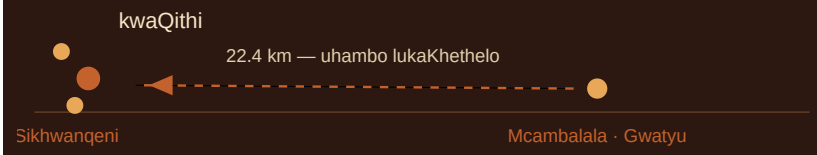
UPHANDO LWAMAQITHI · AMAQITHI RESEARCH

Sasilapha.

The amaQithi in Glen Grey, and Sihlwengu in the council of Maphasa



“Inkomo ayizali, izala ngozaliswa.”

This document sets out the amaQithi claim to the Bolotwa country of Glen Grey: that we entered it with the men of Maphasa and Gungubele, and that our ancestor Sihlwengu sat in that chief’s council.

QITHI.CO.ZA · AYABONGA QWABI · AUGUST 2026

IBANGO · THE CLAIM

We were in Gungubele’s chieftainship

AmaQithi did not wander into the Bolotwa country by accident. We came into it the way everyone else in that country came into it — behind the councillors who carried a dead chief’s son into the mountains and rebuilt a nation there.

IBANGO LETHU · WHAT WE CLAIM

1. AmaQithi were present in the chieftainship of Gungubele, son of Maphasa.
2. We entered the Bolotwa country of Glen Grey with Maphasa’s men, after 1853 — not before.
3. Sihlwengu, our ancestor, was one of Maphasa’s councillors. Gungubele’s councillors were his father’s councillors, and Sihlwengu led a following of his own in that same location.

Ayabonga Qwabi, on behalf of the houses of kwaQithi

Ukulungiswa · A correction that matters

It is often written that the Gwatyu and the Bolotwa were Maphasa’s country. They were not. Cathcart’s own description of the land he seized in November 1852 puts Maphasa’s territory a long way west of here: an extensive tract running from the Great Kei west to the Klipplaat, with the Windvogelberg in the middle. That is the Whittlesea and Cathcart country. Maphasa’s great place became a Dutch farm — Bouwer’s farm, the one Gungubele later tried to buy back and could not.

The Bolotwa country is where the survivors went *afterwards*. Hemming, the magistrate who destroyed them, wrote it plainly in 1878: after the forfeiture, Maphasa’s councillors withdrew into the broken country at the junction of the White and Swart Kei, taking with them Maphasa’s son, a boy of about twelve. From there the scattered remnants came back together and filled the country between the Swart Kei and the mountains running from Braam Nek to the White Kei. Later they pushed north as far as the Bolotwa River.

> **This is the whole argument in one sentence.** The amaQithi villages sit inside the country the amaTshatshu built *after* 1853, not the country they lost *before* it — which is exactly why our presence there is evidence of who we travelled with.

30.6

km from the Kei junction, where the boy chief was hidden, to Gungubele's great place on the Gwatyu

1.4

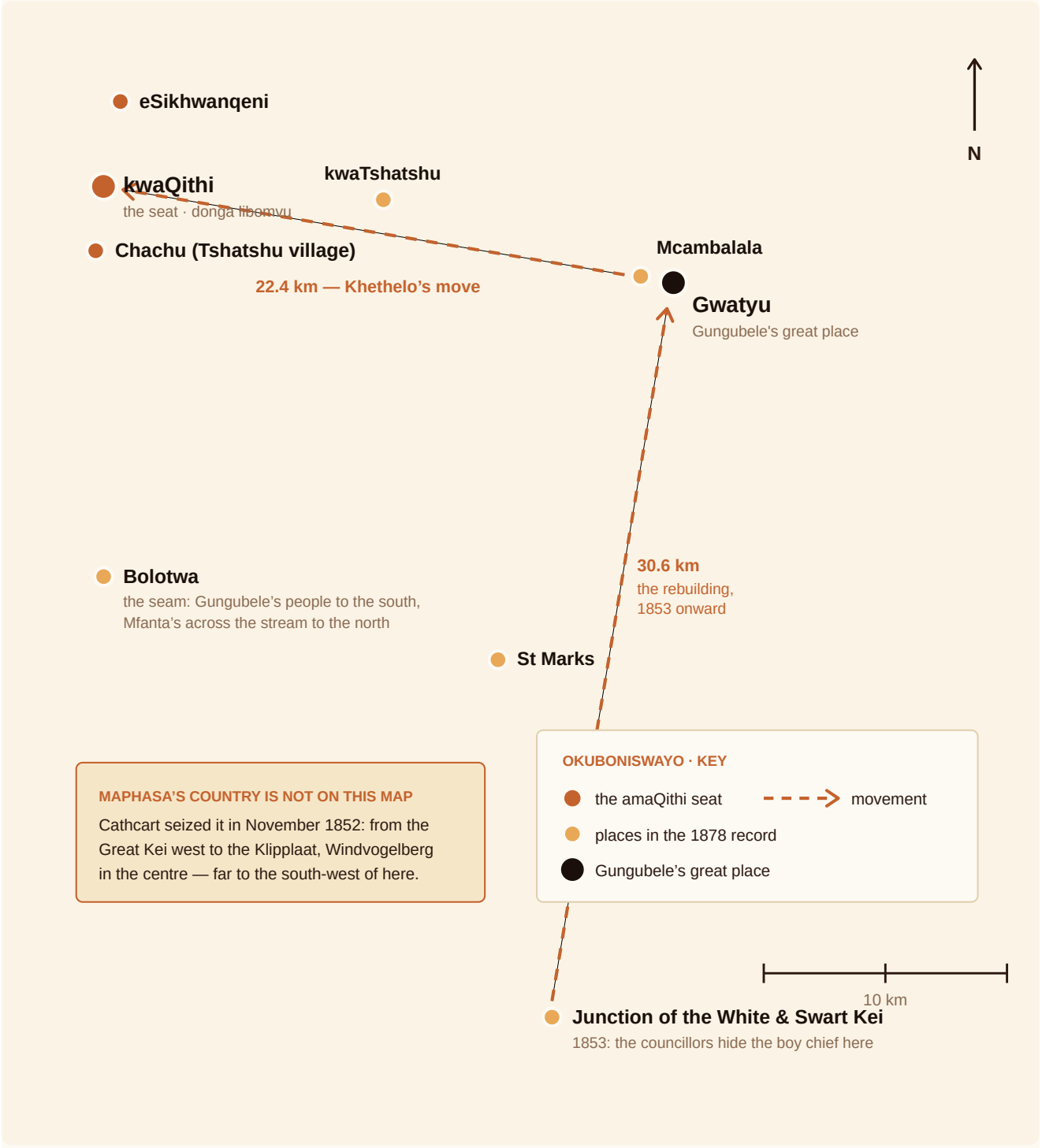
km from Mcambalala, where Khethelo lived, to that same great place

22.4

km due west from Mcambalala to kwaQithi — Khethelo's move, the expansion in miniature

UMHLABA · THE GROUND

One country, forty kilometres long



Iindawo zamaQithi nezamaTshatshu, zibekwe ngokwe-coordinates. The amaQithi seat — eSikhwanqeni, kwaQithi and Chachu — runs six kilometres north to south along almost one meridian. Gungubele's great place on the Gwatyu lies 23.8 km east of kwaQithi, with Mcambalala 1.4 km beside it. The dashed arrows are the two movements this document argues from: the rebuilding northward out of the Kei junction after 1853, and Khethelo's move west into the Bolotwa country.

IXESHA · THE SEQUENCE

How the Tshatshu came to the Bolotwa

A clan already living at the Bolotwa in 1840 would tell a different story from a clan that arrived with the rebuilding. Ours is the second story. The Qithi villages sit on the northern edge of the expansion — the ground the amaTshatshu took after Darala's people emigrated, when Gungubele's followers pushed up to the Bolotwa River and met Mfanta's people across the stream. That is a specific decade and a specific movement, written down by the men who tried to stop it.

1820s–35 — Bawana and Maphasa move north-west of the Great Kei into Windvogel country, the land the colonists called Bushmanland. Maphasa meets Colonel Smith at Shiloh in 1835.

1850–52 — War of Mlanjeni. Maphasa is wounded and dies near Whittlesea.

Nov 1852 — Cathcart forfeits Maphasa's land: Great Kei west to the Klipplaat, Windvogelberg in the centre. The clan is broken up.

1853 — The councillors withdraw to the junction of the White and Swart Kei with Maphasa's son, a boy of about twelve. The remnants gather. They fill the country between the Swart Kei and the Braam Nek mountains.

c.1862 — Gungubele is installed as chief by his father's councillors. He rides to Queenstown with two hundred men to ask for recognition and is refused.

1865 — The Thembu emigration to the Transkei. The amaTshatshu refuse to move.

after 1865 — After Darala emigrates, Gungubele's people push north as far as the Bolotwa River and meet Mfanta's people across the stream.

1877–78 — War of Ngcayecibi. The quarrel over Bouwer's farm — Maphasa's old great place — becomes a war. On 24 January 1878 Hemming attacks the Gwatyu; the fight lasts two and a half hours.

9 Apr 1878 — Gungubele surrenders with fourteen councillors. Tried in a day by a jury including three men who had fought him. Sentenced to death, commuted, held on Robben Island.

Dec 1878 — Driver reports. He names Umfanta, Gungubele and

The sequence, from the colonial record. The marked entries are the ones that carry the claim: the forfeiture, the withdrawal to the Kei junction, the installation of Gungubele by his father's men, the push north to the Bolotwa, and Driver naming Sihlwengu.

AMAPHAKATHI · THE COUNCILLORS

Sihlwengu, and the men who made a chief

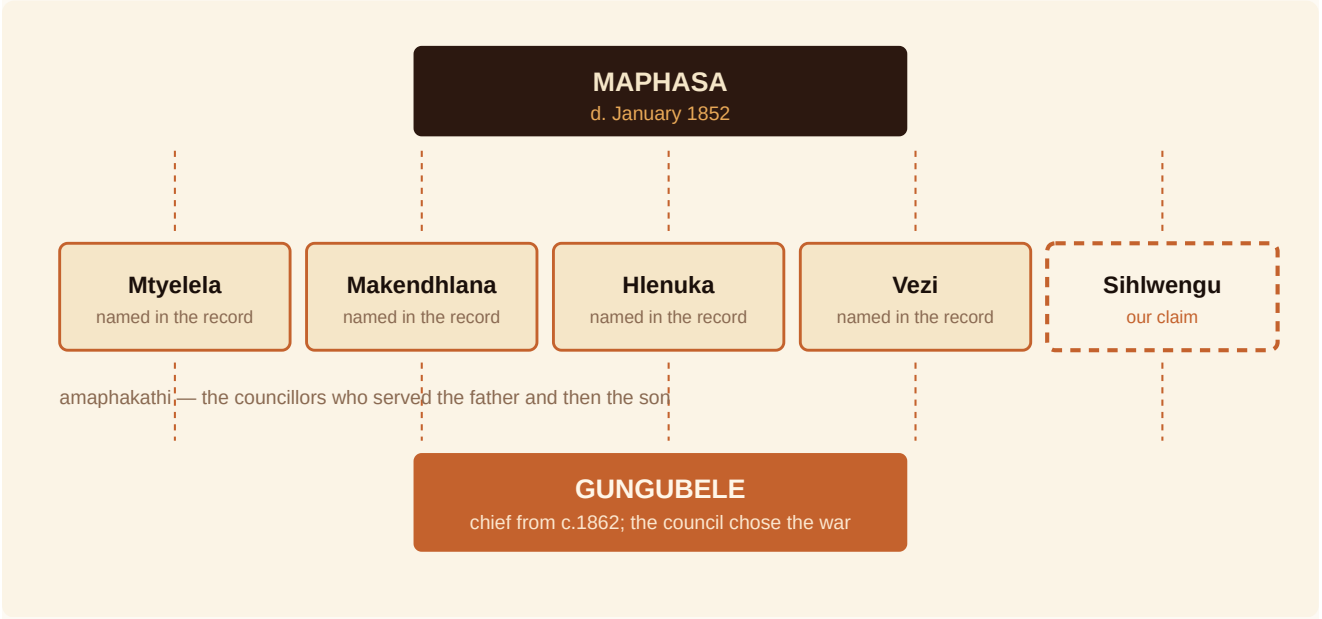
DOCUMENTED

In December 1878, C. H. Driver, Special Magistrate of the Queen's Town Tambookie Location, reported on the rebellion that had ended that April. He named three men whose immediate followers took an active part in it: **Umfanta, Gungubele and Sihlwengu.** He then recorded that the country formerly occupied by Umfanta and Sihlwengu had been cleared and filled with people moved out of the Tshatshu and Dungwana locations.

That is a colonial magistrate naming Sihlwengu in the same breath as two chiefs, and stating that Sihlwengu held country of his own inside the location.

DOCUMENTED

At Gungubele's trial that July, witness after witness said the same thing: the chief did not want the war, and his councillors drove him into it. His missionary, the Reverend Newton, testified under oath that Gungubele was entirely in the hands of his councillors, and that **some of them had been his father's councillors.** Three are named in the record — Mtyelela, Makendhlana and Chief Hlenuka — all of whom had served Maphasa and wanted the power of the amaTshatshu rebuilt. A fourth, Nomiba, was heard telling the chief that if he would not fight, another chief would be found.



Four of Maphasa's councillors are named in the 1878 trial record as men who served the father and then the son. The fifth box is the claim this document makes.

OUR CLAIM

Sihlwengu belongs in that list. He held ground in the location, he brought a following into the fighting, and he stood beside the chief in a war that the councillors, not the chief, had chosen. Men of that standing under Gungubele were Maphasa's men first. Chief Vezi, Maphasa's own brother, sat as councillor to Maphasa and then to Yiliswa the regent while remaining a chief in his own right — so holding your own country and sitting in the council were never opposites in this house.

Umda · Where Sihlwengu’s country was

Driver does not pair Sihlwengu with Gungubele when he describes the clearances. He pairs him with Umfanta — the country formerly occupied by Umfanta and Sihlwengu was the country that was emptied and refilled. That is a precise placement, and it points at us.

Hemming describes the same border from the other side. After the Thembu emigration of 1865, Gungubele’s people pushed north until they held nearly everything as far as the Bolotwa River, and there they met Mfanta’s people with only the little Bolotwa stream between them. The two chiefs became allies. In February 1878 their fighters regrouped together in the mountains at the Kei junction and held off twelve hundred men.

kwaQithi sits sixteen kilometres north of Bolotwa, on exactly that seam. Not deep inside Gungubele’s ground and not deep inside Mfanta’s, but on the line where the two allied chiefdoms met — which is where a man with his own following and his own country would be placed, and where Driver says Sihlwengu’s country was.

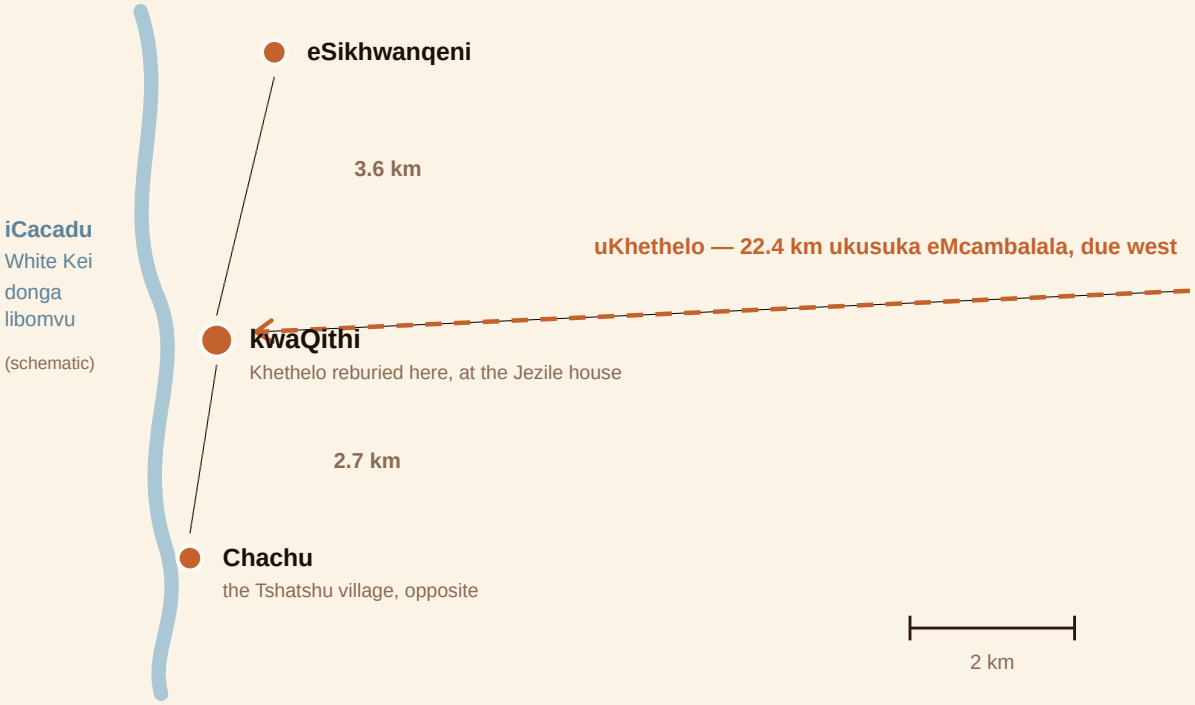
> **Where this gets settled.** Hemming issued warrants against forty-three named leaders in January 1878. His “Digest of Evidence” on the rebellion survives as Cory Library MS 7377. If Sihlwengu is on that list — and the list records where each man lived — the claim on this page moves from ours to everyone’s.

UHAMBO LUKAKHETHELO · KHETHELO'S MOVE

Twenty-two kilometres, due west

ORAL TRADITION · THEMBA BANISI, JULY 2026

In the early 1990s, Qithi people troubled in their families consulted a sangoma. They were told to find an ancestor named Khethelo and bury him properly. Khethelo had left Mcambalala and moved to *donga libomvu*, in the country of the Qithi and Chachu villages. He lay there with a spear, a spoon and *ama-tanjies*. Nobody living knew this. They went, they found the grave, and the objects were there as described. He was reburied at kwaQithi, opposite the Chachu village, at the Jezile house. He is called the forefather of forefathers.



Umzi wamaQithi, close up. The three villages of the seat, and the river the families call donga libomvu running between kwaQithi and Chachu. The river's course here is schematic; the village positions are field coordinates. Khethelo's remembered move arrives from the east, out of the country of the great place.

OUR CLAIM

Put the coordinates on that story and it stops being a family memory and becomes a map of the Tshatshu expansion. **Mcambalala lies 1.4 km from Gungubele's great place on the Gwatyu.** Khethelo was not living somewhere vague on the Ngcobo side. He was living next door to the chief. And his move — 22.4 km, bearing 279°, almost exactly due west — lands him in the Bolotwa country in the same decades that Gungubele's followers were filling it.

Donga libomvu is a river, not a gully. It is what the families call the White Kei — iCacadu — on the stretch that divides Chachu from kwaQithi. So "the ancestors are buried at the red donga above the White Kei" is not two landmarks. It is a name and its translation in one breath. And the tagline is more literal than it looks: *from the White Kei, we rise.*

IMIGAMA · DISTANCES

What the ground says



Great-circle distances from field coordinates.

The shape of it

Three villages within six kilometres of each other, strung north along almost the same meridian. A second cluster twenty-two kilometres east, where the chief lived. And the whole thing hanging off a river junction thirty kilometres to the south, where a boy was hidden in 1853. The country is small enough that a man could ride from one end of the argument to the other in a day.

UBUNGQINA · CORROBORATION

What the books already say

This was Khoesan country, and the books say so plainly

DOCUMENTED

Mager and Velelo open their history of the amaTshatshu with the land itself. West of the Great Kei, north of the Amathole to the Stormberg, was Windvogel country — named for the Khoesan captain who held it. The rivers carry Khoesan names: Kei, Cacadu, Tsomo, Khomani. Every habitable cave was painted, and the paintings marked the ground for different bands. Madolo lived in a cave on the upper Swart Kei with a python painted in it, and some of his people lived on the banks of the Cacadu. The word *Tambookie*, which the colonists used for abaThembu for a hundred years, is a Khoesan name for us.

They state directly that contact between Khoesan and abaThembu produced friendship, intermarriage and shared speech, and that the clicks in isiXhosa came from it. They also record what the Thembu histories record: that as the amaTshatshu moved west they fought amaLawu and abaThwa and took their land.

Ingqithi, and the light-skinned praise

DOCUMENTED

Jolly's 1994 thesis assembles the Thembu–San record. The Thembu practised amputating the first joint of a finger; the custom is generally acknowledged to have been borrowed from the San. Thembu skin was reported lighter than that of many other Nguni groups, which Derricourt reads as a long history of intermarriage. One Thembu praise is still "the tiny man". Warner, at Clarkebury, recorded that Tambookie hunting parties gave any San with them first choice of the kill, ahead of the chiefs, in recognition that the land had been theirs first.

> **Read that against our own house.** Nomacule Kwinana, born in Lesotho, gives the family praise *amaQithi amhlophe anzipho zintle* — the light-skinned amaQithi with beautiful nails. A phenotype tradition kept inside one house, and a nineteenth-century observation written down by strangers, saying the same thing.

The Tambu'ki of 1776

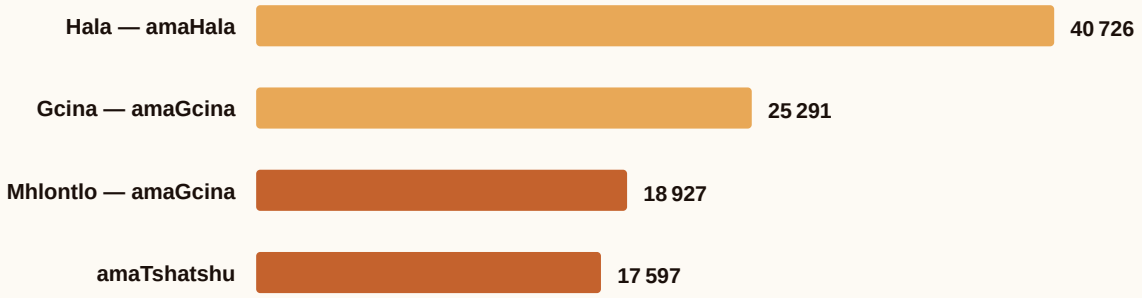
DOCUMENTED

Stow records a cattle-owning San group called the Tambu'ki living near the Tsomo in 1776. Paterson understood them to have been San who intermarried with pioneering Thembu clans; when the Thembu split after a quarrel, the weaker group joined the Tambu'ki and amalgamated with them. That is the amaQithi origin mechanism, written down two centuries ago, about a group carrying the Thembu name and living a hundred kilometres from kwaQithi.

IINDAWO 1975 · THE GRID

Who held Glen Grey when the state drew it up

A. O. Jackson's 1975 survey for the Department of Bantu Administration exists to make the homeland system look like it grew out of our history. Read it as a state document. But its lists are exact, and they show where our villages were filed.



Eight administrative areas name places in the amaQithi registry. Those two authorities are shaded darker.

Glen Grey district by tribal authority, 1970 census figures as published by Jackson in 1975. eSikhwanqeni sits under Mhlontlo; Bolotwa and Rodana under the amaTshatshu.

TRIBAL AUTHORITY	HEAD, 1975	ADMINISTRATIVE AREAS NAMED	POP. 1970
Hala (amaHala)	Manzezulu Mtirara	Buffeldoorns, Zwartwater, Vaalbank, Zingqutu, Qoqodala, Agnes, Nonesi, Kundulu, Mbizana, **Cacadu 17**, Ilinge	40 726
amaTshatshu	Reuben Ngubenyathi Katsi applied for chieftainship; refused	Macibini 12, **Bolotwa 14**, Lante 16, **Rodana 18**	17 597
Gcina (amaGcina)	Zwelixolile Mpangele	Macubeni, **Mkupusi 4**, Jojweni, Xonxa, Mount Arthur, Mhlanga, Three Crowns	25 291
Mhlontlo (amaGcina)	Gwebindlala Mhlontlo	**Bengu 1**, Lady Frere–Ngcuka, Lady Frere–Cumakala, **Sikwenqeni ward of Cacadu 17**, Upper Ndonga	18 927

Where our names land

eSikhwanqeni is in the book by name, as a ward of Cacadu 17 under Mhlontlo, counted as amaGcina, 580 people. **Bolotwa** is an amaTshatshu location. **Mkupusi**, where Qwabi Joka was born in 1842, is amaGcina. **Bengu**, home of the Mangqwengqwe and Fulumeni families, is Mhlontlo. **Rodana**, which the Manimani family left for eMaqwathini, is amaTshatshu.

Mager and Velelo add the piece that explains the villages themselves: Reuben Katsi was made headman in 1940 over thirteen small villages collectively called Rodana, and in 1966 the thirteen were merged into four — Tshatshu, Rodana, Mtsalane and Mpothulo. So the Chachu village two and a half kilometres from kwaQithi is a betterment village, made by merging older settlements. Ours is one of the settlements that was there to be merged.

Xalanga, for the record

TRIBAL AUTHORITY	TRIBE	HEAD, 1975	POP. 1970
KwaGcina	amaGcina	Bonani Gecelo, acting for Rogers Gecelo	7 129

Emaqwatini	amaQwathi	Xego Sami Moni, acting for Stokwe	7 742
Ehlatini	abaThembu	Wellington Tofile — elected headman, no chiefly lineage	6 610
Eqolombeni	abaThembu	Arthur Mvinjelwa — elected headman; a Hlubi	7 064

IMIBUZO · WHAT WE GO AND ASK NEXT

Four questions, in order of how answerable they are

#	QUESTION	WHO OR WHERE
1	Which thirteen villages were merged into Rodana, Tshatshu, Mtsalane and Mpothulo in 1966? Was kwaQithi one of them?	Elders in the Rodana villages; Bantu Affairs file BAO 54/1368/03, Kapteins en Hoofmanne, AmaTshatshustam, Lady Frere
2	Is Sihlwengu among the forty-three men named on Hemming's January 1878 warrant, and does the record say where he lived?	Cory Library MS 7377, "Digest of Evidence", Re Gungubele's Rebellion
3	Does the Sidlwengu tradition carry any memory of 1878 — the Gwatyu, the Bolotwa, a chief taken to Robben Island?	Themba Banisi; the Jezile house at kwaQithi
4	Where are Khethelo's grave goods now — the spear, the spoon, the tanjies? Who was on the party that lifted them?	The 1990s exhumation party; several will still be living

Imithombo · Sources

- Anne Kelk Mager and Phiko Jeffrey Velelo, *The House of Tshatshu: Power, Politics and Chiefs North-West of the Great Kei River c1818–2018* (2018).
- A. O. Jackson, *The Ethnic Composition of the Ciskei and Transkei*, Ethnological Publications No. 53, Department of Bantu Administration and Development (Pretoria, 1975).
- J. Hemming, Resident Magistrate, Report on Native Affairs, Queen's Town, for 1878 (G.33–'79).
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- Sir George Cory, conversation with John Hemming, Grahamstown, 5 March 1914, with editorial footnotes.
- Sir George Cathcart, *Correspondence relative to his military operations in Kaffraria* (London, 1857) — the November 1852 forfeiture.
- Pieter Jolly, *Symbiotic Interaction Between Black Farmers and South-Eastern San*, PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 1994 — ingqithi, the Tambu'ki of 1776, Thembu–San intermarriage.
- W. D. Cingo, *Ibali labaThembu* (1927) — Gcuwa, eldest son of Gungubele, chief of amaTshatshu; the amaQiha and amaTshatshu branches.
- Oral testimony collected 2026: Themba Banisi, Nkosikho Manimani, Mpho Plata, Nomacule Kwinana, Ntobeko Mangqwengqwe, Bunje Nyelezi, Amos Gaji and others.

Distances and bearings were computed as great-circle values from field coordinates and are accurate to about 100 m. Any error in a coordinate carries through. Claims are marked **documented** where a written source states them, **oral tradition** where a named elder gives them, and **our claim** where the amaQithi are making the argument.