1 SOCIAL SCIENCES: History

2 Grade 7

3 THE MFECANE MOVES BOUNDARIES

4 Module 1

5 WHAT IS MFECANE?

6 A. Where do all the people who live in South Africa come from?

As with any other country, South Africa’s population continually changes. People move in and out of the country and also move about inside the country itself. We call this movement of people migration. The movement of people to a country is called immigration, and if they move out of a country, it is called emigration. There are several reasons why people migrate.

The Khoi have lived in South Africa for the past 10 000 years.

During the Iron Age, about 2 000 years ago, black people also settled in the subcontinent. In 1652, Jan van Riebeeck founded the first white settlement. Thereafter, immigrants from France, Germany and Britain settled here.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, Khoi groups, and later also Griquas, migrated to the interior away from the increasing number of white people settling on the available land. Some of the greatest migrations were, however, the MFECANE (module 1) and the GREAT TREK (module 1). These migrations had important consequences.

7 WHAT IS THE MFECANE?

Between approximately 1815 and 1830, different black groups clashed with one other. This caused a chain reaction and led to further confrontations and wars. Many herds of livestock and supplies of grain were destroyed – with accompanying hardship and suffering. There were ruins everywhere. Thousands of refugees fled in all directions. Those who took cover in the bushes and mountains had to live as hunter-gatherers. Many died of hunger, or were killed by wild animals. These wars of destruction took place all over the subcontinent from the Eastern Cape frontier in the south, to Lake Victoria (in Tanzania) in the north.

The NGUNI PEOPLE (e.g. ZULUS) call this upheaval the Mfecane – which means “to crush”.

The SOTHO PEOPLE (e.g. SOTHOS) call it the Difaqane – which means “forced removal”.

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1. Sources on the Mfecane

For historians who always search for the truth, the Mfecane will remain an incomplete puzzle, because many misunderstandings and very little information exist. There are two particular reasons for this:

The written documents which do exist were mostly written by white travellers, missionaries and officials. These people were, however, not always well informed, not always well informed about exactly what had happened, since the events took place over such a widespread area. Therefore, the sources are not always reliable.

Other sources on the Mfecane are oral sources which are not as reliable as written and visual sources.

Figure 1

SOURCE A
SOURCE B
Oral sources about the Mfecane were not always as reliable as written and visual sources.

8 Activity 1:
9 Distinguish between facts and opinions in sources on the Mfecane
10 [LO 2.3]

The following examples will help you to identify some misunderstandings and to recognise them when you are doing your historical research.

a) What is the misunderstanding in source B?
b) What problem do you think this could lead to?
c) Do you think misunderstandings like this can be avoided? How?
d) Why are oral sources not always reliable? Source A.
e) What are the similarities between the sources?
f) Sketch two examples of misunderstandings that occur in our country. Write captions for your sketches. In 1830 the interior of South Africa appeared as follows. Subsequently we are going to look at how the empires came into being.
11 2. What caused the Mfecane?

When there are few documents and little evidence it is very difficult to reconstruct historical events and even more difficult to understand and explain them. Historians have therefore different views, sometimes called theories or explanations for such events.

As you have now discovered, it is difficult to describe the Mfecane. Some historians see the Mfecane as caused by events, mainly:
• as struggle for power, especially in KwaZulu-Natal;
• competition for trade;
• the influence of the environment.

Therefore, we are going to investigate what reliable information does exist about the Mfecane to support this explanation.

1. The struggle for power in kwaZulu-Natal

The constant warfare and changes that occurred in the last half of the eighteenth century led to the rise of new, powerful chiefdoms. In the area north of the Thukela, three kingdoms began to emerge. In the south the Qwabe had taken control over a large area by 1813. To the north the Ndwande became the most powerful group under the leadership of Zwide.

12 Activity 2:

13 To be aware of the different views of the causes of the Mfecane

14 [LO 2.3]

Read the accompanying article, and explain why the Sotho people compulsory referred the events as De-faqane - relocation.

SOURCE

The Mthethwa occupied the central position between these two powerful kingdoms.

Each of these kingdoms swallowed its smaller neighbours to increase its own power.

The Mthethwa under Dingiswayo began to expand politically and commercially, which enabled them to control the entire coastal lowlands and the trade with Delagoa Bay. Dingiswayo also spread his power inland, up the White Mfolozi River, between the Qwabe in the south and the Ndwande to the north. Chiefdoms such as the Zulu of Senzangakhona and the Buthelezi and Khumalo were conquered. Turning northwards, Dingiswayo defeated the Ngwane. The only remaining power that did not submit to Dingiswayo was Zwide and his Ndwandwe. The rulers who were conquered were left in control of their chiefdoms but were subject to the Mthethwa kingdom.

Eventually war between the Mthethwa and the Ndwande broken out in 1817. The attacking Mthethwa army was driven south after Dingiswayo was captured and put to death. The confusion among the Mthethwa opened the way for a new and even more powerful leader – Shaka.

Shaka joined the tribe of Dingiswayo as a young man. He quickly became well known because of this abilities as a natural leader and his bravery. Out of gratitude for his services, Dingiswayo made him chief of the Zulu tribe, although Shaka would not normally have become a chief.

Dingiswayo’s death provided Shaka with the opportunity to seize power. There were, however, two serious threats to this power: the possibility that the Mthethwa would disintegrate, and the military power and confidence of Zwide.

Shaka showed exceptional political skills in getting the support of the Mthethwa royal family and went on to defeat and replace those in the royal families and chiefdoms who opposed to his rule. He took control of all the people north of the Thukela. Only Ndwande remained independent.

Thousands of refugees fled as Shaka expanded his territory and power through wars – this caused a chain reaction of plundering and chaos as the refugees entered the land of other tribes. The rise of Shaka thus contributed to the Mfecane.

15 B. Competition for trade

Financial considerations probably caused the forced removal that took place. Here are four examples:
(a) The British government needed labourers, especially after the arrival of the British settlers in 1829.
(b) In the area beyond the Orange River, groups like the Griquas and the Taung were guilty of slave trading.
(c) The Portuguese government in Delagoa Bay also traded in slaves. Black people had to leave their homes and flee to avoid being captured as slaves. This brought about unrest, conflict and destruction amongst them.
(d) There was also great competition for the trade in ivory, where stronger groups attacked smaller groups in order to get the most ivory. Trading nations in competition for slaves

Thousands of people move to our cities each year. Why?

16 C. Influence of the environment

Another possible cause of the Mfecane was, of course, the influence which the environment had on people and events. Good rains result in good crops.
During droughts, only a little rain fell, crops were poor and many people moved to areas where there was better rainfall.
Sometimes, farmers fought each other in order to obtain the best fertile lands for their crops.
Study the rainfall map and choose the correct answer between brackets:

a) Cattle farmers found the (western; eastern; northern) part of the country agreeable because of the high rainfall and the good grasslands.

b) In the dry areas, they usually farmed (crops; cattle; sheep and goats) due to a shortage of water.
17 Activity 2:
18 To present the causes and the consequences of the Mfecane
19 [LO 2.2]

The latest RESEARCH proves that Mfecane was a complicated “puzzle” of INTERWOVEN causes and consequences:

![Figure 6](http://cnx.org/content/m23197/1.1/)

- The first part of the puzzle indicates two causes of the Mfecane. What were the results of this?
- What is your definition of the Mfecane?

20 Assessment

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<th>LEARNING OUTCOME 2: HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING – The learner will be able to demonstrate historical knowledge and understanding</th>
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<td>2.1 Understand chronology and time</td>
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<td>2.2 Supply reasons why an historical event took place (causes, effects)</td>
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<td>2.3 Differentiate between different periods (similarities, differences)</td>
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Table 1