



EDITED BY WILLIAM M. CLEMENTS

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## XHOSA

### GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

Linguistically related to the **Zulu**, who speak a similar prefix-oriented Bantu language, the Xhosa are among the several indigenous groups that lived in the eastern part of what is now South Africa prior to European contact. They were both pastoralists and horticulturalists—the men assuming the roles of warrior, hunter, and cattle herder, while the women were responsible for crops and the domestic sphere. The traditional Xhosa community consisted of several beehive-shaped dwellings arranged around a central kraal for cattle. The Xhosa pastoralist economy put them at odds with the first European invaders, the Trek Boers, who appeared from the west in about 1770 in search of grazing lands to accommodate their own herds.

Competition for land ultimately precipitated armed conflict, and Xhosa history since European contact was one of gradual loss of their land base. The colonial government first attempted to separate European and African territories, with the Fish River as border. But as that government increasingly identified with its European antecedents, the Xhosa and other Africans lost more and more of their land. By the middle of the nineteenth century, little of the original land base remained available for their use. The Boer War of the last decade of the nineteenth century eventually produced the South African Union, which united the British colony with the independent Boer Republic. The result was a democratic state, though only whites had the right to vote. Africans were confined in particular parts of the newly united nations—eventually 13 percent of the nation, according to the Native Land Law of 1913. The Xhosa, among others, were allotted territories known as “Bantustans.” No white could own land on these reservations—the



A young Xhosa participates in the traditional stick fight during the initiation ceremony in the Eastern Cape region of South Africa (1998). This annual ceremony brings the young men into manhood. (© Sasa Kralj/Trace Images/The Image Works)

homelands of Ciskei and Transkei for the Xhosa in particular—nor could Africans own land in the rest of South Africa. This provided a basis for the apartheid policy that characterized South African social and political life until 1994, when free elections installed Nelson Mandela, himself a Xhosa, in the presidency of a more integrated nation-state.

The loss of their land base took its toll on virtually every aspect of Xhosa life. Land was essential for hunting, cattle herding, and raising crops. Since much of the rest of Xhosa culture emerged from its economic foundations, changes in ways of making a living due to the lack of sufficient land resources affected social organization, gender-based divisions of labor, systems of social control, political life, and even expressive culture. The arts, including Xhosa folklore, however, had the potential to assist the Xhosa in making the transition from their traditional way of life to that which the modern world was imposing on them without losing their sense of group identity. Xhosa folklore became a principal device in effecting the persistence of the distinctive Xhosa spirit into first the twentieth and then the twenty-first century.

#### TIYO SOGA AND XHOSA FOLKLORE

Xhosa folklore attained its status as a living embodiment of African metaphysical principles and self-consciousness when it encountered the historical divide between tradition and modernity. Not only had Xhosa folklore to embody a different concept of temporality, but it also had to negotiate the transition from oral to written forms. This conjunction is symbolized by Tiyo Soga (1829–1871), the first modern major Xhosa intellectual. Tiyo Soga was aware that modernity compelled forms of cultural expressiveness. Central to him was what Xhosa folklore would make of the religious world of Christianity or what consequences Christianity and print culture would have for traditional forms of expression.

Because of this consciousness, he was concerned with the immediacy of historical principles. Detesting capitalism, which he viewed as exploitative, oppressive, and responsible for the horrendous making of the New World through slavery, Tiyo Soga was uncertain what political position he should take regarding it. He was aware that this economic system was the enabler of modernity and Christianity. Though very much aware that Christianity preceded capitalism, he was intellectually engaged with the possibility of alternatives, had this religion not been brought to Africa. Concerning modernity, Tiyo Soga sought its theoretical possibility and realization outside the confines of capitalism. Though aware that this was not possible, he was able to perceive Xhosa folklore as an intellectual bridge between tradition and modernity. What mattered most to Tiyo Soga regarding Xhosa folklore was its ability to accommodate to new circumstances. Should it be able to synthesize new experiences, he thought that Xhosa folklore would be a dynamic process for the development of Xhosa historical consciousness.

Tiyo Soga believed that the launching of the missionary Xhosa newspaper *Indaba* (News) by the Glasgow Missionary Society in August 1862 would not only assist in banishing falsehoods about the cultural origins of the Xhosa nation but also be a medium for the preservation of Xhosa cultural traditions. Beginning with the first



issue, in whose pages he sometimes wrote under the pseudonym of *Unonjiba waseluhlangeni* (An enthusiastic enquirer into cultural origins), he sought to posit Xhosa folklore as a bridge between the past and the present. In the inaugural issue, he wrote what could be taken as a manifesto of what the Xhosa nation should undertake to achieve at the beginning of a new historical moment:

What are the skin skirts' pockets, and the banks for the stories and fables, the legends, customs and history of the Xhosa people and Fingo people. This is a challenge, for I envisage in this newspaper a beautiful vessel for preserving the stories, fables, legends, customs, anecdotes and history of the tribes. The activities of a nation are more than cattle money or food. . . . All is well today. Our veterans of the Xhosa and Embo people must disgorge all they know. Everything must be imparted to the nation as a whole. Fables must be retold; what was history or legend should be recounted. What has been preserved as tradition should be retold. Whatever was seen or heard or done under the requirements of custom should be brought to light and placed on the national table to be sifted for preservation. Were there not several tribes before? Where is the record of their history and customs' good eloquence? In the olden days did not some people bewitch others? What were the names of the men of magic? Is it not rumoured that some were tortured severely and cruelly? Are there no people who have an idea of matters of this nature which happened under the cloak of custom? Are there no battles which were fought and who were the heroes? What feathers were worn by the royal regiments? Are there no anecdotes connected with the brave men who wore decorations? Were there no hunting expeditions in those far off days and why were the breasts of the eland and the buffalo eaten only by those at the great place? We should revive and bring to the light all this great wealth of information. Let us bring to life our ancestors: Ngconde, Togu, Tshiwo, Phalo, Rharhabe, Mlawu, Ngqika and Ndlambe. Let us resurrect our ancestral fore bears who bequeathed to us a rich heritage. All anecdotes connected with the life of the nation should be brought to this big corn pit of our national newspaper. I cannot recount all we shall gain by having this journal.

Xhosa folklore emerged from the context of interaction among the Xhosa nation, the Khoisan (Hottentots), and the San (Bushmen). This interaction is evident in the implosive consonants (clicks) in the Xhosa language, which were borrowed from the San. The relationship between Xhosa and San societies was strongest before the advent of modernity. Xhosa religious beliefs, customs, rituals, and myths reflect the historical interchange between the Xhosa nation and these two other indigenous nations of South Africa.

The earliest written accounts, taken from oral tradition, testify to the reciprocity among these African societies. Xhosa myths of origin reveal parallels with San myths of origin. Xhosa oral traditions locate the origins of mankind and the world in a place called *Eluhlangeni* or *umhlanga*, "the place of the reeds," where *abantu bomlambo*, the mythical river people, resided. These traditions construct an elaborate setting for the Xhosa cosmogony, its flora and fauna, its rituals and beliefs, and the proximity between nature and history. Although this myth of origin about *umhlanga* (in Zulu, *uhlanga*) has affinities with other African myths of origin, in Xhosa oral

traditions it took on distinctive traits of incorporation, amenability, expansion, and constant metamorphoses. A Xhosa oral tradition published in 1848 recounts the nation's mythical origins as simultaneous with that of the Khoisan and San:

A certain man had three sons, whose names were Ibranana, Xosa, and Twa. Ibranana was a keeper of cattle, sheep, and goats, as was also Xosa, while poor Twa was satisfied with his honey bird and his game in the desert. Ibranana (the ancestor of the Hottentots) was not a tall man, and his complexion was sallow. Twa (the ancestor of the Bushman) was shorter still and more slender, and also of a sallow complexion, but a shade lighter. And Xosa was a tall, muscular man, and dark coloured. We know nothing on which we can depend, of Sikomo, or his son Togu, or his son Gconde, farther than that they and our fathers occupied a country north of our present settlement.

In including this narrative in his 1914 biography of Ntsikana (1780–1821), the first African Christian convert, John Knox Bokwe, who belonged to the third generation of Christian converts, was arguing that given the heterogeneity and simultaneity of the mythical origins of the Xhosa nation with other African nations, the transition from the “old civilization” of tradition to the “new civilization” of modernity was not a betrayal of the nation. The heterogeneity of the past provides a precedent for more recent cultural transformations.

When Tiyo Soga presented a rendition of the same narrative of Xhosa mythical origins from the oral tales he collected in the 1860s, he made the extraordinary shift of excluding the San nation (Bushmen) in the narration and replacing it with Europeans. The significance of the narrative dramatically shifted from the orality of tradition to the written nature of Christianity, since it consciously tries to align the Xhosa myths of origin with the second and third chapters of the biblical Genesis. This attempted alignment across historical worlds and religious systems was part of Tiyo Soga's effort to convince Sandile (1823–1878), perhaps the last great Xhosa chief of the frontier wars, to join the whole nation in moving toward modernity. This argument had particular resonance in the aftermath of the Nongqawuse episode of 1857, when the Xhosa nation nearly committed national suicide. In postulating the heterogeneity and simultaneity of origins of whites and blacks from the same Father, Tiyo Soga was attempting to convince Sandile and the doubters that modernity was equally an African invention—or, at the very least, a white invention “bequeathed” to the world. Tiyo Soga believed that modernity had become a European invention imposed through force and violence, and hence his mission was to utilize Christianity to free modernity from the horrendous consequences of capitalism.

In his contribution to the first issue of *Indaba*, Tiyo Soga formulated an expansive scope for Xhosa folklore: its concerns should encompass fables, legends, customs, anecdotes, and stories. Although for him Xhosa folklore should preserve the “rich heritage” of Xhosa history bequeathed by the “ancestors,” Tiyo Soga was concerned that folklore should not be limited by history. What was so extraordinary in this formulation is that he saw Xhosa folklore as contributing to the “national table,” just like the ethnic folklores of other nations. He expected Xhosa folklore to have a role in the invention of African nationalism, an occurrence that happened after his lifetime.

Tiyo Soga viewed folklore as a dynamic process. His formulation anticipates contemporary understanding of the complex structure of folklore. In the middle of the nineteenth century, he was already grappling with the survival of Xhosa symbolic knowledge in the context of the intrusion of print, and so a definition of folklore that recognized its fundamental characteristic as being oral transmission would unduly limit the concept. Xhosa *imbongi* (praise poets) have perhaps been the most successful in retaining the folkloristic nature of Xhosa symbolic system(s) in the context of modernity. The *imbongi* art form has not forsaken its orality in the face of print culture. A critical issue in the African and Xhosa context is the language in which this oral transmission occurs. Xhosa folklore can only be transmitted through the Xhosa language, not by any European language.

### S.E.K. MQHAYI AND THE *IMBONGI* TRADITION

Given that the praise poetry of the Xhosa *imbongi* is predicated on the principles of improvisation, constant re-creation, and reformulation, it is not surprising that the performance artist S.E.K. Mqhayi has been sensitive to the necessity that folklore meet and accommodate the challenges of modernity. Mqhayi, born four years after the death of Tiyo Soga, was to respond most fully to the plea and challenge posed by the Xhosa intellectual in 1862. Mqhayi deserved the designation of “*Imbongi Yesizwe*” (National Poet, or Poet of the World) for bringing Xhosa folklore into the modern age. For this reason, most of the major intellectuals of the New African Movement who belonged to the generation that followed that of Mqhayi—for example, H.I.E. Dhlomo (1903–1956), Guybon Bundlawa Sinxo (1902–1962), Benedict Wallet Vilakazi (1906–1947), and A. C. Jordan—acclaimed the Xhosa poet for having imaginatively constructed through poetic form the bridge between tradition and modernity. Because of the revolution initiated by Mqhayi in Xhosa literary culture—in fact, in South African culture—the *imbongi* tradition was transformed from a praise paean to past chiefs to a critical vehicle for ideas about the present. Mqhayi’s other achievement was to change the subject of *imbongi* tradition from being predominantly about personalities—preferably royal ones—to being about commoners, processes, or objects at the historical divide between tradition and modernity.

In many ways, *imbongi* tradition is at the center of Xhosa folklore. Jeff Opland, one of the leading authorities on Xhosa culture, states that “oral poetry belongs to the domain of folklore” (1998). Opland not only notes that the creation of oral poetry in performance is a social activity that requires the participation of the community but also claims that the constancy of its style, techniques, and themes makes it one of the best conduits of a people’s or nation’s heritage. He argues that *imbongi* tradition belongs in this realm because it is a “people’s autobiographical ethnography.” Engaging the issue of the intrusion of modernity into tradition, he argues that since Xhosa oral poetry is a living organism reflecting the aspirations of a people or nation, it is able to adapt to new social circumstances brought about by urbanization, literacy, and assimilation. Other scholars have argued for the resiliency of folklore in the form of *imbongi* tradition (*izibongo* tradition in the Zulu context) in response to the new political and cultural context of modernity. Indeed, the *imbongi* tradition was

reconstituted and reformulated in the workers' movement in opposition to apartheid in the 1980s. The heritage coming from folklore was reshaped anew in the context of the politics of modernity, thereby closing the historical divide between print culture and oral performance.

From Mqhayi in the early part of the twentieth century to Yali-Manisi at its end, both oral performance and print culture are part of the modern *imbongi* poetic process. Archie Mafeje (1967) suggests that *imbongi* tradition has developed a self-reflexive mode of criticism as it has engaged the impact of modernity on tradition. The oral poet questions those institutional forms of folklore that are regressive and undemocratic, such as the chieftainship. One of the factors that sustained Xhosa folklore throughout the twentieth century is undoubtedly the *imbongi* tradition. One phenomenon leading to the demise of apartheid and consequently the elections of 1994 was the role of the *imbongi* tradition in mobilizing the democratic aspirations of the South African people against the politics of oppression. No modern cultural form was as effective as the *imbongi* tradition in intervening in modern politics. The *imbongi* who is viewed as having initiated this self-reflexiveness is S.E.K. Mqhayi.

Mqhayi's impact was so profound that J.J.R. Jolobe, a major Xhosa poet in the written Xhosa language, proposed in 1956 that the first fifty years of South African literature in the twentieth century be designated as "the age of Mqhayi." Mqhayi's historical and critical imagination was formed at a time of extreme turbulence marked by two historic events: the Nongqawuse episode of 1857 and the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902. The former was a moment when the Xhosa nation was virtually on the verge of national suicide, as it sought historical solutions to English imperialism's shattering of its national soul. The latter demarcates that same imperial modernity imposing itself on the white nation of Afrikaners (Boers). The Anglo-Boer War was a watershed between tradition and modernity, between the English and the Afrikaners, between black and white, between black Ethiopianism and white Protestantism, between the Xhosa nation and the Mfengu people, between the progressive New African intellectuals around the *Izwi Labantu* (The Voice of the People) newspaper and the reactionary New African intellectuals of the *Imvo Zabantsundu* (African Opinion) newspaper, and between the secularizing New Africans and the religiously inclined New Africans. Mqhayi responded with oral poetry in the *imbongi* tradition, which for the first time was seriously confronting the challenge of print culture. Mqhayi revolutionized *imbongi* tradition by means of three achievements: (1) he made the tradition concern itself with the future and the present and not exclusively with the past; (2) he changed its orientation from being about historical personages to investigating historical situations; and (3) he made certain that its largely celebratory mode would be transformed into an ongoing critical process. As a budding *imbongi* of the newly launched forward-looking *Izwi Labantu*, he criticized the regressive *Imvo Zabantsundu* for pandering to white interests at the expense of Africans as well as having compromised the newspaper's vitality of the 1880s through unsavory and opportunistic alliances.

In a poem called "EzikaSarili" (Praises of Sarili), Mqhayi critically poeticizes (as translated by Wandile Francis Kruse [1978]):



|   |  |
|---|--|
| Nguzwe lafa ngeembiza zikaMbune;  | He is Land-at-War because of Mbune's beer pots.  |
| Hayi! Ngomon' amaMfengu a seGcuwa!  | Good gracious! The Mfengu of Butterworth are mean-spirited;  |
| IGcuwa libhaliwe nhabafundisi.  | Butterworth has been alienated by the missionaries.  |
| Zindinqenil' izizwe zade zaxelelana.  | The clans hesitated to go against me and took counsel.   |
| Zindinqenil' izizwe zade zace' umlungu.   | The clans feared me and asked for the white man's help.  |
| Ukuze zithi nje zakulil' izinandile,<br>Abizw' uFulele kuthwe, "Wayek' amaMfengu"<br>kub' ohlwaywa nguyise, | As a result when sad occasions came Veldtman was summoned, and it was said, "Leave the Mfengu alone."<br>For they were ill-treated by his father Hints |
| O wawafak' ekhwapheni mhlana afika.   | Who, in fact, put them under his wing, the day they arrived.   |
| Kukuze lixole ngoNgcayechibi,   | Hence, when the War of Ngcayechibi ended,  |
| Isizwe siwel' uMbashe.  | The nation had to cross the Bashee River.  |
| UEditor mayingabi nye kulo mzi<br>uyintabalala  | Let there not be just one Editor in this numerous community.   |
| UNdiya kuNondiza ngomfaz' o qhomfayo.   | I-will-go-to-Nondiza [the Herbalist] on account of a woman who commits an abortion.  |

This poem, written in the beginning years of the twentieth century, responds to several historical issues. First, as an upcoming Xhosa poet, Mqhayi criticizes John Tengo Jabavu, a Mfengu editor of the *Imvo Zabantsundu*, for lacking a sense of roots in a spiritually and materially impoverished community. Given that the Mfengu people were predominantly Zulus and other ethnic groups who had run away from *mfecane* (social upheavals of constant wars) caused by Shaka, they lacked a stabilizing folklore that would provide certainty about their belonging to a nation with a historical vision. Second, given the lack of foundation of the Mfengu people before they became a "nation," they are prey to all kinds of ideological currents that happen to cross their path. Mqhayi criticizes the Mfengu people not so much for converting to Christianity—which is a turn toward modernity, which he favored—as much as for aligning themselves with the interests of white people against what he perceived to be the greater interests of black people. Mqhayi was beginning to awaken to the ideology of African **nationalism**. It is possible that Mqhayi was responding to the philosophy of pan-Africanism that F.Z.S. Peregrino, an expatriate from Ghana who came to Cape Town in 1900 from the United States, was propagating in his *South African Spectator*

newspaper. Third, as he clearly states, Mqhayi was well aware that the Xhosa nation had not been accommodating to the Mfengu people when they settled among them. But to Mqhayi, this disdain and rejection of the Mfengu by the Xhosas could not justify *Imvo Zabantsundu's* rejection of the ideological and political interests of New Africans of whatever ethnic persuasion who had embraced modernity and support of the particularistic interests of the Mfengu. Clearly Mqhayi is arguing for an acceptance of modernity that does not reject tradition, which is where folklore is anchored. Fourth, in criticizing John Tengo Jabavu for being the only editor of his newspaper in contrast to having an editorial board, Mqhayi was castigating the individualism of modernity that Jabavu had uncritically embraced. Fifth, characterizing it as an attempted "abortion," Mqhayi expressed his exasperation with Jabavu's hostility to the modern ideas, aims, and aspirations that were beginning to emerge on the pages of *Izwi Labantu*. Mqhayi thus completely altered the *imbongi* tradition by giving it a critical edge and by making it a part of the discourse about the tribulations of modernity.

#### YALI-MANISI AND THE *IMBONGI* TRADITION

If Mqhayi was the major voice of Xhosa *imbongi* tradition in the first half of the twentieth century, then Yali-Manisi was its major articulator in the second half. If it could be said of Mqhayi that he brought the tradition across the historical divide into modernity, Yali-Manisi could be viewed as having ushered it into the new millennium, even though he died a year before the beginning of the twenty-first century. In the foreword to Yali-Manisi's epic poem *Inkululeko* (1977), Opland writes, "[W]e believe [him] to be one of the greatest poets in this country. . . . He is one of the most powerful *imbongi* practicing today, an inspiring performer with a deep sense of history, an intimate knowledge of his subjects, and a quite remarkable poetic talent." Later, Opland reaffirmed his high estimation of Yali-Manisi: "Since then [their first meeting in 1970] my association with Manisi as performer, informant, colleague, teacher and friend has grown, and I regard him as the greatest living exponent of the traditional art of the Xhosa oral poetry." Opland mentions that although Yali-Manisi's Xhosa traditional birth name was Phakamile (meaning "Elevated"), his Christian name was that of the English imperial explorer David Livingstone. Both Mqhayi and Yali-Manisi strangely enough had names that reflected the historical tension between tradition and modernity in South Africa.

An excerpt from his magnificent poem "The Cattle-Killing" shows the fertility of his poetic imagination. The narrative of the circumstances of its production is fascinating. On 20 December 1970, while sitting together in Jeff Opland's car, Opland—wishing to test the *imbongi* tradition in actual live production—asked Yali-Manisi to recite a poem on a subject or event that had never before exercised his imagination. Yali-Manisi was taken aback and queried whether Opland meant that very instant. Opland replied in the affirmative, and both settled on the theme of the Nongqawuse tragedy. Opland writes that Yali-Manisi reflected for only twenty-three seconds and began without the slightest hesitation to recite. What follows is an excerpt of this achievement:

And so catastrophe crippled this land,  
 for Mhlakaza's daughter emerged from the pool,  
 came back home noising the problem,  
 made her demented report to men,  
 who never pay any attention to females.  
 That in itself of course was suspect,  
 a veritable curse to this land of Xhosa,  
 for a woman to claim that the shades had addressed her,  
 that she'd met and conversed with them face to face.  
 Where were this country's thinking people?  
 Where were the great men?  
 Where were the dignitaries?  
 Where were the senior men of experience,  
 who danced to the beat established by others,  
 dancing besotted on cattle? . . .  
 So then, my fellow countrymen,  
 this is the problem Nongqawuse announced,  
 informing the Xhosa, who sat back unsuspecting:  
 she claimed to have talked to the shades in person,  
 and they called for the wholesale slaughter of cattle  
 and the total destruction of grain,  
 for the One Everlasting would speak to the nation,  
 the one we know by the name of Qamata.  
 It was this same Qamata who had pressed her to prominence  
 on the day the unheard-of occurred,  
 events without precedent in the country of Phalo. . . .  
 It so happened that when this girl made her announcement  
 the Xhosa were in virtual control of the land,  
 a nation custom-sustained.  
 So they made preparations to receive what was coming  
 and began to slaughter their innocent cattle. . . .  
 All of our problems began with conversion:  
 conversion entailed the acceptance of God,  
 yet this God we said we accepted—  
 this Bible—is pregnant with evil incarnate,  
 it's held by a man who faces westward,  
 his clerical collar primly folded in front  
 is secured by a butterfly stud at the back,  
 and concealed at his back a cannon is lodged  
 which looms into view when he opens his mouth  
 and shatters the sinews of those he confronts.  
 And when confusion afflicted the land  
 the Christian missionaries cut right through,  
 they cut right through urging peace and calm.

Several issues present themselves in Yali-Manisi's reconstruction of one of the most dramatic moments in Xhosa history. First, the poem recognizes the fact that the violent intrusion and the subsequent imposition of European modernity on African traditional societies unleashed a profound crisis in the Xhosa nation regarding the certitude of its historical and spiritual existence. Since folklore in many ways is the spiritual center of any nation still negotiating its identity, it is not surprising that this encounter shattered Xhosa folklore. The momentary breakdown of Xhosa folklore gave rise to apocalyptic visions, such as in the Nongqawuse episode. It was perhaps in response to the tragic consequences of 1857 that five years later Tiyo Soga called for the restoration of Xhosa folklore, a restoration not intended to reinforce what had been but rather to make sense and accommodate the forces that had entered Xhosa society. In a certain sense, Tiyo Soga's appeal to Sandile was to urge the great chief to face the future that had announced itself in the form of modernity. The reconstitution and reconstruction of Xhosa folklore by Tiyo Soga was for the purpose of both preserving the past and bringing the future into being. For him, at this moment of serious crisis, there were things that could be preserved and those that could not.

Second, Yali-Manisi shows that the breakdown of the beliefs in traditional society produced confusion concerning the production and transmission of knowledge. Instead of knowledge coming from the wisdom of old age through lived experience, it announces itself through youthfulness. Here Yali-Manisi fully invokes beliefs fundamentally expressive of the institutional forms of tradition and implicated in Xhosa folklore: patriarchy and superstition. Given the crisis into which patriarchy was plunged by the advent of the new, the production of knowledge shifted from traditionally constituted agents. Given her youthfulness, Nongqawuse, who was associated with the dissolution of the old ways, was in no position to understand the historical necessity of that breakdown. Tiyo Soga could because of his education and wisdom. Because of the crisis, the knowledge of the ancestors was not mediated by the knowledge of lived experience. Perhaps because of the disastrous consequences engendered by the crisis, Yali-Manisi is unwilling or unable to recognize the momentary shift in the production and transmission of knowledge from the male to the female principle. Another possible explanation for Yali-Manisi's reticence about the seeming gender shift is that Nongqawuse was a pawn in the power struggle within the Xhosa patriarchy. Some historians have argued that Nongqawuse was coached by her maternal uncle, a traditional medicine man, through her maternal aunt, a prophetess, to express her apocalyptic visions.

Third, Yali-Manisi is prescient in observing that the crisis was about the value and ownership of land more than about the production and transmission of knowledge. Fourth, Yali-Manisi indicts Christianity and the Bible as implicated in the damnable aspects of modernity. He positions himself in opposition to Tiyo Soga, who tried to salvage modernity from capitalism through Christianity. In his estimation, the Christian missionaries were not disinterested observers and arbitrators of the 1857 tragedy. Yali-Manisi thus broaches a subject that preoccupied many intellectuals throughout the history of the New African Movement in South Africa: the role of Christianity in colonial domination. His condemnation of Christianity is one of the strongest to

come from the political imagination of a major New African creative artist. The condemnation most likely expressed Yali-Manisi's search for a mediating way between tradition and modernity. In his condemnation of Christianity and criticism of the production and transmission of knowledge in traditional societies, David Livingstone Phakamile Yali-Manisi was continuing to expand and deepen poetics in the interrogative mode that Samuel Edward Krune Mqhayi had made germane to the *imbongi* tradition for it to survive the historical divide between tradition and modernity. They both enabled Xhosa folklore to survive into the twenty-first century.

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