

**FROM THE ZULUS TO THE KAZAKHS.  
NINETEENTH CENTURY CONTACTS BETWEEN  
RUSSIA AND SOUTH AFRICA\***

Could there be any connection between the Zulus and the Kazakhs as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century? Between remote parts of Russia and South Africa? According to some archival documents, people from these two countries did know something about one another and had started to form mutual images of one another even in that epoch. And this led to contacts – direct or indirect. The available evidence is fragmentary, often contradictory and sometimes difficult to interpret. But it is there.

**A Pondo Chief Seeks Assistance of the Russian Tsar<sup>1</sup>**

Lo msebenzi undogamele, ndicela izandla ke ngoko ezihlobeni ukuba zindincedise.

(Alone this work is beyond my physical strength and so I feel I must ask for help and assistance from friends).

Xhosa proverb.

We found this letter, written in English, in Moscow, in the State Archive of the Russian Federation<sup>2</sup>. It was handwritten – the handwriting is difficult and the grammar is odd<sup>3</sup>.

It was addressed to a "czar" – Alexander III at the time – and was posted to St. Petersburg from South Africa, specifically from Esihlonyane in Pondoland, on 10 November 1886. It must be one of the most unusual documents in the history of Russian international relations.

We cite it fully and try to maintain the features of grammar and spelling of the original letter. All geographical places and names are reproduced as spelled in the original.

---

\* First published in *Vostok (Oriens)*. Issue 6, 2008.

---

<sup>9</sup> Gurevich E.L. The image of an African in contemporary Russian popular culture // The 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of Africanists... P. 188; Photos 3–8.

<sup>10</sup> Kharitonova E.V. Op. cit. P. 190.

<sup>11</sup> For example, see: Ojo-Ade F. Africans and Racism in the New Millennium // Journal of Black Studies. 2001. Vol. 32, № 2. Pp. 184–211; Winant H. The New Politics of Race: Globalism, Difference, Justice. Minneapolis, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> See Bondarenko D.M. Op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> See: Evgenieva T.V. Cultural and historical basis of forming the image of an "alien" in modern Russia. // Aliens not allowed. ... Pp. 39-57 (in Russian).

<sup>14</sup> Kharitonova E.V. Op. cit. P. 192.

<sup>15</sup> For example, see: Gdaniec C. Op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> Aleshkovskiy I.A., Iontsev V.A. Trends in International Migration in the Globalising World // The Age of Globalisation. 2008, № 2. P. 86 (in Russian).

<sup>17</sup> For example, see: Kalb D. Afterword. Globalism and Postsocialist Prospects // Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies, and Practices in Eurasia. London, 2002. P. 317–334; Yiu-wai C. Postcolonial Discourse in the Age of Globalization // Globalization. Critical Issues. New York; Oxford, 2004. Pp. 37–48.

To the Czar  
St. Petersburg  
Russia

Esihlonyane  
Pondoland  
10 Nov. 1886

Sir

I again write, to you, I wish to explain our present position As a Nation. We are independent Nation subject to no other power up to the present Self Independent. The Pondo Nation now ask to be protected by you. The English Government wants to take Away our Country. They have recently taken forcibly a portion of our country occupied by the AmaXebisis<sup>4</sup> and have Annexed it since we wrote to you on the 25th (Oct.? – A.D., I.F.). Our Country is taken away from us without any just Cause. And we have not fought with the Colonial Govt. We are quite unaware of our Crime to the English Govt. Things which have been forcibly taken from us are 1<sup>st</sup> the Country occupied by the Xebisis.

2nd Port St. Jones River Mouth they have taken it, saying they will purchase it with Money. So said they. They made an offer to buy the country occupied by the Xebisis from us for Cash. As I said have made an offer for the two ports they have taken these two ports and still make an offer to buy them for Cash<sup>5</sup>. We refuse to accept their offer. After the letter we sent to you the Country occupied by the AmaXebisi is, we hear, Annexed on the 25th Oct last they have taken our ground without our being fighting with them and without any just reason The only thing is their imposition on us. As we are not strong. As them, the Pondos Are not Armed As the Colonial Govt Subjects. The extent of our Country is about 300 miles breadth and 380 miles long. Trusting you will give this letter your Serious Consideration.

I have the honor to be Sir  
Your Most Obedient Servant  
Umhlangaso J.S. Faku<sup>6</sup>  
For Paramount Chief Umquikela<sup>7</sup>  
Chief Councillor and Prime Minister W<sup>8</sup>

P.S. do not listen the English Govt. what might they say. They might say perhaps the Pondo Country belongs to them. They might say this to delude you as you are no aware of the facts, that it is false. The boundary of the Pondo Country Commences from Umtata river Mouth and up along the Umtata river and through Gungululu to Shawbury Mission Station, and go down to Ngxaroli and through Ishungwana and to the Umzimvubu River and Run along the Stream to the junction of the Imvenyane stream and along the Intsuzwa Mountain and to Celintcungu<sup>9</sup> Mountains to Nolangeni Mountains through Engele Mountains. Another thing they have armed their subjects to come and fight us. As we have no friend to assist us we don't want to be un-

der the protection of the English Govt. We shall await your valuable assistance. The English Govt is treating us most shamefully. The population of the Pondo Nation is about 200,000. Our country is very rich in Copper, Gold, Coal, etc. and all kinds of Menirals<sup>10</sup> It is for this reason they want to take away our Country forcibly against our Consent. Should you kindly agree to protect us. We would Allow you to Open all Mines in the Country.

I have the honor to be  
Sir  
Your most obedient Servant  
Umhlangaso J.S. Faku  
for Paramount Chief Umquikela  
Chief Councillor and Prime Minister

How did Faku get the idea of sending a letter to the Russian Tsar? What did he know about Russia? It is obvious from the letter that he did not know much – not even the tsar's name. And yet he asked for his help. And this was not even his first letter.

Most likely, the origin of this letter was the rumour about the Russians that spread among the Xhosa, one of the biggest ethnic groups in South Africa (of which the Pondo were a part), in the wake of the Crimean War. In 1857 the Xhosa heard that somewhere in the north some "Russians" were fighting against the British, just like the Xhosa did, and that these Russians were willing to come to the Xhosas' aid. These rumours were sparked by the news that General George Cathcart had been killed in one of the battles against the Russians during the Crimean War. In 1852-53, Cathcart had been governor of the British Cape Colony, and he was one of the most hated ones by the Xhosa. The renowned South African writer Zakes Mda wrote in his novel *The Heart of Redness*: "We all remember how the news of the death of Cathcart spread like wildfire, with universal jubilation and impromptu celebrations. People for the first time heard about the Russians. And while the British insisted that the Russians are as white as themselves, the AmaXhosa knew that it was a lie. The Russians were black. They were the spirits of the AmaXhosa soldiers who had died in various wars against the British colonisers..."<sup>11</sup>

But Faku wrote his letter at the end of 1886 – three decades after these events. At that time, he could have gleaned information about Russia from many other sources. Among the Xhosa there were already a number of graduates of missionary schools – those who read missionary magazines, and even wrote articles for them. Faku himself was a correspondent of *Imvo Zabatsundu*, the first Xhosa newspaper. He wrote to the paper's editor, John Tengo Jabavu, and sent him materials for the paper.<sup>12</sup> Knowledge

of the English language was spreading, and with it the ability to learn what was going on in the world. Many Xhosa went to work on farms and mines in the Cape Colony and Natal. They saw a lot there. They could have even met real, rather than fictional Russians – sailors who visited Cape Town and Simon's Town. A well educated person like Faku could have visited the Cape Town Museum of Curiosities and Natural History, which exhibited Russian arms and uniforms, Russian coins and even such a mysterious – for South Africans – object as cast-iron oven shutters<sup>13</sup>. Faku could have also received information about Russia from European traders living in Pondoland.

Whatever the sources of his information, it could only confirm and reinforce the impression of the thirty-year-old rumour: the Russians were enemies of the British, they were fighting against them, and sometimes won. Hence, it is to them that one should turn for help.

One can easily imagine the astonishment of St. Petersburg officials when they received the letter. Hardly any of them had heard about the Pondo. Certainly none knew where Pondoland was and what its relations with the British and the Boers were.

Had this letter arrived just a few years later, at least in 1890, the letter would, perhaps, have received more attention. It was in 1890 that the first Russian engineers were sent to the Transvaal to study mining there, in order for it to be applied in the Urals and in Siberia. This reflected a growing interest in South African affairs on the part of Russia. But in 1886 the letter could have remained unnoticed. If somebody did pay attention to it and did report the matter to higher-ranking officials, we did not find any trace of such developments. If any thought was given to ways of using the letter against Russia's arch-rival – England, we did not find any follow-up, nor a response either to this letter, or the previous one, which was mentioned in our document.

### **A Distant Echo of Wars of the British against the Zulus and the Boers**

The wars between the Russians and the British did not go unnoticed in South Africa. In Russia, the wars of the British against the Zulus and the Boers that took place in the late 1870s – early 1880s, did not go unnoticed either. The first of these wars occurred in 1879, the second one, in 1880-1881. Both began with defeats of the British. In January 1879, the Zulus wiped out one of the British columns that invaded their country in the battle of Isandlwana. In 1880, the Boers defeated a British detachment in the battle of Majuba.

Both defeats caused such a shock in Britain that it resulted in the collapse of Disraeli's government. Their echoes were heard in Europe too.

The French, too, were in a state of shock, although not because of the defeats of the British. They were appalled by the death of the son of Napoleon III at the hands of the Zulus. They used to call him "The Imperial Prince", and Bonapartists dreamed of seeing him on the throne. He travelled to South Africa in search of military glory and joined one of the British detachments. Both Empress Eugenie, his mother and widow of Napoleon III, and Queen Victoria blessed him in this endeavour. However, a Zulu assegai put an end to the Napoleonic dynasty.

The Russian Embassy in London monitored these developments with close attention. Ambassador Count Shuvalov reported to Chancellor Gorchakov on 22 January (3 February) 1879: "For three years the British Government has been experiencing serious difficulties in South Africa. The 1877 annexation of the Transvaal did not improve the situation." With regard to the Anglo-Zulu war that was unfolding at the time Shuvalov wrote: "The outcome of the struggle leaves no doubt. The Zulus will be defeated, but victory will require blood and money... At the end of this campaign the conquered lands will be annexed and immediately placed under British control."<sup>14</sup>

Having learnt of the battle of Isandlwana, the ambassador described the reaction of the British public and government to it in a report dated 31 January/12 February 1879. He concluded that "defeats suffered by the British troops caused deep embarrassment".

While diplomatic correspondence focused mostly on England, its reaction to the war, and its soaring military expenditures, the Russian public became interested in Britain's opponents, the Zulus. After the battle of Isandlwana several Russian newspapers and magazines published descriptions of Zulus' everyday life, their military organisation and military skills.

By that time Russian readers already knew something of the Zulus. For instance, in 1828, a Moscow magazine, *Vestnik Evropy*, founded by Karamzin, published the following news: "From the Cape of Good Hope we are notified that as of August 3 the army of King Shaka was advancing against the Kaffirs<sup>15</sup> between the Umtala River<sup>16</sup> and the Washi River.<sup>17</sup> Colonel Somerset moved to the Kasi River (Kaisikamma)<sup>18</sup> to defend the border and to assist the Kaffirs."<sup>19</sup> In 1873 in St. Petersburg, a collection of tales of the Zulus and the Khoikhoi, who were called Hottentots at the time, was published.<sup>20</sup> However, the first detailed description of the Zulus appeared only after 1879.

An extensive essay titled *Cetewayo, the King of the Zulus, and his Possessions* was published in the largest Russian magazine *Niva* immediately after Isandlwana. Cetshwayo, one of Shaka's successors, entered the Russian language as Cetewayo. The article stated: "As an intelligent and sagacious ruler, he was always careful with his neighbour, whose might he understood well." The neighbour is England, which by then owned not only the Cape

Colony, but also an outpost, Natal, located right in the middle of Zulu territory. The article also stated that Cetshwayo did not provoke the war, and that the British started it. There was a photograph with the caption: "Cetewayo, the King of the Zulus, victorious against the British".<sup>21</sup>

A few months later the same magazine informed its readers that: "the Courageous chief Cetewayo, who many times valiantly repelled the British, has been captured... It now remains to bring him to Europe as an animal and for small newspapers to begin to mock his habits and eccentricities..."<sup>22</sup>

Three weeks later it stated: "The Kingdom of the Zulus has been destroyed and, as we have mentioned, the war is over. But did it contribute much to the glory of British arms and of Beaconsfield's policy? Unlikely. From the very beginning of the war in South Africa, there have been loud voices among the British themselves condemning the unjust invasion of Cetewayo's possessions."<sup>23</sup>

Similar information and assessments appeared in the *Golos* newspaper<sup>24</sup> and in some other Russian newspapers and magazines.

With regard to the victory of the Boers at Majuba and the subsequent Anglo-Transvaal negotiations, the Russian mission in London reported to St. Petersburg (18 February (2 March) and 14/26 March 1881) that "the annexation of the Transvaal was illegal and the consequence of a fraud" and that the demands of the Boers were "just". Russia's ruling circles were still furious about Britain's uncompromisingly anti-Russian position during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78. Despite this, the embassy noted in its report that: "Making broad concessions to the Boers, Mr. Gladstone acted wisely and fairly."

There is no doubt that the reason for the attention which the Russian authorities, press and public paid to these events, as well as their reaction to them was the result of their hostile and suspicious attitude towards the British. The two greatest empires, the Russian and the British, could not live together in peace, especially after the Crimean War. During the 1870s and 1880s, Anglo-Russian rivalry in the Central Asia peaked. Russian anglophobes greeted the difficulties that Britain faced in South Africa with joy, if not with malice. A lot was written in Russia about Britain's troubles in this distant land, inadvertently introducing the Russians to Britain's opponents there. The picture was, of course, distorted by political expediency, but it still reflected the realities of South Africa and informed readers about the events that were unfolding there.

### **Cape Town Greets the Son of the Russian Tsar**

Of all visits by Russians to the Cape Colony in the 1870s, one, the visit by the 22-year-old Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich attracted the greatest attention, both in Russia and in the Cape. The reason was not so much that

fact that he was the son of Emperor Alexander II (he was Alexander's third son, and therefore was not considered as heir apparent to the throne) but rather by a romantic story that followed him. It was said that the Grand Duke had either married, or was about to enter in a morganatic marriage with a girl who was not considered his match. Her name was Sasha Zhukovskaya. She was a maid of honour of Empress Maria Nikolaevna, Alexander's wife, and, alas, a daughter of just a poet – Russia's famous poet Zhukovsky. Alexander II sent his son on a voyage around the world for two or three years to let him think the matter over. The Grand Duke was followed by gossip everywhere he went, and in the Cape the gossip was fuelled by rumours that a mysterious Russian princess, rich but long out of favour, came to the Cape shortly before the royal visit and even went to see the diamond mines.<sup>25</sup>

Alexei arrived in Cape Town on 3 June 1872. The *Cape Argus* solemnly reported: "the long-awaited Russian imperial squadron with Grand Duke Alexei on board arrived in Table Bay".<sup>26</sup> Vice Admiral Posiet commanded the squadron. Twenty years earlier Posiet visited the Cape together with the writer Goncharov on board the frigate *Pallada*. Together, Posiet and Goncharov made a trip to the interior of the country, stayed in Cape Town and even visited prisons and met their inhabitants.

The Grand Duke was met with due pomp: the Cape parliament allocated special funds for his reception and even adopted a welcoming resolution.<sup>27</sup> He stayed in the colony for three weeks, and Cape newspapers were full of reports about the way he passed his time: a formal reception at the Government House, the success of a ball in his honour, his trips around the colony, a banquet on board the frigate *Svetlana*, his purchase of the best ostrich feathers, a "magnificent gift" from the Russian Empress that he gave to Lady Berkeley, wife of the Cape Governor-General, and another gift, of a malachite necklace, to one of the eminent ladies of Cape Town, this time from himself.<sup>28</sup>

The Grand Duke attracted the attention of the Cape public once again two years later on the way back from his voyage, coming from the East, this time as commander of the frigate *Svetlana*.<sup>29</sup> By that time his sister, the Grand Duchess Maria, had married Prince Alfred, the second son of Queen Victoria, and had become the Princess of Edinburgh. This was, of course, an important theme of high-society gossip, and who could better describe the new princess than her brother?

Both visits attracted the attention of the Cape public to Russia. The main impression was that of the luxury and pomposity that surrounded the life of the royal family.

And what about the Duke? Was he cured of love?

Love affairs or morganatic marriages of the royal family were not openly discussed at that time. Even after Grand Duke's death there was little reliable

information about this affair. General Alexander Mosolov, Chief of Staff of the Ministry of the Imperial Court, wrote in his memoirs: "Alexei Alexandrovich as a very young man was infatuated by the maid of honour Zhukovskaya, and, according to some rumours, married her secretly and had a son with her, who received the title Count Belevsky. However, according to the more recent opinions of members of the imperial family, the rumours about the marriage of Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich were false. He did not marry the maid of honour Zhukovskaya. She did not live long".<sup>30</sup> According to other sources, Zhukovskaya died only in 1893, and was even married to Dr. von Wohrmann.<sup>31</sup>

The Grand Duke was not out of favour for long. In January 1881 he was appointed member of the State Council. Alexander III, upon ascending to the throne in March 1881 after the assassination of Alexander II, forgave his beloved brother Alexei completely. In July the same year, Alexei Alexandrovich was appointed to head the Navy and the Naval Department. In January 1882, the Cape Town authorities received his commendation for the hospitality extended to the Russian warship *Kreiser*. He signed the commendation already as the General Admiral of the Russian Navy.<sup>32</sup> He had just turned 31 at the time.

Alexei Alexandrovich held this high position during the reign of his brother, Alexander III, and his nephew, Nicholas II. His naval career was propped up not only by his title, but also by that voyage around the world. The Duke, however, showed no talent in naval affairs. S. Yu. Witte wrote of him: "A man who never had any ideas of his own about statecraft and had no serious ideas in general. He was more inclined to lead a private comfortable life than the life of a statesman." In addition, he was "always under the influence of a particular lady with whom he lived at the time."<sup>33</sup>

Years later, during the Anglo-Boer War, when Alexei Alexandrovich was appointed Naval Minister, a publisher of the best informed Russian newspaper wrote: "The Naval Minister lives in Peterhof with his mistress and does nothing. As long as the Grand Duke is General Admiral, we shall not have any navy. Great Dukes do nothing, while ministers do everything "not to disturb the Great Dukes". Theft is colossal." Of course, no one would have dared to publish such sentiments, so this entry remained only in the publisher's diary. In the same year, 1900, the publisher foresaw the destruction of the Russian navy by the Japanese. "The Emperor hates the Japanese..." – he wrote. "Our navy is bad... The Japanese have a wonderful navy, and they can destroy us."<sup>34</sup> This in fact happened just a few years later during the Russo-Japanese War.

Alexei Alexandrovich's visits to Cape Town were doubtless recalled in 1904, when a huge Russian armada was sailing past the coast of South Africa to the Far East to fight the Japanese. After all, he was one of those who sent

thousands of Russian marines to their certain death. After the defeat of the Russian navy, he retired and, like many Russian aristocrats, left his luxurious palace in gloomy St. Petersburg and went to live out his days in cheerful Paris. However, he kept the rank of admiral until his death.

Fifteen years after Alexei Alexandrovich another Great Duke, Alexander Mihailovich, visited the city. He was married to Xenia Alexandrovna, the beloved sister of Nicholas II, and was influential in the Russian government, especially in naval affairs. In 1900, he was appointed Chairman of the Council of Merchant Shipping, and in 1909 was promoted to vice admiral. Just like his elder relative, he gained experience in maritime affairs during his trip round the world, which he made as a young officer on board the corvette *Rynda*. During this trip, in 1887, he visited the Cape of Good Hope. Many years later, in his old age, he shared some of his memories of the Cape. He wrote of the hardships of labourers on Boer farms, the arrogance of the British and the luxury of the clubs of British officers. He also recorded the words of Cecil Rhodes which were often repeated in Cape society. These were about the need to "think imperialistically."<sup>35</sup>

### An Artist's Sketches

The Russian reader got the idea of how South Africa and its inhabitants looked from the drawings which were made by those who visited this far-off land and which were then published in Russia. Alexei Vladimirovich Vysheslavtsov (1831-1888), a Russian artist, was the most renowned author of sketches of South African life. He stayed in South Africa for about three months – from mid-March to mid-June 1858. Upon his return, he published a book with three pictures of South African life as separate insets. He did not explain what was in the pictures but it was clear enough.

One presented different types of inhabitants of the Cape Colony. A fisherman, a sailor, a fishmonger, Cape Malays, a Khoi woman with a child on her back – at the time she would be called a Hottentot. All were in European dresses, although some were in rags and barefoot. The second picture depicted the Africans. They were drawn walking along a road near Cape Town at the foot of Table Mountain. One drags a bag, the other, obviously feeble, is leaning on a pikestaff. The third sketch depicted a Cape beach. Vysheslavtsov did not draw the rich white public. They were obviously the same as everywhere and therefore of no interest to him.

In his book Vysheslavtsov spoke of South Africa not as of a white outpost of civilization on the edge of the African continent, but as of a Babylonian mixture of peoples. "It seems like all the nations of the world have sent a sample of their nationality to Cape Town", he wrote. "There is an amazing diversity of colours in the streets; here – red Malay turbans, there crowds of

Kaffirs, strong people with dark copper faces, a Mozambican, a *pur-sang* Negro, a Hindu in his picturesque white coat, draped easily and gracefully. In addition, there are the British in all sorts of hats, for example in gray felt helmets with a sort of a fan, similar to white quilted samovars, or in a straw hat with a veil. Amidst Kaffirs, Negroes, British and Malays there are, occasionally, skippers and captains from merchant ships, soldiers in red uniform, and, finally, we, the inhabitants of Orel, Tambov, Tver..."<sup>36</sup>

### A Zulu Hero in Kazakh Folklore

In 1978, Apollon Davidson received a letter from Alma-Ata from Professor A. Derbisalín, a specialist in the history of the Kazakh literature.<sup>37</sup> Professor Derbisalín wrote that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the Kazakh bard Akylbai Kunanbaev had created an oral poetic song, "A Zulu". Derbisalín asked what sources could the bard have used for his poem.

The fact that such a song existed is amazing. In the nineteenth century, on the far outskirts of the Russian Empire beyond the Caspian Sea, in the Kazakh language – a folklore poem about a Zulu!

Professor Derbisalín suggested that the idea of the poem could have been adopted from a book or books in Russian because the Kazakhs had no written literature at the time. However, Russian 19<sup>th</sup> century literature does not contain much information about the Zulus either. We have already mentioned that in 1873 a book of translations of Zulu folklore was published in St. Petersburg<sup>38</sup>, and after the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 the Zulus were often mentioned in the press. But hardly any of these publications could have reached not just Kazakhstan but, moreover, the storyteller, Akylbai!

Could it be that a Zulu visited Russia or even Kazakhstan? Oddly enough, such a possibility cannot be completely ruled out. The evidence for this is the story of a Zulu named Mgnoka – if, of course, it had some real life basis. According to its author, L.D. Turner, who published it in the *Journal of Negro History*, a group of Zulus came from South Africa to the Sudan to help the Mahdists fight the British. In this they did not succeed, but they crossed the entire continent and came to Egypt. Then Mgnoka came to Germany, travelled to America, changed many professions, studied several languages and even published articles in American magazines<sup>39</sup>. But so far no information about the Zulus visiting Kazakhstan or Russia at that time has been found.

We asked A. Derbisalín to send us the text of the poem. It was recorded and published in 1924 in the Kazakh magazine *Sana*, which has long become a bibliographical rarity. From the text of the poem, it became clear what its source was. The poem is a paraphrase of Rider Haggard's novel *King Solomon's Mines*, first published in 1885 and soon translated into Russian. The

difference between the poem and the novel is that the Kazakh author turned the Zulu into the main hero – thus the title of the song.

What caused Akylbai's interest in the plot of the novel? The author died in 1904, so we can only guess. Possibly he saw a parallel between the Zulus and the Kazakhs: both fought against colonialism and both suffered defeat.

Illiterate Pondos and Xhosas heard about the Russians, while illiterate Kazakhs heard about the Zulus... This is perhaps the most surprising fact in the history of early contacts between Russia and South Africa and of Russians' and South Africans' views of one another.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pondo (AmaPondo) – a Xhosa-speaking people of South Africa. By the treaty of 1844, the British recognised that the Pondo territory extended from the Drakensberg Mountains to the coast of the Indian Ocean between the Umtata and Umzimkulu rivers. After the death, in 1867, of Faku, the most famous and powerful chief of the Pondo, they split, and the territory west of the Mzimvubu River fell under the rule of the "usurper" Ndamase, while the territory east of the river remained under the rule of the legitimate heir of Faku, Mgikela, who signed the letter that is reproduced here. (For more details about these events, see Davenport T.R. South Africa. *A Modern History*. London, 1991. Pp. 126-128).

<sup>2</sup> State Archives of the Russian Federation, fund 677, inventory 1, file 475, lists 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> We are grateful to Professor Christopher Saunders of the University of Cape Town, who helped us to decipher the text of the letter.

<sup>4</sup> AmaXebisi – a Xhosa-speaking group, closely related to the Pondo. They inhabit a small territory between the Mtamvuna and Mzimvubu rivers to the north of the Pondo (see footnote 1). Their northern border is the modern town of Kokstad. The Pondo believed that by their 1844 treaty with the British this territory was under their sovereignty. It was occupied by the British in 1886.

<sup>5</sup> Port St Johns – a harbour at the river mouth of the Mzimvubu River. British ships began to call on this port since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1878, the governor of the Cape Colony, Sir Henry Frere, declared Mgikela deposed and "bought" Port St Johns from Ndamase's son (see footnote 1). In response, Mgikela levied tribute on transit through his territory and with the assistance of local white merchants built a new harbour, Port Grosvenor, to create competition to Port St Johns. In 1885, Frere declared the entire coast of Pondoland a British protectorate.

<sup>6</sup> Mhlangaso (Umhlangaso) J.S. Faku – secretary of Mgikela, the supreme adviser and the Prime Minister of Pondoland, who was obviously a very well educated and far-sighted politician. The idea of levying tribute on transit caravans from the Cape Colony and of building Port Grosvenor (see footnote 5) was his, just like, apparently, the initiative to send letters to the Russian Tsar.

<sup>7</sup> Mgikela (1867-1888).

<sup>8</sup> The meaning of this letter in the text is unclear.

<sup>9</sup> The name is not clear.

<sup>10</sup> According to the text. Both the number of the Pondo and the mineral wealth of their country were greatly exaggerated.

<sup>11</sup> Mda Z. *The Heart of Redness*. Cape Town: OUP, 2000. P. 70.

<sup>12</sup> Odendaal, A. African Political Mobilisation in the Eastern Cape. PhD Thesis, Cambridge University, 1983.

<sup>13</sup> Wrangel A.V. From the Cape of Good Hope. Nautical Collection, 1859. № 1.

<sup>14</sup> Foreign policy archives of the Russian Empire, fund of the Chancellory, 1879, file 78, lists 48-50.

<sup>15</sup> The Xhosa were referred to as Kaffirs at the time.

<sup>16</sup> Most probably, Umtata River.

<sup>17</sup> Most probably, Bashi River. If so, it was the aforementioned Pondo that were to be subjected to this attack. The news item refers to one of many of Shaka Zulu's military campaigns, in the course of which he defeated and united many South African peoples. In 1828 he was killed by his relatives and subordinates. A book by E. Ritter, *Shaka Zulu*, offers a vivid description of his life. It is based on the oral tradition of the Zulus (Moscow, 1989 – the third Russian edition).

<sup>18</sup> Later this name was transcribed in Russian as Kitsikamma. More correct is Keiskamma. Somerset's advance to the river could not possibly have assisted the Xhosa in their war against the Zulus: the river is far to the west of the suggested area of invasion.

<sup>19</sup> *Vestnik Yevropy*, 1828. № 20. P. 310.

<sup>20</sup> *Fables and Tales of Savage Peoples*. St. Petersburg, 1873.

<sup>21</sup> Cetewayo, the King of the Zulus, and his possessions. *Niva*, 12 March 1879, № 11.

<sup>22</sup> Political review. *Niva*, 17 September 1879. № 38, p. 756.

<sup>23</sup> Political review. *Niva*, 8 October 1879. № 41, p. 816. See also *Niva*, 19 February, 9 April, 7 May, 21 May, 21 August, 8 October, 19 November 1879.

<sup>24</sup> *Golos*, 5/17, W26, 17/29 February 1879.

<sup>25</sup> *Standard and Mail*, Cape Town, 28 March 1872.

<sup>26</sup> *Cape Argus*, Cape Town, 4 July 1872.

<sup>27</sup> *Cape Argus*, 6 July 1872.

<sup>28</sup> *Cape Argus*, 6, 9, 11, 13, 16, 18, 20, 23, 25 July 1872; *Standard and Mail*, 4, 6, 9, 11, 18, 20, 13, 26 July 1872; State Archives of the Republic of South Africa. KAB. GH, Vol. 1/348, ref.77, part 1.

<sup>29</sup> *Cape Argus*, 22 January, 21, 25 April, 18 July 1874.

<sup>30</sup> Molosov A.A. At the Court of the Last Russian Emperor. Moscow: Ankor, 1993. P. 72-73.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 260.

<sup>32</sup> State Archives of the Republic of South Africa. KAB. GH, vol. 1/416, ref. 13.

<sup>33</sup> Witte S.Yu. Memoirs. Leningrad: State publishing house, 1924. Vol. 3, p. 253.

<sup>34</sup> Suvorin A.S. Diary. Moscow-Petrograd, 1923. P. 244.

<sup>35</sup> Great Duke Alexander Mikhailovich. *Books of Reminiscences*. Paris: Lev, 1933. P. 98.

<sup>36</sup> Vysheslavtsov A.B. *Pen and Pencil Sketches during the Circumnavigation in 1857, in 1858, in 1859 and in 1869*. St. Petersburg, 1862. P. 71-72.

<sup>37</sup> Letter from A. Derbisalín to A. Davidson, 20 October 1978.

<sup>38</sup> See footnote 17.

<sup>39</sup> Turner Lorenzo D. The Odyssey of a Zulu Warrior // *The Journal of Negro History*, July 1955. – Vol. XL. – №. 3.

## SYNOPSIS

*Nikolay Kosukhin*

### CONTEMPORARY AFRICA: METAMORPHOSES OF POLITICAL POWER

(Executive editor – Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) A.M. Vasiliev;  
Institute for African Studies of the RAS – Eastern Literature,  
Moscow, 2009, 494 p.)

The collective monograph offers an analysis of the features of the functioning and development of political power in Africa at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. It studies the political role of Islam, the prospects for democratisation of North African societies, the system of power relations in the countries of Tropical Africa, including the key issues of the conflict and crisis development of political mechanisms, as well as the tendencies of establishing transitional forms of power structures, the establishment of a federal political system (the experience of Nigeria), the evolution of party political systems, and the problem of African identity. The pressing issues of forming national relations and main directions of national policy in South Africa are also discussed in the monograph.

The monograph consists of three parts, which have the following titles. The part one is titled "North Africa: Power, Islam, Political Game". The first part covers the following topics: the politicisation of Islam, the Tunisian model: "democracy without Islamists", the Algerian model: "from civil war to guided democracy", the Moroccan model: "monarchy and Islam in a multi-party system", the Egyptian model: "democratisation in the context of the state of emergency".

The second part titled "Tropical Africa: power, crises, geopolitical institutions" is dedicated to the conflict and crisis development of power relations, parliamentarism as a form of political modernisation, evolution of party political systems, establishment of the Nigerian political system, Islamic factor in politics, issues of African identity and nationalism, formation of transitional forms of power organisation, and socio-political preconditions for the collapse of autocratic despotism. The third part titled "South Africa: power, dismantling of the apartheid, new political guidelines" is devoted to national policy and national relations in South Africa after 1994.