

A Preliminary Solution to the Indigenous Issues in South Africa Colony

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Abstract

South Africa is an important colony in the colonial territory of the British Empire. In the process of British colonization, the nonstandard management and unconstrained colonial behavior caused considerable troubles and injuries to the indigenous people. Evangelical Thomas Fowell Buxton and missionary John Phillips contributed to solving the local indigenous problems. The indigenous problems in Cape colony promoted the establishment of the select committee on Aborigines (British settlements), which gave relevant suggestions to solve the indigenous problems in South Africa, and to some extent eased the contradiction between colonists and indigenous people.

Keywords: Cape Colony, indigenous issues, Thomas Fowell Buxton, John Philips

1. Indigenous Issues in South African Colonies

The problem of indigenous people in South Africa began in 1652, when the Netherlands established a colony in Cape. Conflicts often occur between colonists and aborigines, which are mainly caused by the colonists' looting of livestock and the different attitudes of both sides towards land. Hottentots, Bushmen, Bantu and Xhosa people in South Africa believe that land is for everyone's use. People use land together to grow crops and use public pastures to raise livestock. Dutch and British colonists believed that land could be used as private property, and adult men should own their own land, allowing the sale and transfer of land. It is the most precious property of the Xhosa people, an important standard to measure personal wealth, an important means of livelihood to provide milk and meat, and an important material to be used for financial gifts and ancestor worship. Cattle breeding depends on good pasture. When the colonists first arrived, they urgently needed the means of subsistence, so they occupied the land and robbed the cattle.

Jan Van Riebeck recorded in his diary: "December 13th, 1652: Today, Hottentots came to our fort with thousands of cattle and sheep ... We saw so many first-class cattle, but we couldn't buy much, which was really annoying." He further wrote in his diary that he hoped that he could get permission to take 150 people and seize 10,000 or 11,000 cows from Hottentots by force. Five days later, Van Riebeck expressed his views again, although he repeatedly admitted that the aborigines were capable and kind and harmless. Soon after, a system of confiscating livestock and enslaving Hottentots was in full swing. One acre of land acquisition has become a common occurrence. Since then, the relationship between the aborigines and Europeans has never been harmonious with the settlers in the Cape of Good Hope. (Nziramanga, C. T., 1973) There were three large-scale wars between Dutch colonists and aborigines.

On October 31st, 1801, William Stephanus Van Ryneveld, the chancellor of the exchequer of the British government in charge of judicial work in Cape Town, reported to British Major General Francis Dundas that the population of Hottentots had decreased due to tribal wars and constant fighting with Dutch farmers. A year later, Jacob Abraham de Mist, a member of the Dutch Council of Asian Territories, submitted a memorandum about Cape to the British government. In the memorandum, he said that the settlers were cruel to the aborigines, so the hostility between them and the settlers was increasing. He called for the protection of indigenous people and asked, "What are the reasons for these poor animals to be persecuted? Since the establishment of the colony, the servants of the company have abused them."

In 1806, the British colonists occupied this place. The colonists thought that the Xhosa people stole cattle from

the settlers and expelled the Xhosa people. This led to the fourth border war: in 1812, the British took over Zuurveld. In 1819, the British decided to establish a neutral zone between Xhosa and white farmers. They ordered everyone living between the Fish River and the Keskama River to leave the area, including Ngqika, the chief of Xhosa, who was forced by the situation to move. His sons, Maqoma and Tyhali, were very angry about his father's migration without fighting. Kuma and his followers moved to the fertile Carter Valley. In this year, the colonists took as many as 52,000 cows from the aborigines. (Bruce, D., 2014) In 1820, the British colonists established a relatively fixed eastern Cape border. In 1829, the British brought the Hoyaloi and slaves liberated from Cape Province to the Carter Valley, forming a buffer zone between Xhosa and the settler farm. They forced Makuma to leave his land. In 1834, Kumar and Tehali launched the Sixth Border War. Kumar fought a very successful guerrilla war in the forests and valleys along the Fish River, and the British suffered heavy losses. After the war, the community of the Xhosa people was destroyed by the British invading forces, their crops were destroyed and they were also plagued by locusts. (Lester, A., 1998)

2. Thomas Fowell Buxton's Concern for Indigenous Issues

Buxton's attention and understanding of the Cape area mainly comes from John Philip, the pastor of the Cape colony London Missionary Association. John Phillips went to South Africa from 1819 as the chairman of the local London Missionaries Association. In 1820, he was also the pastor of Cape Town Congregation in South Africa. In Cape, indigenous khoikhoi, together with many mixed-race people, constitute the Cape colored people, who have almost no civil rights. On September 21st, 1821, when Philip visited Bethelsdorp, a city in South Africa, he found a letter that could prove that the colonial administrator did not give the khoikhoi freedom according to law when Sir Rufane Donkin was governor of Cape Town. On November 6th, 1821, Philip's friend and Sir Brenton, the commander of Simondown, sailed to England. They used Philip's investigation results to win the establishment of a committee to investigate the colonial situation in Britain. In 1822, Philip visited England and arranged a meeting between Buxton and Wilberforce. Since then, Buxton has had frequent contact with the colonial office. (Lester, A., 2008) Investigators J. T. Bigger (Chief Justice of Trinidad) and W.M.G. Colebrook (an Indian officer who later served as a series of governors of West Indies) were sent to investigate the colonial policies of Cape, Mauritius and Ceylon. (Lester, A., 2008) On July 25th, 1822, the British government set up an investigation committee. In 1824, Buxton examined the reports of these commissioners to obtain useful information about the Kosa people. In 1826, Philip returned to England with his family, made use of all available means and political influence to legislate for equality of khoikhoi, and wrote *Studies of South Africa*. In 1827, Thomas Fowell Buxton lobbied the colonial minister George Murray to urge the imperial government to rescue the khoikhoi Iraqis and give them equal legal status with white settlers. In April, 1828, *South African Studies* was published. The description of the violent plunder of the Xhosa people in this book caused great sensation in Cape Town and England. During the controversy of this book, Buxton formally raised the issue of the Xhosa people in parliament. (Lester, A., 2008) Buxton believed that the government should give freedom to the Xhosa people, and this proposal was passed in the House of Commons. Philip spoke highly of the adoption of this proposal, and thought it would have a great influence on improving the living conditions of people of color all over the world.

In this situation, in 1828, Sir Richard Burke passed the Act on Improving the Situation of Colored People in Hottentots and Other Free Cape (Note 1). The legislation abolished the passport law, exempted the Xhosa people from apprenticeship requirements, explicitly recognized their right to own land, and declared that all free people of Hottentots and other colored people have the right to enjoy all the rights enjoyed by British subjects. In January, 1829, the Ministry of Colony approved this decree and prohibited any future modification by any colonial authority. However, this decree was not universally recognized in Cape Town and angered the Boers. The colonists' activities in the Kate River Basin aroused Buxton's strong concern. He kept a lot of correspondence with Philip, Cape settlers, Thomas Pringle of the Anti-Slavery Association and James Read of the London Metal Exchange. (Lester, A., 2008) The correspondence reflects that the territory of Xhosa people and Zulus people are often abused and robbed by British colonists because they are adjacent to the eastern border of Cape colony. The colonists rob their cattle, and African herders are accused of theft with little evidence. The Xhosa people retaliated against the colonists. After the colonists robbed the Africans of their livestock, the settlers didn't know clearly, because of the violent attacks of the settlers over the years, frequent cattle stealing incidents and intermittent full-scale wars. (Laidlaw, Z., 2004) Buxton is indignant at the personal persecution and property deprivation suffered by the indigenous people. He thinks that the members of the South African commando team should be responsible for this situation, and Britain should compensate the indigenous people in a civilized way. (Laidlaw, Z., 2004) He began to visit the Colonial Office regularly. (Note 2), constantly raise indigenous issues, openly expose colonial plunder, and strive to increase colonial ministers and staff's

understanding of the actual situation. (Laidlaw, Z., 2004) In December 1833, he wrote to Thomas pringle, a colonizer in southern Africa, about the report of the Cape Town colony on the "commando system". The colonists used this system to attack the small mistakes of the indigenous people and plunder their cattle or property far exceeding the original requirements of the colonists. He asked pringle and Cape Town Minister john philip, who disagreed, to clarify and provide evidence. (Follett, R. R., 2008)

3. Recommendations of the Special Committee on Indigenous Issues

On January 17th, 1834, buxton wrote a letter to pastor Philip of Cape Town colony, which said, "I noticed the barbarism of our country towards the indigenous people in the occupied country. As Christians, we usurped their land, kidnapped, enslaved and murdered them. I am ashamed of such Christians. My purpose is to investigate the past order of the colonies and formulate rules and laws for the reasonable treatment of the indigenous people in the settlements according to the principle of justice. Spread the true faith of Christians to uncivilized countries. Make up for the harm to indigenous people as much as possible, and balance the conflict between preserving indigenous culture and spreading advanced culture. " (Buxton, C., 2010) On July 1st, 1834, he made a motion to the king, in which he detailed his dissatisfaction with the South African commando system. The colonists once invaded Kavran [Caffreland] by armed forces; After plundering the barbarians' land, they usually return home triumphantly with plenty of spoils. (Buxton, C., 2010) He pointed out that the British spread spirits and firearms in the colonies, which made many indigenous people wander on the brink of extinction. He called on Parliament to pay attention to indigenous issues and investigate the actual living conditions of indigenous people in British settlements. His proposal was supported by the colonial minister Thomas Spring-Rice. (Nziramanga, C. T., 1973) On July 19th, 1834, the British government sent a notice to all colonial governors, asking for new information about indigenous people, and instructing colonial governors to ensure that indigenous people get their fair rights and ensure their personal and property safety, so as to promote the spread of civilization among countries. After the instructions were put forward, the evidence provided by colonial officials was continuously sent back to Britain. (Nziramanga, C. T., 1973) On September 30th, 1834, he wrote back to his good friend Thomas Spring Rice, the colonial minister, claiming that he hoped Philip could provide him with more empirical evidence about the actual situation of the colony and the commandos' behavior, indicating that he would do his best to correct their behavior as long as he was still there. (Buxton, C., 2010) At the same time, we wrote to Philip to discuss how to better safeguard the interests of both sides under the inevitable situation of spreading modern civilization.

In May, 1835, when the Sixth Border War ended, Cape colonial government annexed about 7,000 square miles of land in Queen Adelaide province. This incident caused a strong conflict between colonialists and humanitarians. Evangelicals and humanitarians want to fight for the right of Xhosa people to own their own land, which is contrary to the purpose of British colonial expansion. Buxton and other humanitarians think that it is urgent to take appropriate measures to manage the colonies.

At the parliamentary meeting on July 14th, 1835, Buxton put forward the same motion again, which was seconded by Sir George Grey, deputy secretary general of the colonies, and explicitly proposed the establishment of a special committee for the indigenous people of British colonies. On July 15th, 1835, the Special Committee of Colonies and Indigenous Peoples, whose core is to investigate the race relations between British settlers and local indigenous tribes and the welfare and justice of British colonial indigenous peoples, appeared. (Ball, W., Chambers, A., & Row, P., 1838) The Indigenous Committee is authorized to send staff to look for relevant witnesses, evidence and files, and the Committee must regularly report the summary of the collected evidence to Parliament and give feedback. The quorum of the committee is five people, located in London, and there is no need to visit colonial settlements. Therefore, the Committee only collected evidence from colonial offices, colonial officials in London and other colonies. The aborigines and their chiefs have no direct way to express their opinions. Missionaries or some concerned settlers become their spokespersons. (Ball, W., Chambers, A., & Row, P., 1838) During the first activity period of the committee (July 31st, 1835 to August 31st, 1835), the committee focused on the indigenous issues in South Africa, and members of the committee talked with Captain Robert Scott Acheson and interviewed witnesses who came to England. (Ball, W., Chambers, A., & Row, P., 1838) After the conference, Adelaide was returned to the Kaffir people, and this action better calmed the anger of the indigenous people in South Africa.

After the third term of office, the Committee put forward other suggestions on the management of colonies in South Africa: the specific contents include the establishment of a treaty which is known and recognized by both sides to delimit colonial boundaries, and separate treaties between Britain and local tribal leaders to clarify the distribution scope, responsibility degree of both sides and the nature of the relationship with the British government. Both sides adhere to the attitude of mutual cooperation. Any behavior that damages the personal

and property of Kaffir people will be punished by the King of England. It is stipulated that Kaffir people can move east of Dayu River. Hottentots and Christian missionaries who were placed in the ceded territory in the early days of the settler war were not bound by this rule. (Note 3) Some actions of kral people and Kaffir people before the signing of the treaty will no longer be compulsorily held accountable. If there is enough evidence to prove theft, the chiefs must return the robbed livestock and stay to investigate the perpetrators, or collectively compensate for the losses, and the expenses shall be borne by the tribe. The sheikh cannot retaliate against the settlers, and it is feasible for the sheikh to sign securities or pledge; Commodity exchange markets should be re-established at suitable places along the border.

These suggestions provide practical rules for alleviating the indigenous problems in South Africa and establishing a good colonial management order. The provisions on the living boundary of indigenous people have reduced the occurrence of border conflicts. The phenomenon of livestock plundering was well suppressed, and the development of commodity trading in indigenous society was promoted. The British colonial managers also communicated with the leaders of indigenous tribes in South Africa, and the clear relationship between the two sides' responsibilities and rights was conducive to maintaining a harmonious relationship.

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Notes

Note 1. (Referred to as the No.50 Act for short), which gave the South African khoikhoi and colored people land ownership.

Note 2. The colonial office was originally attached to the Ministry of the Interior and the Trade Commission. It was not until 1825 that the colonial office assumed the main responsibility of managing the British colonies. The colonial office consists of five departments: North America, West India, Australia, Africa and Mediterranean. In 1843, a miscellaneous department was added.

Note 3. REPORT FROM THE SELECT COMMITTEE ABORIGINES (BRITISH SETTLEMENTS); With the minutes of evidence, appendix and index. ordered, by the house of commons, to be printed, 26 June 1837. page 425.

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