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THE 'MFECANE' AFTERMATH

towards a new paradigm

6-9 September 1991

'TEACHING IN THE AFTERMATH'

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TEACHING IN THE AFTERMATH.
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PART ONE:

It is one day in the teaching practice of August 1990. I am sitting in a small DET classroom while the student teacher is giving an exposition of the 'mfecane'. The standard eight pupils are surprisingly competent - they know the routes of all the migrations, the names of the people and their leaders. They recite them from heart and I am lulled by the incantation until I hear the deadly phrase: 'they were running away from the Zulus'. It sounds like the beat of a distant war-drum. I sit up smartly and look at the map that the student teacher has drawn on the chalk-board from their recital. It suddenly captures for me the absurdity of the mfecane myth - this immense tidal wave reaching out to engulf southern Africa.

Academic historian, Julian Cobbing told a seminar hosted by Wits University, a few years ago that he had experienced a similar sort of epiphany while he was trying to teach the 'mfecane' to university students. It was, he recalled, enough to set him on his heretical course. Many of the academics who were at that seminar had just begun to take Cobbing's critique of the 'mfecane' seriously, but still had reservations about its extremism, particularly in its dismissal of the 'internal revolution' theories that had been advanced and supported by Africanist historians. But right now, in student teacher Thabo's lesson, I feel that Cobbing's attempts to undermine the Zulucentricity of the mfecane could not be more timely.

It is possible that I am impelled towards this conclusion by the overwhelming anguish of the present circumstances. In August 1990, in the townships on the Witwatersrand, the cry of 'the Zulus are coming' seemed to resound everywhere, even to spill out onto the motorways. It appeared to reflect the potency of the myth about the Zulu and their exceptional militancy, encapsulated in school textbooks.¹ (See appendix 1.) The behaviour of the latter day warriors also seemed to demonstrate that some Zulu-speaking people had internalised this version of their history to make it an essential part of their identity.

¹. For a detailed analysis of the presentation of the mfecane in secondary school textbooks, such as those written by A.N. Boyce, as well as the more recent History for Today and History Alive, and of university texts see K. Carlean, 'Myths of the Mfecane and South African Educational Texts: A Critique.' (Unpublished paper, Rhodes 1990) A fine criticism of existing educational texts, Carlean's paper is nevertheless totally uncritical of Cobbing's thesis, which he castigates other authors for ignoring or failing to acknowledge.

Inkatha's financial links with the South African police had not yet been exposed and even the Frankenstein's monster of Uwusa was still supposed by most to be an Inkatha initiated scheme, rather than the creature of the South African state it later turned out to have been. Without the benefit of these later revelations, which might have shed light on the genesis of the violence, in the closing months of 1990, progressive journalists found it difficult to extricate themselves from the cloying strands of the mfecane myth. In the first few days of the initial violence in Thokoza in August, they tinkered self-consciously with 'Zulu and Xhosa speaking' to suggest that they did not believe that the friction was caused by ethnicity, but then they seemed to have no idea of what had. Late in August, Allister Sparks wrote an editorial for the now defunct Daily Mail asking what had caused the Natal civil war suddenly to leap into the Transvaal.² He referred to 'huge eruption(s)' I found it interesting that he used language suggestive of violent natural movement. It was as if it were the only way in which one could explain such an apparently fantastic geographical feat and is, of course, highly reminiscent of the language used in traditional accounts of the 'mfecane'.

Sparks' editorial moved on to argue that the civil war had been imported into the Transvaal as part of Inkatha's desperate bid for power. He talked about the organisation 'trying to ensure its place on the national stage'. And although my historical self balked at such journalistic cliches, he was right, although few knew the details of the backstage team. It was not that the civil war had spontaneously spilled over the Drakensberg, as his opening paragraphs implied, it had been managed and directed in a way that perhaps only outworn theatrical metaphor can impart, but it still required a script and a 's to play it out. Giving a synopsis of the plot and alluding to its sponsors would not suffice as explanation.

In those days, as has been mentioned above, the progressive journalists, schooled to think of ethnicity as reactionary, were troubled about explaining the township war as 'faction or tribal fighting'. They began to hunt for other causes and for grand conspiracy, which in the end took them into the secret police files. In an interview published in The Weekly Mail in late August 1990, with a man described as 'a frightened hostel dweller', a journalist discovered that, under duress there were Pedis, Shangaans, Tswanas, even Xhosas from the hostel 'who have become Inkatha members overnight'.³ As more interviews were undertaken, and especially when writers were prepared to probe beyond the role of the increasingly obviously manipulative Inkatha, it emerged more clearly that the battles were not just about ethnic differences. The most sophisticated of the analyses suggested that the violence had to be seen in the general context of impoverishment, scarce resources and brutalisation. The rapid flare up and intensity of the fighting had a great deal to do

². A. Sparks, 'Who Stands to Gain from the Violence?' The Daily Mail 22/08/1990.

³. The Weekly Mail 24-26/08/1990.

century counterparts and were prepared to believe that Myeni had an 'impi' - half a million strong - poised to strike Soweto, as he boasted.⁸

There are still questions that remain unanswered, for all that we now know of Inkatha's indebtedness to the South African state. Where did Inkatha's leaders find the basic ideological material with which to inspire their allies (or paid agents), to terrify their opponents and to vindicate those who had been saying all along that ethnic division would survive apartheid? At one level the answer is obvious, because we know now that many of their resources came from the state. But we might still wonder how they came to choose their particular expressions of terror and mayhem, how they attracted their recruits, and more importantly how they were able to continue justifying unspeakable acts in the name of tradition? I would argue, much as I did, on that afternoon last year, with student teacher Thabo that much of their inspiration came from history - or rather from a particular version of history - from the 'mfecane', whether it was conveyed to them in school or on Shaka Day or through some other institution of which we are ignorant. (see appendix 2) As teachers we tell our students that everyone ran away from Shaka when we can hardly be sure that such a person existed.⁹ We magnify Zulu militancy and extract it from a very particular and limited nineteenth century context so that we have their impis rushing out of nineteenth century Natal to devastate and lay twentieth century Thokoza (or Soweto) to waste.

While I was watching student teacher Thabo's lesson, other students of mine were fleeing for their lives from the 'Zulu' and I wanted to shout at Thabo to make him stop, to break the collective trance, but of course I did not and politely reserved my comments for later. After the lesson, Thabo agreed that it was dangerous to continue with the old 'mfecane' but wanted to know how one went about replacing the image of the omniscient impi on the rampage. This set me thinking about the possibility of reconstructing a narrative. That I thought in terms of a narrative was initially disconcerting. It was at first sight, a contradiction of what I have argued before.¹⁰ I have even

⁸. Musa Myeni, Inkatha Freedom Party's foreign affairs chief, threatened to unleash 250 000 trained fighters on Transvaal townships at a rally. Subsequently a large Inkatha group did go on the rampage in Bekkersdal on the West Rand. For this potted version Cf The Weekly Mail, 2-8/08/1991.

⁹. I am of course exaggerating this point. But Cf Carolyn Hamilton's work on sources on Shaka, which demonstrate that they contradict each other even on the level of physical description.

¹⁰. See for example, C. Kros, 'The Making of Class: beyond model curricula - a preliminary critique of the presentation of history in South African schools', Perspectives in Education, 10 (1) 1988,

with strained relations between various groups of residents living and competing with each other under extremely harsh conditions. Thokoza's battles between hostel dwellers and the inhabitants of the Phola Park shack areas were perhaps the starker illustration of this phenomenon.⁴ A hostel dweller commented that he and his fellows had 'no peace of mind and rest of the soul. We are like lost people', which at once said something much more tragic than all the crimson skylines and mangled corpses that were appearing under the banner headlines of the corporate press, and hinted at why people were looking for an identity they were prepared to kill for.⁵ Despite the 1991 exposé of the South African government's connections with Inkatha, it would be a pity to forget some of these less satisfying revelations about the nature of South African society.

A friend of mine from Soweto commented some time in those early days of August: 'Before this, no-one noticed the difference between a Xhosa and a Zulu. When one said "that one there is a Xhosa," it was a linguistic difference only'. It comforted me to hear that and as, I have suggested above, material reasons for the tensions that were surfacing abound. Even so, it is not quite true to think that Buthelezi plucked ethnicity from the innocent African sky; not even Vlok's hand-outs included the 'Zulu tradition' which Buthelezi and Zwelethini used alternatively to threaten and to whip up support. It was a tradition with such apparently substantial roots in the past and in Buthelezi's own putative genealogy that even intellectuals were bemused.⁶ Despite the efforts of progressive journalists, stereotyped pictures of the Zulu and their inherent capacity for aggression; the old myth of the warriors who could not wait to prove their manhood by washing their spears in blood, which Jeff Guy tried to lay to rest years ago, seem to have presented a powerful obstacle to all sorts of people's understanding of the situation.⁷ Even the highly educated people with whom I came into contact, thought that perhaps the 'Zulus' contemporary pugilism proved that Cobbing was wrong about their nineteenth

⁴. Cf for example, an article in The Daily Mail, 16/08/1990, which describes a 'Zulu' raid on the squatter camp and a subsequent, so-called pre-emptive raid on Khalanyoni Hostel, Thokoza. Also, Cf The Weekly Mail, 12-18/04/1990, an article with the evocative title of 'The toilets that started the trouble', for an analysis of clashes over facilities in Katlehong squatter camps.

⁵. The Star, 23/08/1990.

⁶. For concentrated evidence Cf The Weekly Mail, 26/07/1991. (See Appendix 1)

⁷. J. Guy, The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom. (London, 1979.)

denounced the Reader's Digest Illustrated History for giving itself the sub-title of 'The Real Story', from a public platform. It seems important, therefore to justify narrative as both academically respectable and, contrary to appearances, consistent with a progressive pedagogy.

The first line of defence is that the best South African historians have employed narrative, however they may have encumbered it with theory in the past, when they were obliged to by PHD requirements and the intellectual vogue of the early 1970s. (cf. Bonner, Delius, Guy, van Onselen and especially recent Peires, who seems to take pride in claiming to have shaken off theory, or heavy-handed analysis, in favour of a story-line)¹¹ South African historians have not 'programmatically refused' narrative, as have, for example economists who have traded in narrative for regressions.¹² But high school history teachers sometimes come to think that narrative history is lower order history. A colleague of mine tells how, when she arrived at her first school as a newly graduated history teacher she arrogantly consigned the teaching of narrative to the older, more establishment- oriented teacher so that she could get on with 'theory'. After a term she realised that the pupils had learned more from the older teacher's stories than they had from her simplifications of Althusser and Hindess and Hirst.¹³

Hayden White thinks that narrative might be the answer to the question of 'how to translate knowing into telling, (to) the problem of fashioning human experience into a form assimilable to structures of meaning that are generally human rather than culture-specific'. ¹⁴ In the essay from which this quotation

pp 87-100.

- ^{11.} Some examples: P.L. Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires: the Evolution and Dissolution of the 19th Century Swazi State. (Johannesburg, 1982). P. Delius, The Land Belongs to Us. (Johannesburg, 1983). J.B. Peires, The House of Phalo. (Johannesburg, 1981) and his The Dead Will Arise. (Johannesburg 1989). Also see P. Maylam, A History of The African People of South Africa. (Johannesburg, 1986.) and L. Thompson, A History of South Africa (Sandton, 1990) for general narratives.
- ^{12.} H. White, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', On Narrative W.J.T. Mitchell (ed), (Chicago and London, 1981) p 1.
- ^{13.} For a convincing, straightforward argument that makes a case for story-telling in history teaching see A. Farmer, 'Story-telling in History', Teaching History, (58) Jan 1990, pp 17-23.
- ^{14.} White, 1981, p 1.

comes, White elevates the narrative, not only to the status of 'metacode', capable of transcending cultural specificities, but also to the highest order of history. By comparing the historical narrative with other forms, principally annals and chronicles, he demonstrates the complexity as well as the efficacy of the narrative. As he remarks, the world does not really present itself in the form of 'well-made stories with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles and ends, and a coherence that permits us to see "the end" in every beginning...'¹⁵ it doesn't come to us 'already narrativised'. When we make 'real events' into a story we use a variety of intellectual strategies. The conception of historical narrative demands certain preconditions. It cannot come into being without the notion of subject or agency, or without the recognition of a central organising principle. Furthermore, as Frank Kermode remarks in the same collection of essays: '...sequence goes nowhere without his doppelganger or shadow, causality.'¹⁶ Historical narrative may, hypothetically exist without analysis; some of our textbook writers have come close to achieving this, but compelling narrative derives its strength from analysis. The two are not mutually exclusive. Croce, quoted by White, indicates the direction we wish to pursue: 'Historical narration without analysis is trivial, historical analysis without narration is incomplete'.¹⁷

The most intriguing and probably contentious element of White's argument is about endings. The annal and the chronicle he chooses to discuss in detail have no endings, and White argues that this was not due to authorial apathy, but because the writers' consciousness, reflected in the forms they chose to write history, precluded the possibility of an ending. It is a theme that Ursula La Guin takes up, a few pages on in a sardonic tale that asks how we reach an end, 'living, as we do, in the middle'.¹⁸ White believes that endings are made possible only if there is 'moralising' - deduced from some presupposition of a legal social system or order which has been transgressed. 'Interest in the social system, which is nothing other than a system of human relationships governed by law, creates the possibility of conceiving the kinds of tensions, conflicts and struggles and their various kinds of resolutions that we are accustomed to find in any representation of reality presenting itself to us as history'.¹⁹

The problem is, that in our case, the old story of the 'mfecane' is an almost perfect narrative and one sees how easily and how

¹⁵. White, 1981 p. 23.

¹⁶. F. Kermode, 'Secrets and Narrative Sequence', 1981, p 80.

¹⁷. Croce quoted in White, 1981, p. 6.

¹⁸ U. La Guin, 'It was a Dark and Stormy Night; or Why are We Huddling about the Campfire?' 1981, p. 195.

¹⁹. White, 1981, p 13.

gratefully the student teacher slips into the rhythm of its sequence, driven by an insistent and stark causality; how she is mesmerised by its dazzling subjects, especially Shaka as he pursues the inexorable logic of his Macbethian course. When our students gave the traditional account of the 'mfecane' they told immaculate narratives that enthralled their listeners.²⁰ Even I suspended all critical judgment when I heard Naledi, her voice dropping to a dry whisper, telling the story of the 'madlatule' famine - 'that time when you spoke quietly if you had food so your neighbours would not overhear you.'²¹ But when they attempted to tell, for instance, a revised story of the Battle of Dithakong (1823) they were lost, they digressed, their narrative collapsed and, like White's medieval chronicler, they could find no ending.

Cobbing has attempted to provide an alternative set of moral assumptions for the narrative to cohere around, but somehow they do not suffice. The students were left drifting on critique and counter critique and could not translate their enthusiasm for Cobbing's moral intentions into conviction. In a simulated teaching session, unable to conclude, they asked their putative standard eight students to conclude for them and even their docile and well disposed peers, who were acting the part of standard eights, rebelled and retreated into defensive conservatism.

We concluded, after a detailed review of the video tapes of these teaching sessions that our students could not teach a revised version of the early nineteenth century without narrative. A white history teacher, who teaches at a predominantly black high school, has since told me that it is extremely difficult to introduce any revisions of the 'mfecane' into the classroom because the pupils immediately suspect her of 'attacking (their) history' - of 'taking away (their) heroes' and they ask: 'what are we supposed to believe in?'²² Other teachers have admitted to leaving out the 'mfecane' altogether because it has become too difficult, and this includes those who were educated at the

²⁰. In April/May of 1991 we embarked on an intensive course of study on the mfecane, Cobbing's critique and critiques of Cobbing with fourth year students. These students were about to complete either a Higher Diploma of Education (Post graduate) or a Bachelor of Arts in Education. All had at least two years of university history behind them.

At the end of the mfecane course they were required to 'teach the mfecane' (divided into three regions: Zululand, Delagoa Bay and 'the interior') in the micro-teaching studios where their performances were video taped.

²¹. Although this story is true, the names of the students have been altered.

²². Telephonic interview with Johannesburg high school history teacher, conducted by C. Kros, 05/08/1991.

premier tertiary educational institutions in South Africa.²³ But no sooner had we reached our conclusion about the necessity for narrative, than we were beset by self-doubt for it seemed to fly in the face of all the latest theories of pedagogy and education for liberation, even flouting our oldest and most cherished dictum of encouraging 'critical thinking.' If we gave teachers a reconstructed narrative, were we enabling them to be the 'transformative intellectuals' of Aronowitz and Giroux's formulation.²⁴ In a paper, inspired by the notion of teachers as transformative intellectuals, Maureen Robinson expresses a common enough fear among progressive educators of 'deskilling' teachers, of leaving them dependent on a textbook, albeit an alternative one. Robinson articulates a 'dependista' theory of materials development, worrying that external funding of ideas leads to retardation, underdevelopment and perpetual dependency. But how do we go about 'empowering' teachers? Naledi, a 'mature' student, felt at her most powerful when she was allowed to tell a story she knew well. When she was required to deal with the new material on the 'mfecane' she lost the thread of what she was saying and her adult class became restless. Naledi and her peers are students at the end of a degree course at one of the best universities in the country and yet they struggled painfully to present a coherent account of the Cobbing critique or of, for example, Eldridge's critique of Cobbing.

Robinson's sub-text speaks her disillusionment with teachers' willingness or ability to create materials, which she ascribes to 'pessimism'.²⁵ She acknowledges the need for teacher 're-education'. I have a feeling we should probably be talking about 'education' in its broadest sense. John Tosh, surveying contemporary Britain, describes history as a 'political battlefield' and I have sometimes thought of history teachers, especially in South Africa, in the way I used to think of my newly matriculated boys who went 'to the border' straight after school, as cannon-fodder.²⁶ Whether we envisage teachers as ill-trained and barely equipped military recruits or hard-pressed intellectual brokers in a conflict-ridden society, we need to recognise that this is what they are, underprepared in a situation fraught with danger. In this context, we have to think very carefully about what may constitute real empowerment.

Lastly, before embarking on our own reconstructed narrative, I would like to examine what I consider to be one of the more

²³. Data collected by Shelley Greybe in initial survey for materials development project. The point here is that the teacher concerned was not ill-educated.

²⁴. Cf. S. Aronowitz and H.A. Giroux, Education Under Siege. (London, 1987).

²⁵. M. Robinson, 'The Role of Resources within Present Struggles in Education'. p 3 (Unpublished paper).

²⁶. Cf J. Tosh, The Pursuit of History (London and New York, 1984).

successful textbook narratives of the early nineteenth century. The narratives in most history textbooks are stark and without digression - they rarely address themselves to the reader to challenge their credulity, as even some writers of fiction do, to prompt reflection on the boundaries between art and life.²⁷ Neil Parsons' A New History Of Southern Africa published in 1982 is somewhat exceptional in this regard. He poses questions such as: 'Why did the Ndwandwe and Mthethwa become so powerful at the end of the eighteenth century?'²⁸ and initially, at any rate, introduces a tentative note, for example: 'It is also likely...'²⁹. He anticipates historical revision, although it is true that his tone becomes increasingly certain in the course of chapter five. Nevertheless, for some of the time at least, he integrates an interrogative tone with the style and pace of a fast-moving narrative, much as Peires does in The Dead Will Arise. Parsons' description of the environment creates the prose effects of a novel (see, for example p 56) and his accounts of battles are shamelessly dramatic, as on page 58: '...Shaka attacked the tired and starving Ndwandwe with a full army...' Although his account of the 'mfecane' and 'difeqane' is complex and satiated with the names of leaders and groups of raiders and counter-raiders, the overall contour of the narrative is strong and potentially provocative.

In his abstract for the present colloquium, Parsons apologises for helping to 'perpetuate the orthodoxy'. But, in some ways, Parsons 1982 account anticipates some of the central tenets of the Cobbing thesis, although he presents them with far less of a conspiratorial air. Parsons points out that '... the area of the Transvaal had been suffering constant minor warfare since about the 1770s...',³⁰ well before the foundation of the Zulu state. His account of the battle of Dithakong, does not have missionary slave-traders but, he points out that the most important lesson learned was '- that a few men with guns and horses could destroy an army of thousands, but they might be controlled by friendship with British missionaries or officials'.³¹ He also introduces the slave trade, but suggests that the 'mfecane' supplied it with its commodities by accident,

²⁷. Cf, for example the mischievous style of Fay Weldon in her novel The Hearts and Lives of Men (London, 1987). On p 168 she addresses the 'Reader', 'Those of you who have been paying good attention...' and on p 172 she writes: 'Reader, you know how in real life coincidences happen again and again...It's against commonly accepted rules for writers to use co-incidence in fiction...'

²⁸. N. Parsons, A New History of Southern Africa (Macmillan, 1982) p 55.

²⁹ Parsons (1982) p. 56.

³⁰ Parsons (1982) p. 67.

³¹ Parsons (1982) p. 71.

rather than anybody's design.³² He concludes chapter four on a strong nation-building note, but chapter five has no properly declared conclusion. It leaves Sebetwane of the Kololo dying on the eve of Livingstone's arrival in his domain. Sebetwane's mfecane related wanderings had taken him and his followers from the western Witwatersrand to Botswana, Namibia and then to the upper Zambezi, covering a geographic circuit, closely related to Parsons' curricular area, which is presumably why the latter chose to leave us with Sebetwane rather than any of the other 'mfecane' heroes. Sebetwane dies of an old battle-wound, made worse by malarial fever and over-indulgence in 'dagga'. His death is represented as a multi-causal fatality, which contrasts strongly with Cobbing's insistence on the exclusively external, European generated 'onslaught'.³³ The mfecane which raised great nations at the end of chapter four, has also dealt Sebetwane a death-blow and because Livingstone pronounces the verdict on the cause of his death and the next chapter is titled: 'European Colonisation', we know that Sebetwane's death signals the closing of an era - the end of the 'mfecane'. It is in 1851 and for Cobbing, four decades premature, for the struggle between African polities and white raiders and their allies, draws to an end only in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Parsons has constructed a fairly sturdy framework, although he suggests and, perhaps he needs to do so more strongly, that historical revision is a constant process, capable of eroding frameworks. Parsons has a hero, but he is one who is more identifiable with a broad geographical region than he is with a narrowly defined ethnic entity. Parsons' Sebetwane is not like the Shaka of the orthodox 'mfecane' who plunges himself and his kingdom ever more deeply into murder and blood-lust until it destroys him, nor yet is he like Cobbing's Shaka, the impotent victim of circumstance, who is slain by conspirators. Sebetwane is neither the creator nor the casualty of Destiny. There is much we could draw on from Parsons' narrative, but it is still dominated by the sense of random wanderers and wanderings, ultimately brought to an orderly conclusion by 'European colonisation', even if the latter impression is conveyed only by the juxtaposition of chapters referred to above.

³² Parsons (1982) p. 66.

³³. See Appendix 3 for Cobbing's suggested synthesis.

PART TWO:

The need to construct a new narrative grew out of a SACHED materials development project on nineteenth century South African history. The project involves writing booklets for teachers which reflect current research on key areas of the current syllabus. The target audience is second language secondary school teachers.

The challenge of the latter has largely shaped the form of the materials. The SACHED team's testing has so far revealed a preference amongst teachers for a traditionally structured narrative, albeit with a progressive content. In the same way that research into the use and impact of the History Alive series by the Natal History Teacher's Association³⁴ in 1989 and Johannesson³⁵ (1988) laid bare the tension between the willingness of teachers to contest the bankrupt content of the current syllabus and their willingness or ability to alter present teaching styles, so the SACHED testing has revealed a similar dichotomy. So for example, teachers have readily accepted a revised interpretation of the Basotho state as a story of conquest and dispossession but are wary of lessons based entirely on evidence, group work or historiographical debates.

The implications of this for us as teachers and materials writers were crucial in shaping the form of the pack on the 'mfecane'. The very first teacher interviewed³⁶ (names have been changed to protect the innocent) confessed that since being introduced to the debate at a UCT lecture, she has abandoned the topic altogether. In her own words

" I don't teach it (the mfecane). I am not current on the debate, I am scared because I know that existing textbooks are wrong and I have too much work to read the ■ stuff."

Interviews like these, the results of the SACHED materials testing, our experiences with student teachers on teaching practice and in workshops all testify to the need for a narrative presentation of alternative history content. Hamilton and Witz (1991) have attributed the overwhelming success of the Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa: The Real Story to its offering 'a synthesised overview of an alternative South African history'³⁷ and its provision of a 'necessary framework and context in which to situate the various sources of history which

³⁴ Morrell, R. 'History textbooks and history teaching in South Africa: Present and Future' (Unpublished paper, 1990)

³⁵ Johannesson, B. B.Ed Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1988

³⁶. Interview conducted by Shelly Greybe on 6-2-1991.

³⁷ Witz, L. and Hamilton, C. 'Reaping the Whirlwind: The Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa and changing Popular Perceptions of History' in South African History Journal 24 (1991), pp 185-202.

were provided'.³⁸

The need for a narrative format seems clear, but where we do not agree with critics of the form such as Hamilton and Witz, is that 'entertaining' narrative has necessarily to be 'authoritative'. (See above p. for the argument that analysis structures narrative and p. on the merits of Parsons' textbook.) It seems clear from the whole preceding argument that the mfecane debate needs to be presented in a narrative form if it is ever to begin to reach a wider audience. The SACHED 'mfecane' history pack is an attempt to make accessible to teachers the implications of the debate generated by Cobbing's intervention and to plug the holes left in the nineteenth century South African history syllabus by the disintegration of the mfecane paradigm. In passing, we may note that this exercise has left us with numb digits.

Probably the greatest constraint on the new narrative has been the debate on whether or not Cobbing has generated a new paradigm. The first stage in constructing a new narrative was an attempt to find a position in the 'Cobbing controversy'. In this, the colloquium held at the University of Natal on March fifth of this year was an important step in clarifying the need to consider the full range of Cobbing's work.

Shula Marks pointed out at the colloquium that Cobbing's evidence for slavery remains inadequate, despite his searches. Despite this, she argued that Cobbing's work has forced us to recognise a new paradigm in that 'mfecane' as metatheory is no longer possible. In its place Cobbing recognises a more diffuse sense of agency than the Zulucentric 'mfecane'. At the Natal colloquium, Jeff Guy commended Cobbing's thesis for shedding 'light on previously boring, barbaric (history)'. He went on, though to caution that 'the evidence for slave-raiding is too slight to carry Cobbing's argument'. Guy also described Cobbing's work as 'squeezing out (the) sense of living people interacting on the ground'. Following Guy and Marks, in reconstructing the narrative, we have found one of the flaws in Cobbing's work is that the people in the states are not active participants, but faceless victims of the external onslaught. In this respect, we submit that he substitutes one moncausal theory for another, albeit one that has regional permutations.

Cobbing and John Wright³⁹ have shown conclusively that the 'mfecane' in its crudest incarnation needs to be discarded and that it has served unworthy political ends. Guy and others have rightfully pointed out that the way forward is through a series of regional studies, which are capable of examining not only the impact of external force, but also the motors of internal change, such as continuities and crises in commodity production. At the Natal colloquium, Guy stressed that it was important not to discard the older 'internal revolution' theories, such as population pressure and ecological crisis, for, despite their current evidential inadequacies, they are still relevant.

A survey of existing work suggests that substantial progress has already been made towards carrying out Guy's agenda. Indeed, it might be argued that, in some respects, in arguing for several regional epicentres, Cobbing was giving voice to a trend already present in the historiography. Since the beginning of the 1970s, a series of works has eroded the old Zulucentric paradigm: Slater (1976), Hedges (1978), Bonner (1982) Harries (1981), Cobbing (1976) Rasmussen (1978), Hamilton (1985) and Wright (1989)⁴⁰. To a degree, a new synthesis has been achieved, especially in Carolyn Hamilton and John Wright's work on Natal (1985, 1989). Using their work we have constructed the following short narrative on the Delagoa Bay-Thukela region. The narrative, in turn, forms part of a broader outline. (See appendix 4.)

⁴⁰. H. Slater, 'Translations in the Political Economy of South Africa before 1840.' (D. Phil Thesis, University of Sussex, 1976.)
D.W. Hedges, 'Trade and Politics in Southern Mocambique and Zululand in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth centuries.' (PhD Thesis,
P. Bonner, Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires: The Evolution and Dissolution of the Nineteenth Century Swazi State. (Johannesburg, 1983)
P. Harries, 'Slavery, Social Incorporation and surplus extraction: the nature of free and unfree labour in South-East Africa.' (Journal of African History, XXII (1981), pp. 309-30.
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The Phongolo-Mzimkhulu Region

Using oral traditions, archaeological evidence and documents, historians know that in the mid 18 century, around 1750, the people of the Phongolo-Mzimkhulu area that we call Natal today lived in many small groups: some had only a thousand people or less and stretched over only a few hundred square kilometres, others had several thousand or more, and spread over thousands of square kilometres.

The people in the region lived in homesteads controlled by the male elders in the communities. They grew cereal crops and kept cattle. Groups of homesteads joined together to form small communities which in turn were grouped together in small chiefdoms. The size of these chiefdoms changed over time as groups joined and left. The chiefs were not able to force small groups to stay because they did not have armies of their own.

Sometimes groups of neighbouring chiefdoms joined together to form a paramountcy which is a group of chiefdoms united under one paramount chief. Such groups formed when one chief was able to control other chiefdoms, but this control did not mean very much in practice. So a paramount chief could not make laws for the chiefdoms he controlled.

This does not mean that everyone in these societies was equal. Some chiefs were richer than others and so could attract more followers, women did not have the same social importance as men and older people had more status than younger ones.

States begin to develop

Then, from about 1775 onwards, some of these chiefdoms began to change - they began to grow bigger and more powerful. This change began in chiefdoms in the area between the White Mfolozi River and Delagoa Bay which we now call Maputo. Find this region on the map.

The three which are most important for this topic are :

- * The Mabudu chiefdom which was settled East of the Maputo River in present day southern Mozambique.
- * The Ndwandwe chiefdom which became powerful in the area that is now Northern Zululand.
- * The Mthethwa chiefdom which was becoming powerful in the area between the Mfolozi and Mlatuze Rivers.

Reasons for state formation

Historians are not sure why these changes took place and have thought of a number of different reasons for the changes.

Some historians like A.T. Bryant have argued that it was great men like Shaka and Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa who created these states. But historians today know that studying the actions of the rulers of societies only tells us about a very small part of that society and leaves us with big questions unanswered.

Other historians have suggested different reasons for the change. In The Zulu Aftermath, Omer-Cooper argued that population growth had made people start fighting over resources like land, cattle and food.

The problem with this explanation is that there is not a lot of evidence to support it. Jeff Guy thought that their social structure changed because the land was not fertile anymore and did not produce enough crops or grass for grazing. Again we are left with questions. If productivity declined, why did it happen in these areas at this particular time?

Another explanation which is supported by lots of evidence is that these early states grew in response to international trade. We know from other parts of Africa that competition for trade could cause conflict which allowed states to grow.

The growth in size and power of the chiefdoms we are looking at happened at the same time as the expansion of trade in ivory after about 1750.

This trade had been carried out on a small scale, since the middle of the sixteenth century with mainly Portuguese traders. From

merchants also traded cloth, beads, and metal in exchange for ivory. Most of this came from areas south of Delagoa Bay.

Now chiefdoms started competing over who would control the most ivory hunting territory and the trade routes to Delagoa Bay.

The growth of trade also had an effect on the relationships inside the chiefdoms. Rulers and lesser groups began to argue over who would hunt and trade for ivory. In some chiefdoms, the subordinate groups won and the chiefdoms broke up, but in others, the ruling chiefs won and became even more powerful than before. They were able to control more people on a more permanent basis than before because now they could share out trade goods. This in turn meant that they had the means to conquer or form alliances with yet more weaker chiefdoms.

Effects of trade

Growth of States

The growth of the ivory trade is thought to have caused the growth of the Mabudu state because it controlled the trade routes between Delagoa Bay and the south. The rise of the Ndandwe and Mthethwa is also partly a result of the ivory trade. Of course, trade was not the only cause of state formation. Political organisation was a factor, as was the position of the state in relation to the trade routes and also the kind of hunting, grazing or farm land they controlled.

Social and political changes

Trade also changed social and political relationships in the chiefdoms.

The chiefs now began to use Amabutho to build their own personal control. These were groups of young men of the same age, owing loyalty to the same chiefs, who had come together traditionally in circumcision schools. Now the chiefs used them as elephant hunting bands. The chiefs then exchanged the ivory for trade goods like copper or beads and used these things to reward their followers. In this way they

built their power and wealth. The more followers a chief had, the more tribute he received (cattle), but also the more amabutho he could use to create more wealth.

The amabutho also fought against the followers of other chiefs - they became armies which could be used to conquer land and expand the chiefdoms.

Ideological and cultural changes

In the late 1700s when smaller chieftainships joined bigger groups like the Mthethwa, they lost their own history. Their history was now that of the larger chiefdom and their rulers were considered to be relatives of the new rulers.

As the chiefdoms grew more powerful and centralised into states, this changed. Now small chiefdoms which became part of larger chiefdoms were no longer included in the history of the larger chiefdom. They could not call themselves relatives of the greater chief as had happened before, but now had a separate history. They also had a different status in society - they were less powerful members of the chiefdom. This happened in the Mthethwa chiefdom and also in the Ndwandwe chiefdom.

So the older groups in the chieftainship became the aristocrats and the newer, less powerful ones became the common people.

Reactive states

Some chiefdoms grew in reaction to the growth of the Mthethwa and the Ndwandwe trading states.

These other states were not so well organised, and their rulers were not able to control the people they ruled as closely as the Mthethwa and Ndwandwe rulers could. They also had amabutho and were growing bigger as they seized more and more land.

Examples of this kind of state are: the Qwabe, the Mbo, the Ngcobo, the Hlubi and the Dlamini-Ngwane (it later became the Swazi kingdom).

Cattle trading

After some years, the differences between these two kinds of states were no longer so clear : they all competed for trade and with each other. Also, they all used the amabutho system to extend their power.

To keep the amabutho system working, chiefs had to have more and more cattle and so they now needed to raid for more cattle and grazing land.

In the late 1780s and 1790s, the ivory trade at Delagoa Bay became less important because Britain and France were at war with each other and had no time for trade in luxury goods like ivory. Now British and American whaling ships began to stop at Delagoa Bay to buy food. Their need for meat caused the trade to switch to cattle. Chiefs further south, who controlled better grazing lands, began sending cattle north for sale.

Historians think that this switch to trading cattle had a much bigger effect on African societies than had ivory trading had. Cattle were central to African society. They were a source of wealth and people did not sell them easily. So more cattle had to be obtained from outside sources. Raiding was the answer. As the trade grew, some chiefs became increasingly powerful. They seized control of cattle and grazing land from weaker chiefdoms.

The Slave Trade?

Some historians are starting to study the effects of the south-east African slave trade on the politics of the region south of Delagoa Bay. Because the work on the topic is only beginning and there is not a lot of evidence we do not know very much about the effects of this kind of trade on the area.

We do know that there was a growing trade in slaves in south-east Africa after the 1810 Anglo-Portuguese treaty which limited Portuguese slave trading. At the same time more slaves were needed. In Brazil, in South America more coffee, sugar and cotton were

being produced. In turn this meant that more slaves were needed on the plantations to grow these crops. Between 1810 and 1820, Brazil was importing upto 27 000 slaves a year. At least 10 000 of these came from Mocambique.

The problem for historians is in working out what part Delagoa Bay played in this trade. If the Bay was a source of slaves in the years between 1810 and 1820, then slave raiding must surely have been one of the causes of conflict. The sources of evidence that we do have, though, only tell of slave trading at Delagoa Bay in the 1820s - after the states had formed which suggests that slave trading may have been a by-product of the wars and not a cause of them.

States develop further

We have seen this far how trade began to change the way the eighteenth century chiefdoms were organised. Some chiefs and their advisors began to grow richer and more powerful through their control of trade. But as we pointed out, trade on its own was not enough to make societies change so much.

Historians are now starting to see that development of these chiefdoms into states was caused by many different factors. The causes were not the same for all of the states and this could help explain why some states were more successful than others.

Madlatule Famine

By the end of the eigteenth century chiefdoms had begun to change: individual chiefs now had far more power and controlled the lives of ordinary people much more directly than before. But this control did not develop only in response to trading opportunities. Things were happening inside the chiefdoms to make this change possible.

In the early nineteenth century there was a very fierce drought in the region. It went on for three years and soon caused a harsh famine. It was called the **Madlatule** famine which means 'let him eat and stay quiet' (eat silently so that the neighbours don't know

you have food). Many people starved, cattle died and people barricaded up their cattle and food in fortified villages. People fought each other for food and the amabutho became more important than ever before in raiding for cattle and food.

The madlatule famine strengthened the growing states. To feed their people, chiefs needed to control more land, cattle, grain stores and people to work and hunt. In turn people accepted the authority of the chiefs because they needed food and protection.

Trade caused the states to begin consolidating. The madlatule famine made the changes permanent. Chiefs and their advisors now decided how people lived - when they planted crops, when they could marry and when they could have children. People's labour was no longer just used to grow food but was now harnessed to produce products for trade so that the chief and his aristocracy could benefit.

The Mthethwa and Ndwandwe states

The way the chiefdoms changed depended on how harshly the famine affected them. We can see this by comparing how the Ndwandwe and Mthethwa states treated the people they conquered at this time.

The Ndwandwe developed a very centralised, military state because they were badly affected by the drought. The area which the Ndwandwe controlled was best suited to cattle-keeping and when the rains stopped, grazing was soon used up. To survive, the Ndwandwe became ruthless towards their enemies. Led by Zwide ka Langa, the Ndwandwe showed no mercy towards the people they conquered. They seized oxen, cattle, farmlands and homesteads. The people they attacked were forced to flee.

By comparison, the Mthethwa under Dingiswayo were not so badly affected by the famine. They controlled the coastal plains which were farmlands and had a high rainfall. So, when the Mthethwa conquered a weaker chiefdom they seized oxen as tribute but left the people they conquered with cattle and lands. The weaker chiefdoms also kept their separate

identity and history. As clients of Dingiswayo they owed him tribute and armed force when he demanded it. One such group was the Zulu. After the murder of Senzangakhona, Dingiswayo sent Shaka kaSenzangakhona to rule the Zulu chiefdom as a tributary state of the Mthethwa.

Both the Mthethwa and Ndwandwe chieftaincies went on expanding. The Ndwandwe spread southwards across the Mkuze River while the Mthethwa expanded up the White Mfolozi River. Soon, the two states were competing directly with each other. In 1817 the Ndwandwe attacked the Mthethwa, defeated them and killed Dingiswayo.

The defeat of the Mthethwa meant that the Ndwandwe was the strongest chiefdom in the Phongolo-Thukela region. The only force left in the south which could challenge them was the Zulu chiefdom which had been slow to send its army to help the Mthethwa fight the Ndwandwe and so had avoided defeat.

In 1818, the Ndwandwe attacked the Zulu and were beaten off. But the Zulu knew that the threat still remained and set about preparing for the next attack. To deal with the emergency the Zulu leadership formed a strong centralised army of amabutho directly controlled by the chief and his advisors. To do this they brought many of the surrounding chiefdoms under their direct control. Some formed political and military alliances, but others were bullied into accepting Zulu rule. The Zulu leaders were able to do this because everyone feared the Ndwandwe and weaker chiefdoms needed Zulu protection.

After holding off a second attack by the Ndwandwe, the Zulu leaders finally fought the Ndwandwe at the Mhlathuze River and beat them. The Ndwandwe were driven over the Phongolo River leaving the Zulu chieftaincy as the most powerful in the Phongolo-Thukela region.

APPENDICES

1. An Example of a School Textbook (DET)
2. Extract from The Weekly Mail showing co-incidence of escalation in violence and Inkatha rallies.
3. Cobbing's Overview (with apologies)
4. Broad Outline of the Narrative: The Myth of the Mfecane.

During the period 1815-1830 the Black peoples were hit by a "human cyclone" which disrupted their peaceful way of life. A period of unrest, violence and bloodshed followed in which hundreds of thousands of Blacks were killed or driven from their homes. This period is known as the Mfecane (crushing) or forced migration of Black people.

Leaders like *Shaka*, *Mzilikazi*, *Mmanthatise* and *Dingane* played the main roles in this migration.

The Mfecane resulted in a resettlement of the Black peoples. This resettlement left the central parts of Southern Africa desolate and deserted, as the Voortrekkers were to discover.

The arrival of the White people ended the bloodshed caused by the Mfecane.

3.1.1 *The Causes of Mfecane (Difaqane)*

Although the Mfecane was a result of the military ambitions of the Zulu, there were other contributory or additional reasons for this happening.

The economic cause or the need for more land

Present-day Natal and Zululand have the highest rainfall in South Africa. Their fertile soil and fine pastures attracted many Black people in the area. The population grew too large for the available land and the different

tribes began to seize land and food from one another.

The social cause or the marriage customs of the Black

They made sure that their women had as many children as possible causing the Black population to increase very rapidly. An area of high population density developed in Zululand and Natal which erupted and affected the whole of South Africa.

Political causes

The increase in power of the bigger tribes led to tension and conflicts between the groups. The traditional initiation ceremonies were adapted to create a standing army that increased power. The traditional system of consultation was abandoned and replaced by an autocratic chief ruling as a despot.

The rise of the Zulu and their conquests caused a chain reaction. The tribes that were attacked fled, leaving Natal depopulated. In their flight they in turn attacked and killed those they met.

In 1816 Shaka became the chief of the Zulu tribe.

After Dingiswayo's death, Shaka united the Mthetwa tribe and the Zulu tribe. Strengthening the Zulu tribe in this way, he then attacked and defeated the Nwande tribe under their leader Zwidi.

The Nwandes split up with Zwidi settling at the Nkomi River, *Soshangane*, *Zwangendaba* and *Nxaba*,⁷ each with their own followers, fleeing from Natal.

Shaka then became the undisputed leader of the area between the Pongolo and Tugela rivers.

After 1820 the Mfecane made its appearance west of the Drakensberg Mountains.

The Ngwane tribe, of Tsonga origin, was the first to be attacked by Shaka. Their chief was Matiwane who had to flee southward with his tribe. In 1822, he crossed the Drakensberg Mountains, attacking smaller tribes that he met.

One of the tribes attacked by Matiwane was the Hlubi tribe of Mpangazita.

In 1825 he attacked the Hlubis and killed Mpangazita. The Hlubi tribe crossed the Drakensberg Mountains and in turn attacked the *Batlokwa* tribe driving them from their peaceful existence in the Caledon Valley.

Mmanhatise was their ruler. When they were disrupted by the Hlubis, the Batlokwas began wandering around attacking other tribes.

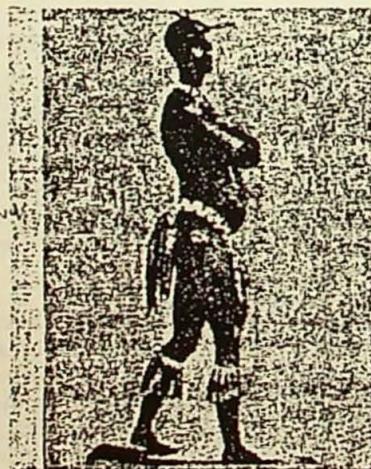
Mmanhatise and her plundering band sowed death and destruction wherever they went. They were even-

tually driven back to the Caledon River area by a combined force of Griqua and Basapin.

After the victory of Shaka over the Nwandes, Soshangane, Zwengendaba and Nxaba, each followed by members of their tribes, fled to the north.

During their flight they attacked the Tsonga tribes wherever they encountered them, leaving a trail of destruction. The conquered Tsongas were incorporated into their tribe creating the Tsonga-Shangana tribe.

The Mfecane spread to the north when Mzilikazi fled from Shaka with some 15 000 followers.



Mzilikazi

Wherever Mzilikazi's impis went they brought death and destruction.

Mzilikazi set out to create a depopulated area between himself and the mighty Zulu whom he feared. After an attack by the Zulu of Shaka, the Matabele moved on their path of blood to the Western Transvaal.

A reign of terror followed on the Tswana inhabiting the surrounding area.

After clashing with the Voortrekkers at Vaal River, Vegkop, Mosega and finally at Kapain in 1837, Mzilikazi decided to move northwards with his followers. He crossed the Limpopo



Shaka

River and settled at the Matoppo Mountains where he built a new capital, Buluwayo. Mzilikazi continued his attacks on the neighbouring Shona and Makololo tribes.

3.1.2 Results of the Mfecane (*Difaqane*)

The Mfecane thinned the ranks of the Blacks as thousands were killed during this period. Smaller tribes were either destroyed or absorbed by the bigger tribes.

Large nations were formed by the stronger tribes. The Basuto, the Matabele and the Zulu nations were born. Old friendships were destroyed and new ones were created.

This led to a reclassified population. Large parts of the interior were depopulated while other parts, such as Transkei, present-day Lesotho, Zoutpansberg and the edge of the Kalahari, were overpopulated.

The foundation was laid for the present Black States. The Blacks settled in the form of a horseshoe which stretched from the Kei River in the south to the north-east, through present-day Transkei, Lesotho, Kwa-Zulu, Swaziland, in an arc through the north-eastern Transvaal and further southwards to the Harts River. This horseshoe pattern forms the basis of the present-day National States in South Africa.

The Zulu gained a position of power.



Moshoeshoe

Leaders who fled from Zululand, e.g. Mzilikazi, Soshangane and Matiwane, continued their plundering and killing, creating a desert behind them. The Zulu political and military system was adopted in other parts. Those that were attacked, attacked other tribes in turn, causing a chain reaction that devastated the country.

This chain of events caused unrest on the Cape eastern frontier as refugees who fled south penetrated the thickly populated Transkei. The Xhosa in turn were forced across the eastern frontier causing problems for the Cape Government.

These events also influenced the Great Trek, encouraging the Voor-

trekkers to settle on the open land in the interior. The area between the Orange and Vaal rivers was completely desolate.

Only the Griquas lived in the south of the Free State and a few scattered tribes such as the Barolongs at Thaba 'Nchu and the Bataung in the region of the Vet River. Moshoeshoe escaped the killings by settling at Butha-Buthe in 1820

Because of the continual attacks by the Barolong, Moshoeshoe moved to *Thaba Bosigo* in 1824, where no one could attack him easily. Here in the Drakensberg Mountains he built up a powerful nation by welcoming those who fled from the killings in other parts of the country.

The Transvaal area was in turn depopulated by Mzilikazi. The Tswana tribes were driven towards the dry Kalahari, whilst smaller tribes like the Pedi and the Ndebele were forced to flee to the north and north-eastern Transvaal.

Large tribes like the Zulu and the Matabele felt themselves strong enough to wage war against the Voortrekkers. Smaller tribes like the Barolong of Moroka and the Bataung of Makwana sought their protection.

The smaller tribes were willing to accept the new immigrants and to exchange land. This formed a basis for future agreements and paved the

way for the Whites to subject the Blacks to their rule.

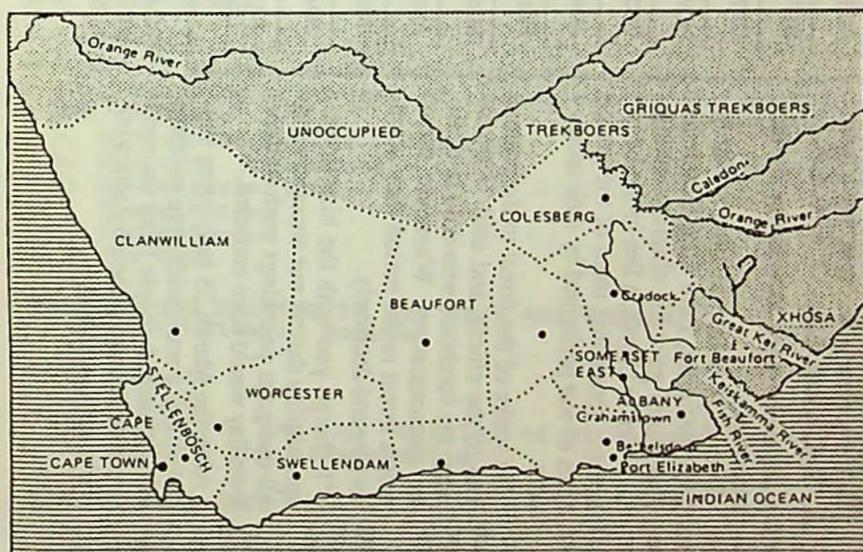
The present land distribution in South Africa is largely the result of the Mfecane and later, the Great Trek.

3.2 The Great Trek

The Great Trek, one of the most significant events in the history of South Africa, started in 1835-36 when thousands of Afrikaners decided to move northward in order to get away from the unsympathetic and humiliating treatment at the Cape.

Between 1835 and 1854 the area occupied by Whites in South Africa had more than doubled and it soon expanded to the Limpopo River in the northern Transvaal and Port Natal in the east.

This mass exodus of approximately 10 000 Afrikaner frontier farmers was the result of several factors. It is not possible to single out one contributing factor because the Great Trek was the result of an accumulation of grievances. The Voortrekkers, as these emigrants were called, originated from different districts and experienced different problems.



The Cape just before the Great Trek 1835

The graphic truth about the Natal war

THIS graph shows the Natal death rate from July 1989 until July 1990. Despite what Foreign Affairs Minister Pik Botha says, it is obvious there was rivalry, fighting and killing between the African National Congress (or its allies before it was unbanned) and Inkatha long before ANC leader Nelson Mandela was released.

There are two obvious peaks of violence, December 1989 and March 1990. Is it coincidence that these are the months following the two government-funded Inkatha rallies.

Both rallies were funded, according to the government, partly because they were anti-sanctions, partly because they were pro-peace.

Yet the sanctions issue played virtually no part in either rally, a fact stressed by Inkatha official Musa Myeni this week.

ANC officials claim the soaring death rate following the two rallies is not a coincidence, and that people

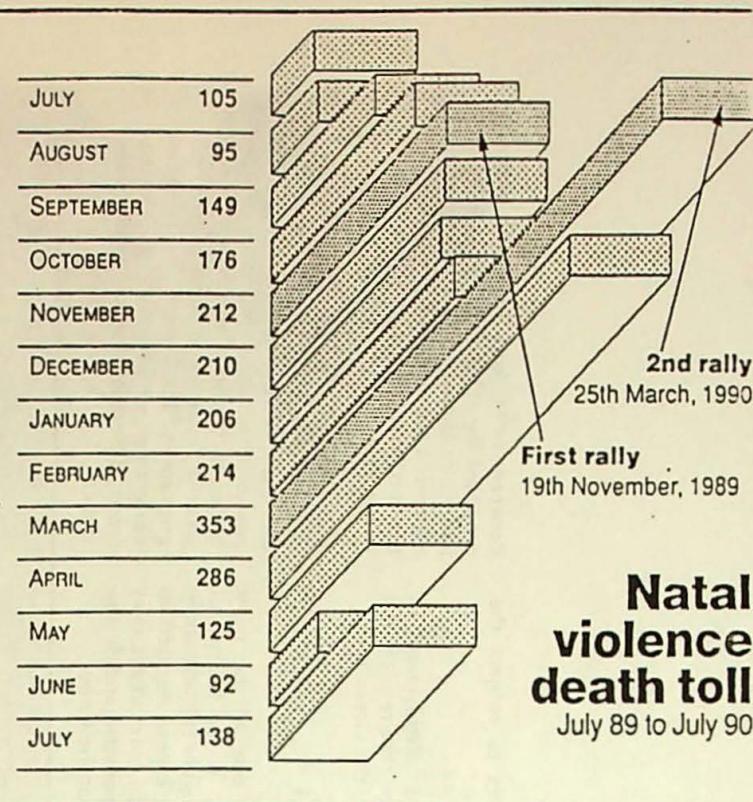
were encouraged to violence by the meetings.

Two days before Inkatha's March 25, 1990 rally, Zulu king Goodwill Zwelithini gave his chiefs, meeting with him in Ulundi, a fire-in-the-belly speech, reminding them of the great feats of war performed by their ancestors.

He spoke of the threat to the nation and to the chiefs, and said "I know what my forebears would do in similar circumstances. Whenever there was a threat to the nation they acted swiftly and decisively.

"I charge you with the historic responsibility that all our ancestors and all our great past kings each in their own day would have endorsed."

After the March 25 rally came the "Maritzburg war", with large numbers of well-armed people from the rural areas surrounding the city attacking the urban townships.



Natal violence death toll
July 89 to July 90

Was it a spontaneous explosion of anger against ANC-perceived townships because of bus-stoning as Inka-
tha claims, or was the anger a direct result of the rally and the feelings aroused by it?

THE MYTH OF THE MFECANE

The debate about the 'mfecane'.
An examination of what has changed

Teaching about pre-colonial African societies

How do we know what happened?

- * Archaeological evidence
- * Oral tradition
- * Written sources

Problems in teaching about pre-colonial societies.

Overview

Outline of the different conflicts.

- * The East coast.
- * Trading and raiding in the Central and Western regions.
- * The Eastern Cape

The East Coast

- * Southern Africa in 1800.
- * Overview of the Thukela-Delagoa Bay region
- * Long standing processes of consolidation and conflict
- * New factors:
 - a) Ecological crises - internal
 - b) External influences - trade
 - c) State formation
 - The Mthethwa
 - The Ndwandwe
 - The Zulu

Trading and Raiding in the West and Centre

"Multicoloured Rogues"

- * The Ndebele
- * The Griqua
- * The Mantatees and the 'battle' of Dithakong
- * The role of the missionaries

The Eastern Cape

- * The Fetcani and the 'battle' of Mbolompo

(Note: we have struggled to define different geographical regions or epicentres.)

COBBING OVERVIEW

- A. How the story of the 'mfecane' has changed
 - 1. How the myth was made
 - The first tellers of the story were labour and slave traders themselves. They had powerful motives for hiding the truth.
- B. African societies before 1770
- C. Colonial penetration of the south
 - 1. Before 1806
 - 2. After 1806 -1820s
 - a) labour seizure
 - b) land grabbing
 - c) wars of land seizure 1812 and 1819
 - d) trading
 - e) missionaries
- D. International economy and southern Africa
 - 1. Sugar and coffee trade in Brazil
 - 2. Rio de Janeiro
 - 3. The Portuguese slave trade
 - 4. New focus on south east Africa, early 1800s
 - 5. Impact of slave trading
 - a) Rise of new 'reactive' African states
- E. South Africa in the 1820s and 30s
 - 1. British and Boer labour raid of 1835
 - 2. Land seizure
 - 3. The 'Great Trek'
- F. Continued Onslaught
 - 1. Boer slaving in the 1840s and 50s
 - 2. Portuguese slaving
 - 3. The rise of the Gaza and Swazi states
 - 4. British expansionism
- G. The end of the slave trade
- H. The crushing of the new states
 - 1. The Zulu 1879
 - 2. The Swazi 1890

(Note: We have taken huge liberties translating notes that accompanied a letter which Julian Cobbing wrote to us in April 1991. We have done so because we think that there is much that is very sound about this overall approach to the nineteenth century.)