

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

**By**

**NOMALUNGISA SYLVIA MAXENGANA**

**THE DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

**UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE**

**SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR J .B. PEIRES**

**APRIL 2012**

## 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!

My late brother Mbuyiselo "Speli," memories of you, your advices, encouragements, these have all given me strength to further my education. To my brother Thamsanqa, this work is as a result of your love for education, you were always by my side, encouraging me all the time – this work is for you bhuti wam. My eldest brother, Vuyisile, it is because of you that I came to



know about Lovedale, you would tell us everything about Lovedale every time you came home for the holidays – this work is for you too, bhuti wam. And Khuthala – this is my younger sister “ndalishiyela yena ibele kumama” – you know you are just my everything. I leave home for weeks, going to the state Archives in Cape Town, to Cory Library in Grahamstown for a whole week, but you never complain that the boys are too much for you, you just become their second mum, indeed you are. For everything that you are to me, my source of strength, inspiration, confidante – this work would never succeed without you, thank you.

Last but not least of my family, my three boys – Khwezi, Liyabona and Buqaqawuli. This big three, they are my everything, my “bodyguards,” my inspiration, always there for me when I come home from the Fort Hare Library, Cory, Archives – jumping all over me (and I know I dare not show my exhaustion because they are just delighted that I am back home.) Thank you guys, this work is for you as a starting point, take it forward!!

I thank the Library Staff at Fort Hare, starting from Mr Clarke (bhuti Phil) at Howard Pim for his readiness to assist me (with my computer illiteracy) in getting material, to the Main Library staff members, Mr Mavuso (bhuti Bhele), Mr Mginywa (Bhuti Tshawe), Mr Khembe (Manxele), Mr Hlakanyana (Sandile), Mrs Bhokhwe, and others. The Department of History at Fort Hare, headed by Mrs D.S. Yekela, my former History Lecturer, thank you “mam wam,” for believing in me, your confidence in me that I can do this, I could write a whole book tabulating your

contribution in making this work a success, but please accept a big thank you from the bottom of my humble heart. Ms Maliza (Sisi Nozo), we did History in our days as Fort Harians together – thank you for your words of encouragement, and you Mrs April.

The Cory Staff, headed by Professor Jeff Peires. Mrs Liz De Wet, my work would not be typed if you had not found me the very efficient MS Deidre Fouche, thank you so much. Louisa Verwey, for helping put my work on a flash, thank you, for any problem relating to technology, I now know where to turn to. Mrs Vathiswa (Vathi) Nhanha – my first born daughter at Cory – many thanks ntombi yam – your assistance getting me material, especially when it came to using the computer – and you did all with a smile, thank you. Cory Library has become my second home, I use their fridge to keep my lunch fresh, and use their microwave to warm it the following day. Mr Gacula (bhuti Victor) always ready to assist me with anything to be photocopied. Even if close to 5 o'clock you were always ready to assist, thank you so much. Mr Lucky Ndzoyiya helped so much with the maps. Mr Vena (Cory Library veteran), thank you for all your words of encouragement.

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.

You believed in me, you encouraged me – this boosted my morale, and propelled me into producing this work. Your approach in doing things, the way you put forward your ideas, even when correcting a major mistake when exchanging ideas with you, you did it in such a good, polite way that I never felt intimidated by your red pen on any page of my work because I knew it was for a good cause, and I also told myself that I would never want to attach your name to a “third rate” piece of work. To me, you are disciplined, dedicated, hard working, diligent and honest (I knew the first time I discussed my work with you that I would never cheat on you with even footnotes), thoroughness, and, Sir, for the very easy person (yet very strict) it has been to work with you, please accept many thanks from the bottom of my humble heart. Brace yourself, Sir, for after scholars read this about you, even those who already have their PhDs, they will be tempted to go back to Honours just so as to be supervised by you. Knowing that you never like to be sung praises, though you deserve much more thanks – I don’t have enough words to do so – let all the words I would have used under normal circumstances to thank you be incorporated into the fact that, because I would never have succeeded without you, I therefore dedicate it to you!!

My thanks also go to the staff members at the Cape State Archives in Cape Town. Without their friendly assistance, I would not have unearthed all that primary evidence stacked away on their shelves. Miss Lizeka Titi (Sisi Lizi), for extending your home to me on my visits to Cory Library, thank you. Your warmth, friendliness and hospitality has made it easy for me to concentrate on

my work when in Grahamstown. Even when you were bereaved, you never chased me away, you will always be my big sister – thank you so much.

My nieces and nephews, Aviwe, Phumeza, Vuyokazi, Sandiswa, Athenkosi, Sipehelele, Siyamthanda, Qhama, Chuma, Dumisa and Nolitha, and my entire Maxengana family, thank you for your good wishes and prayers. My cousins, Lungisa, Mkhanyisi, Vuyisa, Luyanda, Mthobi, Noluvuyo, Mava and Samkelo, you are everything to me, bantwana bakamalume, thank you for what you are to me and us all at home.

To my colleagues at my school, headed by Siphumle Mbane (Msuthu), all the students and former students, Mr Mqulwana (our former principal) – thank you for your best wishes. Mr Manditha (Skhomo), educator at Amathole Museum in King Williams Town, for your encouragement in my studies, thank you so much.

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.