

**THE IMPACT OF MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF VICTORIA EAST,  
1824-1860**

**By**

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**DECLARATION**

I the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in any part submitted it at any university or other institution for a degree

*N. May* .....

Signature

*April 2012* .....

Date

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis covers a period of drastic change in that part of Xhosaland later known as Victoria East. Chapters One and Two deal with the clash between the Glasgow missionaries at Lovedale and the amaXhosa who were expected to simply discard their way of life in favour of the new dispensation. Chapter Three explains the arrival in the Eastern Cape of the amaMfengu, formerly called abaMbo, and their role in the divisive policies of the colonial government. Chapter Four recounts the brief interlude (1836-1846) during which the colonial government tried but ultimately rejected a more equitable model of cross-border relations known as the Treaty System. The final chapter deals with the introduction of direct rule over the newly-created district of Victoria East, and with the policies of Henry Calderwood, its first magistrate, which were artfully constructed to perpetuate 'Divide and Rule' so as to maintain a comfortable life for the white settlers in the border area.

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Block Drift 1847

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[Maps from J.S. Bergh and J.C. Visagie, The Eastern Cape Frontier Zone, 1660-1980 ( Durban: Butterworths, 1985, pp. 23, 51) ]

## PREFACE

When I first came to Alice many, many years ago, to register as a student at Lovedale (then a Teacher Training College), I met the then Rector, late Mr R. Sigabi, who referred me to the University of Fort Hare, also in Alice. That is when a bond developed between me and Alice, with its rich mission history – as a student at Fort Hare and, later, as a teacher at Msobomvu village. I just knew that, if ever I were to do some historical research, it would definitely be on Alice. Whenever I introduced myself, the minute I said I was from Peddie, and that my clan name is “Gasela,” people would ask “Ungowase Ngqushwa, uyiMfengu?” (are you an iMfengu from Peddie?) I would then wonder ‘what is wrong about Peddie and amaMfengu?’ I came to a decision that my research would also be on amaMfengu, who they were, where were they from, and what is it that they did in the past, to cause such uneasiness among amaXhosa whenever the word ‘iMfengu’ is uttered?

My research is therefore an attempt to unearth the rich history of Alice, paying particular attention to the contribution of the missionaries, especially the Glasgow Missionary Society in Education. A lot has been written already about the missionaries but not much about the reaction of the indigenous people to their influence. This study, therefore, also looks at the impact of the missionaries on the people of Alice and Victoria East. It is known that when two cultures meet, there is bound to be a clash, especially if the newer one imposes itself on the

older, established one, and especially if the newer one undermines the older one. This clash of cultures, therefore, also constitutes the essence of this study. The missionaries, as the harbingers of the new culture, much as they brought positive things, clashed with the custodians of the old culture, precisely because they failed to compromise. They wanted people to discard their own culture and assume a new one – this was unacceptable to indigenous people.

The whole question of amaMfengu is also addressed in this work inasmuch as the amaXhosa/amaMfengu/Colonial relationship always ended up with warfare and the usurpation of Xhosa land. Here the old notion of ‘Divide and Rule’ inevitably comes up on the part of the Colonial government.

Finally, I came to realize that nothing much has ever been written on the history of Alice despite it being the greatest centre of black education in Southern Africa where many African leaders drank at the fountains of education, Lovedale and Fort Hare, including former South African President Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela, and President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. These two stalwarts of the liberation of Africa represent all the leaders who studied at Lovedale or Fort Hare at one time or another. This work therefore aims to put this little town, so huge in terms of its cultural and educational contribution, in its rightful context on the historical map of South Africa.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 2009, I happened to attend the Womens Day commemoration of 9 August. In the course of her speech, one lady speaker advised us that 'If you put God in the centre of all your endeavours, everything else falls into place.' How very true! First and foremost, I dedicate this work to God, for the strength and courage He has given me to continue my studies against all odds, and for all the people He put at my disposal to assist me.

I thank my family, my father, my pillar of strength, who, though not at all educated, saw the value of education and, deviating from the old belief that it is not wise to educate a female child (for she will get married and develop the family into which she is married), saved his money and sent me to the University of Fort Hare – Tata, this work I dedicate to you. To my late mother, the embodiment of self-discipline, good morals, respect, dedication, diligence – this work is the result of your upbringing, for who and what I am today I thank you Gcwanini, Miya, Sibewu, Mja – may your soul rest in peace!

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To the Head of Cory Library and my Supervisor, Prof Jeff Peires – thanking you, Sir, will be my topic for my Ph.D. Dissertation, because this little paper cannot contain the thanks due to you. You have been my Supervisor, my big brother, my friend, my mentor, and again my supervisor. Thank you for your assistance, without you this work would never have taken off the ground.

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Alice, the surrounding villages, including Msobomvu where I work, here is my little contribution, to make sure that even the future generations know the History of Alice, which is part of our Heritage, thank you for everything; Alice is to me home away from home, very few people know that I come from Peddie.