

HERITAGE

STABILITY AND VULNERABILITY: SOGA'S 1866 MAP

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This map of the trans-Kei lands of south eastern Africa in 1866 was created by the Reverend Tiyo Soga to accompany his 1866 report to the Foreign Committee of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

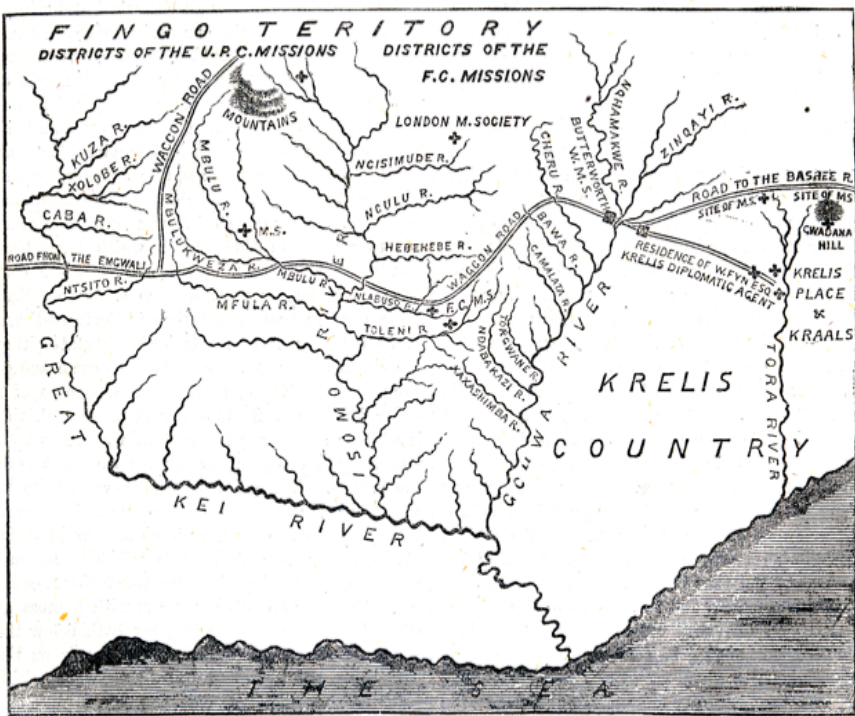


Fig. 7-1. Map by Soga of the land between the Kei and Tora Rivers
Source: Missionary Record of the UPC. New Series, 1 (1867), 234.

The map details Soga's journeys with his colleague from the Free Church of Scotland, the Reverend Richard Ross, in search of sites for four potential mission stations with the amaMfengu (Fingo) and the amaGcaleka Xhosa. Although excerpts of Soga's report and this map, produced on a printing press,¹ were published in January 1867 in the church journal, the *Missionary Record of the United Presbyterian Church*,² when Williams collected Soga's works for his *Journal and Collected Works of Reverend Tiyo Soga*,³ he omitted this map and it has not been reprinted since 1867. The primary objective of the map is its invitation to other missionaries and the two missionary societies to work with these two groups of people. The map signifies at once that the land is open to, and available for, these new influences, and settled and occupied by established communities.

Soga's map is unique because he depicts lands to the east of the Kei River. He has clear representations of natural topography with rivers, mountains and the coastline labelled, and roads and mission stations placed neatly upon them. Maps of this region made during the 19th century typically portray the area between Cape Town and the Fish River, very occasionally the Keiskamma or Bashee Rivers, and very seldom proceed all the way to the Kei River. None of these maps provides topographical detail inland from the coast between the Fish River and southern Natal. No other cartographer knew the area well enough to transcribe it. The topography of the region with its undulating rivers, ridges, and ravines, kloofs, forests and mountain passes, is said to have confounded British military attempts to annex it from both the colonial frontier and the ocean, costing the lives of thousands of British soldiers and settlers. Soga's map decentralises the Kei River at the heart of these travails, highlighting instead one of the Kei tributaries, the Tsomo, which runs in a straight line from north to south as a natural bound-

¹The labels have been typeset. Soga had access to a printing press at Lovedale College, but I believe it was retouched in Edinburgh, because the "T" in "Tsomo" is given as an "I," so that its label reads "Isomo," a mistake unlikely to have passed a Xhosa editor. "Tsomo" is spelt correctly in the report but the title "Fingo Territory" is missing one "r."

²*Missionary Record of the United Presbyterian Church* New Series. 1 (1867): 234.

³Tiyo Soga, *The Journal and Selected Writings of The Reverend Tiyo Soga*; edited by Donovan Williams (Cape Town: Balkema, for Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1983), 116-118. Graham's Town Series: 7.

ary between the Fingo and the amaGcaleka Xhosa peoples, for whom missionaries are required.

Soga's ability as a cartographer must be added to the list of his many talents, but Soga's map is also deeply significant because it reveals the particularity of his perspective. Soga's gaze is not bound to the ocean, as is the gaze of the colonists. He does not survey this land from the coastline northwards; his perspective is based very much on terra firma, on mountains, rivers and plains. Soga subtly demarcates the Kei River as the western front of his landscape, not an eastern frontier, affirming lands in African control, and African knowledge of this area. Soga also affirms African ownership of this land through his use of the titles "Fingo Territory" and "Kreli's Country" and subtitles "Districts of the UPC Missions" and "Districts of the Free Church Missions." Soga asserts through his adept knowledge of the landscape that Africans were completely at home in this area, indeed, as West argues, that "before European greed gazed upon the mineral wealth of the interior, the interior was firmly and fully in the control of indigenous African peoples."⁴ Similarly, Soga titled one of his articles for *Iindaba* written in Xhosa "Emlungwini pakati"—"Into the European Interior,"⁵ again asserting the centrality of Xhosa lands and the periphery of lands occupied by colonial settlers. It is my contention that Soga's reversal of the colonial depiction of African lands as peripheral and the colonial metropolis as central is oppositional, to the point of being anti-colonial.

However, although Soga's map shows the area as accommodating and available for settlement, and asserts the precise positions of both the Fingo and amaGcaleka people in 1866, it also reveals their vulnerability to colonial relocation. Soga labels the mission station at the top of the map simply "London Missionary Society," disguising the fact that this station had had four names—Bushman's Station, Freemanton, Freemantle and the Mount Arthur Glen Grey station—as successive mission communities had been forcibly removed by the colonial government. In March 1865, only the previous year, Soga had written that "The Gaika *cannot* move beyond the Kei" (emphasis in original), for three reasons, most notably that a war would

⁴Gerald O. West, *The Stolen Bible: From Tool of Imperialism to African Icon* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 3.

⁵*Iindaba* 1, 9 (April 1863): 133-136; and Soga, *Journal and Selected Writings*, 163-167.

break out if this were to occur.⁶ The amaNgqika, to whom Soga referred as “the Gaika,” were not relocated during Soga’s lifetime because Suthu, Ngqika’s Great Widow and mother of the Chief Sandile, had negotiated with the colonial authorities in her capacity as co-Regent whilst her son was a child not to have her people moved from their ancestral lands around the Amathole mountains. The Mfengu had been granted land as reward for their loyalty to the British colony and Soga’s depiction of their location in this map and his description of the populations is congruent with his need to keep communities safe from the threatened “extinction” he had argued against in the press.⁷ In his call to missionaries to minister to the Mfengu and amaGcaleka, Soga’s positioning of them seems to legitimate the areas in which they were living, so giving them a virtual claim to the land.

⁶Tiyo Soga, “The Question of the Removal of the Gaika Tribes across the Kei,” in *Journal and Selected Writings*, edited by Donovan Williams (Cape Town: Balkema Press, 1983), 16; and Tiyo Soga, Handwritten Manuscript Journal, Howard Pim Library, University of Fort Hare, F001256308; 12.

⁷Soga’s colleague, Reverend John Aitken Chalmers, had predicted that the amaXhosa would suffer “extinction” if they did not all convert to Christianity in his published letter: “Recreations of a Missionary: What is the Destiny of the Kaffir Race?” *Iindaba* (3 April 1865). “Extinction” at that time meant forced removal and/or mass murder akin to genocide. See Roger S. Levine, *A Living Man from Africa: Jan Tzatzoe, Xhosa Chief and Missionary, and the Making of Nineteenth-Century South Africa* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2013), 130 and 243-244, footnote 12. Soga refuted this in a letter published as “What is the Destiny of the Kaffir Race?” in the *King William’s Town Gazette and Kaffrarian Banner* (11 May 1865). For more discussion, see Joanne Davis *Tiyo Soga: A Literary History* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2018) 98-103. For the letters see the same work, pages 335-343, and Soga, *Journal and Selected Writings*, 178-182.

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