SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN MISSION STATIONS IN CAFFRARIA 1816 — 1854 — PART I

Donovan Williams
University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada

With each succeeding publication on Christian missions in Southern Africa, some of the existing problems relating to this evocative subject are worse compounded. Traditional mythology continues to dominate — albeit in different forms — and superstructure is erected on shaky foundations, leading the unwary historian ever further from reality, especially when a doctrine or a cause is involved (and African history is so susceptible to both). Some of the current difficulties attending the study of Christian missions in Caffraria[1] seem to have been generated by an inadequate perception of the physical nature of the mission station, the activities which took place there, and their relationships with Caffraria itself and the Cape Colony. Only when all this has been ascertained with reasonable accuracy can the historian move on. A lack of attention to these basic considerations sometimes leads to wrong inferences and conclusions.

A case in point is Colin Bundy's *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (London, 1979). While discussing the Mfengu in 19th Century Ciskei and Transkei, he concludes that "it will be seen that there was a correlation between missionary activity and the spread of African peasant[2] agriculture; that 'stations' or 'schools' served as foci of social change".[3] Equally, the theme of chapter 2, section 2: "Mfengu and Missionaries", is a discussion of the missionary aim to Christianize, civilize and integrate the pre-capitalist African (Black) into the capitalist norms. So far so good, and few would deny that most missionaries were dedicated to inculcating both the Gospel and Western Civilization, although not necessarily in that order. However, it is all too convenient to assume, as Bundy has done, that mission stations were peopled solely by Blacks (Xhosa and Mfengu), and that the Blacks were the only legatees of whatever consequences these curious but pervasive organisms bequeathed to Caffraria. The truth is that mission stations during the first half of the 19th Century in Caffraria — and, indeed, it would seem, elsewhere — were rather more complex in ethnic composition, variety of occupations, allegiances and interconnections with the outside world, than is generally assumed by most historians. Norman Etherington[4] has prised

I would like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for a grant which made much of this research possible.

1. "Caffraria" is used as a generic term for the land between the Great Fish and Great Kei Rivers. The area includes today's Ciskei. There is occasional mention of mission stations lying outside this area (e.g. Butterworth). 1816 saw the establishment of the London Missionary Society Station at Kat River by Joseph Williams. 1854 is a useful, but not definite, terminal date as by then the mission stations were being rebuilt, and resettlement taking place, after the end of the 1851 Frontier War.
2. I have studiously avoided the word "peasant". Thus my information will not have an emotive connotation. In addition, more work will have to be done on the use of the term by missionaries and clergy themselves before it can be used with impunity. For instance, in the "Original Register of Marriages" at Tutura, in 1899 the majority of those described as "peasants" could not write; by 1905 the majority could do so. Clearly literacy was of no consequence to the presiding clergyman!
3. Bundy, p. 36.
4. *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in Southeast Africa, 1835—1880: African Christian Communities in Natal, Pondoland and Zululand* (London, 1978).

open the oystershells of mission stations in Natal, Pondoland and Zululand. After tackling the problem of the composition of mission stations[5] he follows the fortunes of the *cholwa* or believers, in the economic, educational and social spheres.[6] Yet even here, one feels that the variety and richness, the very *essence* itself, of mission station life are missing. And, as in the case of Bundy, it seems that essential ingredients for the formulation of conclusions are lacking. The same reservations must be expressed about M Wilson and L Thompson, *The Oxford History of South Africa* (Vol. 1, Oxford, 1969).[7]

I feel that justice has not been done to the complexities of mission stations in Caffraria, the history of which should be written from the *bottom upwards* in order to *safely* cherish assumptions on which books are built. This study, while by no means exhaustive, will attempt to scrutinize some of the mission stations in Caffraria, 1816 to 1854, in terms of population, work, relations with Caffraria and, to a lesser extent, the Cape Colony and the Kat River Settlement. Its purpose will be to bring to light hitherto dormant material, so that it may not be ignored in future writing of missionary history, to inject an element of caution, and to point to several desirable new directions which that history should explore.

An indispensable part of this article is the analysis of the ethnic affiliation of persons living on mission stations which is provided in the Appendix,* with all the attendant cultural implications. This is an attempt to correct the rather simplistic views still propagated by Bundy, Wilson and Thompson, and others. As early as 1960 I pointed out the variegated ethnic composition of mission station inhabitants during the first half of the 19th Century. This included Blacks (Xhosa or Mfengu), Hottentots, Gqonaquas or Gqonas (Hottentot-Xhosa), Gqunukhwebe (Hottentot-Xhosa), and Coloureds ("Bastards": White-Hottentot/Black) especially up to 1830.[8] I reiterated this view subsequently;[9] however, sustained, detailed analysis has been lacking. The Appendix attempts to provide such detail. It is the first attempt in South African historiography to do so for Caffraria. I hope it will encourage others to do likewise elsewhere and thus launch this aspect of demographic history in sure fashion. If no other purpose is served by this Appendix, it should be a valuable starting point for genealogical and population studies of Ciskei in the early 19th Century. However, this undertaking is fraught with difficulties which will be discussed in detail in Part II of this article. For the purposes of Part I it is sufficient to note that little distinction is made between the various ethnic groups named above. The more complicated data in Part II may well influence the social and economic aspects dealt with in Part I, but it will be some time before it can be adequately integrated into the work which must still

*To be published as Part Two in the May 1986 number of *Historia*.

5. Ch.5, passim.
6. Chs. 6—9, passim.
7. Vol. 1, ch. VI, mentions the various ethnic groups but does not relate them to missionary work, e.g. pp. 265—266.
8. Donovan Williams, "The Missionaries on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony, 1799—1853", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 1960, University of the Witwatersrand, ch. 7, passim, which discusses in detail this complex subject. Attention is drawn to the preamble of Part II which will be published in *Historia* in May, 1985.
9. *When Races Meet: the Life and Times of William Ritchie Thomson ... 1794 to 1891* (Johannesburg, 1967), pp. 45—47. *Umfundisi, A Biography of Tiyo Soga*, 1829—1871 (Lovedale, 1978). I have chosen to use the name "Hottentot" instead of "Khoi" solely on the grounds that that is the name used in the sources and this is a study of those sources.

be done along the lines which I indicate below. The result will probably be a different picture of the social and economic history of missions than that which is currently in vogue.

This study is spread over between three (later four) missionary societies, nine main stations, and over a period of nearly 40 years. The missionary societies are:

(a) The London Missionary Society, with stations at Kat River, Buffalo River (Kingwilliamstown) and Knapp's Hope (Keiskama).

(b) The Glasgow Missionary Society (which in 1837 divided into the Glasgow Missionary Society adhering to the Principles of the Church of Scotland and the Glasgow African Missionary Society.) After 1842 the GMS had the following stations: Burnshill, Pirie and Lovedale; the GAMS had Chumie (Tyumie) and Igqhibgha. (Passing reference is made to three outstations of the GMS: Kwelehra, Macfarlane and Nchera.)

(c) The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, with stations at Wesleyville and Mount Coke.

The data was extracted from most of the known archival material in South Africa and England, in the Cory Library for Historical Research, Rhodes University (relating mainly to the Scottish and Wesleyan Methodist missions), the archives of the London Missionary Society and the Methodist Missionary Society at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and sundry other sources at such places as the National Library of Scotland, University of Fort Hare, Ciskei, and the Government Archives, Cape Town. There is a dearth of statistical information, by way of censuses and reports. Therefore the degree of social and economic change among the mission inhabitants in Caffraria, and those living outside mission stations, and the speed with which it took place, cannot easily be determined.

★ ★ ★

One should start with the definition of a mission station as given by the redoubtable John Ross, of the Glasgow Missionary Society, in 1845:

> A Miss[ionary] Station is a collection of houses (greater or smaller), according to the number of people who choose to settle at it, with an avowed desire to hear the word of God and to observe it; having for its nucleus the missionary's dwelling and perhaps a place of worship.[10]

The degree to which historians have Spengler-like projected their preconceptions on to the subject of houses is aptly summed up by Bundy quoting Kate Crehan,[11] who, he points out, "has explored what seems at first glance an almost mystical preference [on the part of the missionaries] for an angular life style". Crehan relates the preference to "certain key elements of capitalist society" (the notions of private property, the in-

10. Draft of letter from John Ross to "Revd. & Dear Sir", Pirie, 10 March 1845, Cory Library MS 8137.
11. "The Leaves and the Tree: the ideology and practices of the early LMS missionaries", unpublished paper, African History Seminar, Manchester University, 1977.

dividual as the basic unit of society, and the nuclear family), and argues that the "African house expressed values which were quite alien to those that the missionaries saw as so crucial".

There is no evidence that missionaries in Caffraria forced those living on stations to build houses which differed from their own. Yet, as William Shaw reported from Wesleyville in 1826, many of the station inhabitants seemed eager to build "decent cottages", "in the style of the Colonists".[12] In that year half of the fourteen houses at Wesleyville were in the "colonial style", the rest being "Native huts".[13] By 1830 "colonial style" houses were in vogue[14] and even those who dwelt in traditional huts intended building "decent cottages".[15] Matwa, son of Ngqika, came to live at the Glasgow Missionary Society station of Burnshill; there, in 1831, he "got up a frame of a house, after the European fashion" with the assistance of Mr. McDiarmid, the missionary artisan.[16] There seems to have been a connection between conversion and such industry. In 1828 it was reported from Chumie that "the converted Caffres have built themselves houses instead of huts".[17] In the 1850's the building of a "square hut" by a family who were members of the church at Pirie was still regarded as worthy of mention.[18]

The eagerness of mission inhabitants to build "decent cottages ... in the style of the Colonists", alluded to above, may be ascribed to what may have been persuasion on the part of the missionaries, based on a system of "ins" and "outs". In 1825 Stephen Kay described Chumie (Tyumie) mission station. There were 32 square houses forming one long street. "In the background there were about twenty-eight constructed after the manner of the natives." He went on to emphasize that "dwellings of this description *were not allowed to form any part of the village plan.*"[19] There is no doubt about the missionary belief that square houses built for and by native teachers and schoolmasters were considered to be "greatly superior to the common round hut used by the natives".[20] The "colonial style" house was a symbol of a break with traditional African society and a symbol of status generated by Christianity, Western Civilization and the vocation of native reader or teacher.[21] In 1828 Mr. McDiarmid, a missionary artisan, writing to the Secretaries of the Glasgow Missionary Society, noted that

> The house of your native reader, at Lovedale, Charles Henry, is now finished, and *very suitable for one in his situation.* We hope this example will be followed

12. Methodist Missionary Society Archives (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London), box 301, item 21, W Shaw to Secretaries, 26 April 1826.
13. *Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society for the year 1826,* p. 42, Report from Wesleyville, 26 April 1826.
14. *Ibid.*, box 303, item 45. W. Shaw to Rev. George Morley, 17 December 1830.
15. *Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society for the year 1826,* p. 42.
16. Journal of the Rev. James Laing, Vol. 1, 15 October 1831, MS 16579, Cory Library.
17. *Glasgow Missionary Society Quarterly Paper,* No. 11, p. 7.
18. Minutes of the Presbytery of Caffraria, vol. 3, unnumbered page, 4 July 1849, Report from Pirie, MS 9039, Cory Library.
19. Stephen Kay, *Travels and Researches in Caffraria* (London 1833), pp. 32—33. (My italics.)
20. *Glasgow Missionary Society adhering to the Principles of the Church of Scotland, Autumn Quarterly Intelligence,* 1840, p. 13 (Burnshill).
21. Native readers, teachers, agents or exhorters were also described as "assistants to the mission". See Minutes of the Presbytery of Caffraria, vol. 1, p. 89, Report from Chumie, 5 Dec. 1828, MS 9037, Cory Library.

> by others at the Institution, who see him living in a house much neater, and more comfortable, than the huts in which they live.[22]

Clearly Charles Henry was someone to be looked up to; someone worthy of emulation.[23] There is a great deal of evidence that this type of person was either unwanted by traditional society or felt uncomfortable living in it.[24] In opting for the mission life they were placing themselves "between" the missionaries and their families, on the one hand, and the average mission inhabitants, on the other. Some of them (or their wives) tried to have a foot in both camps at the same time, but this was the source of nothing but trouble. Chiefs saw them as breaking away from traditional society; missionaries saw them as clinging to it.[25] The erection of "colonial type" houses had another advantage, in the eyes of the missionaries. A report from Chumie in April 1842 observed that

> Connected with the improvement of the people on the Station[,] one pleasing prospect at the present time is the erection of eight houses [i.e. as opposed to huts] by the natives — two of unburnt brick and the remainder of wattle and daub. At Struthers' school a house has been commenced by the mother of the Teacher — herself a candidate. However uncouth the appearance of these houses are, when we know the wants they must necessarily create, such as candles, stool, table, etc. we trust these things are the faint glimmerings of a better day to the benighted people of this land.[26]

The importance of new houses erected on mission stations also lies in the variety of materials used in building. At Burnshill, in 1831, James Laing reported that there were two burnt brick houses with windows.[27] The window panes would have been acquired from the Colony, probably in Grahamstown. The earlier reference to the erection of a house for Charles Henry in 1828 noted that it sported a door and two small windows each containing four panes "of the Society's glass".[28] Window frames, like the burnt bricks, could have been made *in situ*. At Lovedale, in 1842, reference was made to two houses being built of "unburnt brick"[29] and this would have been made on the station. Writing from Chumie on 15 July 1842, William Chalmers noted that two Blacks, professing Christians, had built themselves "a square house or cottage each, of unburnt brick, and both are useful at handling the plough".[30] In 1840

---

22. *Glasgow Missionary Society Quarterly Paper*, No. 111, p. 11, McDiarmid to Rev. Secs., Balfour, 5 June 1828. (My italics.)
23. See below for a discussion on "native" readers and teachers as a clearly identifiable social group. Also see below for the irrigation furrows as status symbols.
24. For a detailed discussion of this see Donovan Williams, "The Missionaries on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony, 1799–1853", pp. 275ff.
25. Cf. Minutes of the Presbytery of Caffraria, vol. 2, p. 117, 21 August 1839, Report from Burnshill, MS. 9038, Cory Library.
26. Minutes of the Presbytery of Caffraria, vol. 2, p. 224, 6 April 1842, Report from Chumie, MS 9038, Cory Library.
27. Journal of the Rev. James Laing, vol. 1, 15 October 1831, MS 16579, Cory Library.
28. *Glasgow Missionary Society Quarterly Paper*, no. 111, p. 11, McDiarmid to Rev. Sirs, Balfour (sic), 5 June 1828.
29. Minutes of the Presbytery of Caffraria, vol. 2, p. 224, Report from Lovedale, 6 April 1842, MS 9038, Cory Library.
30. *Caffrarian Messenger of the Glasgow African Missionary Society*, No. XIII, April 1843, p. 183, Report from Chumie. (A rare publication of which a copy is in the Howard Pim Library, University of Fort Hare.)

> At Lovedale, it was noted that burned brick, however, is not good. A burned brick may generally be broken between one's hands, or by pressing upon it with the heel of a boot. This is probably owing to the presence of saltpetre, or some other chemical substance in the clay. But *raw* bricks — bricks dried in the sun, do tolerably well, were it not that they are liable to be injured by the ants.[31]

Construction drew on yellow wood and other hard wood found in the forests around Pirie and Chumie. Stink wood is mentioned as a hard wood either used *in the Colony* for making furniture or obtained from the Colony for that purpose.[32]

There are also a number of references to manual skills on the part of those living on mission stations. Such skills were either cultivated within or imported from outside. At Pirie, in 1844, "All the people of the Station, excepting four", helped with the building of the church. They supplied "materials and work — especially plastering ..."[33] The missionary mechanics or artisans, with which most stations were supplied, seem to have played a role in setting an example in industry and techniques. Tente and Matwa, sons of Ngqika (Gaika) came to live at Burnshill, and they erected a house, "the frame of which Mr. McDiarmid [the missionary artisan] had formed after the fashion of civilised life".[34] The artisans encouraged those whom they supervised, allowing them considerable scope: "... with the exception of their having a few holes bored for them, with instruments which they did not possess, the whole has been done by themselves both as to planning and executing".[35]

An omnibus description of how this was done was published in 1840. Inhabitants were "employed as quarrymen and labourers in the erection of buildings. Something has also been done to teach them in the art of sawing timber".[36] Some who built houses seem to have learned to do so at Lovedale. In 1845 F G Kayser reported from Knapp's Hope that Wenna(sic), a Xhosa, "who was at the Seminary" built himself a house with a fireplace, and did so on his own, with some missionary advice.[37] Stone was also used. Only Lovedale seemed to have good stone which was put together with "a little dressing". There was difficulty in obtaining corner stones. The houses which were built were

> about twenty-four feet by twelve, and divided into two apartments, and are greatly superior to the common round hut used by the natives, where the whole family with their visitors, sit, eat and sleep. There are now *five houses* at this Station, built after the European form. And besides these, the two Schoolmasters have put up kitchens separate from their houses, with brick chimneys built also

---

31. *Glasgow Missionary Society adhering to the Principles of the Church of Scotland, Autumn Quarterly Intelligence*, No. IX, 1840, pp. 13. Sawing operations which produced the timber are discussed below.
32. Ibid.
33. Minutes of the Presbytery of Caffraria, vol. 1, p. 289, Report from Pirie, 3 January 1844, MS 9038, Cory Library.
34. *Glasgow Missionary Society adhering to the Principles of the Church of Scotland, Autumn Quarterly Intelligence*, No. IX, 1840, p. 2.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
36. *Glasgow Missionary Society adhering to the Principles of the Church of Scotland, Autumn Quarterly Intelligence*, No. IX, 1840, p. 13.
37. F G Kayser to Directors, Knapp's Hope, 7 October 1845, London Missionary Society Archives (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London), box 21, jacket 3, folder B.

by themselves, and each has erected with his kitchen a small room for the accommodation of visitors from other Stations.[38]

The tools used in these enterprises, and which were necessary for general station use, were: axes, vices, spirit levels, jack and hand planes, glass diamonds [for cutting glass, presumably], "some handsome files, and others for wood and iron". In addition, the missionaries used "screw augers"; in one instance, however, they did not allow the mission inhabitants to use them, since they were so easily broken. The missionaries were thus obliged to bore for them, "which prevents them from learning to bore for themselves".[39] In addition the following were used for building houses at Knapp's Hope: hand saws, adzes, "drawing knives" and nails.[40]

Twenty years later those living on stations seemed to have had considerable practice in building techniques when they contributed en masse to the construction of buildings such as churches. At Pirie in 1854 John Ross informed his son Richard that "all the men, women and youths, male and female, will have another turn in plastering, laying the floor, fixing the seats and colouring the walls. Forty-five men have wrought, there are still four who have to work a day and besides the old man referred to above, there are 3 whom I cannot expect to do anything".[41] At Lovedale a "fine church" was being built in the same year (1854) "and the people are contributing to it well".[42] The distribution of labour was interesting. The male inhabitants of the mission quarried stone. John Ross — a man of parts — built the walls himself. Joseph Williams, a "native teacher" and probably a nonXhosa, conveyed the stone to the building site; he was also "the chief plasterer" and did thatching as well. Thomas Fortuin, also a teacher and probably a nonXhosa, planed the seats and Ross erected them. McDiarmid, the missionary artisan, finished two window frames" while Ross found "the sash for the other window". In addition, the females (presumably both Blacks and others) fetched the thatch and laid the floor of clay, white-washed the whole building inside and outside and coloured the inside again with a yellow ochre which their daughters brought from a distance of about two miles likewise gratuitously ..." Mrs. Ross glazed the windows, using clay which had been gathered at the river by her servants. The eldest Ross boy, Richard, during his vacation from the Lovedale Seminary, made the doors.[43]

Not all missionaries were enthusiastic about these activities. In 1866 John A. Chalmers, of the United Presbyterian Church mission at Henderson, conveyed to the Home authorities his concern about the imposition of having to erect mission buildings, calling it an "unpleasant" task. "It is high time that missionaries were relieved of this burden", he protested. "How can the church expect that the agents can have any practical knowledge, such as is absolutely necessary, in superintending house-building, when their previous training is of such a nature as makes them unfit for having to do with bricks and mortar[?]". Such work should be done by artisans.[44]

★ ★ ★

38. *Glasgow Missionary Society adhering to the Principles of the Church of Scotland, Autumn Quarterly Intelligence*, No. IX, 1840, p. 13.
39. *Ibid.*
40. F G Kayser to Directors, 15 March 1849, LMS Archives, box 24, folder 2, jacket A.
41. J Ross to R Ross, 20 May 1854, Pirie, MS 2957, Cory Library.
42. Mary B Ross to J Ross, 13 December 1854, Lovedale, MS 3014, Cory Library.
43. J Ross to "Rev and Dear Sir", Pirie, October, 1842, MS 3136, Cory Library; J Ross to Henry Knox, Pirie, 23 January 1844, MS 3191, Cory Library.
44. *Missionary Record of the United Presbyterian Church*, No. VIII, New Series, Vol. 1, p. 154.

Closely associated with the tools used for building houses and churches on mission stations were the implements used in agriculture and everyday life. One of the earliest references to the use of a plough is by William Shaw, writing from Wesleyville in 1826:

> There are about thirty acres of ground in cultivation on this Institution, and belonging to its inhabitants: they have just reaped an abundant harvest of Maize and Guinea, or Caffre corn. We prevailed on a few of them last season to try the plough, and the crops on the ploughed lands have yielded so much better than those cultivated in the Native [Xhosa?] manner, that an impression favourable to the plough appears to have been made.[45]

In 1830 the mission at Buffalo River (Kingwilliamstown) boasted one plough.[46] By 1831 it had two,[47] and this remained so for 1832.[48] Yet, according to John Ross at Pirie, writing in 1848, and harking back to the years after the peace of 1836, there was resistance to such innovation among those who lived outside the mission station:

> They began to use iron, or European, Spades and to adopt the hoe in the culture of their grounds. But so great was native aversion to the use of these implements, by males, that those who used them were spoken of as slaves. When they began to use their oxen in tillage they were calumniated as not properly caring for their cattle and deteriorating them from the great national custom and pleasure of racing them.[49]

Equally, there was a willingness on the part of "those who adopted the Word of God as the rule of faith and manners, and felt the consolation of it, in proportion, as it was brought into the actions of daily life[,] that were willing to undertake these changes and to bear the obloquy".[50]

Nevertheless, the use of the plough spread because the advantages were immediately obvious. At Buffalo River John Brownlee observed in 1849 that the acquisition of six ploughs had apparently resulted in crops of barley, wheat and oats over some 20 acres.[51] At Chumie, in 1835–36, Old Soga (father of Tiyo Soga) was taught by Government-assisted persons how to use the plough, and he combined it with an irrigation channel, to much monetary gain.[52] In 1838 John Ayliff reported from Butterworth — well beyond the Kei River — that in addition to clothing, "the Plough is also coming into repute among our people".[53] Some time after the early 1850's, ap-

---

45. *Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society for the year 1826*, p. 42, letter of William Shaw, 26 April 1826. The impression conveyed in my *Umfundisi*, (Lovedale, 1978), p. 8, that Old Soga was the first to use the plough in Caffraria, is wrong.
46. "Schedule for Returns to be made Annually by Missionaries in South Africa", Caffraria, 17 February 1830, LMS Archives, box 11, folder 4, jacket C.
47. "Caffrarian Return", 25 January 1831, LMS Archives, box 12, folder 3, jacket A.
48. "Returns of Kaffer Mission", 6 December 1832, LMS Archives, box 13, jacket C, folder 2.
J Ross to R. Southey (Sec. to High Commissioner, Cape Town), Pirie, 17 May 1848, MS 3519, Cory Library.
50. Ibid.
51. J Brownlee to Tidman, Kingwilliamstown, 27 October 1849, LMS Archives, box 24, folder 2, jacket D.
52. Williams, *Umfundisi*, pp. 8–9. See below for further details of Old Soga's entrepreneurship, irrigation channels and money economy.
J Ayliff to Secs. 15 Dec. 1838, MMS Archives, South Africa (5), Albany 1830–33, item 43.

parently, it was reported from Caffraria that at all the Wesleyan Methodist mission stations the plough was in use, and that "some of the chiefs" had ploughs of their own. In some instances the plough had superceded the traditional wooden hoe, and the "European spade" was replacing the traditional wooden spade.[54] There is a sense of self-congratulation in this account that "civilization" had been promoted: "the Bible and the plough go together in Southern Africa". A 1861 census of British Caffraria, the land between the Kei and the Bashee which had been annexed by the Crown, reveals that there were 528 ploughs.[55]

There is no doubt that the mission stations were the nuclei from which the use of Western-style implements radiated into Caffraria. In 1824 John Ross informed his mother that "the people" were using "picks or hoes" and spades for cultivation. He had rewarded the most industrious with hoes, and these were "glaring in the sun where no hoes were seen before".[56] Sometimes the references to implements are fleeting and tantalizing. In 1842 at Chumie, "a messenger came from the chief's residence, stating that Tyalie had departed this life ... and requesting the loan of implements to make the grave".[57] In 1842 Maqoma's people wanted to "lead the water out of the mission furrow at Knapp's Hope. They asked for help, which included "some spades and pick-axes".[58] By 1861 use of "implements" seems to have been well established. When the "heathen" chief Mhlana died near Mgwali, Tiyo Soga, the resident missionary, described the funeral arrangements and interment in detail, noting that the grave was filled with "spadefuls" of earth.[59]

These activities had social effects which do not seem to have been recognized by historians of Christian missions in Caffraria.[60] Reference has been made earlier to the perception on the part of missionaries that "colonial type" houses on mission stations bestowed an appropriate status on native readers or teachers; or, indeed, that it was *necessary* for native agents to have an "improved status" among their fellow countrymen who were "heathens". There is recurring evidence that missionaries wittingly and unwittingly encouraged such distinctions in connection with other aspects of what they regarded as improvement on the ways of traditional society. Irrigation canals are a case in point. These had been associated with missionary endeavour from the earliest years in Caffraria. When Joseph Williams, of the London Missionary Society, established his mission station near the Kat River in 1816, he constructed a furrow. Thereafter, construction of the furrow became a *sine qua non* of stations in Caffraria. In an area of unpredictable rainfall and periodical drought it attracted people to mis-

---

"The Wesleyan Missions in Kaffraria and the Border Districts of the Cape of Low Hope Colony. Being an Account of their rise, progress, and present State and Prospects", undated, unsigned MS., MMS Archives, box 309, South Africa XI 1854–57, Cape. Also Misc. Papers 1822–74.
Population Return, British Kaffraria, 31 Dec. 1861, Govt. Notice No. 14 of 1862, MS 1990, Cory Library.

56. J Ross to his mother, Lovedale, 28 September 1826, MS 7713, Cory Library.
57. *The Caffrarian Messenger of the Glasgow African Missionary Society*, No. XII, Dec. 1842, p. 182. F G Kayser to Directors, Report for 1842, LMS Archives, box 18, folder 5, jacket B, 26 December 1842.
59. Journal of the Rev. Tiyo Soga, 3 Feb. 1861, University of Fort Hare Library. This journal has been published in *The Journal and Selected Writings of the Reverend Tiyo Soga*, edited by Donovan Williams (Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1984).
60. Cf. Bundy, p., 38 where a fleeting reference to missionaries actively promoting social classes is not followed up, nor does he mention houses and irrigation canals conferring "status".

sion stations and their environs.[61] It seems that the first Black to cut a water furrow himself was Old Soga.[62]

As with living in European-style houses,[63] there is evidence that the knowledge and skill to make furrows, which was acquired at mission stations, seemed to give those who initiated such work a certain respect in the eyes of traditional societies. Chiefs and sons of chiefs — for instance, Tente, brother of Matwa, son of Ngqika — were associated with furrow-making.[64] According to at least one missionary, Robert Niven, this "invest[ed] the design with more than ordinary eclat and respectability".[65] Native teachers or readers were unpopular among those living outside mission stations. Nevertheless, in 1844, Festiri Soga,[66] from Chumie, was happy to be sent by the missionaries to assist in cutting a furrow for a group of non-mission Blacks who thought that it was "a good thing". He himself looked forward to settling among them in an anticipated atmosphere of goodwill generated by the success of the furrow.[67] All in all, mission stations seemed to produce a self-consciousness among teachers or readers. Henry Calderwood, of the L.M.S., noted that: "I think there is a serious danger to the mission in Caffreland in the tendency to *selfsufficiency and importance* in the minds of native teachers".[68]

★ ★ ★

Another fundamental change to take place at mission stations, and in Caffraria in general, was the emergence of a money economy.[69] This took place during the twenties and early thirties. In 1824 the missionaries at Wesleyville attracted labour by paying five strings of beads per day.[70] At Pirie in the same year beads were exchanged for honey and brambles.[71] In August 1825 when Stephen Kaye entered Caffraria, buttons were currency near Chumie.[72] By the 1830's, however, mission inhabitants, or those closely associated with missions, who had perhaps visited the Colony, had begun to appreciate the value of colonial coinage. At Burnshill, in 1838, James Laing observed that money was sought after by native children living at the mission station; with it they purchased clothes.[73] As early as April 1832 he lamented that materialism was taking a hold on some of his communicants:

> [T]he best of them having seen the benef[it] of money desire it very strongly —

61. Williams, *When Races Meet* p. 45; *Umfundisi*, p. 4. For a detailed discussion of the widespread creation of furrows at missions stations see Williams, "The Missionaries on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony, 1799—1853", Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Uniersity of the Witwatersrand, pp. 66—71.
62. Journal of the Rev. James Laing, vol. 2, 20 June 1836, MS 16572, Cory Library.
63. See above, footnote 21—22.
64. Journal of the Rev. James Laing, vol. 1, 20 June 1832, MS 16579, Cory Library.
65. *Caffrarian Messenger of the Glasgow African Missionary Society*, VI, August 1840, p. 95.
66. Brother of Tiyo Soga.
67. *Caffrarian Messenger of the Glasgow African Missionary Society*, XV, January, 1844, p. 238.
68. Annual Report from Blinkwater, 28 August 1840, LMS Archives, box 17, folder 3, jacket B. (My italics.) It is unclear what Calderwood meant by "native" — probably Hottentot, Coloured or Gqona.
69. See Williams "The Missionaries on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony 1799—1853", pp. 239 ff.
70. Report from Wesleyville, by W Shaw, 10 April 1824, in *Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society for the year 1824*, p. 52.
71. Notebook of Mrs. J Ross, containing letters to parents, p. 25 (Aug. 1824), MS 2637, Cory Library.
72. Kay, *Travels and Researches in Caffraria*, p. 50.
73. Journal of the Rev. James Laing, vol. 2, 12 October 1838, MS 16572, Cory Library.

> Cattle and goods they also have more than Christians do. Improvement in the arts and in useful learning they care little about except as a means of obtaining money. They will learn e.g. to saw wood for money but not for the sake of the benefit they might derive unto themselves by [entry ends].[74]

It seems that Laing was ambivalent about the material benefits of Western civilization. The adoption of some aspects was essential to break the cake of custom, yet that very aid to Christianity had within it the seeds of worldliness.

The emergence of a money economy took place in situations where the majority of mission inhabitants cultivated "gardens" or "fields". This subject merits careful consideration, for all was not as it seems to some historians. Gardens were a flourishing feature of mission stations from the earliest years. Already by 1826 there were "upwards of 300 acres of land under cultivation" at Chumie. Some gardens were enclosed and planted with fruit trees.[75] Some earliest evidence indicates that, at some stations, gardens increased faster than population.[76] In at least one instance, the gardens were four miles away from the station (Knapp's Hope).[77] It seems that some people chose *not* to live on mission stations because of the danger of not being able to support themselves. In 1832 James Laing observed that

> We believe that the Kaffirs would more frequently come to stay at our Instit[ution] could they readily get away from their Kraals and obtain their cattle to take with them ... They depend much on cattle for support and if they were to leave their Kraals and come to the Instit[ution] they would find some difficulty in obtaining a livelihood.[78]

John Ross of Pirie noted in 1845 that

> the [inhabitants of the station, in addition to raising cattle and "native grain"] raise some foreign grain, [such] as barley and wheat, potatoes and fruit of various kinds [sic]. These add greatly to their comfort in constant supplies of food. But their distance from markets[,] and other stations being nearer to the markets[,] they do not acquire much more by their sales than enables them to get a few clothes and other necessary articles. They are[,] however[,] vastly better clothed and fed than their neighbours apart from Miss[ionar]y, Stations. And but for the heavy draw back [sic] by the latter substantial wea[l]th and social comfort. As it is, they use teams of oxen in plowing, and what they do not plough the husbands and young men share the burden of the labour with the hoe or spade with their wives and mothers or other relatives.[79]

Clearly there was innovation and economic change on mission stations, but the rate of some of it depended on proximity to markets, whether in the Cape Colony, or along

---

74. Ibid., vol. 1, 6 April 1832, MS 16579, Cory Library.
75. *Glasgow Missionary Society Quarterly Paper*, No. 11, p. 7.
76. F G Kayser to Directors, Buffalo River, Kaffraria, 18 October 1828. LMS Archives, box 11, folder 2, jacket B.
77. F G Kayser to Directors, 23 December 1837, LMS Archives, box 16, folder 2, jacket C.
78. Journal of the Rev. James Laing, Vol. 1, 12 April 1832, MS 16579, Cory Library.
79. Dft. letter, John Ross to "Revd. and Dear Sir", Pirie, 10 February 45, MS 3137, Cory Library.

the frontier where forts, in particular, bought agricultural produce. There was, as Ross pointed out, little actual *work* at mission stations (presumably for monetary payment) "as there [was] but one missionary".[80] But the value of Ross's observations lies in the fact that he recognized the pull of traditional economy and the slow move away from it and into a money economy.

Nevertheless, there were enterprising people on mission stations who managed to produce enough for European extras. In 1842 the inhabitants of Chumie mission station produced a "good" crop of maize and a "more than average" crop of millet. Some of them also produced "a good quantity of potatoes". The report went on to say that one man had sold "more than twenty shillings worth, which he has spent purchasing clothing for himself and family".[81] At Buffalo River, in 1849, John Brownlee observed that among "our church members" there was "something of an improvement". They possessed eight waggons which had been procured "in the hopes of giving employment for the support of their families". But, he pointed out, there was

> no evidence of increase of Wealth[,] as in every case more than the value was given in the purchase[;] yet it has already *extended the means of employment and is producing a Change in the Social habits of the People*[.]

The Colonial Government had donated five ploughs to the station and one had been purchased. All were in use; the result was a gratifying increase in cultivated land — 20 acres — and crops of barley, wheat and oats. Brownlee himself had introduced several varieties of barley.[82]

Thus by the forties diversification in employment and changes in agricultural techniques, associated with small amounts of money, were evident at mission stations and spreading to the surrounding areas. This is clear from the activities of Old Soga who lived near Chumie.[83] He combined the cutting of a furrow with the purchase of a plough for two oxen. According to James Laing he was the "first Kaffir who has introduced the plough into this part of the country". He ploughed land for others at a fee, making sure that he and "his wives and people" went on with their own "agricultural operations". James Laing observed that "if he [Old Soga] fully avail himself of the use of the water, he may be the richest native in the country".[84] His activities were described by an astute missionary observer, Robert Niven of the Glasgow Missionary Society, at Igqhibgha, near Chumie, in 1840:

> More use has been made of the Society's plough than formerly. Soga, an influential counsellor of U Tyalie, and an improving character, who lives beyond the Institution, first trained his oxen and then himself to the plough. This season he has lent out the former at 4s.6d. per day to persons belonging to the Mission-Village, to break up the ground, with the loan of the Society's plough — adding 1s.6d. when he became ploughman. In this way, tillage has been systematically and efficiently managed, and what is of great moment, an example of spon-

80. *Ibid.*
81. Minutes of the Presbytery of Caffraria, vol. 2, p. 224, Report from Chumie, MS 9038, Cory Library.
82. Brownlee to Tidman, Kingwilliamstown (Buffalo River), 27 October 1849, LMS Archives, box 24, folder 2, jacket D. (My italics).
83. Old Soga's activities are discussed at great length in Williams, *Umfundisi*, pp. 8–10.
84. Journal of the Rev. James Laing, vol. 2, 20 June 1836, MS 16572 Cory Library.

taneous nature origin has been given, to recommend the European mode of agriculture.[85]

By 1850 the economic circumstances of the population on mission stations differed considerably from those outside them. Mount Coke was probably characteristic of missions elsewhere. It was reported that

> The population of the Mission-Village continues steadily to increase; extensive fields have been brought under cultivation; several of the Native residents are proprietors of waggons, ploughs, oxen, and horses; and, although they are far from coming up to the full standard of a civilized people, as that term may be generally understood, they nevertheless present a marked contrast to the surrounding population, with which they themselves were, at no distant period, closely identified in spirit and in conduct.[86]

Early cross sections of the economic and social life on L.M.S. mission stations in Caffraria are revealed in the annual "Schedule for Returns to be made Annually by Missionaries in South Africa". The statistics below show what changes took place during the period 1830 to 1832 at Buffalo River (Kingwilliamstown). (Caution should be exercised in the use of tables such as these as the categories change from year to year and there are curiosities and inconsistencies.)

	17 Feb. 1830[87]	15 Jan. 1831[88]	6 Dec. 1832[89]
"undifferentiated" population belonging to the station	104	160	139 (50 females, 41 males, 18 girls, 21 boys)
horses	20	22	21
oxen	60	70	54
cows and calves	200	200	
sheep	300	230	300
goats	180	150	260
waggons	1	3	3
ploughs		2	2
"Caffre Huts"	6[10?]		
trees	150	40[?]	300
"Garden ground"		3	20
"houses"		3	6
"corn fields"			20
"state of cultivation'		"wheat 1"	"barley 3"

85. *The Caffrarian Messenger of the Glasgow African Missionary Society*, No. V, 1 April 1840, p. 85, Niven to Directors of GAMS, Igqhibgha, 15 January 1840.
86. Report from Mount Coke, in *The Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society for the year 1850*, p. 52.
87. LMS Archives, box 11, folder 4, jacket C.
88. "Caffrarian Return", 25 Jan. 1831, LMS Archives, box 12, folder 3, jacket A.
89. "Return of Kaffer Mission", LMS Archives, box 13, folder 2, jacket C.
90. Minutes of the Presbytery of Caffraria, vol. 3, unnumbered page, 5 January 1853, Report from Pirie, MS 9039, Cory Library.
87. LMS Archives, box 11, folder 4, jacket C.
88. "Caffrarian Return", 25 Jan. 1831, LMS Archives, box 12, folder 3, jacket A.
89. "Return of Kaffer Mission", LMS Archives, box 13, folder 2, jacket C.

Certain other activities were not reported. Another avenue of work for mission station people — pursued especially by Hottentots and Coloureds — was sawing wood in the surrounding forests. Sometimes the records are uncertain as to whether such people actually lived on the station,[90] but there were some at Burnshill in 1831 who left "because their saw [was] broken".3[91] At that station in the forties or fifties there is mention of a sawyer who was also a "wright", and who helped build houses.[92] Wood was plentiful. There was a large forest near Pirie in which grew yellow wood trees "several feet in diametre". There was a smaller one at Chumie and others scattered throughout Caffraria. Such timber was felled with cross-cut saws but more frequently with the axe. "The framesaw is seldom used, the whip-saw being preferred". In 1840 the timber produced was sold at about 2½d. for a "superficial foot of one-inch plank", and other sizes in proportion.[93] Here, as elsewhere, the enterprising Sogas were active. In 1848 Festiri and his brothers (and, it seems, other members of the "church") were running a thriving sawpit which produced "a considerable quantity of plank" which they were selling.[94]

The Hottentots and Coloureds (and, perhaps, Gqonas)[95] on mission stations seemed to have been an enterprising group. As has been shown, they were active in building European-style houses, and were referred to as "handy men" by John Ross at Pirie. Ross compared them with the Blacks and observed that "Very few indeed of the natives at our Missions can do anything effective in putting up a house whether of stone, brick or wattle and daub". He "ever aimed to train natives" to thatch and plaster, as well as to drive waggons. [96] (Presumably by "natives" he meant Xhosa, and whether this lack of skill was because the mission inhabitants of Burnshill were there for the first time, after the war, or whether the old, unskilled, former inhabitants returned is uncertain.) NonXhosas were more experienced in these skills. They came to the mission stations from the Kat River Settlement (after 1829) or from the Colony,[97] and they had a variety of skills, as has been previously noted. They were thatchers,[98] and some were "rope pullers" (during the thatching process).[99] The records frequently mention Hottentots, Coloureds (and, perhaps, Gqonas) participating in the transport business, as waggon drivers. A history of transportation on the frontier may one day reveal the extent and impact of their activities.

Whether practising other skills or not, the Hottentots and Coloureds (and perhaps Gqonas) also made up the bulk of the interpreters. Interpreters were an indispensable element in missionary activity during the first half of the 19th Century, at

90. Minutes of the Presbytery of Caffraria, vol. 3, unnumbered page, 5 January 1853, Report from Pirie, MS 9039, Cory Library.
91. Journal of the Rev. James Laing, vol. 1, 1 November 1831, MS 16579, Cory Library.
92. [J Ross to ?], n.d. [Pirie], MS 3683, Cory Library.
93. *Glasgow Missionary Society adhering to the Principles of the Church of Scotland, Autumn Quarterly Intelligence*, No. IX, 1840, p. 12.
94. Journal of the Rev. J R Cumming, vol. 4, 24 July 1848, 18 Oct. 1849, South African Library.
95. Because of the difficulty in separating these groups, I use this cumbersome tripartite mode of description. (These difficulties are discussed in Part II.)
96. Notes by [J Ross to ?], n.d. [Pirie,], MS 3683, Cory Library.
97. Ibid. This letter makes reference to two persons born of mixed European and Hottentot parentage, who had learned skills in the Colony.
98. J Ross to "Rev. and Dear Sir", Pirie, 8 Sept. 1841, MS 3132, Cory Library.
99. J Ross, 18 Aug. 1853, Pirie, MS 2937, Cory Library.
100. For an introduction to these interesting people, see Williams "The Missions on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony, 1749–1853," pp. 197–200. A glance at the index on *The Journal of William Shaw*, ed. W D Hammond-Tooke (Cape Town 1972) will prove illuminating, and the other source material in the relevant archives is ripe for plucking.

least. They were active not only on mission stations, but acted as guides and go-betweeners when missionaries travelled or scouted out new sites for stations.[100] We know that some were paid — Joseph Wesley of Wesleyville received £100 p.a. in 1840 (when native teachers were being paid £12 by the Scottish missions!)[101] Their role in the social and economic history of Caffraria is deserving of further investigation (see below).

There is no doubt that the missionaries regarded certain Coloureds, Hottentots, and even Gqonas and Xhosas as a superior class of person when they engaged in work which was somewhat removed from Black traditional society, and in which the Blacks do not seem to have been active to any significant extent. By the middle of the 19th Century an entrepreneurial class was emerging, living on mission stations mainly, educated there (at Lovedale in particular), some of whom were church elders, teachers or interpreters, and some of whom were engaged in work such as sawing wood or driving waggons in addition to agriculture. Dukwana (son of Ntsikana and a printer and elder at Lovedale) and Festiri (brother of Tiyo Soga) were examples of Blacks of this class. These people would meet from time to time to deal with local matters, such as quitrent, or wider issues relating to evangelization. Meetings were chaired by persons such as Dukwana, committees were chosen, and deputations sent to discuss problems at source.[102]

The extent to which the diffusion of this thriving and variegated activity on mission stations, or its influence, was dependent on the relationship between the *numbers* living *on* mission stations, and the numbers living *outside* them, is unclear. The average size of a mission station during the first half of the 19th Century was, perhaps, 100 to 300 persons, most of whom were actually living on the station. But until more work has been done on population statistics for Caffraria (together with the other desiderata listed below) it would be injudicious to embark on speculation.[103]

★ ★ ★

This preliminary investigation into the nature of mission stations in Caffraria during the first half of the 19th Century reveals that there was a richness and complexity of activity by people of diverse ethnic origins. There is evidence of strong economic, social and ethnic links with the Cape Colony and the Kat River Settlement[104] and traditional Black societies in Caffraria. Perhaps this is stressing the obvious; but until detailed work has been done on these interconnections, it seems unwise to make durable assumptions about the social and economic influence of mission stations in Caffraria, and to build heavily on them.

101. Methodist Church Albany and Kaffraria District Minutes and Circuit Reports, p. 33, List of Subordinate Paid Agents, MS 15023, Cory Library; *Glasgow Missionary Society Winter Quarterly Intelligence*, No. 11, 1839, p. 5.

102. Journal of the Rev. J R Cumming, vol. 4, 2.2.49; vol. 5, 10.4.49, 22.10.49. During the Frontier War of 1846 Dukwana was a negotiator between Sandile's forces and the colonial army (Chalmers to Cumming, 26.7.1846, Comming Papers, item 287. There is no mention of this class of person in Bundy. Dukwana was described as the most influential of the mission inhabitants at Chumie (*Missionary Record of the United Presbyteria Church*, no. 1, vol. v, Feb. 1850, p. 44).

103. See my thoughts on the lack of research into population, settlement patterns, and much else, in *Umfundisi*, p. 14, note 10. Enough evidence probably exists. See for example, ibid., p. 73, note 30 where the Rev. John Sclater estimated that about 10 000 persons lived "in our sphere on labour" at Mgwali. Micro-studies and large correlations are clearly called for.

104. See Part II of this article, to be published in *Historia* in May, 1986, for evidence of this link.

A decade or two ago the historiography of Christian missions in Caffraria was a relatively uniform catalogue of the progress of Christianity and Western Civilization among the benighted Blacks who saw the Light. Much of this is now being queried. But it would be a pity indeed (and perhaps downright unscholarly) if basic research during the formative period were passed over with a mere acknowledgement of the new trends. Much more is required.

Several subjects suggest themselves for research, in addition to those already mentioned above. More detailed work is needed on the reaction of the various traditional societies around the mission stations to such things as the emerging money economy which may have radiated from the stations. It is by no means certain that there were identical responses from Chumie to Butterworth — yet much writing is based on such an assumption. The role in this of Hottentots, Coloureds and Gqonas living at the stations must be ascertained. Economic influence must be carefully studied in the context of the traditional customs of each group and economic contacts with the Cape Colony. There should be a painstaking gathering of details of receipt and income of mission inhabitants. Other needs are lists of interpreters and waggon drivers, showing their origins, education and activities (information on the routes used by waggon drivers, and their loads, and who owned the waggons would be instructive); maps of the areas actually visited by missionaries or readers and teachers, the places and the frequency of such visits (this, in collaboration with surveys in the later 19th Century, might help in assessing the spread of Christianity, and "Civilisation"[105]); lists of people migrating between the missions, the Cape Colony and the Kat River Settlement; research into the peregrinations of mission residents during the frontier wars, how they supported themselves[106] and how this affected mission stations on their return (for return they did, to the same station, religiously); studies of the social, economic and political implications for the 19th Century of "upper" classes of teachers, readers or exhorters, at or outside mission stations; even a compilation of information on church collections during the 19th Century would add immeasurably to our real knowledge of economic developments.[107] Work on these and other topics in search of good, solid, basic data would add highly desirable depth to current studies. Once that data is correlated, both by topics and area, new conclusions can be formulated and it is possible that current historiography will be enriched (and justifiably disturbed) by it.

(To be continued)

---

05. The sources abound with data for such a study. The Journal of the Rev. Tiyo Soga is rich with names of outstations and people living there. A letter of John Ross to Bryce Ross, 2.11.1841, MS 8107, Cory Library gives a list of hamlets around Pirie which indicates a very large circuit. An example from the *Second Annual Report of the Glasgow Missionary Society adhering to the Principles of the Church of Scotland, Spring Quarterly Intelligence 1840*, p. 26, provides a good illustration of available statistics: of 122 pupils at Lovedale and two outstations combined, 33 were dressed in European clothing.

06. During the 1851 Frontier War some did very well for themselves at Kingwilliamstown selling firewood (Dft. letter, J Ross, Kingwilliamstown, 16 May 1851, MS 2900, Cory Library.)

107. Some records are remarkably detailed. See, for instance, John Ross's description of a collection taken at Pirie in 1855: "24/- and some pence" including 1 shilling, several sixpences, "most 3d pieces," 14 pennies and 4 half-pence. (MS 2976, Cory Library).