the levels they had as a result of the Gcaleka wanting retribution because of the treatment that one of the Tsonyana chiefs had received. As such, the paramount chief of the Gcaleka could be excused for finding the news from Fynn unexpected. Furthermore, what guarantee did the paramount have that the Tsonyana were not the only clan that was going to turn their back on him?



The Wedding Inquiry

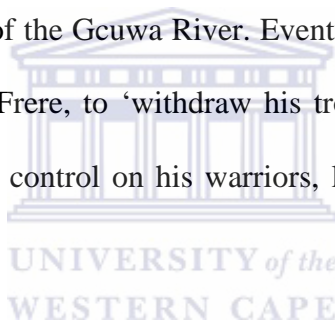
Although Sarhili had called off the attack, convincing both Fynn and Eustace of his reluctance to make war with the colony, few other colonial authorities shared in this belief. This sentiment is best illustrated in the following correspondence from E. B.

Chalmers:

‘Kreli [Sarhili] is foremost in his promises to maintain peace, and Eustace and Fynn both believe him. I am perfectly convinced in my own mind that the old fox has been acting a very treacherous part, and I am sorry to find some of the officials were hood-winked.’⁷⁶

⁷⁶ C 1961, E. B. Chalmers to Bowker, 2 September 1877.

Having placed the matter of the shooting in colonial hands, Brownlee decided to launch an inquiry, which was to be led by Mfengu resident magistrate, John Ayliff and Gcaleka resident, John Eustace. However, it appears evident that the Mfengu did not want the issue resolved by the Inquiry and consequently found different ways of interrupting the proceedings. These delay tactics included false war alarms as well as the non-appearance of key witnesses.⁷⁷ Those witnesses who did give testimony did it in a long-winded manner that delayed the Gcaleka from stating their case. Consequently this inquiry never got to review the evidence that would equip it to make an ‘informed finding’.⁷⁸ To aggravate matters for Sarhili, he was unable to get the Gcaleka army to disperse as too much mistrust existed on both sides of the Gcuwa River. Eventually, after receiving word from the new Governor, Sir Bartle Frere, to ‘withdraw his troops or face the consequences’ Sarhili was able to exert more control on his warriors, leaving small pockets on watch along the Gcuwa River.⁷⁹



With the inquiry dragging along, Frere conducted a tour of the frontier that included meeting with the individual chiefs in Butterworth, Fingoland, in mid September 1877.⁸⁰ Sarhili is accused by the colonial archive of making various excuses for not going to Butterworth to meet the governor but eventually gave two principle reasons for his non-appearance. Firstly, Sarhili pointed out that the governor had met the Mfengu in their own country and as such a precedent had been set. Sarhili argued that as Frere had met with the Mfengu in their country, he would have to meet Sarhili in Gcalekaland.

⁷⁷ G. 17, Eustace to S.N.A., 1 September 1877, pp. 179-181.

⁷⁸ By informed finding I mean that not enough evidence was presented whereby it could render a finding that would implicate the Gcaleka or Sarhili as would undoubtedly be the case.

⁷⁹ G. 17, Eustace to S.N.A., 1 September 1877, p. 181.

⁸⁰ C. 1961, No. 30, Frere to Carnarvon, 5 September 1877.

Secondly, he had at the behest of his resident erected a building near his kraal for the express purpose of hosting dignitaries.⁸¹

Frere was determined to establish peace on the frontier before returning to Cape Town and proposed meeting Sarhili in Gcalekaland. This proposal was discouraged by Frere's advisors citing security concerns. Sarhili responded by insisting that he had more to fear. The paramount was expected to meet the governor be in the heart of enemy territory essentially at the mercy of the same government that killed his father. Unable to reach some form of compromise, Sarhili never met with Frere.⁸² Instead, Frere sent him a written message enjoining Sarhili to maintain the peace.⁸³

In the interim, half of the military force in the Eastern Cape was being relocated to Fingoland.⁸⁴ Events were unfolding involving the Gcaleka that made war with the Mfengu almost inevitable. On 21 September, Bacela, son of Qaza, headed a 300 strong incursion into Fingoland and the Reserve where they seized large quantities of livestock. On their way back to Gcalekaland, they were confronted by a troop of police who demanded the return of the livestock. Whereas these Gcaleka returned the sheep and goats, they refused to restore the cattle to their owners and the colonial archive quotes them as claiming that 'we do not care about your government any longer we will take the cattle'.⁸⁵

⁸¹ West Fynn, *'The '77 War'*, (East London, 1911), pp. 10-11.

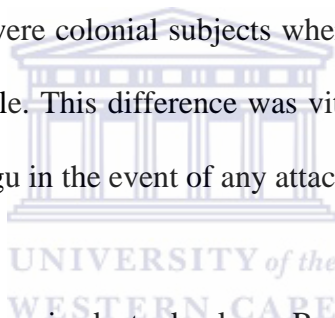
⁸² C. 1961, No. 44: Frere to Carnarvon, 25 September 1877.

⁸³ C. 1961, End. I, No. 39: Frere to Sarhili, 20 September 1877.

⁸⁴ Molteno Papers, No.616: Frere Minute for Ministers, 19 September 1877.

⁸⁵ G. 17, Eustace to S.N.A, 31 January 1878, p. 34.

Bacela and his companions then rode off with the cattle to no opposition from the police.⁸⁶ If the quotation in the colonial archive is to be trusted it raises an interesting question: What had caused these Gcaleka warriors to act in such a cavalier fashion when the colonial police confronted them? John Soga argues that this attitude stemmed from the fact that many Gcaleka were under the impression that in the event of conflict with the Mfengu that the colonial military would remain uninvolved, as was the case in the 1872 incursion into Thembuland.⁸⁷ If one were to accept Soga's argument, then it would appear as if this band of Gcaleka warriors did not understand the difference in the relationships that the British had with the Thembu and the Mfengu. It must be remembered that the Mfengu were colonial subjects whereas, in 1872, the Thembu were still independent of colonial rule. This difference was vital as the British were bound to provide protection to the Mfengu in the event of any attack on them.



Around the same time as this episode took place, Runeyi, one of the great Gcaleka warriors of the time, returned from his mission to Sandile. He was sent to the Ngqika Great Chief by Sarhili to ascertain whether the Ngqika were going to support the Gcaleka in the event of conflict with the Mfengu. Although Sandile failed to commit his people to the conflict, the great Gcaleka warrior Runeyi was still adamant that war was the only course forward. This attitude seemed to be reflected by many Gcaleka. Spicer writes of Runeyi:

⁸⁶ West Fynn, *The '77 War'*. (East London, 1911), p. 34.

⁸⁷ John H. Soga, *The South Eastern Bantu*. (Johannesburg, 1930), p. 250.

‘So formidable was his reputation as a warrior, and so determined was he [Runeyi] on war that people everywhere said ‘now there will be war’.⁸⁸

It is interesting that Spicer uses the behaviour of a famous warrior as an indication of a looming war. After all, Sarhili was the paramount chief and as such his actions should be more indicative of what the future would hold. However, having worked through the archive Spicer may have realized that Sarhili once again was struggling to restrain his subjects. This is best illustrated by Moni in a letter he relayed to government allaying fears that he may ally Sarhili in a possible war with the Mfengu. Moni stated:

‘I wish Government to understand that I will not take part in this quarrel, whatever turn it takes, and will do all in my power to prevent my people from assisting the Gcaleka who I hear are disregarding the words and wishes of Chief Kreli [Sarhili].’⁸⁹

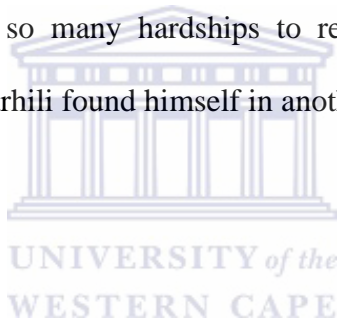
It is my view that Sarhili was facing a similar situation to the time of the cattle-killing when his subjects disregarded his directives. Sarhili understood the consequences of going to war against the colony would be diabolical for his people and was trying his best to avoid such an eventuality. However, it seems as though his subjects had different ideas about the matter as evidenced by the continual Gcaleka raids into Fingoland. By 23 August 1877, all Europeans, including Eustace, were leaving Gcalekaland as the threat of war had become so inevitable and Sarhili had to concede to the wishes of his people.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ C. 1961, Encl. No.43: Statement of West Fynn to Frere, 29 September 1877.

⁸⁹ G. 17, W.R. Fynn to Eustace, 31 August 1877.

⁹⁰ Michael Spicer, ‘The War of Ngcayecibi 1877-78’, (MA. Thesis: Rhodes University, 1978), p. 100.

By September of 1877, the Gcaleka were on the cusp of war with the Mfengu, and therefore, with the colony. The paramount chief of the Xhosa had lost control of his subjects and was about to endorse a war he did not want his people to fight. He had been unable to convince the Gcaleka that war with the Mfengu was going to be against the colonial military as well. Sarhili was also fearful that Maphasa was going to defect to the colony thereby splintering his people before a shot was fired in anger. Moni was not prepared to support a potential Gcaleka war effort and neither was Sandile at that point. The inquiry into the policeman shooting had been abandoned and therefore no diplomatic solution readily presented itself in terms of appeasing the Gcaleka. Twenty years after the cattle-killing, having endured so many hardships to re-establish his authority of the Eastern Cape political stage, Sarhili found himself in another hopeless situation.



Chapter 5- The Beginning of the End

This chapter will discuss the events in Sarhili's life from the beginning of the War of Ngcayecibi until the death of the paramount. Sarhili was on the cusp of war with the Mfengu. This chapter will outline the events of the war as well as the repercussions of this conflict for both the Gcaleka and the paramount. The Xhosa king was forced into exile again where he was forced to live in the Mbashe Forest in an attempt to avoid capture and possible deportation by the British military forces. After much negotiation, Sarhili was able to return from his exile but was only given a small tract of land in Bomvanaland. The colonial authorities removed all semblance of independence that the paramount had previously enjoyed. The Xhosa king was forced to accept that his judicial powers were devolved to a colonial official. Most of the colonial correspondence related to Sarhili for this time period concentrated on his behaviour as a subject of the Crown.

This chapter will highlight the diplomatic acumen of the paramount as he attempted to circumvent the control that the colonial state exerted on himself and his subjects. Although the Xhosa king had surrendered the autonomy of his rule, he did not give up trying to reassert himself on the Eastern Cape political stage. He was constantly agitating for more land and several events in Bomvanaland served to illustrate that the Xhosa king's continued ambition to regain some of his former influence. All these efforts proved to be in vain, the manner in which the Gcaleka paramount chief attempted to sabotage his own assimilation into colonial officialdom indicated his refusal to accept his plight.

The Gcaleka go to war- The Battle of Gwandana

The colonial archive informs us that by 25 September 1877, only one police troop was actually stationed in Butterworth.¹ However, the Gcaleka were probably aware of the fact that Governor Frere had authorized the detachment of about half the Frontier force to Fingoland as hostilities were reaching fever pitch. These forces had at this point, not arrived and as such we may conclude that if the Gcaleka were going to attempt to displace the Mfengu from Fingoland that it would be easier before reinforcements had arrived. It would seem to whereas the raiding of Mfengu livestock had escalated that the Gcaleka had not decided what to do about the intervention of British policeman. Consequently, whenever a 'white' policeman approached, the Gcaleka withdrew from their raids.² On 26 September, a war party led by Khiva and Mxoli, attacked Mfengu kraals at the foot of the Gwandana Mountain in the Idutywa Reserve. Soga writes that when the war cry was sounded and the bulk of the warriors at Hohita heeded the call to battle without the consent of the paramount.³

This disregard by the Gcaleka army for the paramount is also recorded in the colonial archive.⁴ What is interesting though is that the archive does not seem to place any great significance on this development. It is my view that this oversight by the colonial archive is a sign that it was creating a different narrative, one that would serve the colonial state as opposed to vindicating Sarhili from any responsibility for the impending war. It would

¹ C. 1961, Encl. No. 23: Brownlee Memo, 28 August 1877.

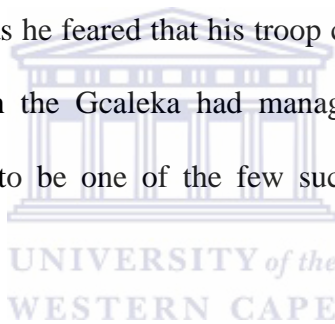
² C. 1961, Encl. 2 No. 44, Griffith to Merriman, 30 September 1877.

³ John Soga, *The AmaXhosa: Life and Customs*, (Alice: Lovedale Press, 1931), p. 120.

⁴ Frontiersman, West Fynn, was a resident in Gcalekaland around this time and regarded himself as a confidant of the Xhosa king. Several items of correspondence from this settler can be found in the colonial archive that corroborate the claims made by Soga about the Sarhili's loss of control of his people. Also see West Fynn, *The '77 War*, (East London, 1911).

have been more difficult for the colonial authorities to sanction Sarhili as they saw fit after the war if they had constantly reinforced his lack of complicity in the Gcaleka war effort. As a result, the colonial archive recorded the attack on Gwandana in very specific terms.

The colonial archive leads us to believe that E.B. Chalmers, who was about to lead a troop on patrol, heard of the attack and led his men to help the Mfengu repel the Gcaleka advance. Arriving at the scene, the colonial troops were able to stymie the 5000-strong Gcaleka army with the use of a 7-pound cannon. According to the colonial archive, the gun broke down and led to a retreat of the Mfengu. The Mfengu withdrawal induced Chalmers to order a general withdrawal as he feared that his troop could end up being surrounded by the Gcaleka.⁵ In this skirmish the Gcaleka had managed to kill seven white soldiers, including one officer. It was to be one of the few successes that the Gcaleka military enjoyed.



It is necessary to unravel the way that the colonial archive deals with this colonial military 'defeat'. We are led to believe that the losses suffered at the hands of the Gcaleka were not a result of superior tactics on the behalf of Sarhili's army but rather, the defeat can be attributed to the malfunction of colonial military hardware. The ineffective nature of Chalmers's leadership is not questioned in the archive as it posits that the Mfengu fleeing the scene caused the general withdrawal. The colonial archive was also uninterested in the seeming inability of the colonial military to combine effectively with the Mfengu army during this skirmish. Although the colonial forces had the superior weapons and therefore could be expected to get the better of the Gcaleka army, no attempt seems to have been

⁵ C. 1961, Encl 2 No. 102, Chalmers to Griffiths, 28 October 1877.

made by the colonial archive to investigate the defeat in any depth. Instead, Chalmers (read colonial military) was relieved of any responsibility for the defeat by the archive and a weapon malfunction is used to explain the Gcaleka victory. At no point does the colonial archive allude to the ‘unsanctioned’ nature of the Gcaleka attack as Sarhili had not given the incursion his blessing.

This initial scuffle exposed several interesting developments amongst the Gcaleka. It must be remembered that the Gcaleka paramount chief had not declared war, yet a number of his subjects, without his sanction, undertook large-scale military action.⁶ Even more indicative of Sarhili’s loss of control was the fact that after the war cry was sounded, the Gcaleka warriors responded without the endorsement of the leader. Soga leads us to believe that Sarhili had lost the ability to direct the actions of his subjects and had become marginalized by his own generals. This ‘*coup de etat*’ had left the paramount in an unenviable position in that if Sarhili were to reassert his rule he would have to support the warring faction of his people or lose his authority over them.

In previous chapters, I emphasise the nature of the Sarhili’s motivation when making important decisions. The paramount had to decide whether he would relinquish power in order to assert the courage of his convictions or to preserve his hegemony and endorse a war that he knew he could not win. Unsurprisingly, the king of the Xhosa chose the latter in perfect congruency with every other decision he had made during his reign. It could be argued that, due to his past experience with the colonial state, he realized that, even if he

⁶ John Soga, The AmaXhosa: Life and Customs, (Alice: Lovedale Press, 1931), p. 120.

did condemn the attack, the British would remain heavy handed in their dealings with him. Unfortunately, this argument has less resonance due to the decisions that Sarhili had made in the past when confronted with a rebellious element among his people.⁷

The battle at Gwandana had given the Gcaleka a false sense of confidence. Ineffective leadership and the importance of a cannon that malfunctioned had allegedly stymied the colonial forces. It would appear that Sarhili was under no illusion that his warriors had been lucky in their victory as he refused to make the customary declaration of war and even declined to give the order to attack in the next military excursion, the Battle of Ibeka, which took place on 29 September 1877.⁸ In a meeting at Hohita, Sarhili tried one last time to dissuade his people from going to war but was challenge by Khiva. The great warrior implored the king to simply grant the army the customary endorsement and allow matters to run their course. Khiva gained the support of the majority of the Gcaleka and Sarhili submitted to the will of his people. However, the paramount reiterated that the Gcaleka would emerge second best from the conflict and, according to Soga, he instructed the Bojela, under chief Lindinxuwa, to remain neutral in the conflict in order preserve the interests of the Gcaleka in Gcalekaland after the war.⁹

The Battle of Ibeka

The next major conflict took place at Ibeka. Ibeka was a trading post that had been fortified by the colonial military and would serve as a defensive station to prevent incursions by the

⁷ One merely has to investigate his involvement with the cattle-killing to be reminded of the extent that the paramount would go to in order to maintain control of his people.

⁸ John Soga, The AmaXhosa: Life and Customs, (Alice: Lovedale Press, 1931), pp. 114-119.

⁹ John Soga, The South Eastern Bantu, (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1930), p. 251.

Gcaleka into Fingoland. Prior to attacking Ibeka, Sarhili sent his great son, Sigcawu, to negotiate with the colonial authorities at the post. Sigcawu is alleged to have explained to the commander at the post, Captain Robinson, that the Gcaleka had no grievance with the police and only wanted fight the Mfengu. Robinson, in turn, made it clear that the police would meet any attack against the Mfengu with force.¹⁰ Consequently, two days later, on 29 September 1877, around 8000 Gcaleka warriors attacked Ibeka.

The Gcaleka had never officially been involved in a frontier war before.¹¹ As such their tactics were naive in that it played directly into the hands of the British. The attack on Ibeka was conducted in a 'full-frontal formation' and the target had been prepared for battle by the colonial military. The Rharhabe, who were the most experienced in making war against the British, avoided this form of attack at all costs in favour of the guerilla attacks that they found to be most effective. However, the success of the Gcaleka tactics at Gwandana had left them deluded that this approach would again be successful against the colonial forces. Spicer writes that the Gcaleka had acquired new firearms and placed a great deal of currency on the war paint of the 'witchdoctor' Ngxito. This 'witchdoctor' advised the warriors to adopt a close formation in their attack in order to best utilize the charm he had bestowed upon them.¹² It was this precise formation that made the advancing Gcaleka easy target for the artillery fire provided by the police troop stationed at Ibeka. The

¹⁰ B. Holt, Where Rainbirds Call, (Cape Town: Struik, 1972), p. 126.

¹¹ Whereas the Gcaleka had been wrongly implicated by the British, or offered support to warring Xhosa clans, this was the first time that the Gcaleka had officially declared war on the colonial state. It can be argued that as Sarhili had not endorsed the conflict, it was not an official war. However, the colonial authorities did not make this distinction.

¹² Michael Spicer, The War of Ngcayecibi 1877-78, (MA. Thesis: Rhodes University, 1978), p. 106.

consequence of this attack was that the Gcaleka had to retreat having lost several hundred of the number as opposed to the six fatalities suffered by the colonial forces.¹³

Prior to the Battle of Ibeka, it seems that Sarhili had attempted to form alliances with other clans in the event of war against the colony. However, at that point no other chief saw it beneficial to become involved in any potential conflict and as such, rejected the political advances of the paramount.¹⁴ However, it was feasible that had the Gcaleka been able to achieve another victory after their success at Gwandana that both the Ngqika and Thembu would have responded by driving the Mfengu settled in their territory, out of their land. This did not occur as the defeat suffered at Ibeka left the other chiefs wary of supporting the paramount. The likelihood of other clans joining the Gcaleka in their military ambitions was further complicated by the fact that Maphasa had defected prior to the onset of Ibeka. Other clans could be excused for reasoning that the war with the Mfengu had split the Gcaleka and as such made them more reticent about joining the Gcaleka military effort. The British responded to Ibeka by declaring war on the Gcaleka on 5 October 1877. In his proclamation, Governor Frere announced the deposition of Sarhili as chief of the Gcaleka as well as the intention of the Cape Colony to invade and annex Gcalekaland.¹⁵

Soga tells us that Sarhili still thought that he could stop the Gcaleka from engaging in a full scale war against the British and therefore attempted to stay behind after the Battle of Ibeka in order to explain to the colonial authorities that he had not sanctioned the attack.

However, he was dragged away by his councilors with them reminding him:

¹³ C. 1961, End No.61, Griffith to Military Secretary, 3 October 1877.

¹⁴ John Soga, *The AmaXhosa: Life and Customs*, (Alice: Lovedale Press, 1931), p. 116-118.

¹⁵ C. 1961, No. 51, Frere to Cunynhame, 10 October 1877.

‘Where is your father Hintsa who was blamed for Gaika’s [Nngqika’s] cattle? Your father was not at war, he died for just this reason in the camp of the whites in whom he confided’.¹⁶

Sarhili followed the advice of his councilors but sent to Brownlee to ask for terms on 3 October. Brownlee refused this request and pointed to proclamation of the governor declaring war on the paramount.¹⁷ However, this refusal to offer terms was a unilateral decision taken by Brownlee as he made his proclamation of 5 October. Instead, on 9 October Brownlee sent out four columns of troops who proceeded to Holela to burn down the Great Place of the paramount.¹⁸ On 15 October Sarhili tried to sue for peace again sending two Christian Gcaleka to Commander-in-Chief Griffith requesting him to suspend hostilities in order to negotiate a peace. Griffith replied that Sarhili had to hand himself and his family over to the colonial authorities unconditionally, the only guarantee for the paramount being that ‘his life would be spared and the punishment as mild as possible’. The paramount declined these terms.¹⁹ The incursion of the colonial military into Gcalekaland began in earnest on 19 October. The Gcaleka had by now adopted guerilla tactics and had moved their women and children, as well as the majority of their cattle, to Bomvanaland.²⁰ The Gcaleka were eventually forced over the Mbashe River into the Bomvana chief, Moni’s land.

¹⁶ John Soga, The South Eastern Bantu, (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1930), pp. 260-261.

¹⁷ C. 1961, Encl. No. 47, Brownlee note on his conversation with Sarhili’s emissary, 5 October 1877.

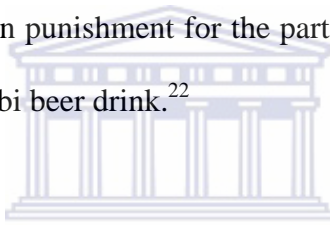
¹⁸ C. 1961, Encl. No. 61, Griffith to Military Secretary, 10 October 1877.

¹⁹ C. 1961, Encl D, No. 84, Griffith to Merriman, 15 October 1877.

²⁰ G.M. Theal, A History of South Africa, Volume X, (Cape Town: Struik, 1964), p. 77.

Sarhili finds an Ally

The defection of Maphasa, prior to the battle at Ibeka, was to inadvertently present Sarhili with an ally. Whereas Brownlee welcomed the defection as it had split the Gcaleka, popular European frontier opinion viewed the Tsonyana chief's desertion with the utmost suspicion.²¹ This general opinion held by the settler population was that Maphasa would commit some form of treachery at the first opportunity as part of a plot hatched in collaboration with Sarhili. As a result, those who did not trust Maphasa were advocating that the Tsonyana should be disarmed. Brownlee resisted these calls but informed Maphasa that his people would face disarmament at a later date, the exact timing of which he did not reveal. This disarmament was in punishment for the part the Tsonyana had played in prior disturbances after the Ngcayecibi beer drink.²²



At this point it is important to recall that the Ngcayecibi beer drink had resulted in a colonial commission of enquiry to ascertain its circumstances. This commission had been abandoned before any ruling could be made due to the behaviour of the Mfengu. The Mfengu had done all in its power to disrupt these hearings resulting in the commission being unable to render any verdict. Yet, Brownlee punished Maphasa and the Tsonyana, through disarmament, for the role that they played at Ngcayecibi. The manner in which the colonial officials treated these defectors would not have gone unnoticed by the Xhosa king.

Maphasa had been joined in his desertion by Makinana, a lesser Ndlambe chief, their combined number totaling approximately 4300 people. They had been settled in Impetu,

²¹ G. 17, Brownlee Memo, May 1878, p. 207.

²² G. 17, Brownlee Memo, May 1878, p. 208.

part of the Cape Colony by the colonial authorities.²³ However, by November 1877 Gcalekaland had been cleared and the opportunity presented itself to resettle these two clans on part of this available land. Brownlee opted instead to place the alliance in an area between the Qora and Shixini Rivers.²⁴ The problem with this exact resettlement location was that Maphasa realized that he would be placed in the midst of the Gcaleka and thus would be under constant threat of reprisals for his defection. Brownlee dismissed these objections.²⁵ Having initially resisted the calls by fellow frontiersman to disarm this alliance, Brownlee was forced to succumb to this pressure when Frere announced that the entire Xhosa nation was to be relieved of their weapons as a strategy to ensure that future frontier wars could be averted. Consequently, on 17 November 1877 Brownlee informed Maphasa that disarmament would commence and that he would forfeit the land he had prior to the outbreak of the war.²⁶ Maphasa had opted to defect to the colony in order to ensure that the Tsonyana did not forfeit their land. However this decision by Brownlee ensured that Maphasa would lose exactly what he had tried to preserve.

Spicer tells us that the resolution sanctioned by Brownlee to disarm the Tsonyana troubled Maphasa greatly as he and his people would be placed in the midst of the Gcaleka without any weapons to defend themselves with in the event of Gcaleka reprisals for his desertion.²⁷ Not only did Brownlee instruct Maphasa and Makinana to collect their people's weapons but he also gave the same order to Captain Von Linsingen, of the German Volunteers. Unfortunately, whereas the instruction from Brownlee was for Von Linsingen to seize the

²³ G.M. Theal, *A History of South Africa*, Volume X, (Cape Town: Struik, 1964), p. 60.

²⁴ N.A. 153. Ayliff to Brownlee, 17 February 1878.

²⁵ West W. Fynn, *The '77 War*, (East London, 1911), p. 16

²⁶ Michael Spicer, '*The War of Ngcayecibi 1877-78*', (MA. Thesis: Rhodes University, 1978), p. 127.

²⁷ Michael Spicer, '*The War of Ngcayecibi 1877-78*', (MA. Thesis: Rhodes University, 1978), pp. 146-147.

arms they saw people moving around with, the German Volunteers chose to enter huts uninvited to confiscate weapons.²⁸ The zeal of the Volunteers was of such a nature that Makinana's people feared that the disarmament was a mere prologue to their extermination. Consequently, under the pretence of searching for lost cattle, Makinana fled with his people to a Ngqika location near Draaibosch, to join his brother Ndimba.²⁹

Brownlee was immediately informed of Makinana's actions by Maphasa as the Ndlambe chief had confided his suspicions to him. Brownlee received confirmation from Draaibosch that Makinana had indeed fled to the area and gave instructions for a police troop to disarm Makinana's people and return them to Impetu. However, instead of following their instructions, the police started seizing cattle haphazardly, not ascertaining whether the cattle belonged to Makinana or Ndimba. It was therefore unsurprising that both Makinana and Ndimba offered armed resistance to the police.³⁰ It must be remembered that the land at Draaibosch was that of Sandile, the paramount chief of the Ngqika, and as such, protocol dictated that the police presence at the very least had to be reported to his person. This oversight was not lost on Brownlee and he attempted to obscure his diplomatic error by claiming that the misunderstanding was due to ambiguity in relation to the exact boundaries designating Sandile's territory.³¹ One of the repercussions of this oversight was that Sandile supposedly reacted angrily to the police presence in his territory and remarked ominously that: 'A snake, if trodden upon, would bite',³²

²⁸ G. 17 Brownlee Memo, May 1878, p. 210.

²⁹ G. 17 Brownlee Memo, May 1878, p. 210.

³⁰ G. 17. Brownlee Memo, May 1878, p. 211.

³¹ G. 17 Brownlee Memo, May 1878, p. 212.

³² G. 17 Brownlee Memo, May 1878, p. 212.

Sarhili, even though he was retreating from Gcalekaland, would not have been oblivious to the treatment that the Tsonyana were being subjected to now that they had subjected themselves to British authority. Bearing in mind the fate Hintsu suffered at the hands of the British in 1835, Sarhili seemed to forsake any thought of surrendering himself to the colonial officials as this course of action would have left him at the mercy of the same authority that had been responsible for his father's death. Instead, the paramount continued to seek an alliance with other chiefs in the Eastern Cape, notably with the Ngqika paramount, Sandile.

Up until this point Sandile had not allowed his people to get involved in the war that Sarhili was waging. However, Sandile still appeared to regard himself as subservient to Sarhili³³ and the Ngqika were also involved in disputes with the Mfengu. This was evidenced in the increase in livestock theft that the Mfengu had been suffering at the hands of the Ngqika since September of 1877. Sandile, it would seem, did not have the support of his councilors at this point to commit his people to war against the British. Such a decision would need to have the support of the majority of his people but this was not forthcoming as yet. However, his young warriors continued unabated in their raids on Mfengu cattle stock, apparently with the blessing of the Ngqika paramount chief.³⁴

The events at Draaibosch saw popular opinion in the colony demand action against Makinana and Ndimba. However, Frere ignored this outpouring insisting that Makinana was merely defending his property and had no desire to go to war against the colony. He

³³ This subservience is reflected in a quote that will appear later in the chapter.

³⁴ Cory Library: PR. 1273, J. Auld in Blithwood Review, October 1924.

therefore instructed Makinana to merely give up his arms and pay a 200 head of cattle fine in order to resolve the matter. Furthermore, Makinana could remain in Draaibosch if he wished. Frere sent former Ngqika commissioner, W. B. Chalmers to mediate matters at Draaibosch.³⁵ Chalmers was able to restore calm in Draaibosch and proceeded to have a meeting with Sandile as well. At this meeting Sandile stated that his people wished to remain at peace with government.³⁶ It would seem that the crisis had been averted.

Missionary John Auld, stationed with the Ngqika, reported that Tyala, chief councilor to Sandile and leader of the peace party within the Ngqika, claimed that Sandile was looking for a reason to go to war with the colony. Auld argued that Sandile's statement to Chalmers was only aimed at buying himself more time in order to gain majority support for war from his people.³⁷ Government responded with an attempt to ensure that any further resistance from the Gcaleka was further weakened the government decided to offer amnesty to any Gcaleka who laid down their arms and was prepared to submit to colonial authority.³⁸ In this way, the Gcaleka were sure to lose even more of their military and thereby make it less tempting for Sandile to join Sarhili in the war against the colony.

This ploy backfired on the colony as the colonial archive claims that while a small number of Gcaleka did surrender their arms the greater majority who emerged from hiding went about the business of launching attacks on colonial targets.³⁹ For their part, the Mfengu did

³⁵ Molteno Papers, No 731, Frere to Molteno, Private and Confidential, 25 November 1877.

³⁶ C. 1961, Encl. 2 No. 38: W. B. Chalmers to Merriman, 21 November 1877.

³⁷ Cory Library, PR. 1273, J. Auld in Blythswood Review, October 1924.

³⁸ C. 1961, End. 3 No. 102: Proclamation signed by Merriman and Molteno, 21 November 1877.

³⁹ Major D. B. Hook, With Sword and Statute on the Cape of Good Hope Frontier, (Cape Town, no date), pp. 249-252.

not really help the government cause, as was hoped for by colonial officials, in trying to establish peace in the region. The colonial archive tells us that the Mfengu openly agitated those Gcaleka that had surrendered and were heavy handed in their duties as Divisional Police that caused a further upsurge in theft of Mfengu livestock by both the Thembu and Ngqika.⁴⁰ The scene was set for Sarhili to gain an ally to the Gcaleka cause.

On 19 December 1877, Sarhili decided to sue for peace again and sent Bhotomane as his representative. Sarhili wanted to remain with his people in Gcalekaland even if he lost his chieftainship but these terms were unacceptable to government as they wanted to settle white farmers and Mfengu on this land. As a result, the colonial authorities were only prepared to offer the paramount guarantees about his personal safety.⁴¹ Bhotomane was able to negotiate a six-day armistice in order to take the terms back to Sarhili and return with an answer from the paramount.⁴² Sarhili, is reported to have said the following in a meeting with Eustace on Christmas day 1877:

‘The terms offered by Government were very hard, that he wished himself and his people to be under Government, and could not see why he might not live in his country’.⁴³

⁴⁰ N. A. 155, T. Wright to W. Wright, 3 November 1877.

⁴¹ G.H. 21/7, Native Resident’s File: Report of a meeting between Bhotomane, Captain Robinson and others, 19 December 1877.

⁴² G.H. 21/7, Native Resident’s File: Report of a meeting between Bhotomane, Captain Robinson and others, 19 December 1877.

⁴³ G.H 21/7, Native Resident’s File: Eustace to Frere, 25 December 1877.

It would seem that Sarhili did not expect much from his peace bid with the state as he had sent Khiva Xoseni to the Ngqika to illicit the aid of Sandile. The timing of this mission was to coincide with the armistice Bhotomane would negotiate with government.⁴⁴ Sandile was advised by his councilors to reject the advances of Khiva. He is reported in the colonial archive to have responded to their advice as follows:

‘How can I sit still when Rhili [Sarhili] fights? Rhili [Sarhili] fights and bursts and is overpowered, then I too become nothing. No longer will I be a chief. Where Rhili [Sarhili] dies, there I will die, where he wakes, there will I wake.’⁴⁵

The war being waged by Sarhili had still not gained popular support amongst the Ngqika and as such Sandile was handicapped in his attempts to align his people with the Gcaleka. It would seem that an even split had emerged among the Ngqika with half the people supporting Sandile’s desire to enter the war and the other half opposing it.⁴⁶ The colonial state was well aware of this dissention among the Ngqika and sought to force Sandile to reject the advances made by Khiva. On 29 December, Tyala announced to the colonial authorities that Sandile had decided to ‘sit still’⁴⁷ Furthermore, he requested on behalf of the Ngqika that government ‘keep the Fingoes quiet’.⁴⁸ On the same day however, the Ngqika reportedly attacked a police patrol.⁴⁹ Sandile denied having ordered the attack and

⁴⁴ G. 17- 78, Eustace to S.N.A, 31 January 1878.

⁴⁵ Jeff Peires, ‘House of Phalo- a history of the Xhosa people in the days of their independence’, (Ravan: Johannesburg, 1981), p. 72.

⁴⁶ G.H. 21/8, Conduct of Sandile file: Brownlee Memo, 11 January 1878

⁴⁷ ‘Sitting still’ was a euphemism used by the Xhosa to indicate that they would not participate in a war.

⁴⁸ G.H. 21/8, Conduct of Sandile File: Wright to S.N.A, 8 January 1878.

⁴⁹ C. 2000, Encl. No. 90: Moore to Lambert, 31 December 1877.

Soga places the blame for the attacks at the hands of Khiva. Soga states that Khiva wanted to get the Ngqika irreversibly involved in the war.⁵⁰ Brownlee proceeded by announcing that all Ngqika who were committed to the maintenance of peace were to meet at Engwali Mission Station where they would be received and protected by government.⁵¹ Sandile did not make an appearance at this station and only one of his chief councilors, Soga, supported the Ngqika paramount chief.⁵² Sarhili had now gained an ally in Sandile.

It would appear that while Sandile had wanted to support the war effort of Sarhili, he too was coerced, to a certain extent, into joining the hostilities by warriors in his clan. However, while Sandile was offered a chance to distance himself from the actions of some of his subjects by the colonial government, this opportunity was not granted the Gcaleka paramount. It remains debatable that Sarhili would have utilized such an opportunity as it would have meant relinquishing both his independence as well as control over the majority of his subjects. As has been discussed before in this dissertation, Sarhili was extremely loathed to lose any degree of power, often to the detriment of his subjects. It is also important to note the double standards that existed between the treatment received by the two chiefs.

The colonial authorities ostracized Sarhili even when his people had limited their hostilities to the Mfengu. The colonial government saw fit to blame him for sanctioning attacks on their subjects even when they were in possession of evidence to the contrary. The Gcaleka

⁵⁰ John Soga, *South Eastern Bantu*. p. 264.

⁵¹ G.H. 21/8, *Conduct of Sandile File: Wright to S.N.A.*, 8 January 1878.

⁵² George Theal, *The History of South Africa. Volume X*. p. 82.

had not launched any offensive on the colony or its officials and the state was prepared to go to war with Sarhili who had not authorized these attacks. On the other hand, Sandile was allowed the prospect of amnesty for the attack on colonial officials, which would have been regarded by the state as more serious than attacking the Mfengu.

This double standard illustrates perfectly the policy the colonial government implemented against the Gcaleka paramount. The fact that Sarhili was independent from colonial control meant that the colonial state was prepared to hold him responsible for all the transgressions of his subjects even when it was apparent that he was attempting to avoid conflict with the colony. Sarhili, in essence, had become a victim of his own success as he had accumulated much influence and power since his return from exile after the cattle killing and this made the colonial authorities uneasy. Consequently, any opportunity to diminish the power of the Xhosa king was seized upon by the colonial authorities and the ongoing conflict with the Mfengu had presented the state with such an opportunity.

The Battle of Kentani

The colonial archive tells us that Sandile was intent on making a last stand together with his king. To this end he attempted to convince Sarhili to ‘fight to the last man’ during their first major battle in alliance with each other. They chose the military camp at Kentani as their target.⁵³ Early on 7 February 1878, the Ngqika army led by Sandile and Khiva advanced from the Kei and the Gcaleka army led by Dalasile approached from the sea. However, the attack was compromised by Maphasa, who had followed Sandile and was

⁵³ C. 2220, Encl. No.3: Brownlee Memo on Sandile, no date.

threatening his flank. Consequently, the Gcaleka attacked Kentani on their own as Sandile could not risk exposing his flank to Maphasa during an assault on Kentani. However, by noon both the Gcaleka and Ngqika had suffered great losses.⁵⁴ Even though the Gcaleka had attacked Kentani on their own, Maphasa succeeded in inflicting large casualties on Sandile's army who were caught between helping Sarhili and defending against Maphasa's warriors.

Apparently this loss caused the Gcaleka to lose interest in continued warfare as the majority of their warriors scattered throughout the Eastern Cape. Sarhili retreated back to his headquarters on the Qora River where he tried to negotiate a palatable peace for himself and the Gcaleka. However, this peace did not materialize and Sarhili fled across the Mbashe River to take up residence in the Mbashe Forest.⁵⁵ Sandile, on the other hand, did not attempt to escape the attentions of the British military and was eventually killed on 29 May 1878 while making his way to a rendezvous at the Thomas River.⁵⁶ The war petered out and on 30 June 1878, amnesty was granted to all involved in the rebellion, except for prominent chiefs and men involved in murder cases.⁵⁷ In other words, Sarhili remained in exile as he was not offered amnesty.

The Ngcayecibi War had been very costly to the paramount chief of the Xhosa. Sarhili had lost virtually everything that distinguished him as a king to his people. Firstly, Sarhili was a king without a kingdom as he had no land but was based in the Mbashe Forests at the

⁵⁴ John Soga, The South Eastern Bantu, (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1930), p. 265.

⁵⁵ N.A. 1: Memo on letter of Chief Magistrate of Fingoland regarding occupation of Gcalekaland, 31 May 1878.

⁵⁶ C. 2220, End. No. 3: Brownlee Memo, no date.

⁵⁷ Cory Library, MS. 14, 254/13.

pleasure of Moni, who had previously been his subject.⁵⁸ Secondly, while most Gcaleka still regarded Sarhili as their chief, the people were scattered all over the Eastern Cape as opposed to be concentrated in any specific area therefore making it impossible for Sarhili to govern over the Gcaleka who were resident in areas of other chiefs as these Gcaleka would be subordinate to the chief in question. Not only was Sarhili a king without a kingdom, he was also a king without a people.

Thirdly, Sarhili lost his independence from the British. In order to negotiate any return across the Mbashe River back to Gcalekaland Sarhili would be forced to accept colonial authority over him. The Xhosa king would have to be subordinate to a magistrate in his district, assuming he received land to settle on, thereby rendering himself powerless in most judicial arbitration. The final loss that Sarhili would have to endure as a result of the Ngcayecibi War was that he had lost most of his cattle. Cattle are imperative to Xhosa society in terms of the chief maintaining control over his people. In other words, Sarhili had yet again lost the majority of the currency that helped ensure the loyalty of his subjects.

Sarhili was depicted by the colonial archive as being somewhat of a reluctant warrior. Throughout the archive references are made to Sarhili either attempting to prevent the war or trying to establish a peace. The archive is also intent on illustrating the lack of control that Sarhili has over his subjects. Interestingly, Sarhili had lost similar control prior to the cattle killing. Rather than investigating how this development would impact the Frontier, the archive remained concerned with a supposed 'chiefly plot'. This, as many have argued,

⁵⁸ Moni had pledged his allegiance to Sarhili in 1872 but had consequently allowed his people to become subject to the Empire thereby making him answerable to the state and not the Xhosa king.

was a colonial invention. It calls for an investigation into why it was, that during a frontier war, so much attention is placed on the lack of control by the Xhosa chief as opposed to uncovering a chiefly plot. It would seem likely that Sarhili would seek the help of his fellow chiefs in the event of war. Yet the prospect of such a plot during the Ngcayecibi War, did not receive much contemplation from the colonial authorities. The archive is instead filled with instances of the paramount being ignored by his subjects. Why would this be the focus of the colonial archive?

It is my hypothesis that the colonial authorities became aware that Sarhili needed to win this war to regain control of his people. However, the British knew, just as the paramount did, that this was not going to happen and as such, the power base that Sarhili had built since his exile would be destroyed. The Gcaleka were the alleged aggressors in the war as they were intent on destroying the Mfengu. It was therefore not necessary for the colonial state to create any reason, as it did in the previous two frontier wars, to attack the Gcaleka. The Gcaleka had given the colonial state a valid reason to attack them and end Gcaleka autonomy. It was therefore unnecessary for the colonial archive to portray Sarhili in any specific manner as the events that were playing themselves out justified the actions of the colonial state. The actions of the Gcaleka were playing straight into the hands of the colonial government. Defeating the Gcaleka would mean that the state could confiscate Sarhili's land, scatter his subjects as well as driving him back into exile. It was therefore not necessary for the archive to reflect anything other than reality. The threat that Sarhili posed was to be eradicated in a manner that was irreproachable as the Gcaleka had initiated the hostilities.

The Return from Exile

By the end of 1878, Sarhili was in exile in Bomvanaland, in the Mbashe Forests, with between 1000 and 2000 men hoping for resettlement to his old country.⁵⁹ He virtually disappears from the archive until 1881 when he starts agitating for his return from exile. The first approach made to Sarhili was via the magistrate at Willowvale, Mr. Stratfield, who offered the paramount land in Willowvale on behalf of the Mfengu petty chief, Ngalo. The land would only be able to accommodate less than a hundred people and therefore Sarhili rejected the offer as he would be at the mercy of the Mfengu.⁶⁰

Captain Blyth, Commander of the F.A.M.P, approached the paramount with an offer from government. Sarhili was offered an immediate and unconditional pardon as well as land on the Qora River, near Holela. The land would be able to accommodate his family and 'close followers'. However, Sarhili refused the offer under the tutelage of his councilors who believed that his diplomatic skills would be able to gain him his entire country back.⁶¹ This expectation did not materialize and government withdrew its offer and Sarhili was forced to remain in exile as by refusing the offer his pardon was retracted as well.

Eventually, Sarhili seems to have realized that he had been forgotten by the colonial authorities and appeals to government, in the form of Henry Vice, chief magistrate of Elliotdale:

⁵⁹ CMT 1/51, Vice to Elliot, 6 May 1881.

⁶⁰ 231 I/EDL 5/1/2/1, Confidential notes of Henry Vice, 5 October 1881.

⁶¹ G. 19, Blyth Memo, 9 May 1885, p. 7.

‘What great crime have I committed? Was it not the first time that I have fought against government? Why have others been forgiven and not me? All I have to say is that I am now living in the bush with wild animals. Would you not intercede with government on my behalf and allow me to return to my old homestead to remain there comfortably?’⁶²

This meeting with Vice was to serve as the catalyst for the resettlement of Sarhili as he was informed by Vice on 25 September 1882 that government had agreed to grant him a pardon.⁶³ The offer to return to part of Gcalekaland was not made again. It would seem the British regarded it as impolitic to make a similar resettlement offer to the Xhosa king as although Sarhili was utterly defeated, he still wielded some form of authority amongst the Gcaleka. Also, it was conceivable that this authority could be devolved onto his great son, Sigcawu. As a result, Sarhili was offered Ncehana, Sholorha and Mcelwana Locations as Land for resettlement. These Locations were in Bomvanaland and could be tightly controlled by the colonial authorities. Sarhili, if he accepted this offer, would have to subject himself British rule as well as the concomitant regulations i.e. the mechanisms of indirect rule. Realizing that he had no leverage to bargain with, Sarhili accepted the land and the terms.⁶⁴

Negotiation, Resistance and Heart Break.

⁶² CMT 1/51, Vice to Elliot, 13 September 1882.

⁶³ CMT 1/5 1, Vice to Elliot, 25 September 1882.

⁶⁴ John Soga, The AmaXhosa: Life and Customs, (Alice: Lovedale Press, 1931), p. 123.

Having resettled in Bomvanaland, Sarhili's actions seem symptomatic of someone intent on resisting his loss of autonomy. In April 1883, a man named Mbebe, was arrested by the police on the charge of two murders. Mbebe was a Gcaleka and stated that he did not recognize the authority of the police to arrest him as he 'belonged to Sarhili' and therefore the policeman was not within his jurisdiction to arrest him. Mbebe was aided by another Gcaleka man, Sombali, who forced the policeman to release Mbebe.⁶⁵ The issue was raised with Sarhili by magistrate Vice, who was still the magistrate of Bomvanaland and therefore in charge of the administering justice in Sarhili's land. Sarhili, in turn, reassured Vice that he had no played any role in the entire episode but that he would 'assist in any way possible'. Vice instructed Sarhili to detain the two men in order for the police to arrest them. When the police constable arrived at Sarhili's residence to arrest the men, Sarhili informed them that the men had not arrived back at their residences and consequently he could not detain them on behalf of the state. Vice remained unconvinced of this as the verbal report of the constable implicated Sarhili in aiding their escape from justice. However, Vice had no proof of such aid and was forced to let the issue go.⁶⁶ Major Elliot, the chief magistrate Thembuland agreed with this assessment stating:

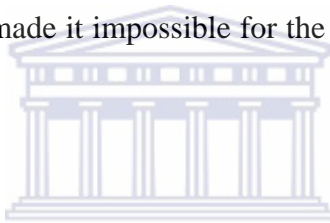
'I am convinced that the entire episode with Mbebe and Sombali was done under the instigation of Kreli [Sarhili] and is in keeping with his past behaviour. Though Kreli [Sarhili] denies any prior knowledge, I am sure no

⁶⁵ CMT 1/51, Vice to Elliot, 25 April 1883.

⁶⁶ CMT 1/51, Vice to Elliot, 28 April 1883.

Gcaleka would go against government without the instruction of Kreli [Sarhili].⁶⁷

In this brief episode we are able to see the tactics Sarhili was set to adopt in the new dispensation to which he was subjected. Prior to accepting the terms offered by the colonial state, Sarhili would have had the authority to adjudicate over the Mbebe matter. However, this authority had been forfeited to the state when the paramount accepted the land offered him in Bomvanaland. Instead of supporting the magistrate, as was set out in the terms of resettlement, Sarhili was accused of undermining the efforts of Vice. The paramount was able to do so in a manner that made it impossible for the magistrate to implicate him in the escape of the two Gcaleka men.



It is my opinion that the most telling aspect of this episode was not Sarhili's alleged complicity in the escape of the two accused. Rather, it is of more importance to recognize the short memories colonial officials seem to have had. In order to blame the entire episode on Sarhili, Elliot states that the Gcaleka would not oppose the state except under instruction from Sarhili. However, the Gcaleka fought an entire war against the colony without the sanction of their paramount chief. It is therefore feasible that these Gcaleka men had acted independently from coercion by Sarhili. It is important to be vigilant to the tactics the colonial archive adopted in its recording of this incident as already, less than a year after the Xhosa king had returned from exile, Sarhili is being portrayed as uncooperative and underhand by the archive. These accusations are based on suspicion rather than any

⁶⁷ 1/EDL 4/1/2/1, Elliot to Vice, 30 April 1883.

concrete evidence but this is hardly surprising as the paramount had been on the receiving end of harsh colonial treatment in the past on the basis of suspicion alone.⁶⁸

The next time Sarhili appears in the archive is in October of 1883 when Hut Tax was due to be paid to the colonial state. After the Ngcayecibi War many Gcaleka settled in Bomvanaland. The Gcaleka were allowed to live in this area under the proviso that they acknowledged their subordination to the existing chiefs and headman that were in charge of the specific areas that they settled in. This arrangement had seemed to work until Sarhili settled in the broader area. John Morris, who replaced Henry Vice as magistrate at Elliotdale, reported that the Gcaleka now refused to acknowledge any Bomvana as their chief or headman and therefore refused to pay hut tax. Morris writes that this caused great dissatisfaction amongst the Bomvana as the Gcaleka were exempting themselves from this levy that the Bomvana were forced to pay. Furthermore, the Gcaleka were appointing their own headman in areas that already had one and claimed that only Sarhili had any authority over them.⁶⁹

It remains unclear how much of this Gcaleka resistance to hut tax was spontaneous as opposed to being orchestrated by the paramount. However, no reference is made in the colonial archive at that time to suggest that he had instigated this resistance so it seems safe to assume that Sarhili was innocent of any coercion. It would appear possible that the presence of the paramount in Bomvanaland had allowed the Gcaleka living in the region an

⁶⁸ Several examples of this ‘guilty by suspicion’ can be found throughout this dissertation. Sarhili was relieved of more than 50 000 head of cattle during the Mlanjeni war as the colonial authorities suspected him of colluding with the Ngqika. He was forced to flee his own country after the cattle-killing due to the so called ‘chiefly plot’.

⁶⁹ CMT 1/51, Morris to Elliot, 30 November 1883.

excuse to refuse paying the tax expected from the residents. Morris realized that this disparity between the Bomvana and Gcaleka was potentially dangerous and urged Sarhili to intervene. The paramount stated that the only way to solve the issue was to give the Gcaleka land of their own. The Bomvana chief, Moni, in a visit to Morris, stated that the Bomvana needed the land occupied by the Gcaleka and that the hut tax situation was becoming intolerable to his people, thereby agreeing with Sarhili's assessment of the situation.⁷⁰ This did not happen and the tension between the two factions persisted.⁷¹

By June 1884, it would appear that Sarhili regarded his only hope of regaining Gcalekaland depended on making it impossible for Gcaleka and Bomvana to live together, as he is accused by the colonial archive of encouraging his subjects to refuse to pay hut tax.⁷² This situation was exacerbated when a petty Bomvana chief, Langa, also refused to pay the tax in protest to fact that the Gcaleka had rendered themselves exempt from the levy.⁷³ The decision that Sarhili had made to encourage the non-payment of the tax prompted Morris, in his 1884 annual report, to describe the Xhosa king as follows:

‘The Gcaleka are a lawless tribe and are not willing to be ruled by Government. Kreli [Sarhili], although showing a disposition to work amiably with this office, is I fear little to be depended upon and will only continue as long as it suits his purpose.’⁷⁴

⁷⁰ 1/EDL 5/1/1/2, Record of a visit of Moni to CM Morris, 4 February 1884.

⁷¹ CMT, 1/51, Morris to Elliot, 19 February 1884.

⁷² CMT, 1/51, Morris to Elliot, 25 June 1884.

⁷³ CMT. 1/51, Morris to Elliot, 2 July 1884.

⁷⁴ 1/EDL 5/1/1/2, Annual Elliotdale Report, 31 December 1884.

Sarhili, even when he is seen to be cooperating with the colonial authorities, is viewed with skepticism by the colonial archive. In the quotation above, Morris stated that the Gcaleka were a 'lawless tribe' thereby effectively exonerating the paramount of any role he may have played in their renegeing of the Hut tax. This admission made it difficult for Morris to justify his ensuing comment, where he accused the paramount of only cooperating with the colonial state when it is expedient for him to do so. Sarhili had already begun his quest to be awarded more territory by the colonial state and as such, it was becoming increasingly necessary for the colonial archive to produce knowledge that would validate a decision that would reject the Xhosa king's request for more land. It was not in the interest of the colonial state for Sarhili to be awarded more territory as it would mean that more Gcaleka would be able to join their paramount chief and therefore increase the influence the Xhosa king could wield in the Eastern Cape. I have argued throughout this dissertation that the colonial archive is an apparatus of the colonial state that sought to protect its interests. It was clearly not in the interest of the colonial state to facilitate any increase in Sarhili's power.

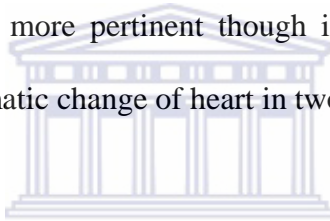
Sarhili agreed to register his subjects with the government in order to facilitate the collection of hut tax. However, he did this at a time when Bomvanaland was in the grips of a drought and appealed to the colonial authorities for some understanding if his people were unable to meet their payments.⁷⁵ The registration of the Gcaleka was completed by mid-October 1884, and oddly enough, bearing in mind the comments Morris made about the paramount in his annual report at the end of the same year, the Bomvanaland magistrate

⁷⁵ CMT 1/51, Morris to Elliot, 19 September 1885.

described Sarhili's behaviour in this process as 'exemplary'⁷⁶. In fact, Sarhili had managed to impress Morris to such an extent that he wrote:

'I have no doubts with regards Kreli's [Sarhili's] sincerity at present that the proposed cession of ground [be] carried through and that he intends to abide by conditions faithfully.'⁷⁷

It would seem as if Sarhili had been able to utilize the resistance offered by the Gcaleka to hut tax to achieve his aim of gaining more ground as his resident magistrate Morris has endorsed his request. What is more pertinent though is why had the Bonvana resident magistrate undergo such a dramatic change of heart in two months?



At this point, it is important to remain cognisant of the fact that the letters contained in the colonial archive were not available to Sarhili and he only had the word of Morris in which to place his trust. Sarhili's past experiences with the British would not have given him much confidence. It is conceivable that he did not regard it as very significant. It would therefore be understandable if he had attempted to gain land through every avenue he could conceive of. Unfortunately for the paramount, it was this distrust that was going to cost him the very commodity he most desired, more land.

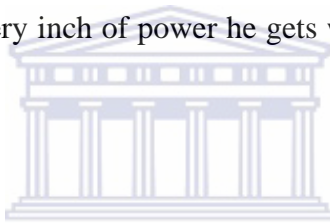
After the meeting with Morris on 9 September 1885, Sarhili waited for approximately one year before he decided to send his son, Sigcawu, to ask the resident magistrate of

⁷⁶ CMT 1/51, Morris to Elliot, 16 October 1885.

⁷⁷ 1/EDL. 5/1/1/3, Morris to Elliot, 9 September 1885.

Elliotdale, E. B. Chalmers, to take up his case for more land. Sarhili had enjoyed a reasonable relationship with Chalmers prior to the Ngcayecibi War and wanted the magistrate to intercede on his behalf to the government. However, Chalmers saw this request as a conflict of interest as this type of appeal had to be done via Morris and the fact that Sarhili had sought his intervention meant that the paramount had breached colonial protocol.⁷⁸ Chalmers proceeded to inform Morris of this violation of procedure which led to a drastic change of heart from Morris. Having learnt of Sarhili's tactics Morris wrote:

'I am afraid that there is much for us to worry about, and Kreli [Sarhili] must be kept down as every inch of power he gets will only make him fight for more'.⁷⁹



It appears from my reading of the archive that Morris had lost all faith in the Xhosa king when he attempted to gain the endorsement of Chalmers as opposed to gaining it from his own magistrate. As far as gaining more land was concerned, this was the diplomatic error that put paid to those aspirations for the paramount chief of the Gcaleka. By early 1887, Morris reports that he and the Xhosa king were at constant loggerheads as regards who had jurisdiction over certain cases. When issues involved crime, it was the duty of the magistrate to adjudicate whereas cultural matters were the province of the paramount. This was tantamount to a system of indirect rule, with a steady erosion of Sarhili's power.

⁷⁸ CMT 1/52, Personal letter from Chalmers to Morris, 4 September 1886.

⁷⁹ CMT 1/52, Personal letter from Morris to Elliot, 15 September 1886.

Several disputes arose regarding dowries. It would not appear as clear cut as other issues as payment of a dowry was regarded by the colonial authorities as a contract and therefore within the jurisdiction of the magistrate. Sarhili, on the other hand thought of this form of bridewealth as a cultural matter and therefore within his sphere of control. Consequently, any dispute regarding dowries was a constant source of dispute between the magistrate and the paramount.⁸⁰ Sarhili must have realized that Morris had undergone a change in attitude as later in that same year he approached the magistrate with a case that had personal significance to the Xhosa king.

One of the Sarhili's wives, Nonkanti, fell pregnant by a Gcaleka man named Banya. Nonkanti proceeded to abort the baby via usage of herbs. During the trial, Nonkanti testified that she had decided to abort the baby by her own accord and that Banya bore no knowledge of her decision. However, Sarhili was not convinced of this and demanded that Banya be tried for murder. Morris ruled that the case was a civil and not criminal one and ruled that Banya pay Sarhili all his cattle in compensation for his interaction with Nonkanti. Even after the trial was concluded and Nonkanti admitted Banya's involvement in the abortion, Morris was not interested in pressing criminal charges against Banya.⁸¹

Sarhili could have adjudicated this case himself if he was prepared to treat it as a civil matter. However, he instead chose to place the case in the hands of Morris, seemingly in the hope that firstly, the case would be regarded as a criminal one. Secondly, by placing his faith in Morris it is reasonable to assume that Sarhili hoped to regain some of the trust he had lost in the eyes of the magistrate. On both counts the paramount was disappointed as

⁸⁰ CMT 1/52, Morris to Elliot, 25 March 1887.

⁸¹ CMT 1/52, Case between Kreli and Banya, 8 December 1887.

when the paramount again requested land, in the person of Sigcawu, from Morris a year later, he was given the following endorsement by the magistrate:

‘I should not be phased to be released from the responsibility of the charge of old Kreli [Sarhili] as he is a source of worry, anxiety and annoyance, but the advisability of such a removal is a matter of grave concern. Sigcau [Sigcawu’s] request is to my mind nothing more than a scheme to regain his old country which will soon when surrounded by his own people’?⁸²

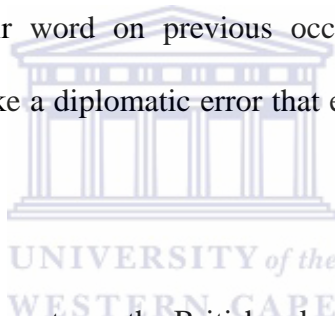
On 27 March 1889, Morris informed Sarhili that the application for more land had been turned down.⁸³ Sarhili responded to this rejection by requesting permission from Morris to ask Captain Blyth to plead his case to government. It must be remembered that Blyth had offered Sarhili a return to Gcalekaland in 1881, which the paramount rejected. Morris decided to oblige the paramount’s request. However, the response remained the same from government. Rose-Innes, the Under Secretary of Native Affairs, wrote to Sarhili via Major Elliot and stated that Sarhili gave up all entitlement to land when he accepted terms to receive land in Bomvanaland. If the land was not large enough, Sarhili was welcome to send some of his supporters to the rail works in the colony where labour was needed. Rose-Innes made it clear that the government was not prepared to entertain any more land claims from the Xhosa king.⁸⁴

⁸² CMT 1/52, Morris to Elliot, 20 October 1888.

⁸³ CMT 1/52, Morris to Elliot, 27 March 1889.

⁸⁴ 4/1/3/3, Rose-Innes to Elliot, 10 November 1890.

Sarhili had accepted terms from the British in order to escape living with wild animals in the Mbashe Forests. He had been astute enough to recognize that he could use the Gcaleka refusal to pay hut tax to his own advantage and went about orchestrating the situation to near perfection. However, when Sarhili had finally managed to gain the trust of the magistrate placed with him, he lost patience. It is only possible to hypothesize but it is my postulation that if Sarhili had not approached Chalmers for an endorsement he would most probably have received more/other land from the colonial government. Sarhili was not privy to the colonial correspondence of the time and as such he cannot be blamed for not accepting Morris at his word that he was promoting the cause of the paramount. After all, the British had not kept their word on previous occasions in the experience of the paramount. But Sarhili did make a diplomatic error that even the past record of the British could not excuse.



Sarhili was fully aware of the importance the British colonial system placed on procedure. It was therefore a grave mistake to attempt to go 'over the head' of Morris and approach Chalmers for help. To Morris, this would have been tantamount to treason, having one of his own charges seeking help without his express permission. It was a blow to their relationship that would leave it irreparable. Each time Sarhili made a request for more land the colonial state required a recommendation from Morris and with time these recommendations became increasingly scathing. Sarhili was never to receive additional/other land as the recommendation from Morris made it impossible for any government official to justify such an award. After Rose-Innes conveyed the finality of

government's decision to not award any other land to the Gcaleka paramount, Sarhili disappears almost entirely from the archive. The next time he reappears is when he dies.

The King is Dead.

Sarhili is reported to have died on 4 February 1893.⁸⁵ As was the case with the birth of the paramount, various other sources have detailed the year of his death at a variety of different times. In the course of investigating the archive, I was only able to find one document that confirmed his death. Sarhili was falsely reported as dead in 1885, but this report was immediately discredited by Morris.⁸⁶ Sarhili's tombstone at Tsholora has his death dated in 1902.⁸⁷ This year is credited in accordance with Gcaleka oral history. Noel Mostert regards 1892 as the year the paramount died, although he does not provide any reference to substantiate this claim.⁸⁸ The Albany Museum in Grahamstown extends the confusion, proclaiming that Sarhili died in both 1892 and 1893. In two separate exhibits, virtually alongside each other, the paramount is said to have died in both years.⁸⁹ Again, no reference is provided.

As was the case with his life, where Sarhili disappeared and re-emerged throughout the colonial archive, his death has also seems to have perplexed this colonial construction. That

⁸⁵ CMT 3/82, Morris to Elliot, 6 February 1893.

⁸⁶ 1/EDL 4/1/1/2, Morris to Chalmers, 18 May 1885.

⁸⁷ See photograph no. 2 in the appendix.

⁸⁸ Noel Mostert, Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), p. xiv.

⁸⁹ See photographs 5 and 6, taken on 3 September 2007, in the appendix.

it has been troublesome for historians to agree on the exact year of his death is indicative of the difficulty the archive has in placing the paramount within its margins. Sarhili tended to appear in the archive especially when he was perceived to be a threat to the welfare of the colonial state or the stability of the Eastern Frontier. His death would ensure that he could no longer pose any danger to the colonial government and as such it is documented haphazardly. This indiscriminate documentation is the only feasible explanation I can find for historians, who have reviewed come of the same correspondence that I have, for listing the death year of the paramount as 1892.



Chapter 6 - Re-Presenting Sarhili

The first five chapters of this dissertation have focused mostly on the way that Sarhili has been portrayed by the colonial archive. In this chapter, I will investigate the manner in which the paramount chief of the Gcaleka has been characterized by contemporary literature, public exhibitions and the Xhosa oral tradition. I have alluded to some of these representations in this thesis in previous chapters but I intend to dissect these portrayals of the Xhosa king minute detail. This is an important process as this thesis has set out to provide a biography of the Xhosa king that attempts to transcend the mechanics of the colonial archive. This process of overcoming the colonial constructions of knowledge does not seem probable in much of the existing Eastern Cape historiography.

Sarhili features in several historical works in the Eastern Cape historiography. However, even though the paramount chief of the Gcaleka is never the primary subject of these publications, Sarhili is often portrayed in very finite terms. These descriptions often manifest itself in the Eastern Cape historical literature in the form of pen sketches where the Xhosa king is 'revealed' to the reader. Most often, the details in these pen sketches are not footnoted or referenced leaving the reader with the distinct impression that the portrayal the author is attempting to convey to the reader is his/her own impressions of the Gcaleka paramount chief.¹ We might assume that the impression left on the author probably originates from the colonial archive, as this historical source tends to dominate the references in 19th century Eastern Cape historiography. When attempting to create a

¹ I have been conscientious in attempting to uncover where the particular author is drawing his/her sources from when they create these pen sketches in order to access the same informant(s) which may provide me with even more insight into the personage of the paramount.

Sarhili for the modern day reader it is imperative for the author to consider the processes that operate within the margins of the colonial archive and how these mechanisms are likely to influence any portrayal of the Xhosa king.

In this chapter, I will investigate these pen sketches of the paramount in several literary works of the Eastern Cape and attempt to unravel how much of an influence the colonial archive, and its knowledge production, has had in informing other authors of the personage of Sarhili. I will scrutinize whether these impressions created by the colonial archive have been sufficiently interrogated by the relevant authors before being conveyed to the reader. In this way, it will become possible to eliminate some of the characterizations that exist within the historiography and thereby help free Sarhili from his entrapment within the colonial archive. This new representation of the Gcaleka paramount chief cannot only be revealed via the deconstruction of existing literary depictions as the Xhosa king is exposed to the public sphere through other mediums as well.

Sarhili is also brought into the public domain via museum exhibitions. At the Albany Museum in Grahamstown, the 'Contact and Conflict: The Eastern Cape 1780-1910' display has been open to the public. In this exhibition Sarhili is featured extensively, with particular reference made to the 1856-7 cattle-killing and the Ngcayecibi War. I will investigate what the exhibition attempts to communicate to its readers and why this particular representation of the Xhosa king has been made public. This process is important as Sarhili in this form of public sphere often and as such it is unlikely that the

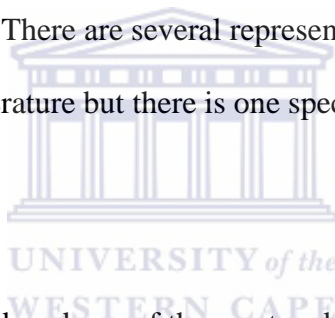
average museum visitor is able to compare this specific depiction of the Gcaleka paramount chief to any alternatives. It is crucial, if I am re-present the Xhosa king, to investigate the claims made in this exhibition and compare them with my own impressions of the material found in the colonial archive. In other words, if the depictions in the display are taken from the colonial archive with no attempt to question the motives behind the nature of the colonial correspondences that created these impressions, it is unlikely that Sarhili's personification at the Albany Museum would be significantly different from the propaganda found in the colonial archive.

The only other way that Sarhili is brought to the public eye is through the Xhosa oral tradition. Although I concede that there are many problems with oral history, it would be negligent on my part to attempt to re-present the paramount without investigating how this historical source depicts the Xhosa king. I have bemoaned the fact that Sarhili has not had a voice in the colonial archive. Even when the paramount chief of the Gcaleka did correspond with the colonial state, this communication was mediated through a colonial official and therefore does not guarantee that the voice attributed to Sarhili is actually his. Oral tradition is as close as it is possible for the modern historian to find the voice of the Xhosa king. In the same way that I proposed throughout this dissertation to deal with the colonial archive, it is also imperative to interrogate the representation in the Xhosa oral tradition. It is essential to remember that Sarhili was the king who endorsed the cattle-killing that effectively destroyed much of the Xhosa culture and as such could prejudice the manner in which he is viewed by his people. Conversely, Sarhili was the last independent Xhosa king and may represent to his people the last bastion of the 'old' way

of life that could possibly influence the manner in which he is remembered. In this chapter, I will unpack how the paramount has been remembered in Xhosa historiography and attempt to understand why he is portrayed in the Xhosa oral tradition in the way that he is.

The Eastern Cape Historiography

Sarhili appears in most historical publications about the 19th Century Eastern Cape. The extent to which he features is dependant on the subject of the work and as such I will confine this literature review to those writings in which the paramount made a significant contribution to the overall text. There are several representations of the Xhosa king that are recurrent in this body of literature but there is one specific portrayal that I intend to deconstruct.



Historian Noel Mostert has produced one of the most ambitious works in 19th century Eastern Cape historiography. In his book *‘Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa’s Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People’*, Sarhili appears with some regularity. However, the Xhosa king also disappears from the Mostert narrative for extended periods of time in the same way that Sarhili is often absent from the colonial archive. Mostert produces several pen sketches of the paramount in relation to the political ambience of the period. These insights tend to be unreferenced by the author and therefore seem to be Mostert’s personal insights into the Gcaleka paramount chief. Generally, in the existing historiography, Sarhili takes centre stage in relation to the role he played in the cattle-

killing episode of 1856-7. This is Mostert's attempt to understand the Xhosa king's endorsement of this millenarian movement:

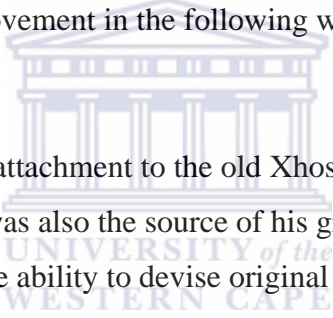
'Strong in his chieftaincy, and with a strength of personality admired by all who came to know him, Sarili [Sarhili] in his youth was regarded as a weakling, mentally and physically. Many magicians and wise men had been consulted over what should be done to give him strength of mind and vigour of body. Those qualities, however, had come of their own accord, suddenly, as can happen with sickly and puny adolescence who emerge from a chrysalis of apparent frailty in a robust transformation. It was this introspective experience of that frailty and the elusive, between material and the abstract, that helped to provide the sensibility that drew his people to him, and left him a highly impressionable man. There was another factor. Strangely, his heirs had died, one after the other, the last of them, a boy aged twelve, in 1853. All these things counted in making him vulnerable to occult influences when the pressure mounted, as they did in 1856 when Mhlakaza's vision offered a promise of salvation for the Xhosa nation'.²

The claim here is that Sarhili was a religious man who resorted to the 'occult' for assistance when pressured situations placed strain on his reign. Mostert will have the reader believe that the paramount that it was due to having endured a traumatic childhood that Sarhili had cultivated this dependence on 'magicians and wise men' for guidance when he encountered difficulties during his supremacy. As a result, when the cattle-killing prophecy emerged, in the wake of the lung sickness epidemic that had been devastating cattle herds in the Eastern Cape since 1853, Mostert argues that Sarhili's

² Noel Mostert, *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), pp. 1184-85.

predisposition to the occult made him more susceptible to the prophecy. It is Mostert's assertion that the Xhosa king endorsed the millenarian movement as a result of his predilection to his religious beliefs, especially in the wake of the crisis that the lung sickness pandemic had created for the Gcaleka and the resultant pressure it had placed on him as their paramount chief.

Mostert is not the only historian to have made this claim. Eastern Cape historian, Jeff Peires, also argues that Sarhili endorsed the cattle-killing due to his religious beliefs. In his book, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Xhosa Tragedy*, Peires explains Sarhili's endorsement of the movement in the following way:

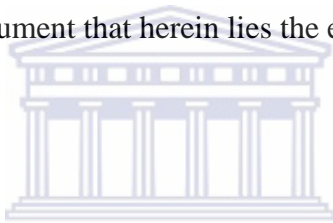


'His [Sarhili's] tenacious attachment to the old Xhosa traditions which was a source of strength was also the source of his greatest weakness. He had neither the will nor the ability to devise original solutions to the new problems which confronted him. In the depth of his complexity, Sarhili was an easy mark for the prophecies which, although in essence radically new, were expressed in familiar idiom.'³

Peires reiterates some of the thoughts expressed by Mostert in the previous citation. He states that Sarhili was susceptible to the prophecy as a result of his religious beliefs. Also, Peires shares Mostert's view that Sarhili was particular prone to resort to these beliefs when he was placed under pressure by circumstances in his kingdom. It is my contention that both these authors are guilty of creating a false representation of the paramount.

³ Jeff Peires, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-57*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), p.86.

Sarhili had made it clear in his correspondence with Rharhabe chief, Maqoma, that he felt that the entire Xhosa political system was under threat as a result of the lung sickness that had affected the Eastern Cape. The Xhosa king argued that in order to maintain the status quo the chiefs had to present a united front that did not contradict the sentiment of the masses. Up until that point, the paramount had ordered the execution of more than twenty of his subjects for the slaughter of healthy cattle (this practice was forbidden for commoners). It would appear that Sarhili had come to realise that these orders had not altered the mindset of his subjects as the slaughter of healthy beasts continued unabated. It is my argument that the Xhosa king started to feel as if his reign was being threatened by this class revolt. It is my argument that herein lies the essence of the decision making process of the paramount.

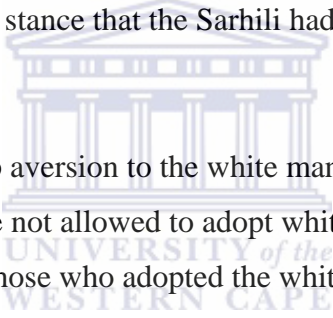


Sarhili made decisions based on either maintaining or increasing his power and influence. I concede that the Xhosa king could have reasoned that the only way to maintain his authority was to place his hope in the prophecy. However, cattle played a pivotal role in the society that Sarhili ruled over as it was the commodity that ensured the loyalty of his subjects. It is my contention that it seems far fetched to believe that the paramount would gamble his authority on the behest of a young girl. Instead, I argue that Sarhili was concerned about the manner in which his people would react if he did not support the millenarian movement. His instruction to execute several of his subjects did not stem the class insurrection that was sweeping over Gcalekaland. The best way for me to support this argument is to take a closer view of other occasions when the paramount was under

pressure due to the political climate in the Eastern Cape and investigate the decisions that he made.

During the Mlanjeni War (1850-3), Sarhili adopted a stance of neutrality in the conflict even though the war was driven by the most revered medicine man of the time, Mlanjeni. This soothsayer had gained a reputation among the amaXhosa for his uncanny ability to avoid capture by the British military even prior to the outbreak of the war. Mlanjeni preached a doctrine of 'cultural purity' and regarded the British as being 'unclean'. This prophet frowned on any cultural exchange between the colonists and the amaXhosa.

Mostert recognizes that this is a stance that the Sarhili had also adopted:



'Sarili [Sarhili] had a deep aversion to the white man's ways and culture. The Gcaleka initially were not allowed to adopt white clothes. Sarili [Sarhili] maintained that those who adopted the white man's dress were the unclean ones.'⁴

If Mostert and Peires are to be believed, Sarhili was supposedly a deeply religious man. It must be remembered that the prophet Mlanjeni preached a similar message to the paramount, so why would the paramount not commit his warriors to the Mlanjeni War? The Xhosa king, I will argue, seems to have realised that a war with the colonial military would in all probability mean the end of Gcaleka independence and therefore a serious erosion of his own personal power. Sarhili ignored the predictions of the most famous and powerful medicine man in the land in order to preserve his authority. This hardly

⁴ Noel Mostert, Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), p. 1186.

seems the actions of a man driven by his religious convictions. Peires, in his preface to *'The Dead will Arise'* undermines the assertion made by himself and Mostert best when he states:

'I believe and trust that this book will demonstrate that the Cattle-Killing was a logical and rational response, perhaps even an inevitable response, by a nation driven to desperation by pressures that people today can barely imagine.'⁵

If one was to place any credibility to this statement made by Peires, it becomes difficult to support an argument that the endorsement given to slaughter by Sarhili was borne out of religious conviction. Instead, Peires alludes to the real reason himself by stating that the pressure brought to bear on the amaXhosa made the mass culling 'almost inevitable'. Imagine the pressure that leaders like Sarhili would have been feeling if their subjects saw no other way out of their predicament save for slaughtering all their livestock, the currency upon which their entire culture was based. Yet, authors like Peires and Mostert insist on blaming the Xhosa king's endorsement of the cattle-killing on his religious zeal.

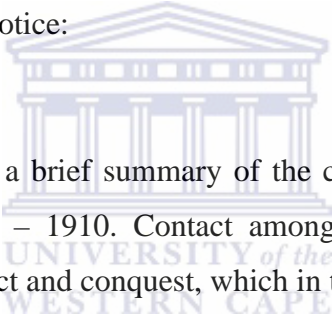
The Albany Museum

In the course of my research I was only ever able to uncover one current museum exhibition in which the Gcaleka paramount chief was featured substantially. The Albany Museum in Grahamstown currently hosts a display titled 'Contact and Conflict: The

⁵ Jeff Peires, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-57*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), preface x.

Eastern Cape 1780-1910’⁶ in which the Xhosa king is extensively represented. Sarhili is not generally a historical figure that appears in the public domain. The way he is depicted by the Albany Museum will be the only portrayal of the paramount that most of the general public are likely to encounter. Assuming this to be the case, it becomes increasingly important that the Albany Museum ensures that their characterization of the paramount chief is not only accurate but also balanced. With this in mind I visited the exhibition to compare the way the paramount is represented in my own research.

Before entering the ‘Contact and Conflict’ exhibition, the visitor is immediately confronted with the following notice:



‘This exhibition provides a brief summary of the complex history of the Eastern Cape from 1780 – 1910. Contact amongst the peoples of the Eastern Cape led to conflict and conquest, which in turn, contributed to the making of a modern South Africa.

People, depending on their particular social, economic, cultural and political background, will perceive and record what they see around them differently. Historians are also influenced by their own world views. This exhibition relies mostly on quotes, pictures and objects to tell a story. It is merely a stepping stone for your interpretation.’⁷

It is difficult to argue against the sentiments expressed in this statement by the museum as it is impossible to record an objective history. However, this statement does not make

⁶ See photograph no. 3, taken on 6 September 2007, in appendix.

⁷ See photographs nos. 2 and 4, taken on 6 September 2007, in the appendix.

allowance for the problem of factual misrepresentation and how the viewer is to negotiate this level of representation.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I alluded to the uncertain manner in which the birth year of the Xhosa king is recorded by the Albany Museum. Sarhili is evidently said to be born in both 1810 and 1813 in two separate displays in the exhibition, virtually alongside each other.⁸ It is possible that this is merely an oversight by the museum researchers and perhaps not too much should be read into it. It may also be that the Albany research team decided to include both birth years of the paramount intentionally as they were unable to reach an internal consensus about when Sarhili was born. The ‘oversight’, finally, might be a product of sloppy research or the politics of the museum that seeks to mark a shift from a settler to a postapartheid institution. Some connection between what I am calling an oversight and the preface to the exhibition ‘Contact and Conflict’ display with a disclaimer, suggests that the paramount was not deemed important enough to warrant sufficient research. It similarly does not open up to a broader deliberation on why the difficulty exists in providing a definitive birth year of the Xhosa king. This despite the fact that Sarhili was arguably the most important Xhosa political figure of the 1800’s yet he was not regarded as important enough to obtain clarity about his birth year.

This contrasts sharply with the adjacent exhibition hall dedicated to the 1820 British Settlers where insignificant artifacts such as cutlery and crockery are exhibited. These displays can boast a full history of its place of origin, its previous owners and the manner

⁸ This is explained in greater detail in chapter 1.

in which it found its way to the Albany Museum. It appeared obvious, even to the casual observer, that a great deal of research had been invested into the genealogy of these inanimate objects. It is interesting to juxtapose the two attitudes that seem to emerge from the quality of research that has been conducted for the two displays.

Sarhili is incidental to the archive. And is reflected as such in the museum. This oversight of the birth date is symptomatic of the way the Albany museum comes to represent the coming together of settler and colonial histories. This is what historian Premesh Lalu argues in his work, *'The Deaths of Hintsa'*.⁹ Lalu reminds us that two separate histories emerge in the 1800's- a settler history and a colonial history. These narratives were often in opposition to each other as the interests of these two groups, the settlers and the colonial officialdom, were not always congruent. Lalu cites the work of George Cory as an attempt to forge these two narratives into one, what he refers to as 'settler colonial history'.¹⁰ In his treatment of the Hintsa's death, Lalu points out the outcry that the mutilation of the dead Xhosa king's body led to among the non-settler community. This led to the creation of a settler narrative as first written by Robert Godlonton in order to provide justification for the way that the native people of the Eastern Cape were being treated by the settlers. However, this narrative was not always congruent with the colonial version of events in the 19th century Eastern Cape thereby creating further contradiction in the colonial archive. This disparity in narrative

⁹ Premesh Lalu. *'The Deaths of Hintsa- Postapartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Pasts'*, (HSRC Press: Cape Town, 2008), Chapter 3.

¹⁰ Premesh Lalu. *'The Deaths of Hintsa- Postapartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Pasts'*, (HSRC Press: Cape Town, 2008), p. 116.

was understood by Cory and he set about drawing one communal history from these two histories.

‘Cory’s history is responsible for reconciling and smoothing over the disparities between settler and official colonial contests. This is the production not of a settler history but of a settler colonial history that is both sustained by and committed to the modes of evidence in the colonial archive.’¹¹

It would seem reasonable to assume that such an amalgamation of often ‘disparate’ narratives would cause some contradiction and inconsistency to surface in the history that Cory produced. This is the history that the Albany Museum has chosen to base their exhibition upon and as such can explain why such a simple issue as a birth year for the Xhosa king had produced two contradictory exhibition texts. What it also highlights is the problematic of the colonial archive as Cory attempted to reinforce both settler and colonial histories with ‘modes of evidence’ as found in the archive. However, this does not account for another display in the exhibition. This is the post-Ngayecibi War account as per the Albany Museum:

‘Sarhili fled across the Mbashe River in the Transkei. However, in 1877, the Gcaleka attacked the Mfengu who were colonial subjects. Sandile and his warriors were drawn into the conflict of 1877-78. They

¹¹Premesh Lalu. *‘The Deaths of Hints- Postapartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Pasts’*, (HSRC Press: Cape Town, 2008), pp. 132-33.

were defeated in 1878 and Sarhili fled north again. He remained in hiding for the rest of his life, dying in 1893 at the age of 83.¹²

I spent most of the previous chapter highlighting the Ngcayecibi War and the consequences it had for the Gcalaka paramount chief. For the most part, my research during this time period was confined to the colonial archive in which Sarhili features prominently. This archive is explicit in its account of the reintegration of Sarhili from exile and the manner in which this resettlement took place. I have explained the problems the Albany Museum would have to face due to its adoption of the Cory settler colonial narrative in relation to the birth year of Sarhili however, this does not explain the inept research that is meant to account for the paramount's last days. It is my opinion that this text in the 'Contact and Conflict' exhibition was not researched in any detail as it is impossible for any researcher to argue that these colonial correspondences were not accessible. They form part of public records that anyone is able to access. Why then, would such a blatant misrepresentation of Sarhili's life form part of an Albany Museum exhibition?

One could argue that this is merely a matter of semantics. Sarhili was never allowed to resettle in Gcalekaland after the Ngcayecibi conflict and as such it could be argued that the Xhosa king was forced to live in exile for the remainder of his life. However, the text does state that he 'remained in hiding' thereby implicitly painting a picture of a king that was living in fear for the rest of his life. This is a far stretch from someone who is not allowed to reclaim the land that was previously under his/her tenure. Sarhili came to an

¹² See photograph no. 6, taken on 7 September 2007, in the appendix.

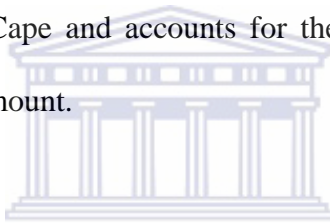
agreement with the colonial state that granted him both a pardon for his part in the war as well as a new tract of ground. He was led to believe that this pardon absolved him of any past act of 'wrongdoing' as defined by the colonial state and therefore he was able to leave the Mbashe Forest and resettle on the land awarded to him by the British. In other words, while Sarhili had spent nearly five years of his life in hiding, he did make a formal return to the political stage of the Eastern Cape and resettled on the land that the colonial officials awarded him.

At first glance it would seem difficult to understand why the museum would attempt to make such an argument. It is possible to argue that, once again, this is merely a factual mistake made by its research team that should not be read too deeply in. However, it seems too convenient that this type of error should be made again when Sarhili is the subject. Instead, I will contend that these factual inaccuracies have a far more deeply seated origin than incompetent research.

Sarhili was the last king of the amaXhosa that was independent of colonial rule, at least for the greater majority of his reign. As such, it is easy to argue that Sarhili could represent a way of life that has long since been replaced by the rigours of colonialism and apartheid. It appeared, from my time spent at the Albany Museum, that a great deal more resources has been expended in the display of its Settler exhibition than that of the indigenous people of the Eastern Cape. The Settler exhibition pays homage to settler icons like Robert Godlonton who have exposed themselves as racists and supremacists through their own writings. It is therefore my contention that the honourific nature of the

Settler exhibition exposes the politics of the museum and that the indigenous peoples of the Eastern Cape are still regarded as second-class citizens.

This opinion is borne out by the haphazard way in which Sarhili is represented. It explains why, in my opinion, the final depiction of the Xhosa king is one of a broken man who was forced into hiding instead of the proud leader who, until the bitter end, tried to regain autonomy for himself and his people through the limited means at his disposal. It would seem that this more accurate reflection of his leadership would be in direct opposition to the type of celebratory tone that the Settler exhibition takes for the arrival of the British in the Eastern Cape and accounts for the inaccuracies in the museum's accounts of the life of the paramount.

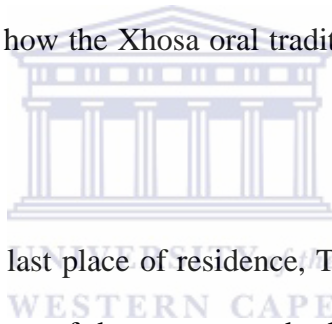


People who visit this museum having never encountered the paramount chief of the Gcaleka would leave with the distinct impression of a man that colonial pressure broke instead of a man who fought against increasingly insurmountable odds in order to retain the independence of his people. I think that this is exactly the point. It is impossible to laud the contribution of the colonial project while, at the same time, acknowledging the struggle that Xhosa leaders like Sarhili endured to ensure a continuation of their way of life. This contradiction is borne from the fact that to acknowledge such a struggle would be to admit that the struggle was for something worthwhile and therefore in stark opposition to the colonial project that is being acclaimed. As such, while the Albany Museum does have an exhibit dedicated to the indigenous population of the Eastern

Cape, this display is in accordance with the racial hierarchy that prevails in the institution that is in perfect congruence with the Cory settler colonial history.

The Xhosa Oral Tradition

As I alluded to at the start of this dissertation, much of my interest in the Xhosa king Sarhili stemmed from his involvement in the cattle killing episode of 1856-57. I have often wondered how the paramount is perceived in the modern day oral traditions of the amaXhosa bearing in mind the role he played in the millenarian event. This intrigued me to such extent that much of my research trip to the Eastern Cape in September of 2007 was geared around uncovering how the Xhosa oral tradition depicts the paramount chief of the Gcaleka.



On a research visit to Sarhili's last place of residence, Tsholorha, I started my quest for access to modern day impressions of the paramount by heading to the site of the Xhosa king's burial. In Tsholorha, we met an old chief of the region, Nomatoto. Nomatoto is regarded by the community in the area as the foremost authority on the Xhosa king. This elder, along with two of his nephews, took us on a guided tour of the burial site and after paying our respects to the Xhosa king, he was prepared to answer our questions about the last king of the amaXhosa.¹³ The first thing that attracted my attention at the gravesite was the inscription on the tombstone. The inscription lists the Xhosa king as having been born in 1818 and having passed away in 1908. My research refutes these dates, especially

¹³ The 'us' I refer to is my supervisor Premesh Lalu, our Xhosa interpreter and masters' graduate Khayalethu Ndudumane and myself.

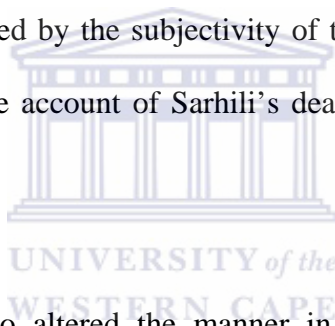
the year in which Sarhili died.¹⁴ However, when I explained to Nomatoto the discrepancy, especially regarding the year Sarhili died, he remained adamant that these dates were accurate and that any evidence to the contrary was a result of ‘white intervention in Xhosa history’.¹⁵

I have given this resolute attitude of this oral historian some thought in order to understand why in the face of such compelling evidence as exists in the colonial archive that he would not concede that the year given for the death of the paramount was inaccurate as recorded on his tombstone. It is difficult to make a convincing argument other than to state that it is impossible to deny that the presence of the colonial state in the Eastern Cape did alter the way that amaXhosa history has been told in mainstream historical circles. Essentially, I am arguing that if indeed the colonial archive has misrepresented the year Sarhili died it would not be the first time that such erroneous knowledge production could be found within its confines. It also makes sense that this erroneous depiction would be most acutely felt by the amaXhosa themselves. It therefore would make sense that Xhosa oral historians like Nomatoto would be wary of making any kind of concession to any ‘knowledge’ produced in the colonial archive. In this dissertation I have underscored numerous occasions when the amaXhosa has been erroneously portrayed by the colonial archive and as such it seems reasonable that the oral tradition displays hesitancy in accepting the colonial archive’s version of events in their past.

¹⁴ I have dealt with the dates on this tombstone in the first and fourth chapters of this dissertation. I have only highlighted it again in this chapter in order to provide the reader with some kind of insight as to where these dates originate from.

¹⁵ Interview with Nomatoto on 2 September 2007.

It is also my contention that this attitude displayed by Nomatoto is more than a mere attempt by the village elder to protect the oral tradition of his people but rather should be read as a form of resistance to the contents of the colonial archive. I think that this is exactly the point that the academy should focus upon. Although the reality of Sarhili's death year has probably been incorrectly recorded by the Xhosa oral tradition, the error should not overshadow the fact that Nomatoto and his fellow historians are attempting to tell the history of the amaXhosa independently of the colonial archive. It seems that Nomatoto is aware that no historical narrative of Xhosa history may emerge from the colonial archive that is untainted by the subjectivity of the colonial project and as such remains determined to alter the account of Sarhili's death year as provided by the oral tradition taught to him.



This encounter with Nomatoto altered the manner in which I approached the next interview I had scheduled. I had genuinely expected that Sarhili would have had his legacy tainted, in terms of the way his people remembered him, because of the nature of his involvement with the cattle killing episode. After all, more than a third of his people had died as a direct consequence of the millenarian event he had endorsed and the way of life they had attempted to defend against the onslaught of British colonial project had basically been destroyed. However, the accounts of Sarhili I had been made privy to by Nomatoto did not reflect this expectation. Instead, the last king of the amaXhosa is still revered in oral accounts of his life. Nomatoto was not the only oral historian that spoke in these terms of the paramount's life.

During our stay in the Eastern Cape, we spent the majority of our time at the Haven Hotel that is based in the Dwesa-Cebe Nature Reserve. Here we were privileged enough to meet some of the community leaders of the area, one of which was Kuzile Juza. He is an influential member of the Dwesa-Cebe Community Forum who has tasked themselves with creating investment opportunities in the region from both domestic and foreign sources.¹⁶ Juza recounted to us an offer the Community Forum had received from the European Union for a sizeable investment in the area. However, these funds would only be forthcoming if the area could create a ‘cultural village’ with which to attract tourists. It was decided amongst the members of the Community Forum to approach a Mr. A. Thaboyi, widely regarded in the area as the foremost oral historian, to write a history of the area. He was to focus specifically on the nineteenth century Eastern Cape and this piece of writing would serve as a ‘handbook’¹⁷ for prospective local tourist guides to recount local history to visitors. This piece of writing would include issues like Hintsá’s death and also the cattle killing. Thaboyi named the work ‘Hintsá’s Heritage Project’ and his account of the cattle-killing episode goes as follows:

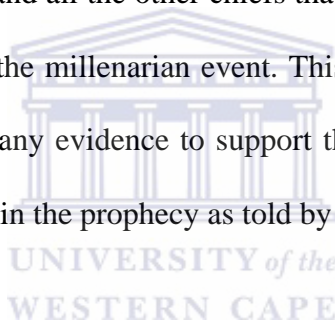
‘On that time the Xhosa was very believed to the ancestors. When one day went to the river she saw the man on river it was a vision to Nongqawuse and Nongqawuse believed.

¹⁶ The Dwesa-Cebe region is one of the rural areas in the Eastern Cape. It requires a near two hour drive to reach the region, which is a mere 40 kilometres off the nearest tar road. The infrastructure is minimal and most people rely on subsistence farming or urban based relatives to survive.

¹⁷ Interview with Kuzile Juza, 3 September 2007. Juza stated that this history would be the one that local tour guides would share with visitors.

He was Sir Gorge Grey who was staying on the river. He instructed the lady that she must go back to the people about the vision she saw on the river and told them the ancestors said that must be destroyed all cattle and the food. Nongqawuse was very proud and she obeyed the commands she go back home to her father and told him. Then Mhlakaza heard that rumours because Mhlakaza was a witch doctor and also a herbent on the river and also he was believed. He went to Sarili told him about the vision the king was believed. The cattle were destroyed ocrding to the instructions of Gorge Grey through ancestors through Nongqawuse.’¹⁸

This passage absolves Sarhili, and all the other chiefs that supported the movement, from any responsibility they had in the millenarian event. This theory has been tested by Jeff Peires but he was unable find any evidence to support the claims made by Thaboyi the George Grey had any duplicity in the prophecy as told by Nongqawuse. Peires states that:



‘Almost all Xhosa today hold Sir George Grey personally responsible for the cattle killing, believing that in some he manipulated Nongqawuse in prophesying as she did. This interpretation is very old and probably dates back to the cattle-killing period itself.

I have looked very closely into all the surviving documents, including the private correspondence and his chief subordinate Maclean, and must state unequivocally that there is no documentary evidence whatsoever in support of this view.’¹⁹

¹⁸ This is taken from ‘Hints’s Heritage Project’. I have not amended the grammar or spelling as I think that it is more authentic in its original form. See photographs 7 and 8, taken on 4 September 2007.

¹⁹ Jeff Peires, The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-57, (Ravan Press, Johannesburg: 1989), pp. 316-317.

I have encountered most of the same documents that Peires has read and agree with his position. I have not read any correspondence that has led me to be suspicious of George Grey. This leads to inevitable question: Why would the Xhosa oral tradition attempt to place the blame of the cattle-killing at the feet of Grey?

I think that two possible answers present themselves when attempting to answer this question. Firstly, as I have mentioned in the third chapter of this dissertation, Sarhili has to assume a fair degree of responsibility for the events of 1856-57. However, when Xhosa oral tradition apportions most of the blame to Governor Grey, the paramount appears to be almost completely absolved. But why would this be important to the amaXhosa? It could be argued that as Sarhili was the last independent king of the amaXhosa he became a symbol of a past life that was no longer available to his people if they so chose it. This construction appears to be nostalgic. Sarhili is remembered by oral tradition as well as the colonial archive as an ardent nationalist who did his best to maintain Gcaleka independence. He was the last independent chief in the Eastern Cape. This would add to the nostalgia and aura of his person. But there is more.

The other reason I can offer for the Xhosa oral tradition account of the cattle killing is that it provides an opposition to the colonial archive. While I agree with Peires and dismiss claims that Grey instigated the slaughter of the livestock I do this based on evidence found in the colonial archive. The Xhosa oral tradition serves to remind the historian that the knowledge production in this archive is not necessarily a reflection of reality and as such could justify an alternative narrative. In other words, due to the

processes at work in the colonial archive, the historian is forced to take any alternative narrative seriously, or at the very least interrogate the content of the archive more intensely.

Re-Constructing Sarhili

I have dedicated this entire chapter of my dissertation thus far to dispelling representations of Sarhili that I have found, through my research, to be misleading. I have taken several sources in the public domain to task for their misrepresentation of Sarhili throughout this dissertation. However, it is much easier being destructive than constructive. The remainder of this chapter will re-construct the paramount and recognize the occasions when other sources have depicted the Xhosa king in a seemingly accurate manner and also introduce some perspectives of my own.

Sarhili had a traumatic childhood caused primarily by the strained relationship between his mother Nomsa and his father Hintsu.²⁰ The differences between his parents resulted in Sarhili opting to spend very little time in his father's court. As a result, by the time that the future king underwent his initiation and accompanying isolation, Hintsu felt that his son had not been in his court often enough to have learnt how to effectively govern. However, it is my contention that this lack of exposure in the royal court did not temper the ability of Sarhili to manage his people effectively in the manner expected of his station. Peires sums up Sarhili's leadership as follows:

²⁰ This relationship is placed under scrutiny in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

‘A master of the Xhosa style of oratory, etiquette and court ceremonial, celebrated for his knowledge of custom and precedent, Sarhili was celebrated by all the other chiefs, who were guided by him in matters concerning law and ritual, and who regarded him as the very epitome and model of chieftainship. Above all, Sarhili was a king who was loved by his people. Unlike his father Hintsá, who won respect through fear, cunning and manipulation, Sarhili enjoyed the spontaneous loyalty and affection of his subjects. He was an accessible ruler, unfailingly pleasant and courteous. His judicial decisions were renowned for their fairness and tact, and he made a point of softening a harsh judgment with words of humour and sympathy.’²¹

Although Sarhili had spent only about a year making himself a regular presence in his father’s court before Hintsá’s death, it seems obvious from the above quotation that the Xhosa prince had learnt his lessons well. Sarhili seems to have excelled in those aspects of leadership that his father showed concern about as he had largely been absent from the royal court in his youth. The Xhosa prince was to demonstrate in his reign that he was unrivalled in his knowledge of Xhosa custom, thereby illustrating that his father’s concerns were unfounded.

Although Sarhili proved to be the equal to the challenge of his office, the fact that his father had raised these concerns in a public forum was to have repercussions for the Xhosa prince, both in terms of the beginning of his reign and his leadership style.²² After Hintsá was killed at the hands of the British, his most important advisors tried to delay

²¹ Jeff Peires, The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-57, (Ravan Press, Johannesburg: 1989), pp. 81-82.

²² In chapter 1, I make reference to the speech that Hintsá made to his people when Sarhili returned from his initiation, and how these words were to cause Sarhili problems after his father died.

Sarhili's rise to power. This attempt to thwart Sarhili's birthright was successful as the new Xhosa king decided to leave Butterworth in order to establish his own legacy. He seems to have been aware that he would be living in the shadow of his father if he surrendered to his advisors. The need to prove himself was to remain as an integral aspect of Sarhili's leadership throughout his reign. Due to the opposition that Sarhili was forced to endure by these advisors, he never underwent the coronation ceremonies that were traditional for his new station.

It could be argued that these ceremonies were largely cosmetic and that the fact that Sarhili did not undergo any of them did not diminish his power.²³ However, it would seem as if the new Xhosa king did not share this sentiment as there is evidence that as late as 1873, thirty seven years after Sarhili succeeded his father as king, that he still wanted to undergo these royal rites of passage. I think that this indicative of an insecure leader. In the near fifty seven years of Sarhili's rule I have not found any evidence that has led me to believe that his reign was ever under threat from any rival clansman. Even at the start of Sarhili's sovereignty, when he was placed under pressure by those elders who were close to Hintsa, I have not found any evidence to suggest that there was a serious threat to right to rule his people.

It is possible to argue that Sarhili wanted to undergo these ceremonies as a matter of tradition and therefore does not reflect any form of insecurity. After all, according to Peires, Sarhili was renowned for his knowledge of custom and may have felt in the face

²³ For a different argument about the coronation of a Zulu king and the power it bestows see Carolyn Hamilton, Terrific Majesty: the powers of Shaka Zulu and the limits of historical intervention, (Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip, 1998).

of the colonial cultural onslaught that he wanted to reaffirm Xhosa cultural convention. However, it must be remembered that by 1873 Sarhili had lost most of his land and his influence among the amaXhosa was increasingly diminished.²⁴ Also, Sarhili's counselors used their influence on the king to advise against these ceremonies as they felt that it could possibly force Sarhili into military action if other chiefs did not pay him proper tribute.²⁵ It would seem that the paramount's counselors were afraid that this reversion to tradition was not only unnecessary but also a way for Sarhili to massage his own ego that could potentially prove catastrophic to Gcaleka independence.²⁶

At this point, I want to return to the death of Hintsá at British hands. Irrespective of what version of events the historian wants heed to two facts of Hintsá's death are irrefutable. Firstly, British soldiers, irrespective of their reasons for shooting the king, killed Hintsá. Secondly, the fact that Sarhili was taken prisoner with his father, under the guise of entering a military camp to negotiate, was to leave some form of impression on the future Xhosa king.

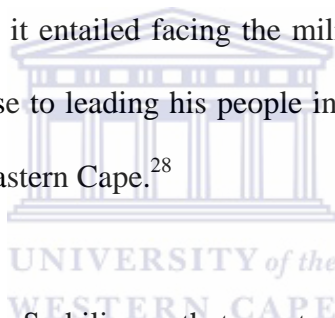
It is my opinion that this encounter left two indelible impressions on the paramount chief of the Gcaleka. Firstly, Sarhili came to the realization that the British military was far superior to anything his own people could offer resistance to. After entering the D'Urban's military camp, it soon became apparent that the both Sarhili and Hintsá were

²⁴ Throughout this thesis I have focused on the increasing inroads the colonial state was making in the Eastern Cape and how these inroads had served to isolate and decrease the power of Sarhili. By 1873, Sarhili was the only independent Xhosa chief in the Eastern Cape and the political interference he was subjected to by the British was serving to place increasing strain on his reign.

²⁵ This episode in the life of the paramount is dealt with in more depth in chapter 3.

²⁶ It must be remembered that all the chiefs who were expected to pay homage to Sarhili were under British protection and any military move made by the Gcaleka if the paramount was disrespected would be tantamount to war with the colony.

being held prisoner. It would appear that any attempt by the combined military forces of the amaXhosa to free them was not even considered. This would make sense if one considers that Hintsá is reported to have attempted to escape from a military escort on a mission to round up cattle to pay the British in reparations for the frontier war raging at the time when he shot. Sarhili realized that any future military engagement with the colonial army would be futile on the part of the Xhosa and would only result in more loss of land and livestock. Not surprisingly, Sarhili opted for the Gcaleka to remain 'neutral' in both the 1846 and 1850 frontier wars. In fact, Sarhili is likened by Spicer as 'the reluctant warrior'.²⁷ However, this description is not entirely accurate. Indeed, Sarhili was a 'reluctant warrior' when it entailed facing the military might of the British army. However, Sarhili was not averse to leading his people into war against other indigenous factions that also lived in the Eastern Cape.²⁸



The second impression made on Sarhili, one that was to stay with him until he died, was a deep mistrust of the British. It must be recalled that Hintsá was invited into D'Urban's camp under the pretext that he was going to negotiate some kind of settlement with the British and ended up being killed. The colonial archive is littered with various accounts of Sarhili being unwilling to meet with any colonial official outside of his own country. Even when war with the Mfengu, and by extension the British, looked inevitable in 1877, something that Sarhili wanted to avoid at all costs, the paramount chief of the Gcaleka was unwilling to meet Governor Bartle Frere on 'neutral' grounds and possibly avert the impending conflict. Sarhili knew that if he lost a war with British that would mean the

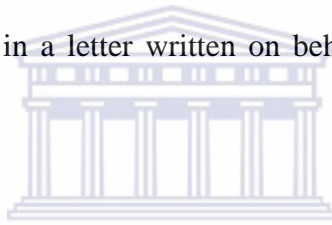
²⁷ Michael Spicer, *The War of Ngqayecibi, 1877-78* (M.A. Thesis, Rhodes University, 1978), p.81.

²⁸ This is best illustrated in 1872 when Sarhili led the Gcaleka into Thembuland after the behaviour of Ngangelizwe started threatening his authority.

end of Gcaleka independence and even so he refused to attempt to reach some form of diplomatic solution with Frere as he was too fearful of British treachery. Spicer writes:

‘If Sarhili had hesitated to meet his new Resident in his own country in 1876, it was absurd of the whites to expect him to meet the Governor in enemy territory with war trembling in the balance’.²⁹

Although Sarhili did not trust the colonial state, it would appear that this did not necessarily translate into personal relationships with ‘white’ people. West Fynn regarded himself as a personal friend of the Xhosa king and the sentiment was to be echoed by Mcotoma Kreli, Sarhili’s son, in a letter written on behalf of the Gcaleka people long after Sarhili died:



‘Fynn’s services were such as to win you the confidence of the native people and the respect and esteem of our late chief Kreli, in token of which among other evidences his last wish was that his favourite assegai and arm-ring should be delivered to you by the hand of his eldest son, the late chief Sigcawu, who commanded his father’s forces during the war, which duty was faithfully performed.’³⁰

However, despite this respect for individuals Sarhili maintained an intense dislike for western religion and culture. Sarhili shared his father’s suspicion of missionaries. This should not come as any surprise when one bears in mind that Reverend Ayliff had played a pivotal role in the defection of the Mfengu to British rule in 1835 after Hintsu had

²⁹ Michael Spicer, *The War of Ngcayecibi, 1877-78* (M.A. Thesis, Rhodes University, 1978), p. 94.

³⁰ Cory Library, MS 2018: Mcotoma Kreli and others to Fynn, 16 August 1911.

granted them land and cattle in the Eastern Cape. Sarhili was very reticent about allowing missionary stations being settled in Gcalekaland and was probably the reason that he had such a patchy relationship with Maphasa, the chief of the Tsonyana Gcaleka. Maphasa had allowed a missionary station to be posted on his land without consulting with the paramount and their relationship remained strained until Maphasa defected to the British just prior to the break out of the 1877 War. However, Sarhili was not averse to using missionaries for his own purposes. After his first exile, following the cattle-killing, Sarhili had allowed more missionaries to be stationed on his land in the hope that he could use their influence to get him more land.

Sarhili's distaste for western culture became apparent by the late 1840's where the colonial archive makes reference to the Xhosa king having 'disdain' for those Xhosa converts who adopted western style dress. Sarhili is recorded to have regarded this form of dress as being 'impure' for his people, a sentiment shared by the prophet Mlanjeni. Although Sarhili was prepared to make some diplomatic concessions³¹ to the British, he was opposed to any compromise of his own culture and traditions. Bearing in mind that Sarhili had gained widespread recognition, both from his own people and the British, for his diplomatic skill, why is it that he clung so vociferously to Xhosa culture?

This is the crucial question, in my opinion, and the one that best sums up Sarhili. I have already stated my impressions in other chapters of this dissertation about what was the primary motivating force that drove the paramount in his decision making. It is my

³¹ Sarhili, for example, built a special meeting room close to his own homestead in which to receive colonial authorities as per suggestion by residents in his country.

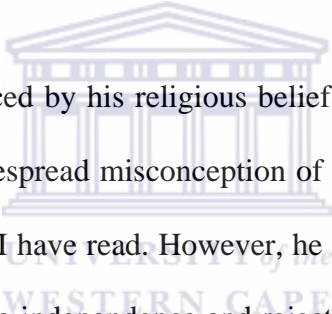
opinion that Sarhili made decisions based on the preservation of his own power. I have motivated this postulation in prior chapters and therefore feel it unnecessary to do so again. However, it is also my position that Sarhili was aware that his position in Xhosa society was justified through the tradition and customs of the amaXhosa and as such, if he wanted to remain unchallenged in his authority he could not allow this culture to be eroded by colonial intervention.

I concede that this impression may seem cynical at first glance. It is conceivable that Sarhili, knowing that he did not want to resist the British on the military front, thought that the maintenance of Xhosa culture was a form of resistance against the colonial advance. However, even within independent Gcalekaland, as early as the 1850's, it became apparent that Xhosa customs were being ignored by the populous as can be evidenced, for example, by the slaughter of cattle by the commoners.³² Sarhili must have realized that any major changes in custom could be tantamount to a *coup de tat* for him. In other words, it is possible to read Sarhili's traditionalist approach as a form of resistance to colonialism. However, it is my position that such a reading is superficial in that it does not take into consideration the consistency of Sarhili's political decisions for the duration of his reign and chooses instead to evaluate the conservatism of the paramount in isolation.

³² As mentioned in chapter 2, commoners were not allowed to slaughter cattle. It could be argued that these cattle had been infected with lungsickness, however, the colonial archive contains several reports of healthy cattle being slaughtered by commoners. Sarhili responded to this slaughter by sentencing more than twenty of his subjects to death but the killings continued unabated.

Introducing Sarhili

This chapter, 'Re-presenting Sarhili', sets out to dispel what I consider erroneous depictions of the paramount, reinforces those portrayals of the Xhosa king in other works that I found to be congruent with my research and also introduce perspectives of Sarhili that I have not encountered in other historical works. I have, to a large extent, kept these impressions focused on the public life of the paramount as it would be difficult to gain any real insight into the private life of the Xhosa king with the sources that are available. So who was Sarhili?



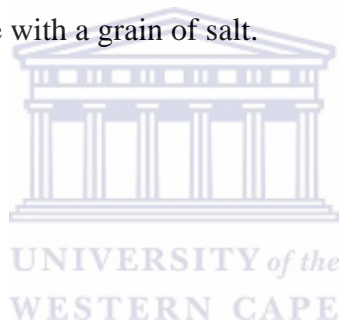
Sarhili was not unduly influenced by his religious beliefs in matters of great concern to his people. This is a fairly widespread misconception of the paramount that has endured in several historical works that I have read. However, he was an ardent Xhosa nationalist who sought to maintain Gcaleka independence and rejected the advances of Christianity. Sarhili was under no illusions when it came to the military might of the British army and sought to avoid any armed conflict with the colonial state. However, this military temperance did not translate itself into disputes with other indigenous factions in the Eastern Cape as Sarhili was prepared to attack these groups if they provoked him. Naturally, Sarhili would not attack a faction that were British subjects as that would be the equivalent to declaring war on the colony itself. In other words, any personification implying that Sarhili was a 'reluctant warrior' would not reflect the reality of his military policy.

Sarhili has been characterized as a king who died in exile while in hiding from the British. To some extent, this statement can be defended. However, my understanding of the term 'exile' does not reflect Sarhili's post-Ngcayecibi War reality as although he was not awarded his old country back by the colonial state he was granted alternative land and did not have to remain outside of British jurisdiction in fear of some colonial reprisal for his involvement in the war. Instead, Sarhili tried to get his a portion of his old land back via diplomatic means and although these attempts were unsuccessful it was a far cry from a broken king eking out an existence in fear of his life on a foreign piece of land.

Sarhili was widely recognized by his contemporaries, Xhosa and British, as having exceptional diplomatic skills. The best way to illustrate this is point out that he was able to maintain Gcaleka independence from the British for more than 25 years longer than any other Xhosa faction was able to. This is even more remarkable when one considers that after the end of the Mlanjeni War in 1853, the colonial authorities regarded Sarhili as the greatest threat to both the colony and peace on the frontier. However, the British were unable to justify any military incursion into Gcalekaland that would crush Gcaleka independence even though many false reports found their way into the colonial archive serving to alert the colony of 'impending' Gcaleka military action.

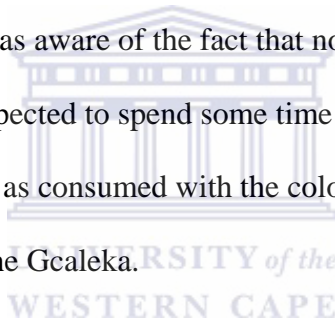
Sarhili was a somewhat insecure ruler. He tended to make his decisions along the lines of 'path of least resistance'. On the two occasions when his rule was placed under severe pressure he bowed on both occasions (the cattle-killing and the 1877 War) to the will of the majority knowing that the consequences of his decisions would have dire

repercussions for himself and his people. These decisions also revealed the primary driving force behind Sarhili's decision making- Sarhili made decisions that were meant to ensure that either his power was preserved or enhanced. If he had contradicted the will of the people it was conceivable that he could have usurped from power all together. Therefore, instead of making the best decision he made the popular one. I am aware that this is a contentious statement but this is the only way I can account for some of the choices the paramount made. I would even argue that Sarhili embraced Xhosa tradition for expedient reasons to establish the legitimacy of his reign and guaranteed the maintenance of his influence. But to arrive at this conclusion we are called upon to read his entry in the colonial archive with a grain of salt.



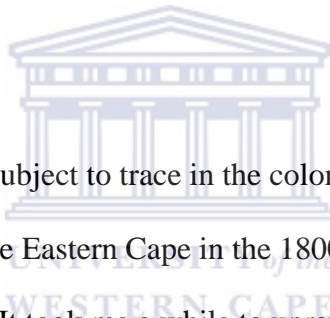
Conclusion

This dissertation started out conceptually to be a biography of the last chief of the amaXhosa. It was initially fuelled by my encounter with the cattle-killing movement of 1856-57 and a desire to understand why any king would preach a form of self-inflicted genocide to his people and what his subsequent life would be like afterwards. I wanted to know how his people reacted to him in the knowledge that his direct endorsement of the movement added so much momentum to the movement that one third of the population died of starvation. I wanted to know how Sarhili was remembered today by the oral traditions of the amaXhosa. I was aware of the fact that no biographical work had been done on the Xhosa king so I expected to spend some time in the archive. What I did not know was that I would become as consumed with the colonial archive as I have with the life of the paramount chief of the Gcaleka.



I have always been aware of the fact the colonial archive has long been regarded as the hegemonic source in historical writing by the academy. I also knew that its contents would be tempered with a specific world view and that I should read it as such. However, I was unprepared for the operability of this source and was forced to withdraw myself from the archive in order to understand the way that it functions. Consequently, I started reading about its functioning in order to prepare for myself a strategy that would allow my work to supersede the obvious pitfalls this source could provide to my writing. There are many strategies one encounters in the academy when reading works based on the colonial archive. I chose to read the archive ‘along the grain’ as I felt that this tactic

would best serve to free my work of the boundaries set by the archive. I attempted to get beyond the limits the archive tries to place not only in what one can say, but also what one cannot. I think that this was the most challenging part of my dissertation. Many of the opinions that I deliver in this thesis are based on what the colonial archive chooses to omit from its margins as opposed to what it includes. I have chosen this route specifically in order to highlight how one is able to think outside of the intellectual confines the colonial archive tries to impose on its reader. It is my opinion that this approach is useful as it combines the legitimacy the colonial archive offers the historical work in the academy while not allowing the archive to curtail any narrative with its own prejudices and knowledge production.



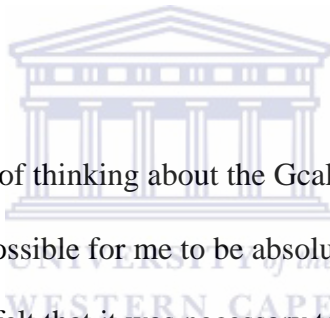
Sarhili was a particularly hard subject to trace in the colonial archive. Bearing in mind the key political figure he was in the Eastern Cape in the 1800s, he is a very sporadic presence within its boundaries. It took me a while to unravel this phenomenon, as I expected him to be everywhere. However, it soon became apparent, having understood that the function of the colonial archive is to support the will of the colonial state that the Xhosa king featured most prominently when he regarded by the colonial officials as being a threat to the welfare of the colonial state. Once I understood this I soon realized the problem the British faced when dealing with Sarhili. Sarhili, being the Xhosa king and the paramount chief of the biggest grouping among the amaXhosa, the Gcaleka, was potentially the greatest threat to the stability of the region and the safety of the colony. However, the first time Sarhili 'led' any military sortie against the British was some forty

one year after he had succeeded his father as king. However, the archive is littered with accounts of impending Gcaleka attacks on the colony as early as the mid 1840s.

This is the problem the colonial archive will always have with a subject such as Sarhili. The archive supports the colonial state unconditionally and thus must reflect a reality that justifies whatever action the state may sanction. The problem with Sarhili arose in that his actions did not fit into 'aggressive native' narrative the colonial archive was reporting. When he did eventually become involved in a war with the colonial military it is because he has lost control of his subjects and even this the colonial archive attempts to skew. Sarhili tends to disappear from the archive when some other Xhosa chief(s) are regarded by the state as posing a greater threat than the Xhosa king. However, even when he disappears it is only to re-appear as a threatening force once again. It is irrelevant whether these reports were reflective of any reality because the state remained all too aware that at some point the independence of the Gcaleka would have to be compromised if the Eastern Cape was to be controlled by Britain. The effectiveness of this ploy is evident in the fact that unless you read significant portions of the colonial archive it is not obvious that this tactic is at work.

I think the most telling episode in this thesis, when attempting to understand the colonial archive, is found in the second chapter when Harry Smith responded to the Ngqika attacks on military convoys near the Amathole Mountains in 1850. The colonial archive took six years to record the fact that Smith had proposed to restore the old power of the chiefs that had been subjected to colonial magistrates since the 1846 War of the Axe. No

reason is offered why it took the archive so long to record this statement and it is not dealt with by the colonial archive in any way save that Smith is accused of not ‘thinking clearly’. It would be regarded as regression if the colonial authorities had returned power to the chiefs in question, as it would correspond with a decrease in control that the colonial state could exercise over these particular clans. The British colonial project is characterized by the degree of control it tries to exert over its subjects. In other words, such a decision would compromise the wishes of the colonial state. I have argued throughout this dissertation that the colonial archive serves as an apparatus to support the welfare of the state and this example illustrates the operationality of the colonial archive the best.



I have offered alternative ways of thinking about the Gcaleka paramount chief in this dissertation. Although it is impossible for me to be absolutely sure of some of my portrayals of the Xhosa king, I felt that it was necessary to dismiss those characterizations that I felt misrepresented him. I do not find it strange that authors like Mostert and Peires attribute religious beliefs to Sarhili’s endorsement of the cattle-killing. For the greater part, they were viewing Sarhili only in relation to this millenarian event and have probably not applied their minds to other pressured decisions that the paramount was faced with during his reign. I have attempted to paint a broader picture of the life of the Xhosa king in order to make it easier to understand how it came about that the paramount endorsed the mass slaughter.

Bearing in mind that I had never heard of Sarhili prior to my reading about the cattle-killing, I was particularly interested in the how he was portrayed in the public domain. My trip to the Albany Museum realised my worst fears as the settler tradition of the museum continues to influence the way in which the indigenous people of the Eastern Cape are depicted. Sarhili, probably the most influential player on 19th century Eastern Cape political stage, is virtually incidental in the museum's 'Contact and Conflict' display. The exhibition texts that have been produced in relation to the Xhosa king either contradict each other or convey to me a severe lack of serious research. Even the disclaimer that the museum proudly displays before entering the exhibition hall does not justify the incompetent research that formed the basis of the texts of the Xhosa king.

Sarhili, with all his flaws, I do believe, loved his people. Even though the colonial archive has attempted to create a history that would not endear the paramount to his people, this narrative has been rejected by the Xhosa oral tradition. Instead, the Xhosa king is still revered by these oral historians who produce a narrative that not only pays tribute to Sarhili, but also absolves him of any responsibility for his role in the cattle-killing episode. I have argued in the previous chapter that this absolution could have been resultant from some form of resistance to colonialism and apartheid but it must be remembered that for 42 years of Sarhili's reign he would have been the symbol for amaXhosa independence. It should therefore not be surprising that in contemporary Xhosa oral tradition that he is still portrayed in that way. Sarhili, the king who never stop fighting for the independence of his people.



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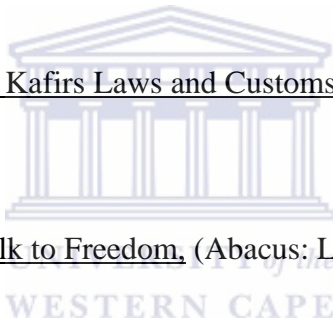
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