

## “Writing down words:” Death and Political Imagination

In point of fact, when I set out Sobantu was not at home; he was at Durban. He did not give me a single word of instruction about anything.<sup>1</sup>

This paper explores the intellectual productions of the Class of 1856 and the complexities of the politics of expression and the page. It focuses on three 19<sup>th</sup> century texts written under considerable exigency or amid difficulties, dangers and hazards between 1877 and 1883. The first text appeared in a bi-monthly newspaper called *Ubaqa Lwabantwana* (The enlightener for the Children) in May 1877.<sup>2</sup> The *Ubaqa Lwabantwana* (hereafter *Ubaqa*) article was about the death of a Christian, Maqhamsela, and the king’s alleged “complicity” in the matter.

Magama Fuze wrote the second article entitled, “A Visit to King Ketswayo” in 1877. This article was about his trip to the Zulu kingdom to see the Zulu king, Cetshwayo. Six years later, Mubi Nondenisa went to Zululand to inform the king of Bishop Colenso’s death. He wrote a journal about his encounter with the king and the political situation in the kingdom. These texts, like most Ekukhanyeni texts, were in dialogue with other printed texts produced in various mission stations and in colonial official circles.

The texts were not just “narratives” produced under names of different writers and published in different places. Rather, they were three pieces of writing, between 1877 and 1883 that reflected the political imagination and the epistolary possibilities of written

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<sup>1</sup> Magema Magwaza’s letter to the Acting Secretary for Native Affairs, January 1, 1878. [translated by John Colenso and Magema Fuze]

<sup>2</sup> For information on the cost of publishing this newspaper, see SNA, 1/1/78 – 1/1/79.

communication in the most dangerous of settings. Each sought to represent the political situation on the eve of the invasion of the Zulu kingdom and during the aftermath of the battle of Ulundi, and the initial stages of the civil war between forces loyal to the king and those against him. What the three texts have in common is that each attempts to adjust the representations and evaluations of the relationship between the British and the Zulu kingdom, in a time of almost unavoidable destruction. And each does so in ways that spoke to what were then recognized as differentiated audiences in Zululand, Natal, the Cape, and England.

The two Ekukhanyeni texts put before the public an imagination of the possibility of a British-Zulu settlement that proceeds without war and destruction, and that permits continuing, even extensive Christianization, and would also perhaps allow for the reform of both British colonial practice and the Zulu kingdom. This was a political imagination of a world in which British aspirations and Zulu realities coexist productively. For this purpose, their authors assembled words and ideas, stories and information to realize this ambition. In Fuze's first text, war was seen as possibly avoidable. In Nondenisa's journal, there was still hope that the Zulu king and kingdom could be salvaged from ruins.

Fuze and Nondenisa knew that their written accounts would be read as evidence and experience, as a history of the past, of what had already happened and as possibilities for the future.<sup>3</sup> Those two members of the Class of 1856 were particular about their missions during their journeys into Zululand. They sought to get "the words" from the

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<sup>3</sup> The transformation of these journals into public texts owes much to other members of Ekukhanyeni mission station. The Bishop was very central in getting Fuze's article published in the *MacMillan Magazine*. And, in the case of Nondinisa's journal, Harriette played a part in its translation and publication in the "Digest on Zulu Affairs" published at Ekukhanyeni Mission Station in 1883.

king. And, at the core of this desire to “write down the words” of the king were two separate attempts to deal with death and destruction. Fuze and Nondenisa had the idea that once the words of the king were turned into textual stories, they would become permanent and, then, could be passed on as a story of what happened and, perhaps, as we saw in the paper I presented last year, be recorded for posterity. But there was even more to the production of these texts. For, first, the two authors were trying to obtain knowledge of the circumstances that seemed always to lie at a remove. Second, there was a challenge of representing, in words, the interests of those observed or written about. Indeed, the political interests and strategies of parties always seemed just a little beyond certainty. So the onus was on the writers to establish coherence between what they learned or observed or were told and what they may have hoped they would be hearing and learning. Third, the writers in their texts anticipated the differentiated and also uncertain audiences for their writings and representations.

This paper also investigates how the intellectual productions of the Class of 1856 and their associates entered into a public *dialogue* with the colonial government and with missionaries’ views of the situation in Zululand. Fuze and Nondenisa intended their texts to interrupt the then almost accepted “view” about the activities of the Zulu king. And, once the Class of 1856 entered the fray, the debate came to focus on the body of a Christian, Maqhamsela, and the figure of the Zulu king, Cetshwayo. Then, the terms of the debates became redefined since Fuze and Nondenisa’s texts unlike political petitions and protests, employed contemporary strategies of narrating. In sum, as will be demonstrated below, these three texts (*Macmillan Magazine*, “Digest on Zulu Affairs” and *Ubaqa*) created tensions around the politics of inscribing voice onto paper.

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In order to appreciate the delicate nature of colonial politics, we begin by first joining a conversation among William Ngidi, Mdliwafa Majosi, and Magma Fuze. In no other correspondence were the feelings and thoughts of the letter writers (or the Class of 1856) about the materiality and the possibilities of epistolary communication even so clear as in this conversation. Afterwards, I return to the three major texts analysed in this paper.

### **A state of war: The making of a political sphere at Ekukhanyeni**

Sometime before the summer month of December 1875, William Ngidi, a former resident and catechist of Ekukhanyeni who was now living at his home in Umsinga south of the Thukela River, wrote a letter to Magma Fuze. The former Ekukhanyeni catechist and translator acknowledged receipt of a letter containing what seemed to be secret or confidential information from Fuze. Ngidi wrote: “your second letter reached me, and I was glad to hear news about land-buying. Write to me again about that matter that I may know more.”<sup>4</sup> Ngidi clearly had an interest in what Fuze had just told him, as he further elaborated on the content of the received letter:

Indeed, Magma [Fuze], as to that proceeding of Somtseu’s [local name of the Secretary for Native Affairs], I don’t know what name to give it only look you! Magma, I have my fears about you in this matter. Mind you don’t tell my Inkos’ Sobantu [the Bishop]! For, look you! Perhaps if he heard it, he would be vexed and would wish to enquire about it, and so there would come another row like those two [Langalibalele and Matshana], and I don’t say that even these are yet at an end, but to all appearance they will be going on until we ourselves die and come to an end, we, I mean, of the present generation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A204 Colenso Collection. William Ngidi to Magma Fuze, undated letter.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

The matter at hand required caution and Ngidi voiced his unease about the ability to handle this delicate issue not only of Fuze but also of Lutshungu, the son of Ngoza Majosi who attended school at Ekukhanyeni with the Class of 1856. As regards to Lutshungu, Ngidi did not even want to involve him in the matter. For, as Ngidi wrote:

And now, look you! As to Lutshungu, I also, Magema, don't wish to speak with him; for he is not like Mdhliwafa in his ways. I agree to speak with Mdhliwafa; but he is not here [...] now, he is gone to the Buffalo River. When he comes back, I will have a little talk with him, asking on my own account.<sup>6</sup>

The stakes were high. At issue was the figure and reputation of one of the powerful colonial officials, Theophilus Shepstone, the Secretary for Native Affairs from 1847 to 1875. The land that Fuze and Ngidi talked about lay in the lower reaches of the Thukela River near where Ngidi lived. But as Ngidi continued, he had to illustrate his point by referring to another related issue that took place in the 1850s at Edendale near Pietermaritzburg. This issue involved a missionary, Allison, and the Christian community. The community of Edendale bought land through the missionary's personal connections and, according to buyers' understandings of the transaction the land belonged to them as private property. On this issue Ngidi felt at ease since the main protagonist, the missionary had died. At the same time this flashback allowed Ngidi to document his innermost feelings about the issue currently at hand. "Look you! Magema," Ngidi continued:

... in this matter, there is most disgraceful cheating. I mean, the disgrace of stealing. Bethink you if the Missionary Allison, who founded the village of Edendale though his act look you! If cheating his people about their land which they had bought with their own money, he was no longer in good [terms] with them when he died, they called him a deceiver, he had ceased to worship with their village. Look you! These people after the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

lesson they have had, might just as well say that of Somtseu [SNA]. I mean Ngoza's people.<sup>7</sup>

In the third paragraph of the letter Ngidi again strongly advised Fuze not to tell Bishop Colenso about this "most disgraceful cheating" or ... rather "the disgrace of stealing."<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, Fuze, on December 23, 1875, received another letter from Mdliwafa, also one of the students who came to Ekukhanyeni with Fuze and Nondenisa in 1856,<sup>9</sup> filling in some gaps on the issue of land that his father Ngoza Majozi bought from the colonial government through Shepstone. "Yes, my friend," wrote Mdliwafa, "I have got your private note to me."<sup>10</sup> And, he continued, "... but I don't quite understand it. Why! There's no one who does not know that Ngoza bought Matshana's land. But as to the paper [receipt or title deed], there is none."<sup>11</sup>

So the issue was, according to Mdliwafa, public knowledge or, one can say, a part of the issue was public secret, that is, "the disgraceful cheating." Mdliwafa insisted, "as to that denial of the Secretary for Native Affairs who had told the Legislative Council that government had received no money from natives that's nothing; the money was paid, but I don't know how much."<sup>12</sup> Partly because of his experience in the case of Langalibalele, Ngidi felt very disillusioned about the colonial situation and life in general. "For you see," he wrote to Fuze:

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> See "Class of 1856" in the History and African Studies Seminar Archive, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Majozi to Fuze, December 23, 1875.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

... in this world there is no one who seeks another's good – no one, I mean, who would seek good for another, & would get it for him & say there it is! Take and enjoy it! No! There is absolutely none! I would bet a hundred upon it!

In light of the recent confrontation between the SNA and the Bishop, Ngidi felt it was now time for the Bishop to keep his distance. “We are only black people!” he told Fuze, “there is no justice for us! You’ll get trouble! Leave us to be eaten up!” His letter allowed Ngidi to vent his feelings in the belief that Fuze, as he requested, would not pass it on to the Bishop. When Ngidi discovered that Fuze did pass on the information to the Bishop, he was, of course, not pleased.<sup>13</sup>

While the Class of 1856 was conversing on the issue of land and the figure of the Secretary for Native Affairs, much was happening in colonial circles. And part of this influenced the conversation itself. For just less than a year before, the same individuals—Ngidi, Fuze and Mdliwafa—were involved in a case against the Secretary for Native Affairs, in which the Class of 1856 and the Bishop “protested against the manner in which Natal put down the alleged rebellion of Langalibalele and his Hlubi people in 1873.”<sup>14</sup> The colonial government alleged that the chiefdom was involved in gun running and ordered the inkosi Langalibalele of the Hlubi people to register all guns with the colonial government. The colonial government summoned him to appear before the Secretary for Native Affairs twice. But inkosi Langalibalele never did. On the third occasion, government messengers informed Shepstone that Langalibalele’s men “insulted

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Jeff Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*, 89.

and maltreated” them.<sup>15</sup> This happened at the time when the Natal colonial government was so fearful of African kingdoms coming together to confront it in this regard chief Langalibalele’s refusal was enough to provoke a most stringent reprisal. Accompanied by the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Benjamin Pine and Shepstone, on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1873, “200 British troops, 300 Natal volunteers and about 6,000 Africans, with two field-pieces” attacked the Hlubi chiefdom. The consequence of this attack was that “from 150 to 200 of the Hlubi [people] were killed,” while on the government side “three members of the Natal Carbineers, including Robert Henry Erskine, son of the Colonial Secretary, and two loyal Africans” were left in the battle field.<sup>16</sup> After this battle, the Hlubi community was “broken up and proclaimed as having ceased to exist.” Two hundred men were imprisoned, and Langalibalele and his son were sent to Robben Island.

By attempting to prove that the Secretary for Native Affairs and Natal government mishandled Langalibalele’s case, Bishop Colenso and the Class of 1856 envenomed the colonial administration. But while the Colonial Office removed the Governor Pine from his post, it gave Shepstone more recognition. On his return to Natal from his first trip to London in 1875, Shepstone, as Brooks and Webb have written, “was not only rehabilitated but set on a new career of power and glory.”<sup>17</sup> The Bishopstowe faction, as they became known—or the Class of 1856 as I have been calling them—saw the incident as a miscarriage of justice, and contrived to expose the brutality of the

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<sup>15</sup> R. Russell, *Natal: The Land and its Story*, 211.

<sup>16</sup> E.H. Brooks & Colin de B. Webb, *A History of Natal*, 115.

<sup>17</sup> E.H. Brooks & Colin de B. Webb, *A History of Natal*, 118.



Shepstone system.<sup>18</sup> From 1873 onwards, Colenso denounced “Shepstone and his regime as rotten to the very core.”<sup>19</sup> The sustained work of the Class of 1856 demonstrates the political life that the station enjoyed as a place for debate and political discussion. What nurtured these conversations, these politics was the epistolary moment. The letters also provide an unusual view of the backstage communication amongst the Ekukhanyeni letter-writers, revealing how their political opinions were sustained.

At the time in which Fuze made his visit to Zululand (June 1877) which led to the second text, a great deal of political maneuvering was taking place in South Africa. It was also at this time that the Colonial Office under Lord Carnarvon made its intentions known on the policy of confederation in South Africa. The details of this policy were discussed at a conference in London in 1876. Theophilus Shepstone represented the colony of Natal. According to the thinking of imperial authorities at the time, territories that did not fall under British influence were to be annexed. These territories included, among others, the Transvaal and the Zulu kingdom.

On his return to Natal, Shepstone introduced this plan by annexing the Transvaal Republic and bringing it under British influence. When this first step was accomplished, it placed Natal and the Zulu kingdom in a new relationship. For, hitherto, the Zulu king had recognized the influence of Shepstone, almost as a father to him. The king also exploited his political relationship with the Natal government in the border dispute with

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<sup>18</sup> Theophilus Shepstone was the Secretary for Native Affairs in the Colony of Natal between 1847 to 1875. See Carolyn Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention*. Bishopstowe was the name of the Bishop’s house and farm lands. As time went on the name Bishopstowe was associated with these letter-writers.

<sup>19</sup> Etherington, *Preacher Peasants and Politics in Southeast Africa, 1835 – 1880*, 42.

the Transvaal Republic.<sup>20</sup> Shepstone, as Diplomatic Agent, was the colonial official who came to Cetshwayo's coronation in 1872. And, from then on Shepstone was seen as a strategic ally.<sup>21</sup> But, now that Shepstone had annexed the Transvaal, officials in the Zulu kingdom would have to review their relationship with the Secretary for Native Affairs. In the eyes of the imperialists and commercial interests, the existence of an independent African kingdom between the Transvaal and Natal represented an obstacle to the scheme of confederation. Wishing to remove the Zulu king, imperial authorities started a campaign to discredit his name in the eyes of the Colonial Office. In the first instance, they portrayed the king as a tyrant.

Writing to the Secretary of State the Natal's Governor and High Commissioner, Sir Bartle Frere, decried what he described as "the practice of killing by impis lately revived by Cetshwayo."<sup>22</sup> To get his point across to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Frere summarized his concerns into eight points. Each point centered on three main issues: (1) the loss of property by the Norwegians, Hanoverians and the English Church, (2) the "system of terrorizing and killing of Christian converts by the king's execution parties," and (3) "the king's late recurrence to some of the worst and bloodiest practices of former Zulu tyrants: Chaka and Dingaan."<sup>23</sup> Most of the eight points were based on the Zululand missionaries' petition about the activities of the Zulu king and missionary presence in the Zulu kingdom. But missionary petitions and the emergent

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<sup>20</sup> Carolyn Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty*.

<sup>21</sup> Jeff Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu kingdom*.

<sup>22</sup> British Parliamentary Papers, No. 29 Sir Bartle Frere to the Colonial Office.

<sup>23</sup> British Parliamentary Papers, No. 29 Sir Bartle Frere to the Colonial Office, See also O.C. Oftebro, Superintendent, on behalf of the missionaries of the Norwegian Mission Society.

discourse about the Zulu kingdom did not go unchallenged. And, Ekukhanyeni led the protest.

What distinguished Ekukhanyeni mission station from other mission stations was the extent of its involvement in the politics of the colony of Natal. This does not imply that the other mission societies did not participate in politics. The difference is that between 1850 and 1880 they did not challenge the policies and official political discourse of the colonial state. Because of its marginal position in a British colony, the American Board Mission took a generation to rethink its position in the colony and to challenge the policies of the Natal government. But, less than a decade after the establishment of Ekukhanyeni, this mission station was already entangled in political and legal debates with the colonial government. Bishop Colenso's actions against the government were in part influenced by his close relationship with the men and women who worked with him at the mission station. The political involvement of the mission station intensified after the "brutal destruction of the Hlubi chiefdom." But the Langalibalele case was a prelude to more things to come. The next clash between Ekukhanyeni and the colonial government took place during the events leading to the British invasion of the Zulu kingdom in 1879.

### **The power of the texts**

On October 29, 1877, as Colenso put his final touches on the introduction to Magama Fuze's article, *A Visit to King Ketshwayo*, questions about the circumstances surrounding

its production were being asked in colonial circles.<sup>24</sup> This “narrative,” as Colenso called it, was the story of Magemu Fuze’s visit to notable families in Natal and Zululand including king Cetshwayo’s royal palace. For sometime before the winter months of 1877, Fuze had expressed a wish to embark on a journey to Zululand, but some of his friends, including Colenso, had warned him that he might be killed. Their concerns were influenced by the news from Zululand suggesting that Cetshwayo was killing and threatening Christians and missionaries. But rumors and warnings could not deter Fuze. When Colenso was away in Durban, Fuze decided to embark on a month long journey to Zululand. On June 10, 1877, Fuze and his brother, Ndokweni, and two of his friends, Mboza and Mbungumbu, went to the office of the Secretary for Native Affairs in Pietermaritzburg to ask for passes to cross the border into Zululand. The Secretary for Native Affairs granted them passes, and, according to Fuze, Arthur Shepstone himself said that [he] was to salute for [him] much to both of them.”<sup>25</sup>

But after sometime, when news circulated around the Capital of Fuze’s visit to Zululand and its political implications, colonial authorities alleged that Colenso had sent Fuze to Zululand. Fuze protested: “it surprises me utterly to hear such a thing, namely, that on my going to Zululand I had been sent by Sobantu to go and speak his secret words.”<sup>26</sup> He was further astonished to hear such “talk mixed up with the affairs of the boundary which is disputed by the Governor of the Transvaal and the King of Zululand.”

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<sup>24</sup> Magemu Magwaza, “A visit to King Cetshwayo” in *MacMillan Magazine* (1878),

<sup>25</sup> This message was for king Cetshwayo and former chief Matshana.

<sup>26</sup> Magemu Magwaza’s letter to the Acting Secretary for Native Affairs, January 1, 1878. [translated by John Colenso]

While Fuze felt strongly about the issue of border dispute, however, he saw himself as, “...nothing at all that I should be named in the talk of such great chiefs.”<sup>27</sup>

In his “words” [letter] to the SNA, which he wrote in Isizulu, he said “for my own part I desired to write them in the English tongue, but as I do not know it well.”<sup>28</sup> Fuze wanted to let the SNA know that he was responsible for his visit to Zululand and absolve the Bishop of all accusations. Indeed, he wanted to take responsibility for the intellectual production of his article to emerge from his visit to the king of Zululand. In the course of Fuze’s protestations, Colenso entered the exchange. Writing to Lieutenant-Governor Bulwer, he pleaded his innocence,

I cannot wonder that many should suppose that the agency and Magera’s visit were both prompted by myself; but I trust that your Excellency at all events will be satisfied by these enclosures that I had nothing to do with suggesting either.<sup>29</sup>

Indications are that the colonial authorities learned of Fuze’s return from Zululand while Fuze and the Bishop were working on the information that Fuze had gathered in his travels. Then, anticipating the potentially damaging effects of Fuze’s text to their case against the Zulu king, the colonial authorities wanted to put doubts on the credibility of the information. For up to now the only news from Zululand had entered Natal through letters and petitions from missionaries, farmers and traders. And, on the part of Ekukhanyeni, Colenso and the Class of 1856 had hitherto relied on messengers from the

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<sup>27</sup> Magera Magwaza’s letter to the Acting Secretary for Native Affairs, January 1, 1878. [translated by John Colenso and Magera Magwaza]

<sup>28</sup> Magera Magwaza’s letter to the Acting Secretary for Native Affairs, January 1, 1878. [translated by John Colenso]

<sup>29</sup> John Colenso to Lieutenant-Governor Bulwer

king. It seems Fuze and company realized that with so much talk of an invasion of Zululand, other sources of information were needed. With this reason in mind, Fuze and his friends undertook the journey.

When Fuze returned from his visit to Zululand, he and Colenso translated and transformed the journal into a “narrative.” Because this text was not just for Ekukhanyeni readers, Fuze and Colenso published it in the *MacMillan Magazine* in 1878. As the manuscript made its way to the publishers in London, dispatches from colonial authorities were also going back and forth.

### **What people read on the eve of the invasion in 1879**

Meanwhile, a missionary newspaper based in Natal had just published its text of the situation in Zululand. This newspaper was called the *Ubaqa Lwabantwana* (hereafter referred to as *Ubaqa*). Just before Fuze embarked on the journey, *Ubaqa*'s article on events in Zululand appeared in May of 1877. It was about the death of Maqhamsela through the hands of what missionaries in Zululand had come to term “the king’s killing armies (impis).”<sup>30</sup>

The political boundary between the colony of Natal and Zululand was porous. People from Natal crossed into Zululand as often as people from the Zulu kingdom entered the colony. But the meanings of what was Natal and what was the Zulu kingdom were constantly defined in the pages of newspapers. It was on the pages of newspapers that the political differences between the two polities were reinforced. Such discourses

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<sup>30</sup> British Parliamentary Papers, No. Sir Bartle Frere to the Colonial Office, See also O.C. Oftebro, Superintendent, on behalf of the missionaries of the Norwegian Mission Society. This idea is also present in an article edited by G.R. Hance, *Ubaqa Lwabantwana*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (May 1877).

made the differences more stark and were loaded with meanings. For the most part, newspapers stressed the lack of what they saw as “civilized” ways of doing things in the Zulu kingdom including its political system. And, as events leading to invasion gathered pace, writings on the political situation in the Zulu kingdom took a new turn. One of the newspapers carried quizzes that were meant to “inform” readers about the status quo in Natal and about changes that had occurred since colonial occupation in 1845, some were question and answer quizzes:

Umbuzo: Inkosi Uhulumeni yokuqala yamangisi ya lelizwe ya e ngubani na?

Ipendulo: Martin West

Umbuzo: Ngi tyele amagama awo onke amakosi amanGisi a busileyo ku lelizwe.

Ipendulo: Martin West, Benjamin Pine, John Scott, Col. Mclean, Robert Keate, Anthony Musgrave, (Sir Benjamin Pine), Sir Garnet Wolseley, Sir Henry Bulwer.

Umbuzo: Ngokubusa kwamanGisi izwe li hlezi kanjani na?

Ipendulo: Li tule

Umbuzo: Ukuhlala kwezwe ku ya fana nokuhlala kwokuqala lapo la buswa **abamnyama** bodwa na?

Ipendulo: Qa! Manje li nemisebenzi eminingi.<sup>31</sup>

Question: who was the first Governor (inkosi) of this country (Natal)?

Answer: Martin West

Question: Give names of all English rulers of this country.

Answer: Martin West, Benjamin Pine, John Scott, Col. Mclean, Robert Keate, Anthony Musgrave, (Sir Benjamin Pine), Sir Garnet Wolseley, Sir Henry Bulwer.

Question: How have English rulers governed the country?

Answer: peacefully

Question: Is the form of government the same as it was during the times when **blacks** ruled the country?

Answer: No. There is a lot of work (jobs) now.

The above genealogy sought to naturalize colonial rule by placing it in a public record and, indeed, bringing it to readers attention. The editor goes on to list the infrastructure that had been built since the 1840s. This was contrasted with what newspapers saw as political stasis in the kingdom. So for this reason, much of the writing came to focus on the person who was the leader of the kingdom, the king.

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<sup>31</sup> G.R. Hance, *Ubaqa Lwabantwana*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (May 1877).

According to many representations, the Zulu king was an autocratic ruler who had a disregard for human life. Such public conversations came, in part, in the form of printed texts that mission societies published at mission stations around Natal and later Zululand. What gave these texts power was the extent and reach of their circulation. The publishers distributed the newspapers to schools and mission stations of various denominations around Natal and Zululand. And, students participated in the production and binding of the newspapers.<sup>32</sup> Chief among these periodicals were the early newspapers, namely, *Inkanyezi Yokusa* (Morning Star), *Ikwezi* (Star Venus) and *Ubhaqa* (Enlightener). *Inkanyezi Yokusa* began in 1850 and its focus was mainly on religious matters. Towards the end of the 1850s, Esidumbeni mission station started printing *Ikwezi*. Unlike *Inkanyezi Yokusa*, *Ikwezi* sought to address a wider and diverse audience, though it still remained a religious newspaper with regular extracts from the bible and moral stories on how to lead a “Christian life.”<sup>33</sup> What also distinguished *Ikwezi* from *Inkanyezi Yokusa* was *Ikwezi*'s coverage of issues in four languages: English, Sesotho, Isixhosa and Isizulu. This would have given *Ikwezi* a wide and diverse readership because mission stations in nineteenth century Natal comprised Christians from various language communities.

Publishers also wanted to distribute newspapers to mission stations outside the colony of Natal. For instance, as people from Natal and Zululand moved to work on the mines in the Transvaal and Kimberley, some American missionaries went with them. In 1889, *The Missionary Herald* wrote that: “in view of the great number of Natives from all parts of South Africa Mr. Goodenough [an American Board Missionary] naturally speaks

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<sup>32</sup> *The Natal Almanac*, 1880.

<sup>33</sup> See J.V. “Ukusina in *Ikwezi Lokusa*, February, No. 55, vol. V, 1866.



of that region as “our mine, not of gold that perisheth, but of mortal souls [for] whom Christ died.”<sup>34</sup>

The missionaries feared that social life in the emerging cities in the Transvaal would undermine the religious work that they started in Natal. No wonder, then, that *Ikwezi* newspaper published articles on what were conceived of as issues in people’s daily lives. For instance, the newspaper frequently carried articles on the bad effects of liquor. The style of articles on liquor varied, ranging from short essays to poems. The following is an example of one of the poems that appeared in *Ubaqa* in 1877, but *Ikwezi* had published it a few years previously:

Ubutywala

Ubutywala, Ubutywala,  
Bu yishinga elidala;  
Bu shingise abaningi,  
Bu dingise abadingi.<sup>35</sup>

Liquor

Liquor, Liquor,  
He is an old ruffian;  
He has made many to be mischievous,  
He has exiled many.

The *Ikwezi* newspaper also sought to get young readers by featuring nursery tales and trickster stories. But the dominant genre of these newspapers was the folktale. The folktales were drawn from Zulu, English, Scottish and Indian traditions. The thread that linked such stories was a didactic message that drew from a penal theory of atonement. For instance, one who did not want to listen or obey the laws of the land would suffer dreadful consequences. To make certain that such moral messages reached the targeted readership, the newspapers wrote them in the form of “narratives” with beginning, climax and ending. It is not clear why the newspaper publishers chose such a form of storytelling

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<sup>34</sup> *The Missionary Herald*, Zulu Mission (1889), 424.

<sup>35</sup> J. Tyler, (ed.) *Ikwezi* (date unknown) and later appeared in G.R. Hance, (ed.) *Ubaqa Lwabantwana*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (May 1877).

when their imagined readers appear to have been adult men, especially since other material in the paper suggested they were wasting their productive energies at beer parties and, burdening women with most of the household chores.

However, this was not the only content that the newspapers, *Ikwezi* and *Ubaqa*, carried. They also featured a column on inheritance (*ifa*). The word “inheritance,” which in Zulu translated into “*ifa*,” shared the root with a word for death, that is, *ukufa*. This semantic relationship between the two words was very crucial in the conversations that took place in the pages of the two newspapers. As noted elsewhere, it was this column of the newspapers that engaged and sustained the emerging entrepreneurial class of *Amakholwa*. Many writers of letters-to-the editor tried to come to terms with the following questions: what should they do with the meager possessions that they had accumulated? And, who should inherit their possessions? While these questions were about material possessions, they were also about moral rectitude. For a man who led a “Christian life” would leave—not just possessions—but also a good name behind for his descendants and community to “inherit.” Still, the concern was how to keep one’s property for the next generations. Such questions sought to redefine family relations, while putting the extended family unit on less secure grounds. Conversations in the newspapers were also loaded with meanings of the worldly and heavenly life. As contributors to *Ikwezi*, such as Makabeni [Dlamini], John Caluza, G.C., Omnyama and Beni went deep into the intricacies and meanings of inheritance, they confronted the very question of death.<sup>36</sup> They found solace in the *grand narrative* of resurrection. As

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<sup>36</sup> Makabeni [Dlamini], “Impendulo ngefa elibizwayo / Answer to the question of inheritance,” in J. Tyler, (ed.), *Ikwezi*, (April 1866).

believers, they were assured that if they led morally upright Christian lives on earth, they should not worry. Such a biblical story of death and resurrection was in itself also in the form of a story, framed in the then familiar schema of beginning (birth), climax (crucifixion), and ending (death and resurrection).

It was this same underlying story telling framework that came to shape political interventions of these newspapers in the events leading to the Anglo-Zulu War. While there were many political interventions in the newspapers and through petitions, one significant story developed around the death of a Christian, Maqhamsela [Khanyile]. In the story of Maqhamsela [Khanyile], the publisher of *Ubaqa* combined the biblical form of narration and the more secular structure of rise and fall.

### **The body of the Christian**

Unlike Inkanyezi and Ikwezi newspapers, *Ubaqa* came to the scene at a time of political turmoil in the relations between Natal and Zululand. It first appeared in the early 1870s, just when the tensions between the Natal government and the Zulu kingdom began to surface. *Ubaqa* sought to influence political opinion in the Colony of Natal and tried to make the difference between the two polities apparent to readers. While such political issues were important for the missionary editor of *Ubaqa*, what was closest to her heart was the Christianization of Zululand. Unsurprisingly, then, the letters that appeared in the newspaper reflected a wish to have a leader in Zululand who was amicable to missionary work. And, when news came to Natal that Christians were treated unfairly in Zululand, *Ubaqa* and writers to *Ubaqa* were quick to respond and ask the Natal government to intervene.

So it was that sometime in 1877 a Christian was killed in Eshowe, Zululand. The name of this Christian was Maqhamsela [Khanyile] of Eshowe mission station. Soon after Maqhamsela's death, a writer from Zululand or perhaps it was the editor of *Ubaqa* herself wrote an article entitled, 'Bakolwa Basesilungwini! / Christians in Natal!'<sup>37</sup> The article called on all Christians to pray for all the people of Zululand—believers, non-believers and also for the Zulu king, Cetshwayo. The writer of the article claimed to be “a friend or relative of Maqhamsela / ngingumhlobo ka Maq[h]amsela.”<sup>38</sup> The friend narrated the story of events leading to Maqhamsela's shooting and death. One evening in April 1877, Maqhamsela, on his way home from the mission station, met an “impi” (a group of armed men). When the armed men saw Maqhamsela, they asked:

Kuini loko okwenzayo na? Aukwazi ini ukuti, Inkosi (uCetshwayo) iyanqaba ukuba abantu bakolwe na? Umaqhamsela wasimze wati, “Nize kungibulala na?” Bavuma – Wati Maqhamsela, “Yeboke, angisabi ukufa; ngiyajabula ukuyifela Inkosi; ngiyazi ukuti, ngiyakuya kuyo ezulwini” – esho ekomba kona.<sup>39</sup>

What is it that you're doing? Don't you know that the King (Cetshwayo) forbid people to be Christians? Maqhamsela simply said, “have you come to kill me?” They answered in the affirmative, then Maqhamsela said “Yes, I am not afraid of death; I am happy to die in the Lord; I know, I will go to Him in heaven” – he said this pointing to it (heaven).

The “armed men” wanted to tie his hands, but Maqhamsela told them, “he would not run away.”<sup>40</sup> But, nonetheless, they went ahead and tied his hands. Thereafter, they drove him

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<sup>37</sup> G.R. Hance, *Ubaqa Lwabantwana*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (May 1877).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

to nearby bushes. According to the friend of Maqhamsela, taking him into the bushes was a sign that they wanted to shoot him.

The events surrounding Maqhamsela's death spread around Natal and Zululand. To the extent that when Fuze did his own investigation into the incident, people he talked to confirmed what *Ubaqa* had written about a month earlier. In his account, Magema Fuze:

Whereupon Maqhamsela begged them that they would allow him time to say a few words of prayer. They consented, and he knelt down and prayed, and, when he rose up, he told them that he was ready now to die.<sup>41</sup>

A number of things seemed to have happened about the story of Maqhamsela's death. First, *Ubaqa* helped to spread the story by fixing it into written words as if that was what actually happened. Second, the individuals who killed Maqhamsela spread news by word of mouth. According to the claims of the missionaries, these individuals used Maqhamsela's sad death to deter potential Christians. But one thing is clear. Maqhamsela's death entered public memory from the time it happened and remained there almost to the end of the twentieth century. In the late 1980s, one of the popular radio announcers of Radio Zulu (now Ukhozi Radio) wrote a play about the death of Maqhamsela. The title of the radio drama was "UMaqhamsela Khanyile."<sup>42</sup>

In the *Ubaqa*'s account, the friend of Maqhamsela, suggested:

Wou! Bakolwayo! Bongani Inkosi ngokuba umfo wenu (Umaqhamsela) wapiwa amandhla ukufela uKristu njeng'	Wow! Believers! You must praise the Lord for He gave your brother (Maqhamsela) the power to die for Christ like the Christians
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<sup>41</sup> Magema Magwaza, "A visit to King Ketswayo", 424.

<sup>42</sup> Thokozani M. E, Nene, "UMaqhamsela Khanyile." The play is housed at the South African Broadcasting Corporation Archives in Durban.

abakolwayo bendulo.<sup>43</sup> of ancient times.

“After praying for his children, missionary and residents of the mission station,” this friend continued, “he prayed for the king (Cetshwayo) and all the people of Zululand.”<sup>44</sup> And when Maqhamsela finished his prayer, Maqhamsela moved and said, “I have finished / Sengiqedile.”<sup>45</sup> But none in the group of “armed men” was ready to pull the trigger until an *Induna* (commander) urged one young man to shoot. The young man then pointed a gun and shot Maqhamsela. “Soon after [the shot] he (Maqhamsela) died, / Kwati, masinyane,” his friend claimed, “there was a loud thunderstorm accompanied by hail and heavy rain / “kwavela ukuduma okukulu nesicoto esesabekayo.”<sup>46</sup> And, “people wondered in fear / Abantu bamangala ngokwesaba.” Obviously, this narration of the events surrounding Maqhamsela’s shooting and death drew from the biblical story of Jesus Christ’s death. What is less clear is how people read this conflation. Did the debates on inheritance and death currently filling the pages of *Ubaqa* shape the way people read and understood the deep meaning of Maqhamsela’s death? For, apart from addressing the material conditions of the *Amakholwa*, these debates sought to get people to think about new ways of transcending death. And, it was on this very question that Fuze and Nondenisa intervened. For these two writers, one of the ways that the Zulu king would be able to overcome death—live on in memory—was to have his words fixed on paper.

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<sup>43</sup> G.R. Hance, (ed.), “Bakolwa Basesilungwini” in *Ubaqa Lwabantwana*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (May 1877).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

### **The figure of the king**

The *Ubaqa* text employed story-telling techniques to get its message across to its readers. And so did Fuze, as we are about to learn. But the two texts differed in their political stances towards the Zulu kingdom. Up to now, Ekukhanyeni had not published any material that explicitly defended the figure of the Zulu king. But it appears that the appearance of *Ubaqa*'s article on May 1877, together with a petition by Norwegian missionaries prompted Ekukhanyeni to look at the situation in Zululand quite differently. A break from relying on messengers came from Fuze's journey into Zululand on June 10, 1878. After having gone to the Secretary for Native Affairs to ask for a pass to cross the border into Zululand, as we saw, Fuze embarked on a month long journey on horse back to see chief Matshana Sithole, king Cetshwayo, and other chiefs of high standing.

But on this journey Fuze also wished to see his relatives along the way, especially Hemuhemu, "our chief by birth."<sup>47</sup> On their first night they slept at the homestead of inkosi Langalibalele's son, Mazwi, and later, in homesteads at Hemuhemu, Pakade, Matshana, and Pakathwayo. What is remarkable in Fuze's journey was that he and his friends slept at the homesteads of families of high standing, most of them families of chiefs and headmen. This itinerary, this series of stopovers, could be read as a statement that Ekukhanyeni's political position was on the side of the chiefs—both those who had been deposed and those whose territory was about to be invaded and eaten up. In his text, Fuze goes on at length on an apparently anecdotal point that reads as a digression from his final destination. It is about his site-seeing at the grove of fallen Amachunu chiefs

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<sup>47</sup> Magema Magwaza, "A visit to King Ketshwayo" in *MacMillan Magazine* (1878), 421.

before getting into the heart of the Zulu king's power circle. For readers familiar with the customary etiquette of paying tribute to those in positions of power, known as "ukotha," Fuze's visits had an immediate meaning. His travel accounts also gave readers a sense of how chiefly families treated guests through the kind hospitality they received. When they arrived at Phakade's homestead, for instance, they were not at all pleased:

And next day I slept at one of Pakade's kraals, where I found a great dearth of food, and the chief's wives, who were there, complaining bitterly about it; so we lay down without eating, and rose early in the morning, and went to sleep at William Ngidi's across the Tugela.<sup>48</sup>

But the kind of reception and the families' standing in their communities were not uniform. After getting a pass from the Resident Magistrate's office at Umsinga, Fuze and the party went to Esigedleni, the homestead of former chief Matshana. Here the ambiance was somehow different, as Fuze wrote:

I sent a man to report me to Matshana, and was given a hut for myself and party; and shortly there a leg of beef uncooked, which we grilled and ate, and slept.<sup>49</sup>

Matshana had been a chief in Natal in the 1860s, but he had ran into conflict with the Secretary for Native Affairs regarding his treatment of people alleged to practice witchcraft. Because of this clash with colonial authorities, he was deposed and sent into Zululand to be under Cetshwayo's custody. Colenso and the Class of 1856 got involved in the investigation of the case of Matshana and his final deposition from power.<sup>50</sup> So

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> John Colenso, *Langalibalele and the Amahlubi tribe being remarks upon the official record of the trials of the chief, his sons and induna, and other members of the Amahlubi tribe.*



when Fuze visited the former chief, wasn't he seeking to rekindle the old ties that Ekukhanyeni and Matshana once had?

The next morning Fuze had an audience with Matshana where the two discussed the political situation in Zululand. For the first time, at Matshana's homestead Fuze recorded the political conversations he had with a chief. As would be the case in this journey, or at least in Fuze's narration of his journey, Fuze asked leading questions:

I am very much surprised to hear the stories about killing in Zululand. But I should very much wish to hear clearly from you, sir, if it is really true that I too shall be likely to be killed; since then I will go back at once. All my friends are afraid that I shall be killed in Zululand.<sup>51</sup>

To Fuze's concern about his safety in Zululand, Matshana responded: "I know nothing about any such matter here in Zululand. No one is killed if he has not done wrong."<sup>52</sup>

Fuze persisted and asked, "I hear what you say, sir; but can all that which is spoken be false, then?" He (Matshana) said that all could be false.<sup>53</sup>

From homestead of Matshana, Fuze went straight to Pakathwayo's homestead and stayed for one night. And, then, he proceeded to Cetshwayo's royal homestead. Along the way he visited a missionary, Mzimela (Rev. R. Robertson), where he stayed from Saturday until Monday. During their stay at Robertson's, Fuze asked for writing paper, "that I might write letters home [to Bishopstowe]; he [Robertson] gave me some note-paper and envelopes, and I wrote two letters."<sup>54</sup> It might be that some of these letters

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<sup>51</sup> Magera Magwaza, "A visit to King Ketswayo" in *MacMillan Magazine* (1878), 422.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

were incorporated into the final text. Regardless, his mentioning of these letters is important in that it suggests that while on his trip Fuze might have sent some of the information that later became part of the “narrative.”

When Fuze and the party left Robertson’s house, then went to the homesteads of Nkinsimane and Mfunzi, two of king Cetshwayo’s chief messengers. Word was immediately dispatched to the king, and “we took a calf from some cattle of the king’s which were there, which Mfunzi told us to slay and eat, and not go hungry.”<sup>55</sup> When they arrived at the king’s palace they “saw two converts, young men.”<sup>56</sup> Fuze asked them for an audience, and they consented. They, then, went to sit under the shade of a tree outside the kraal, whereupon Fuze began to inquire about rumors that “killing armies” were killing Christians in Zululand. Fuze wrote the following account given by these two young men:

There was a man of Gaozi’s who had been a convert for two years. When Gaozi first heard that his man wished to become a convert he tried to prevent it, and collected his council to inquire closely about the conversation of that man. But as the man would not abandon his conversion, the Induna Gaozi let him alone, to be a convert if he pleased; but he ordered that the king should not be told about that matter. So things remained until a whole year had passed. But afterwards, when the second year was nearly at an end, the missionary Mondri (Mr. Oftebro) went and told the king about the man’s conversion, Gaozi not having told him what he should say to the king, and being moreover absent from home at the time. When the missionary told that matter to the king, he was astonished to hear that it had been hidden from him by Gaozi, and sent a man to hear the truth about it from Gaozi. When Gaozi heard that, he was alarmed, thinking that the missionary had gone to inform against him to the king, because he had concealed that matter from him; and he sent an impi to kill the man at once, before Ketshwayo had sent a word of reply to him. So the impi went to kill him; and when it came to him, the convert, whose name was Maq[h]amsela, asked them where they were going. They said that

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<sup>55</sup> Magemag Magwaza, “A visit to King Ketshwayo” in *MacMillan Magazine* (1878), 423.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

they had come to kill him. Whereupon Maq[h]amsela bravely told them that he would not run away, but he begged that they would allow him time to say a few words of prayer. They consented, and he knelt down and prayed, and, when he rose up, he told them that he was ready now to die. Those who were sent, however, were all afraid to kill a man who was guilty of no fault at all, and they just stood and looked at him. Then some young fellow came forward and fired at him with a gun, and so died Maq[h]amsela.<sup>57</sup>

It was only on July 23 that Fuze and his party finally got an opportunity to see the king. On this day:

as we came out from the chief Induna, Mnyamana, we saw the king standing at the top of the kraal speaking with his people, who were seated in great numbers; he was standing at the entrance of the cattle kraal.<sup>58</sup>

The party could not wait, on seeing him, “went up to pay [their] respects.”<sup>59</sup> And, on this occasion, in almost the same manner Ngidi observed seventeen years earlier,<sup>60</sup> Fuze was careful to describe the king’s physique:

Ketshwayo is a black *ikehla* [head ringed man], resembling his father [the late Mpande or Panda], and firm in flesh. He is large, but his body is firm, not flabby, like the bodies of other large men among the Zulus. His face does not look so well as it did formerly. He had on today a spotted blanket. After paying our respects, we went down to the bottom of the kraal.<sup>61</sup>

Fuze began asking king Cetshwayo about the rumors. The king aired his discomfort at the very idea that missionaries would leave without saying a word to him. He also said:

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<sup>57</sup> Magera Magwaza, “A visit to King Ketshwayo” in *MacMillan Magazine* (1878), 424.

<sup>58</sup> Magera Magwaza, “A visit to King Ketshwayo” in *MacMillan Magazine* (1878), 425.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> See “The Class of 1856”.

<sup>61</sup> Magera Magwaza, “A visit to King Ketshwayo” in *MacMillan Magazine* (1878), 425.

For truly I don't know any good at all that they have ever done for me; all they did was to say that all the people ought to be converted, together with all my soldiers, and Mzimela (Mr. Robertson) himself is continually saying so to me.<sup>62</sup>

Fuze responded:

King of kings! That is good. Gumede! And I too say, sir, that the soldiers of the king and the whole Zulu people should be converted? For what means that being converted? Is it not a good thing to be converted? To be converted, sir, it is to practise what is right and good before men and in one's own heart, to carry a white heart through reverencing Him who made all men. That is not being converted, Gumede, when people cast off the power which is appointed to rule over them, and despise their king, and go and live with the missionaries.<sup>63</sup>

Fuze's response was sure not to anger the king. The king responded by saying, "A! Well then, if that were the case, it would be all right, since that is quite proper."<sup>64</sup> In the conversation, which he wrote down as a dialogue, Fuze wished to show that Cetshwayo did not take part in killing Christians. This point, in their conversation, was the narrative climax in Fuze's story, where he distanced the figure of the king from the body of the murdered Christian, Maqhamsela.

Furthermore, Fuze's text shows a list of all the chiefs whom the Natal government had deposed. In doing this, he hinted to the possibility that what had befallen the other chiefs was about to happen to the Zulu king. Thus, all the activities of the Natal government were woven into Fuze's story about his visit to the Zulu king. But this version of his narrative had limits: it was written in English for an audience based mainly in Britain with little immediate influence on the politics of the Colony of Natal.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Magemagwaza, "A visit to King Ketshwayo" in *MacMillan Magazine* (1878), 426.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

Still, when Fuze's article became public the name of Colenso and the name of Ekukhanyeni institution became associated with seditious politics. Even Fuze's name made a significant dent in colonial circles. He became this "notorious Magma."<sup>65</sup> And word about Fuze's version of events—his story—passed quickly, complicating our understanding about the relation between voice and paper, dissemination and translation.

### **Searching for the king and his words**

Two years after the publication of the two major texts discussed above in this paper—Fuze's account written in English and *Ubaqa*'s story written in Isizulu—the British army invaded the Zulu kingdom. The invasion resulted in the Battle of Isandlwana when the Zulu army defeated the British army on January 23, 1879. Six months later, on July 4, the British came back with reinforcements, and defeated the Zulu army at the battle of Ulundi. King Cetshwayo was captured and exiled to Cape Town, where he was imprisoned in the Castle. He was later sent to England to meet Queen Victoria and returned three years later, at the time when the country was plunged into a civil war between Usuthu, a section loyal to the king, and Hamu-Zibhebhu, a section that had broken ties with the Zulu king.

Ekukhanyeni was the only mission station openly against the British invasion in 1879. The view from Ekukhanyeni comes to us—as it did to readers at the time—through William Ngidi, who decried the invasion's repercussions. He said:

I quite hope that now you know that the Zulus are set at loggerheads by the cunning of white men, who want to eat up their land. My heart is very

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<sup>65</sup> James Saunders, "Natal in its relation to South Africa," in *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, vol. 13 (1881 – 82), 119. Housed at Killie Campbell Library in Durban.

full of grief, I cannot find words to express it, for this splendid old Zulu people.<sup>66</sup>

Amidst the civil war, John Colenso died in 1883. At the time, Cetshwayo was running for his life into the hills of Zululand.

Meanwhile, *Ubaqa* covered the events in Zululand, especially the death of Colonel Durnford, George Shepstone and the significant role that Edendale soldiers played in the war. In its November 1879 issue entitled, “UCetshwayo,” *Ubaqa* assured readers that Cetshwayo’s rule had come to an end. The editor felt that “it was proper to publish the story of the last Zulu king in Isizulu / noko kuhle ukuba indaba yenkosi, yokugcina ya kwa Zulu, i cindezelwe ngolimi lwesizulu.”<sup>67</sup> Again, in this two-page long article, the editor asked readers to imagine the future of the kingdom without its king. Clearly, she wanted readers to begin with this story because it was the newspaper’s cover story. The editor provided readers with Cetshwayo’s life history from his early encounters with the colonial government to his army’s defeat at Ulundi.

But the Class of 1856 still hoped to salvage the passing era. At this point, the work of rescuing the king especially fell to the hands of Mubi Nondenisa. The second major Ekukhanyeni article which is the subject of this paper deals with the search for the Zulu king. Mubi Nondenisa wrote his journal between July 26 and August 22, 1883. Afterwards, Nondenisa and Harriette Colenso translated and transformed the journal into a story or an account of the destruction of the king and the ruling council. When the two

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<sup>66</sup> Killie Campbell: Colenso Collection. William Ngidi, April 1, 1883, cited in Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*, 69, and “Class, Imperialism and Literary Criticism: William Ngidi, John Colenso and Matthew Arnold,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 241.

<sup>67</sup> “UCetshwayo,” in *Ubaqa*, vol. III No. 18 (November 1879).

Ekukhanyeni messengers, Nondenisa and Twayiso Mabaso, went into Zululand they never expected to find the country in ruins. Rather, their main purpose had been to inform the Zulu king of Bishop Colenso's death. As they approached Zululand, they heard news of the "surprise" attack on the king's palace at Ulundi and the mass killing of most of the members of his *ibandla*, the highest council of state. As Nondenisa noted in the journal:

And so the enemy got within [palace where *ibandla* was gathered], and killed all the men of rank, sweeping them clean, and killed and swept clean among the king's wives and children, and mothers, and all his womenfolk of the common people who were cutting grass to thatch the huts, both those from across the Umhlathuze, and those from this side, for they had swarmed to the king, all these were killed.<sup>68</sup>

Despite this news, the two Ekukhanyeni messengers went on searching for they wanted to be sure to get direct words from the king were he still alive. As they moved closer to the king's palace, Nondenisa noted: "today [July 27] there has been nothing but the passing and re-passing of people lamenting with one another, until sunset." He added that people "were talking of rumours that they had heard." Some were saying that attackers had killed the king. Nondenisa and Twayiso felt that "it would be wrong to go back without having made sure about this [themselves]."<sup>69</sup> Indeed, they continued to look for the king while also spreading word of the Bishop's death. When Mhambi, described as a confidential man of Qethuka, a chief in the Reserve, heard of Colenso's death, he said: "Mtokwana truly speak out my word which is the word of all Zululand, that since Sobantu is dead, we are all dead, there is an end of us. Well! And what is this which has happened?"<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Mubi Nondenisa, "Journal of his journey into Zululand in 1883," in *Digest on Zulu Affairs*.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

After two weeks of searching, on August 6, 1883, Nondenisa and his party came closer to finding the king. Nondenisa noted, “it was a large kraal but, large as it was, it was chock full of Zulus swarming both within and around it.”<sup>71</sup> The party sent Siqaka, whom they met in the homestead where the king was resting, to report their presence to the king. Siqaka did as instructed and “came back with a present of meat” and a message:<sup>72</sup> “the king says that your courage must be kept, it is something wonderful! That you should have come on with the country in such a state!”<sup>73</sup> The party waited to be called to see the king. But it was going to be on the morning of the second day that they were “summoned.”<sup>74</sup> “So we went,” wrote Nondenisa in his journal, “all three of us. We saluted, saying Bayete!” After the king greeted them, they “condoled with him on his ill-treatment and spoke [their] errand.”<sup>75</sup> The king responded by saying: no! I died on the day when Sobantu died, I felt then it was all over with me, what came after was not surprising.”<sup>76</sup>

As soon as they settled down, Mubi “sent Mhambi to fetch [his] writing case.”<sup>77</sup> And, thereafter, he began to write down the king’s words. Besides his enquiries, Mubi brought some questions from his writing case that Harriette Colenso had written down at

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<sup>70</sup> Mubi Nondenisa, “Journal of his journey into Zululand in 1883,” in *Digest on Zulu Affairs*.

<sup>71</sup> Mubi Nondenisa, “Journal of his journey into Zululand in 1883,” in *Digest on Zulu Affairs*.

<sup>72</sup> Mubi Nondenisa, “Journal of his journey into Zululand in 1883,” in *Digest on Zulu Affairs*.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*



Ekukhanyeni. The interview lasted for some time and many issues arose including how Zibhebhu's men sought to kill king. The king stressed the destruction of his personal belongings and things that connected him to the English royal family:

Yes, Mr. Grant's wagon they have destroyed, together with all my presents which I brought from England, and my cup which the Queen gave me, and my stick which the Prince [of Wales] gave me.<sup>78</sup>

He continued:

These then [which you have written] are my words, and I say let this wicked destruction of me be reported to all authorities that have been thus destroyed while sitting at home in my own place [that is, attacking no one].<sup>79</sup>

It was in this context of war and death that the three texts emerged. And, for the most part, the writers wanted to come to terms with the events themselves and also document what had happened. But, as soon as they began, Fuze and Nondenisa realized that their power, which was based on exposing the activities of the colonial government as well as all the forces against the king, was limited. So they redoubled their efforts at getting the words of Cetshwayo, and, most importantly, writing them down.

## **Conclusion**

While the three texts examined in this paper—"Bakholwayo BaseNatali," "A visit to the Zulu King Cetshwayo" and Nondenisa's journal—shared some common features, they also differed in important respects. The *Ubaqa* story was told from a distance and apparently through a person who was not there, and, for this reason it had to draw from

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<sup>78</sup> Mubi Nondenisa, "Journal of his journey into Zululand in 1883," in Digest on Zulu Affairs.

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biblical imagery and narrative structure. Fuze's account was more able to pay attention to ambiance and detail. His recording of the meeting with various families was meant to challenge the many other texts of the time that relied on creating an image of the Zulu king as a despot. For, if the king was cruel and killing Christians, why would he have given an audience to a Christian, Fuze, never mind having engaged him in dialogue? This was an implicit question underlying Fuze's account, which challenged his readers to question their assumptions.

The Class of 1856 emerged from this entanglement through textuality and the politics of voice and sound in the political saga of the Zulu kingdom. So when Colenso and Cetshwayo died, they capitalized on their associations with both men. Having control of the two men's words in print gave the Class of 1856 extra power to speak about and comment on political events in Natal and Zululand. And, thus, we can see that their writing activities became a central moment in the politics of the time. But the old means of engagements would also change because this group of Ekukhanyeni former students did not stop there. They sought to extend the reach of their political message. And, one of the ways in which they did this was to nurture an epistolary network of people who shared their ideas.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> The kind of political imagination I discuss above was not necessarily a perfected imagination of a next world of better British-Zulu relations and an enlarged scope for Christianization.