

THE NEW AFRICAN ELITE IN THE EASTERN CAPE AND SOME LATE
NINETEENTH CENTURY ORIGINS OF AFRICAN NATIONALISM

by

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Among the more glaring lacunae in South African historiography is the absence of detailed scholarly work on the origins of African nationalism. Elsewhere in Africa, the move from alien rule to self-government stimulated enquiry into the roots of the nationalist movements that helped propel African states to political independence and then came to power. That white minority rule has continued in South Africa and freedom to gather relevant material in that country has been restricted may be chiefly responsible for, but do not excuse, the absence of similar investigation of the origins of African nationalism in South Africa, where the multi-racial nature of the society in which that nationalism has emerged has given it special characteristics and where its nineteenth century roots probably lie thicker than anywhere else on the continent.

This paper focuses on the emergence in the eastern Cape in the eighth and ninth decades of the nineteenth century of politically active, articulate Africans, the product of an advanced, Christian-based education, and tries to show their contribution to the making of African nationalism in South Africa. It was not, of course, the only one. It may be that in South, as in East, Africa what Lonsdale has called the "spontaneous contribution to nationalism" (1) will prove as important. If Cape origins alone be considered, the dominant mode of African response in the first century of interaction with whites, namely military resistance and, what went hand in hand with it, "the pagan reaction", needs to be examined in depth and investigation made of direct connections between primary resistance and modern mass nationalism, of the kind Ranger attempts to establish for East and Central Africa. (2) That the long history of "traditional" resistance should today be recalled is natural, when violent struggle has been adopted as the strategy of the nationalist movement. That movement was for long, however, non-militant, and military resistance on the Cape frontier, which was crushed so ruthlessly that there was no post-pacificatory revolt (3), ends in 1881.

The emergence of the group of Africans with which this paper concerns itself coincides roughly with the passing of the phase of military resistance, which occurred three years earlier in the Ciskei than it did in the Transkeian territories. "Civilization by

mingling" had, of course, a long history on the eastern frontier by the late 1870s. African education, mission inspired, had begun very early in the nineteenth century. The earliest and greatest of the institutions that was to provide advanced education for Africans, Lovedale, began its work in 1841. (4) Among those associated with it in its early years was the most prominent early member of the new class of educated Africans, Tiyo Soga, who went on to Scotland to complete his education and become the first ordained African minister, returning to serve as a missionary among his Xhosa people until his early death in 1871. (5) But his interests were very largely caught up in his missionary life, and it was only in the early 1870s that Lovedale produced a new generation who were to engage actively in Cape politics and take up publicly political positions on matters of concern to the African community. Most prominent among them were Pambani Mzimba and Elijah Makiwane, its first self-trained African ministers, and the literary figure of John Knox Bokwe, all three of whom were to have lengthy associations with the institution. (6) At roughly the same time, at the neighbouring Wesleyan Methodist institution, Heald Town (7), John Tengo Jabavu, who was to play a dominant role in shaping African political thinking in the 1880s and 1890s, and the ministers James Dwane and Charles Pamla were among those receiving their education, to be followed there, before the end of the decade, by Nehemiah Tile. (8)

It was such men who were to provide a new African political leadership in the decades following the Cape-Xhosa war of 1877-8. In the years immediately before the war, relatives of major chiefs and their councillors who had been given educational opportunities were appointed to posts as clerks and interpreters in government offices on the frontier. When war came the position of Edmund Sandile, a son of the Ngqika chief Sandile, Nathaniel Mhala, a cousin of the chief, and Christian Ngqika, a half-brother, all of whom were in government service, became impossible and they joined the rebel cause. (9) Their doing so first drew serious attention in colonial circles to the growing class of educated Africans, and both Frere, the Governor, and Stewart, principal of Lovedale, defended it from the charge that it was, as a group, disloyal and attached rather to the old chiefly élite and the traditional politics of the chiefdom than to Cape society. (10) Frere and Stewart were right in their assessment of the bulk of the new class of educated Africans, and after the war, with the idea of military resistance in the Cape colony (if not in the Transkeian territories and Basutoland) now effectively dead, Ciskeian Africans began to give expression to their involvement in the activities of a common society by adopting political positions on the issues of the day. (11)

The earliest set of such political attitudes constitutes a response on the part of the articulate members of the African élite to the actions of the second responsible ministry at the Cape, which, coming into office in February 1878, in the middle of the Cape-Xhosa war, soon created the impression among the black community, by the tone of ministerial speeches and its administration on the frontier, that it believed in discriminatory and harsh treatment for Africans. Talk was louder than deeds, and the ministry was faced with vast problems of post-war settlement, but the effect was to stir up vocal

African opinion in a way no such matter had done before. (12) Strong exception was taken, for example, to the reference by Uppington, the Attorney-General, to Africans as the "natural enemies" of the white man. (13) Among government actions bitterly resented were its disarmament policy, which seemed to imply that Africans, especially the Mfengu, could not be trusted to continue to bear arms. (14), and the removal of the loyal Ngqika across the Kei in September 1878. (15) An ambitious young government interpreter, Shadrack Mama, publicized the indignities suffered by African women in Cape Town when forcibly shipped back to the frontier after the war. (16) Despite promises to his missionary superiors not to do so, John Tengo Jabavu, then an equally young Somerset East school teacher, could not restrain himself from attacking the government in letters to colonial newspapers for legislation that seemed to him specifically aimed at Africans, such as the vagrancy and cattle removal acts. (17) The administration of the pass law was tightened up and much criticism was expressed when two highly respected members of the élite, both ministers, were in turn arrested for returning from the Transkei without a pass. (18)

When, in May 1881, Sprigg fell and Scanlen took over as Prime Minister, Jabavu sighed with relief, "the reign of coercion has breathed its last" (19), and Mzimba thought the resignation of the Sprigg ministry "the best thing they could have done". (20) Even though the Scanlen government committed what Jabavu described as a "lamentable blunder" (21) in its treatment of General Gordon in 1882, African opinion remained quiescent, probably because the government seemed to compare so favourably with its predecessor. The memory of the Sprigg years remained vivid (22); this memory and the example of the merging of the rival movements of Hofmeyr and S. J. du Toit into the Afrikaner Bond in May 1883 helped produce both the first, short-lived attempts at strictly political organizations and intense electoral activity to return candidates in the 1884 election who would have regard for African interests.

When such activity seemed to meet with success, particularly in the Victoria East contest (23), and when the new government which came into power after the election began to embark upon a "reckless course downward" (24), strenuous efforts were made to organize the enrolment of Africans on the parliamentary register. Doubts as to the wisdom of such a strategy were voiced, however, by none more strikingly than Mzimba, who, having learnt from his reading of George Washington Williams' History of the Negro Race in America (25) of the disillusionment in the efficacy of political action among the Negro community in the southern United States following the collapse of Reconstruction, argued in November 1886 that Africans should not concentrate on participatory politics but instead on education, which would in the long run enable them to take their rightful place in society. "Let the white man rule", he argued, "... we shall get nothing at present from politics. If we go into politics we shall sooner or later be forced out, whether we like it or not." (26) White reaction to increased African participation came, as Mzimba had anticipated, the following year, when the first of two measures (27) passed the Cape Parliament to set bounds to African political participation to reduce the potential threat such participation posed

to white minority rule. The immediate gains participation offered, such as they were, were sometimes diminished by Africans themselves, as when, in the King William's Town contest of 1888, Jabavu and Charles Pamla worked for rival candidates, reducing the influence of the African voters. (28)

Limits on African political participation were in part self-imposed. Though there were Africans who in the early 1880s called for black men to stand as parliamentary candidates (29), potential candidates refused to do so. Jabavu himself rejected the suggestion that he put up for Parliament in the 1884 election, though there is evidence he would have liked to have been elected. (30) Having been nominated for the Alice municipal council in July 1883, Bokwe withdrew, not wishing to arouse white prejudice by his candidacy. (31) The political involvement of the new African élite can, in fact, be characterized as essentially accommodationist and defensive in its posture, prepared to work under white direction and accepting that it existed in large measure on the white man's terms. Jabavu, the leading African political figure in these decades, believed that only such a posture could win results. He never became disillusioned with the strategy of participation, despite its failure to prevent continued set-backs in the struggle to halt further discrimination. A student of Cobden and Bright (32), he saw history in typically Victorian terms, as progress through constitutional action towards an order free of such restrictions as racial prejudice. That, in fact, things were not working out that way must be the result of a temporary aberration; if the colony did not change for the better, appeal to the British Crown would, in the long run, see justice triumph.

If the growth of political consciousness in the African community in general was stimulated by the electoral activity organized by leading members of the new African élite (and in his pioneering article on African divisional politics in the Cape before Union, Stanley Trapido argues that a sense of political awareness was aroused in Africans not registered as parliamentary voters as a result of such activity [33]), other forms of political organization aided the same process and at the same time constitute more direct examples of the tactics to be employed by the nationalist movement in its decades of constitutionalism. (34) In the last two decades of the nineteenth century petitions were repeatedly organized on matters of local or general concern, either to the colonial parliament or to London, sometimes on white, but more often on African, initiative. (35) Leading members of the new élite served on deputations to meet colonial politicians or to go to Cape Town to protest against intended legislation. (36) Mass meetings were organized to pass resolutions to be sent to colonial politicians (37) or, as that held in King William's Town in October 1887, to discuss African response to a piece of legislation which, it was thought, would curtail African rights. That meeting chose a deputation to go to England to present a petition appealing to the Queen to disallow the registration act. (38)

Other methods of politicization were employed. In 1881 Jabavu became the first pure African editor of the Lovedale monthly, Isigidimi. Sama Xhosa (Xhosa Messenger), increased its circulation,

and used its columns to press on Africans the need to participate in the elections of 1884. (39) From November 1884, he edited from King William's Town his own weekly newspaper, Imvo Zabantsundu (Native Opinion), which became the leading channel for the dissemination of political views by the articulate members of the new African élite. Bokwe's articles on "The Native Land Question", which first appeared in Imvo when Glen Grey was under discussion, were reprinted and widely circulated to members of the Cape Parliament and others. (40) Other occupations of the articulate, chiefly teaching or the pulpit, provided much scope for politicization. Mzimba, for example, occupied a position at Lovedale from which he could influence generations of students. (41) Their education and Christian background and adoption of western values (42) helped cut such men off from the wider community who remained "Red", and they were often very conscious of their special position within the black community, but their colour, in a society permeated with racial discrimination(43), meant they could not escape from their membership of that wider community. For, however much provision was made for the black élite to be accommodated within a political and legal system which did not overtly discriminate on grounds of colour, the very fact of its blackness gave it a subordinate status within the total, white dominated society, and meant it would campaign on matters of concern to the black community as a whole. (44)

In the Transkei, Nehemiah Tile headed a church which was closely linked in its early years with a political movement under his leadership to restore the Thembu paramount to a position such as he occupied before colonial protection was extended to Thembuland. Though exceptional among the self-made educated élite in taking an active role in traditional politics in the 1880s, Tile did, however, employ many of the same techniques as Ciskeian African politicians, organizing petitions to the colonial government and writing letters to The Cape Argus and The Cape Mercury as part of his campaign. (45) In many respects, notably in its goals and its association with chiefly politics, his movement may be seen as a strange forerunner of Matanzima's aberrant brand of African nationalism.

Tile was the first member of the educated African élite to break with a recognized church and found his own permanently established, African run church, in this way using a Christian framework within which to express African equality in an age of white control. African assertion, while it may perhaps be said to have expressed itself in limited form in the short-lived African political organizations of the early 1880s, is most clearly and strongly seen in these years in religious independency, the only field in which Africans took action on the basis of full equality. In that assertion religious independency helped give birth to an essential component of African nationalism, though one that has varied in intensity over the decades. That Tile himself left the Wesleyan church was in part due to his resentment of the white control he found to exist within it. (46) There is some evidence that he was, as leader of the Thembu church, less inclined to view it as an exclusively Thembu institution than its name would suggest, and support is given this view by statements that imply that for him, as for other members of the educated élite of whose attitudes we have a

record, ethnic considerations did not weigh heavily. (47) But he seems to have moved beyond those who participated actively in the electoral politics of the colony in his assertion of black identity and rejection of white leadership (48), not only giving this content in his establishment of his own African church but articulating it as had not been done before. A Thembu councillor describes him as advocating the position that "the Native as rightful owner of Africa should fling off all control by the white man and himself govern his own affairs". (49) And when Mzimba broke with the church into which he had been ordained and in 1898 founded the Presbyterian Church of Africa, he stated that "even the Black man in Africa must stand on his feet in matters of worship like people in other countries, and not always expect to be carried by the White man on his back. He has long learnt to walk by leaning on the White man, but today he must stand without leaning on anybody except his God." (50)

If the contribution of religious independency to nationalism was in large part ideological, it would also seem to have played a part in introducing a wider unity among Africans in South Africa. Tile's church, at least at times, was known as the Thembu church "of South Africa" (51), and Mokone, head of the Ethiopian Church, travelled from the Rand for discussions with the head of the earlier independent church, then Jonas Goduka, and the Thembu church offered the Ethiopians in Johannesburg some assistance. (52) The other major response we have discussed, political involvement, also contributed to this increase in scale. The first American political organizations, which would seem to have no direct connection with institutional expressions of twentieth century African nationalism, reveal in their names that the new African élite of the eastern Cape was bound by no narrow territorial outlook. The South African Native Political Association and then the South African Aborigines Association were founded within six months of each other in 1883.

The activity of the Cape educated élite in the late nineteenth century in some respects, of course, ran counter to the development of a nationalist movement. Obvious examples are the failure to establish a permanent political organization (53) and the setting in motion of what was to develop into a rival channel for black aspirations in the twentieth century. (54) Nevertheless, it is suggested that the peculiar importance of the eastern Cape as a seed-plot for African nationalism in South Africa must be recognized, not only in that it saw the longest tradition of military resistance but also, and of more direct relevance to that nationalism in the first half of the twentieth century, the most active involvement in the politics of a common society by Africans and the beginnings of religious independency, responses led by the new class of Christian, educated Africans.

Notes

- (1) J. Lonsdale, "Some Origins of Nationalism in East Africa", Journal of African History, IX, 1 (1968), p. 141 and passim.
- (2) T. Ranger, "Connexions between 'Primary Resistance' and Modern Mass Nationalism in East and Central Africa", Journal of African History, IX, 3 and 4 (1968). An obvious similarity between the two is seen in the increase in scale that the war and rebellions and cattle-killing on the eastern frontier demonstrate.
- (3) The final attempts at resistance, in 1877-8 and 1880-1, were the nearest approximations to post-pacifactory revolts on the eastern frontier.
- (4) R. H. W. Shepherd, Lovedale, South Africa. The Story of a Century 1841-1941 (Lovedale, n.d.); J. Wells, Stewart of Lovedale: the Life of James Stewart (London, 1908); Lovedale collection, Rhodes University. Dr. R. H. Davis of the University of Florida has recently completed a Ph.D. thesis on African education in the Cape colony in the nineteenth century.
- (5) J. Chalmers, Tiyo Soga (London, 1878). His Journal, quoted in part by Chalmers, reveals a certain race consciousness, but this was not expressed in political attitudes. See also the biography by A. Wilkes in Dictionary of South African Biography, I (Cape Town, 1968), pp. 758-9.
- (6) On Mzimba, see especially the biography by his son, L. N. Mzimba, Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba (Lovedale, 1923); also, as for all those associated with Lovedale, Lovedale Past and Present (Lovedale, 1887), and, as for all those members of the élite mentioned in this paper, T. D. Mveli Skota, The African Yearly Register (1st edition, Johannesburg, n.d. Cf. also later editions). Shepherd has a chapter on Makiwane in his Bantu Literature and Life (Lovedale, 1955), and has written Bokwe's biography in the Dictionary of South African Biography, I, pp. 88-9.
- (7) On Heald Town, see L. A. Hewson, "Healdtown. A Study of a Methodist Experiment in African Education", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Rhodes University, 2 vols., 1959.
- (8) On Jabavu, see, inter alia, D. D. T. Jabavu, John Tengo Jabavu (Lovedale, 1922). Charles Pamla was the first African Methodist minister, James Dwane the editor of the Wesleyan journal, Unwesile, which first appeared in February 1882, published in Grahamstown; both became active in politics. My recent article on "Tile and the Thembu Church" in the Journal of African History includes such biographical information on Tile as is known. (JAH, XI, 4 [1970], pp. 553-70).
- (9) For Mhala, see Mhala to Mvalo, King William's Town, 13 December 1877, Cape Archives, G.H. 21/8; for all three, Frere to Hicks Beach, 1 June 1878, Br. Parl. Papers 1878, lvi (C.2144), pp. 220-

232, and Frere to Hicks Beach, 24 June 1878, *ibid.*, p. 233. Much later Mhala was to become involved in journalism and African politics.

- (10) Frere's defence is in his despatches of 1 June and 24 June 1878 (see note 9 above). The Colonial Office did not accept his arguments (PRO C.O. 48/485/8861, minutes by Fairfield and Herbert on the despatch of 1 June 1878). Stewart's defence is in The Christian Express (e.g. March 1878) and, later, in Lovedale Past and Present. A Register of Two Thousand Names.
- (11) African political attitudes first became vocal at this point, but there is some evidence of an attempt at political participation at a much earlier date (1865 or 1866; see S. Trapido, "African Divisional Politics in the Cape Colony, 1884 to 1910", Journal of African History, IX, 1 [1968], p. 84 and note 9). Africans themselves recognized that the change in their attitudes came at about this time; Imvo recalled in 1887 that in the "pre-Ngcayecibi" period (i.e. before the Cape-Xhosa war) they had been "indifferent" to politics (editorial 1, 6 April 1887).
- (12) Note, for example, the total absence of African reaction when Carnarvon's draft South Africa Bill did not provide for African representation in the central legislature. The most likely vehicle for African expression in the 1870s, The Kafir Express-Isigidimi (see, further, note 38), was in its early years almost entirely limited to strictly missionary opinion, which did not then express itself on "political" matters (see note 18 below).
- (13) A particularly hard-hitting attack on Uppington for his use of this phrase was made by T. Galele in a letter to Solomon, 27 September 1879. Saul Solomon papers (microfilm in South African Library, Cape Town).
- (14) See, for example, S. B. Mama to Editor of The Kafir (sic) Express 17 May 1879, Solomon papers.
- (15) When he heard the move was planned, Mzimba wrote a lengthy letter to Solomon condemning the scheme, 8 July 1878. Solomon papers.
- (16) S. B. Mama to Chesson, 29 Dec. 1879. Anti-Slavery Papers (hereafter ASP), Rhodes House, MSS, Br. Emp. S:18 C.142/15. Mama's report of the incident was published in The Christian Express and quoted by Saul Solomon in the Assembly. Sprigg branded Mama's action, in writing the report, "a crime against the state" (The Journal, 4 Aug. 1879). Mama left his job and began legal training.
- (17) Jabavu to Brigg, 25 September 1879, Cory MS 15, 281 (Rhodes University). Jabavu became a regular correspondent for The Cape Argus in Somerset East.
- (18) Elijah Makiwane was arrested in March 1880 (Chesson to Kimberley, 23 August 1880, PRO C.O. 48/498 Offices and Individuals), Pambani Mzimba early the following year (The Journal, 8 March 1881; The Christian Express, April 1881). Missionary opinion was eventually forced by the actions of the Sprigg government

and the intensity of African feeling to adopt a political stance, which it had previously refused to do; an editorial in The Christian Express of February 1880 announced it could follow the government no further.

- (19) Jabavu to Chesson, 18 May 1881. ASP, C.139/2.
- (20) Mzimba to Sir, 7 May 1881, Cory MS 8499.
- (21) Jabavu to Chesson, 24 October 1882, ASP C.139/4. Interestingly, the élite supported the Basuto in their resistance and Jabavu was very critical of the "loyal" position adopted by leading members of the Basuto educated élite, such as George Moshoeshe.
- (22) The memory remained for a long time. See, for example, Jabavu to Stewart, 14 July 1898 (Stewart Papers, Univ. of Cape Town, bundle 31).
- (23) See, for example, Jabavu to Chesson, 18 August 1884, ASP C.139/5. Rose Innes, returned to Victoria East, told Stewart: "I know that it is to the native vote that I owe my success, and now that the contest is over I must say that I feel somewhat apprehensive that I may disappoint those who secured my seat ... I only hope that their expectations will be reasonable." (9 March 1884, Stewart Papers, bundle 31)
- (24) Jabavu to Chesson, 30 November 1885, ASP C.139/7.
- (25) 2 Vols., New York, 1883.
- (26) Invo, 30 December 1886. He shared Williams' optimism that an integrationist goal would eventually be achieved. "Race prejudice", he quoted from Williams (vol. 2, p. 551), "is bound to give way before the influence of character, education and wealth."
- (27) Acts 14 of 1887 and 9 of 1892.
- (28) Warren, supported by Jabavu, received most African votes, but Schermbrucker was returned (see, e.g., Sprigg Papers, Cory MSS 10, 461-2; Invo, 15 November 1888).
- (29) Jabavu himself made the suggestion in Isigidini, editorial October 1883, given in translation in The Cape Argus, 26 October 1883. His general position was that whites could probably represent African interests better in a "white" parliament than Africans (D. D. T. Jabavu, Jabavu, p. 18). Another who called for black men in Parliament was Richard Kawa, secretary of the South African Native Political Association (The Journal, 16 May 1884).
- (30) Irvine to Stewart, 9 November 1883. Stewart Papers, bundle 31.
- (31) Bokwe Letterbook (South African Library, Cape Town), I, pp. 123-4. Pressure from Stewart may have been an important factor in his decision.

- (32) A. Kerr, Fort Hare 1915-48 (London, 1968), p. 86.
- (33) Trapido, "African divisional politics", op. cit., passim.
- (34) Political participation in the electoral process was to continue in the Cape in one form or another into the 1950s. Trapido has suggested links between Jabavu's "loose network" and the Cape section of the I.C.U. (ibid., p. 97).
- (35) Numerous examples could be given; one of the earliest is the Mfengu petitions to the Cape House of Assembly in 1879, for which see Jabavu to Chesson, 6 May 1880, ASP C.139/1.
- (36) Early in 1887 a deputation interviewed Sprigg on the government's African policy; in mid-1889 a deputation of Makiwane, Jabavu and Wauchope, Bokwe's cousin, travelled to Cape Town to protest against a new pass bill, afterwards withdrawn (at the same time protests were sent direct from the frontier: e.g. Bokwe to Sprigg, 11 June 1889, Sprigg Papers, Cory MS 10, 502).
- (37) e.g. the meetings organized by Richard Kawa in the first half of 1884 in the Ciskei to support the movement for the "retrocession" of the Transkeian territories (see, for example, The Journal, 16 May 1884).
- (38) Imvo, 12 October 1887. The deputation was never to set out, for the Secretary of State soon announced that, with the law officers of the Crown reporting that the act did not violate the Constitution Ordinance, he could not advise that imperial consent should be denied.
- (39) On Isigidimi, which became a separate paper from The Kafir Express in 1876, see, inter alia, E. Rosenthal, Bantu Journalism in South Africa (Johannesburg, n.d.), and A. C. Jordan, "Towards an African Literature", South Africa, 1958-60, especially parts XI and XII. For comments by Bokwe on the circulation of Isigidimi, see The Christian Express, April 1882. It ceased publication in 1888, after the death of its editor, W. Gqoba.
- (40) J. K. Bokwe, The Native Land Question (Lovedale, 1894).
- (41) He was in charge of the Lovedale congregation from 1875; it separated from the institution in 1886.
- (42) For a striking example of how far this could go, see S. B. Mams to Chesson, 29 December 1879, ASP C.142/15. "I am more Whiteman than a Kaffir", wrote Mams, and went on to say how he attempted to "foster into the minds of my ignorant countrymen all the advantages of Civilized and religious life ..."
- (43) An example of such discrimination in the Transkei prompted C. Paula to ask the Chief Magistrate of Thembuland: "God has made my face black. Has God made a sin by making black people?" (27 January 1893, Cape Archives, C.M.T. 3/191)
- (44) Thus the Hofmeyr act of 1887 was followed, for example, by united protest on such an issue as the pass laws (see note 36 above).

- (45) e.g. the petition of 26 December 1883, enclosed in Under Secretary for Native Affairs to Chief Magistrate, Thembuland, 25 January 1884, Cape Archives, C.M.T. 1/8. For his letters to newspapers, A. Stanford to Chief Magistrate, Thembuland (conf.), 23 July 1884. Cape Archives, N.A. 96, pp. 207-8.
- (46) It may not be coincidence, for example, that it was only a few months before Tile left the Wesleyan church that that church, meeting in its first South African Conference, had decided that certain important questions, such as the distribution of funds, were to be considered "by English Ministers alone".
- (47) This is not to deny that such men were not often intensely proud of their origins (this pride in his Xhosa origins comes out, for example, in Bokwe to Innes, 6 July 1885 - Bokwe Letterbook, I, p. 215), or that ethnic considerations were not, in fact, sometimes important (as in the Thembu church or Mzimba's largely Mfengu church, or in the running dispute between Isigidimi and Imvo, which was, however, also concerned with such issues as the extent to which an African press should take up a political position and whether a classical education was best suited for Africans), but Jabavu, for one, actively campaigned against recognition of ethnic differences (and so, when in 1891 census figures distinguished "Kafir" and "Fingo", he objected that the distinction was "meaningless" [Imvo, 7 January 1892]).
- (48) Such assertion in the political sphere would have threatened, if not destroyed, the accommodationist character of African political involvement in these decades; religious independency was conveniently a way of asserting African equality which avoided confrontation. Note, for example, the defensive nature of the resolutions passed by the South African Aborigines Association, e.g. rejecting the idea of raising the franchise qualification (The Christian Express, September 1883).
- (49) Statement of Songwevu, enclosed in Liefeldt to Elliot, 20 February 1902, Cape Archives, N.A. 498, No. 96. Liefeldt reported that Veldtman Bikitsha told him that Tile had said the Thembu church had as its object "a political move to free the Native from European control and for the ultimate supremacy of the Coloured races throughout South Africa", but this statement must be regarded with extreme suspicion, for it so closely corresponds with white fears of what the various independent churches, lumped together as "Ethiopian", represented - fears which had no basis in fact.
- (50) Quoted Skota, African Yearly Register, 3rd edition, p. 72.
- (51) A. Lea, The Native Separatist Church Movement in South Africa (Cape Town, n.d.), p. 24.
- (52) Skota, African Yearly Register, 1st edition, p. 209.
- (53) Jabavu was probably more responsible than anyone for this, fearing such an organization would detract from his personal role in African politics. The nearest approach to such a permanent

organization was the semi-political Native Educational Association, founded in 1879, and given an elaborate constitution in mid-1882; Makiwane was elected President of the N.E.A. in July 1884. On it, see, inter alia, Invo, 21 January 1887; Bokwe Letterbook, II, pp. 68 ff.

- (54) Direct connections between the independent church movement and participation, either in the nationalist movement or Cape African politics, are not easy to find. Mzimba may perhaps have retained some interest in participatory politics, and the first meeting of the South African Native National Congress in 1912 was opened with a prayer by an independent minister, but those ministers most active in politics remained in the orthodox churches, men such as Rubusana, who was incensed when the Congregational Union in 1892 insisted that a white man succeed to the pastorate of the Peelson church, despite a call by the overwhelming majority of the congregation to Rubusana to be minister, but who nevertheless remained within the Congregational church, retiring to East London, from which base he was to engage in his long career of political activity.