

**“Warm oneself at the society of men, and women:”<sup>\*</sup> Reconfiguring the idea of  
*Ibandla* in 19<sup>th</sup> century Natal and Zululand**

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**Introduction**

I think it would be highly objectionable if our natives were either able to criticize the Pentateuch, or to point out the contradictions and fallacies of the leading articles in any of our newspapers.<sup>1</sup>

On October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1898, four businessmen, Isaac Mkhize of Riet Spruit in the Lions River Division, Bryant Cele, Walter Frazer Mzamo and Mark Samuel Radebe of Pietermaritzburg came before James Forder, the Acting Magistrate of City Division at Pietermaritzburg, to register a national weekly newspaper called *Ipepa lo Hlanga*, (The paper of the original source).<sup>2</sup> As subjects of the Queen under a British flag and businessmen with businesses at the Capital,<sup>3</sup> Pietermaritzburg, they followed protocol and made two declarations under section 2 and 7 of law No. 9 of 1858: First, the said newspaper would be printed by the Zulu Printing & Publishing Syndicate (hereafter ZP & PS), and second, the ZP & PS would distribute the newspaper throughout Southern Africa.<sup>4</sup> The representative of the Natal government, James Forder, endorsed the proposed establishment of the newspaper. Two months later—while the lawyers of the

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<sup>\*</sup> This is a literal translation of the Isizulu saying: “ukotha ibandla.”

<sup>1</sup> The quote is taken from an article that appeared in *The Natal Witness*, December 16, 1873. It was written just a few years after the Colenso and Ngidi conversation. Readings on this ...

<sup>2</sup> I return to the careers of these men later in the paper.

<sup>3</sup> All four businessmen were exempted from Native Law and had pledged allegiance to the British Queen. For more information on Exemption Law, see ...

four founders of the paper filed documents with the government—the ZP & PS began printing and distributing the newspaper.<sup>5</sup>

In the first six months of *Ipepa lo Hlanga*'s existence, the publishers registered 550 subscribers and distributed 50 free copies to readers in the Cape Colony, Rhodesia, Beira, Delagoa Bay, Natal and Zululand Province.<sup>6</sup> Partly, because of the design, writing style and the issues that the newspaper investigated, it attracted a diverse and *critical* readership.<sup>7</sup> According to the manager and printer (Umhleli), Mark Radebe, the main target market of the newspaper was young men in towns and cities who could read English and Isizulu, hence, the *Ipepa Lo Hlanga*'s sub-title was an Anglo-Zulu weekly newspaper.<sup>8</sup>

But, since section 2 and 7 of law No. 9 of 1858 did not put censorship on issues that newspapers could cover, language and style in which newspapers were to be written and designed, the editor and writers to the *Ipepa lo Hlanga* assumed that every issue affecting Anglo-Zulu relations in Natal and Zululand “were to be investigated and discussed in the paper.”<sup>9</sup> But, as they soon learnt, they were wrong. After publishing a series of articles on the condition of Africans in Natal and Zululand and, specifically

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<sup>4</sup> NAD, C.S.O., 1597.

<sup>5</sup> NAD, C.S.O., 1759

<sup>6</sup> NAD, SNA, vol. 1/4/9. The newspaper had correspondents in the Cape Colony who regularly sent articles for publication. The title of the column was “Ezase Koloni” ngu Mkoloni / News from the Cape Colony by a Capetonian. The column was written in isiXhosa. See one of the articles, *Ipepa Lo Hlanga*, January 1, 1904.

<sup>7</sup> In referring to the paper's readers as a critical readership I wish to capture the rigour with which they engaged issues that they discussed in the pages of *Ipepa Lo Hlanga*.

<sup>8</sup> *Ipepa lo Hlanga*, May 17, 1901.

<sup>9</sup> *Ipepa lo Hlanga*, December 14, 1900.

how “Europeans” had changed over the past 50 years [1850 to 1900], the Natal government military authorities closed down the ZP&PS offices and prohibited the staff of the Company from getting access to their books.<sup>10</sup> Partly due to the action of the military, *Ipepa lo Hlanga* was not published for three months in 1901, the whole of 1902, and for three months of 1903.<sup>11</sup>

Seeing that the infrequency of publication would affect circulation and readers’ loyalty, the printer and manager urged subscribers and readers of the paper not to stop reading the newspapers and also reading in general. Radebe reminded readers:

...kiti emva, wonke umuntu oyindoba  
ubelota ibandla kwazise ilapo bekuvama  
ukupatwa indaba ezipete izwe,  
ezitokozisayo nezihlumamisayo.<sup>12</sup>

...In our past, every man attended the  
community council where matters of  
national importance were discussed,  
matters that brought joy and sustenance.

The manager, Radebe went further to say “even women knew the laws of the land / inomfazi imbala ube wazi umteto opete izwe.”<sup>13</sup> Radebe’s seemingly ideal and romantic claim that in “our past / kiti emva” information or issues of “national importance / ezipete izwe” circulated or flowed through the body politic without let or hindrance was designed to let colonial authorities know that the idea of talking and writing about thorny

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<sup>10</sup> NAD, C.S.O. 1759.

<sup>11</sup> NAD, C.S.O. 1759.

<sup>12</sup> “Makufundwe,” *Ipepa lo Hlanga*, May 1, 1903. It appears that for the most part the writers of newspaper Leaders did not want to have their names appear on the paper because of state prosecution. And, since I refer to this Leader extensively in this paper, I use the name of the editor and manager, Mark Radebe, rather than saying anonymous writer or just the name of the newspaper.

<sup>13</sup> Leader, “Makufundwe,” *Ipepa lo Hlanga*, May 1, 1903.

issues in the *Ipepa Lo Hlanga* and the very practice of writing and reading newspapers were neither new nor seditious.<sup>14</sup>

But the editor (also the manager of the paper) continued to claim that most writers and readers of the newspaper held an idea that by reading and writing to the newspaper they were “warming themselves at the society of men and, women (*botha ibandla*).”<sup>15</sup> Radebe’s profound statements or claims suggest that the idea of *ibandla* was very central to writers and readers. Indeed, writers who regularly sent letters to newspapers had coined a name for their forum—*ibandla le Nkanyiso* (the forum for enlightenment). And, for newspaper owners and editors like Radebe and John Langelibalele Dube, editor and founder of *Ilanga laseNatali* in 1903, investing the concept of *ibandla* with new meanings of print culture helped them to create and expand readership and also ensure that readers felt close affinity with their newspapers.

This paper explores the constitution of a new form of an *ibandla* for the literati, the conventions that governed its inner workings and the broader intellectual implications of these writers’ political project. It does this by investigating how writers used newspapers as a new form of *ibandla* and as both forum and parliament to discuss political and cultural issues.<sup>16</sup> I argue that editors, printers and writers to newspapers carved a space where they nurtured each other through their writings while transforming

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<sup>14</sup> *Ipepa lo Hlanga*, December 14, 1900.

<sup>15</sup> The definitions are taken from J.W. Colenso, *Zulu-English Dictionary* (Maritzburg: P. Davis & Sons, 1884). See also Alfred T. Bryant, *A Zulu-English Dictionary with notes on Pronunciation, A Revised Orthography and Derivations and Cognate words from many Languages; including also a vocabulary of Hlonipa words, Tribal-names etc., A synopsis of Zulu Grammar and a Concise History of the Zulu people from the most ancient times* (Maritzburg: P. Davis & Sons, 1905).

<sup>16</sup> During the time of Zulu Independence *Ibandla* was the highest council of state.

the idea of *ibandla* from a highest council of state and church congregation towards a less bounded network of readers and writers. But this nurturing was not for everyone. Some, especially women and the poor, could not “warm themselves in the society of men and women.”

### **Reconfiguring the inner meaning of *Ibandla***

While the idea of *Ibandla* was so significant in the editors’ interaction with readers as a marketing strategy, on the one hand, its definition was rather elusive. In its mid-nineteenth century meaning *ibandla* could mean, in the first sense, “all the men, young and old, in one place, whether only two or three or a large band, or the whole body; hence, company.”<sup>17</sup> In the second sense *ibandla* meant a “tribal council, assembly, strength of a kraal” or the highest council of state. When missionary activities gained momentum in Natal and Zululand *Ibandla* acquired a new meaning, which I refer to it here as a third sense, that of a “company of believers or church.” One’s attendance at an *ibandla* gathering, in the first and second senses, was referred to as *ukotha* which meant “to warm one’ self at (acc.); wait upon (a chief); lay a charge, inform, against (a person).”<sup>18</sup>

Owners (of newspapers) and writers to newspapers deployed and manipulated the concept of *ibandla* as a *neutral* idea with a genealogy going back to the past while, simultaneously relying and exploiting its subversive potential or powers. As the nineteenth century wore on, writers sought to purge *ibandla* of its religious connotations,

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<sup>17</sup> John W. Colenso, *Zulu – English Dictionary*.

<sup>18</sup> John W. Colenso, *Zulu – English Dictionary*.

that is, in the third sense, and, instead, emphasized its political meaning. This discursive process of reconfiguring the *Ibandla* into a public, political and intellectual domain relied on the epistolary moment as a social system, that is, the constitution of networks of correspondence, circles, spheres. During this moment (1860 to 1910) epistolary practice was characterized by a culture of reciprocity and exchange.

But the process was not without contradictions because in their (writers') attempts to redefine and reposition *ibandla* towards the end of the nineteenth century, they had to redefine the powers and position of the king. Because, in pre-print media times (during the time of Zulu independence), the king controlled *ibandla* and the outcome of the debates that took place at the forum. However, redefining the powers of the king was not a problem to these writers at this time. First, because when debates about the reconstitution of this sphere took place: there was no king in Zululand.<sup>19</sup> Second, the center of intellectual activity on culture and governance had moved to the colony of Natal, in fact, right at the center of the colonial capital, Pietermaritzburg. But at this time writers faced a new kind of power: that of the colonial state. One of the things that the Natal government, especially the Secretary for Native Affairs, did was to appropriate the *ibandla* and other political institutions.<sup>20</sup> The SNA and magistrates demanded that Africans address them in the same manner that they would do to a Zulu monarch. One of the demands from colonial officials was that Africans greet magistrates by a royal salute of *Bayede!* And, indeed, some magistrates tried to enforce the government command. For instance, a Ladysmith magistrate Mr. Waller was among the magistrates who wanted

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<sup>19</sup> See Chicago Art Journal and Africa's Hidden Histories.

<sup>20</sup> One of the ways in which the colonial government controlled *Ibandla* gatherings was to pass laws regulating Native Assemblies, for instance, Act No. 5 of 1898. See, NAD, SNA, vol. 1/4/9.

to be greeted in a royal salute. But he could not do as he pleased, for *Ipepa lo Hlanga* made it public that he was “acting a veritable autocrat in dealing with the natives.”<sup>21</sup> And when he continued, two months after this editorial, the newspaper wrote another one on the magistrate’s behavior:

Mr. Waller further said that, what he required the natives to do, with regard to saluting him, was the fulfillment of their own law. We must differ from him. No petty chief or “induna” was ever greeted by the royal salute of “Bayete”! Under native law. It was criminal to attempt it. The magistrate at Ladysmith may receive this assurance from us that, in what he is doing, he is usurping the title. As to resorting to coercive measures in requiring natives to salute, we leave the intelligent world to judge the wisdom of the act.<sup>22</sup>

Third, reconstituting this sphere also meant that writers had to deal with the very definition of what it meant to be a man of mature age. Because during “the times of kings,” as writers constantly reminded each other in the forum, the king authorized the rite of passage to manhood and, therefore, man’s admission into the highest council of state. The symbolic act was accompanied by the bestowing of a head-ring (isicoco) as a visible sign that a man had entered into a particular age group in society. One of the things that the writers did away with was this sign of manhood, the head-ring.

### **The Literati on culture: Redefining *Ibandla***

Elsewhere, I suggested that one of the things that connected readers and writers of letters was the sharing of information. If one of them had read something of interest in a book or

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<sup>21</sup> Editorial notes, *Ipepa lo Hlanga*, August 21, 1903.

<sup>22</sup> Editorial notes, “New Issue,” *Ipepa lo Hlanga*, September 11, 1903. For similar issues pertaining to the greetings, see Shula Marks, *The Ambiguities of Dependence in South Africa: Class, Nationalism, and the State in Twentieth Century Nata* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986).

newspaper, he or she shared it with others. Through this sharing and exchange of views letter-writers managed to create a network of readers who had a common language and some consensus on the issues they discussed. But the ideas that they shared were not givens; they constructed them as their connections developed. This construction or production of ideas about themselves and the society that they imagined was shaped to a large degree by the discussions they had in the sphere provided by magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, books and daily conversations.<sup>23</sup> Reading letters to the editor and private letters among themselves one gets a profound sense of the importance of these discussions and also of print.

Not only books, as I show in elsewhere, but also newspapers were shared. The letter-writers notified each other about the interesting latest news. In one of his regular letters to Ekukhanyeni, Gumede, a resident of Rookdale in Bergville, wrote to Harriette,

Ngitumela ikasi Natal Witness ka  
8<sup>th</sup> May 1903 ekuluma ngo  
Dinuzulu umntwana. Amanye  
amapepa ka 1900 – 1901  
angedukele. ... ngitumele futi  
uMasuku amakasana uma asele  
hambile ungisize nkosi uwaqubele  
Mossdale, [...] via Dannhaus  
[Street].<sup>24</sup>

I am sending a page of *The Natal Witness* of 8<sup>th</sup> May 1903, that talks about prince Dinuzulu. Other papers that came out from 1900 – 1901 have disappeared. ... I have also sent some pages to Masuku, and, please, pass some of the pages to Mossdale, [...] via Dannhaus Street.

The informal nature of the above note to Harriette suggests that the correspondence was regular. And Gumede had no reason to explain what was said in the newspaper or write a long letter. Making sure that they were abreast with the contemporary situation was one

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<sup>23</sup> I talk about these extensively elsewhere.

<sup>24</sup> Letter from [Josiah] Gumede to Harriette Colenso, 3 January 1908. Colenso Collection, A204



of the ways in which they maintained their connection. But ascertaining the extent of their conversation and mechanisms that they used is only the beginning. One has to go deep into their conversation and even further into how they constructed their sphere or *ibandla* as they called it here.

One of the first serious journals of *Amakholwa* came out in 1889 and was called *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*. The St. Alban's College at Maritzburg published the paper under the editorship of Rev. F.J. Greene, an Anglican minister. Unlike the above-mentioned newspapers, this journal covered a wide range of issues that included religious, political and educational issues. But even this journal could not satisfy politically inclined readers and contributors to the paper. They felt that extensive coverage of biblical issues would impact on readership. Solomon Khumalo, who later became the editor of *Inkanyiso*

*YaseNatali*, wrote:

Nxa lingena kakulu endabeni ezifundisayo songati abamkeli bayakuliyeka. Indaba ezimnandi sizizwa ngokweneleyo izincwadini ezingwele, (religious books) nasemasontweni. Epepeni lendaba (Newspaper) silindele indaba zombuso, nezinye ezimalunga nosizo lwomuntu lapa emhlabeni.<sup>25</sup>

If it [newspaper] enters the domain of [biblical] teachings [to a great extent] readers [receivers] might abandon it. Because we hear enough good news in religious books and at church services. In a newspaper, we expect news on governance, and those [news] that deal with a person's duty on earth.

Such views got a sympathetic ear from Thomas Zulu of Spandekroon, who "wanted to hear political issues in the newspaper / Sidinga ukuzwa izindaba zelizwe kuleli pepa."<sup>26</sup>

Writing to the newspaper and taking part in the *ibandla* had its own conventions. Some of the conventions were created by readers and writers themselves as the network

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<sup>25</sup> Sol. Khumalo, *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, June 7, 1889. Words in parathesis are in the original.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Zulu, *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, September 14, 1889.

developed. Among many of these conventions was the salutation: “Bandla” or some times “bandla lakiti le *Nkanyiso* / good fellows of the *Nkanyiso*” (literal translation).<sup>27</sup>

Writers introduced their letters with this salutation and return to it after making a particular point. And when writers wanted to put a point before readers they imagined themselves at the forum, for instance, Elias D. Khumalo responding to Sol. Khumalo on the issue of *lobola* put it:

Kumhleli we Nkanyiso, Ngisize ungifakele lamazwi ami, ngifuna ukuba nami ngike ngipendule uMr. S. Khumalo kulendaba yake kukona indawana nami engifuna ke ngi yibeke pambi kwebandhla.<sup>28</sup>

To the editor of Inkanyiso, could you, please, put my words [in your paper] I like to respond to Mr. S. Khumalo’s article on [lobola]. There is something in it that I want to place before the forum / ibandla

The idea was that as writers responded to each other’s contributions they were warming and nourishing each other.

While editors of newspapers liked writers to see newspapers as a new form of *Ibandla*, writers like J.S Mdimma of Adams Mission Station south of Durban felt a sense of loss. Particularly in the way writers concluded their letters. Mdimma put it: “what does it mean to say—I am yours—in the Zulu tongue? / Ukuti—ngongowako—loku ukutini olimini lwesiZulu?”<sup>29</sup> Mdimma’s concerns could not end there, he continued, “does Bongoza (old Zulu general) know that manner of speaking, what about Mapita (another Zulu general) and others do they know it?”<sup>30</sup> (Ubongoza uyakwazi loko kukuluma, u

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<sup>27</sup> Most writers used this expression. See *Inkanyiso YaseNatali* and *Ipepa Lo Hlanga*. But for a specific case see Joel Msimang’s letter to the editor, Mahamba – Swaziland, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1890. See also A. Sililo, “Mngane / Friend”, *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, January 24, 1891.

<sup>28</sup> Elias D. Khumalo, “Ukulobola”, *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, October 1, 1889.

<sup>29</sup> J.S. Mdimma, “Kumhleli weNkanyiso”, *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, October 15, 1891.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

Mapita yena nabanye bayakwazi nje konje?) Mdimas unease was caused by the fact that this was a direct translation of the English that he did not appreciate. He urged writers to borrow words from Sesuthu or Sitwa (San language). In this case, it seems, Mdimas wanted writers to widen their readership to include readers who spoke languages other than English and Isizulu. But to such concerns Fuze responded by saying that this represented no significant problem. Because according to Fuze, it meant respect:

Yebo kambe, Mdimas, lelo'zwi silitola kumaNgisi, kepa nati ngokwetu senza njalo uma sikuluma, sikulume ngokuhlonipa, njengokuti "yebo, Baba – mnumzana" – "nkosi" – "nkosikazi" – nakumfokazana, nakumfazi, nentombi yomfokazana, uma sikuluma singaxabene.<sup>31</sup>

Of course, Mdimas, we get that word from English, but we also speak like that when we talk to each other with respect, like saying Father, Nkosi, Nkosikazi even when speaking to a man of less status, women, ... daughter, when we are not quarrelling.

While questions about the conventions of the *ibandla* were important and attracted attention, it was the discussion on head ring (isicoco) that solicited varying views. On September 14, 1889—from the Carpenter's shop at St. Alban's College—Jas. J.K.

Khanyile wrote a letter to *Inkanyiso YaseNatali* challenging the view that people who wore head-rings did not want to keep up with changing times. In his letter, he not only dealt with those whom he thought wanted to be assimilated into English society but also the very act of trying to move out of one's community and customs. In the latter case, he referred to people who wanted letters of exemption from Native Law. Khanyile wrote:

... sinombuzo ngodaba esilubone epepeni elidlulileyo ngendaba yokungena ebulungwini. Ngoba sizwa benziwa into enkulu, izicoco za oyise seku yinhamba, into enkulu seku osheleni abane no

... We have a question concerning the news we saw on last week's paper about exemption from native law. For we hear this being made a big issue, and the head rings (izicoco) of their fathers have become

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<sup>31</sup> M. Magwaza, "Mngane / Friend", *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, October 15, 1891.

sixpence.<sup>32</sup>

an insult, and the big thing now is 4  
shillings and six pence.

According to Khanyile exemption and 4/6 (the money that was paid to receive papers of exemption and medals) did not remove any discriminatory practices. Africans were still prevented from “buying guns, taken into prison for ignoring the curfew bell and could not present their views in the Legislative Council.”<sup>33</sup> The son of a head ring[ed] father, as he referred to himself, asked those who wanted to abandon their fathers’ head rings to tell him the names of their fathers and their social status.

Khanyile’s letter—because of its provocative tone—started a debate between those who had been exempted and the ones’ who did not. On September 18, 1889, two days after Khanyile’s letter had appeared on the *Inkanyiso YaseNatali* newspaper, John Khumalo sent his response that was published on October 1, 1889. In the response, John Khumalo pleaded: “I say Mr. Kanyile listen carefully to my words that respond to your letter /Ngiti ngilalele kahle Mr. Kanyile emazwini engiza kuku pendula ngawo.”

According to John Khumalo, Mr. Khanyile missed the point that: “there are two people [small percentage] who have been exempted whereas there are a hundred under the law of the head ring [Native Law]<sup>34</sup> / abantu abasemtetweni babili abasemtetweni wezicoco, bayikulu.” This difference in numbers meant that there would be more people prosecuted under Native Law. But what is significant in the above quote is Khumalo’s reference to Native Law as the “Law of the head rings / abasemtetweni wezicoco.” A reference he made not once but five times in his three-paragraph-response to Khanyile.

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<sup>32</sup> Jas. J.K. Khanyile, Izicoco / Head-rings, *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, September 14, 1889.

<sup>33</sup> Jas. J.K. Khanyile, “Izicoco / Head-rings”, *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, September 14, 1889.

<sup>34</sup> John Khumalo, “Mngane / Friend”, *Nkanyiso YaseNatali*, October 1, 1889.

Such reference further focused the debate on the head ring rather than on Africans' rights that, perhaps, Khanyile might have intended. From then on, the conversations revolved around the immense symbolic power of this male headgear.

As a property owner and businessman, John Khumalo detested the “Law of the head-ring” because it deprived women (wives) all rights over their deceased husband’s property. He wrote:

... Uti uma usebenza uti ngisebenzela abantwana bami ekusebenzeni konke kobudoda bako. Akufike ukufa ke ufe. Bese zifika ke izicoco lezi wena ozenza igugu bese zitata yonke impahla yako nabantwana bako.

...In all your active life you say I am working for my children. There comes death, you die. Then, there arrive the head-rings (headringed men) you [Khanyile] consider special and take all your property including your children.<sup>35</sup>

John Khumalo’s response raised the perennial question that faced extended families, which was what to do with family members who did not apply or qualify for exemption from Native Law. According to Native Law, a woman, regardless of her age and status in society, had no rights to own property. When her husband died, male members from her husband’s extended family had all the rights over the property of the deceased. For John Khumalo and others who concurred with him, the head rings came to symbolize all these legal inequalities. Partly because of space, Khumalo ended his response on the property question but stressed that: “I have not answered you. This is just to say come on—I am going to response properly / angika kupenduli namhla ngisakuhola nje ngiti woza kukona ngizakukupendula.”<sup>36</sup> The conversations went on and became quite charged. Seeing that

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<sup>35</sup> John Khumalo, “Mngane / Friend”, *Nkanyiso YaseNatali*, October 1, 1889.

<sup>36</sup> John Khumalo, “Mngane / Friend”, *Nkanyiso YaseNatali*, October 1, 1889.

the debate might get out of hand, on January 17, 1890, Sol Khumalo, a colleague of Jas. Khanyile, came into the fray to defend his colleague. But his defense was imprecise. In his plea titled, “what wrong has Mr. Jas. Khanyile done / Woneni uMr. Jas. Kanyile?”<sup>37</sup>

Sol Khumalo thought that the conversation had gotten out of hand and this threatened the good atmosphere and spirit that prevailed in the paper or rather *ibandla*. “Hau! How dare you liter the paper with rubbish; has it (rubbish) enlightened anyone? / Hau! Nenzani ukuba ipepa niligcwalise nge rubbish; yake ya kanyisela bani”<sup>38</sup> What Sol Khumalo did, in this case, signaled an ominous future of the life of the forum. It set a precedent where the editor refused to publish letters that, he thought, were badly written or improper. It was not only the editor who urged writers to send good letters but also Magma Fuze who was printer at St. Alban’s College where *Inkanyiso YaseNatali* was published. Fuze referred to letters that were not well written as “rubbish” (*imfungumfungu*) and told readers that their letters had been destroyed.<sup>39</sup>

Sol Khumalo advised people to stop responding to Khanyile if they did not understand what he meant. However, instead of clarifying Khanyile’s stance on Exemption, Sol. Khumalo reminded readers that there were still “many issues that need[ed] to be discussed / sinendaba zinengi esifuna ama sizikulume.”<sup>40</sup> But of all the critiques of head-rings (*izicoco*) Fuze’s final words in the debate were strong and went to the core of what writers to the editor wanted to construct. Like Zagunde Zikalala of Pietermaritzburg who urged people, especially men not to pass time by drinking beer,

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<sup>37</sup> Sol. Khumalo, “Woneni uMr. Jas. Kanyile”, *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, kJanuary 17, 1890.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> M. Magwaza, “Nkosi Yami Mhleli / My Dear Editor”, *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, July 30, 1891.

Fuze said the same about the sewing-on of head-rings. On January 17, 1891, he wrote that: “the sewing-on [wearing] of head rings has caused an inability among us to think properly / ngoba ukutunga isicoco yiko okusibangele lobututa obungaka.”<sup>41</sup> He acknowledged that in the past: “the head ring was a treasure when Zulu kings ruled the land: but today it [head-ring] is nothing / naso-ke isicoco lesi sasi yigugu kusabusa amakosi akwazulu; sesiyize nje namuhla.”<sup>42</sup> Implicit in Fuze’s statement is that the sewing-on of head-rings bounded men to the power of the king and thus did not allow an individual to be himself.

Moreover, the time that men spent sewing-on head-rings or bonding in this fashion, it seems according to Fuze, was not appropriate for someone who had writing skills. The place for such individuals was on the new forum they had created—*Ibandla le Nkanyiso*. In addition, not only did Fuze loathe the idea of the conferral of the sign of manhood but also the shininess of its appearance when worn. He wrote that people should send their children to schools “so that they [children] would not be attracted to the dreaded and shiny head-ring / kona izingane zetu zingasayikufuza lobu’bucwazicwazi buka ngiyane otunekileyo.”<sup>43</sup> To the men who participated in this sphere, a new culture had emerged: one that valued individual’s ability to write and write well.

For in mid-1890s, Dinuzulu would be welcomed in the *Ibandla le Nkanyiso* not so much for his position as heir to the Zulu throne but for the ideas he expressed in the letters he [had them] sent to the editor. Fuze helped to get his letters from St. Helena

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<sup>40</sup> Sol. Khumalo, “Woneni uMr. Jas. Kanyile”, *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, January 17, 1890.

<sup>41</sup> Magma Magwaza, “Mngane / Friend”, *Inkanyiso Yase Natali*, January 17, 1891.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

published in *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*. For instance, in one of the letters, Dinuzulu wrote about his experiences at St Helena and complained about irregular attendance of his teachers. He wrote:

Ngilalele ukubona kwenu ngendaba yencwadi enganityela yona ukuti yabalwa yimi, nokubonga kwenu. Ehene, madona [bandla]... ungezwa udumo lwabelungu lokuti ngiyafundiswa. Umuntu ofundisayo ufika ngo fayifi (5 o'clock) amuke ngo sikisi (6 o'clock), ngolunye usuku apute angafiki. ...ngiqinisile ngokuba angifundiswa muntu.<sup>44</sup>

I am listening [reading] to your views about the letter I wrote, and your appreciation. Ehene, men [bandla] ... do not listen to the white people when they say I am being taught. The teacher comes at 5 o'clock and leave at 6 o'clock, and on certain days does not come at all. I am right when I say I do not have a teacher.

For, had he been well taught, Dinuzulu continued:

Ukuba ngangifundiswa abesengibona ingcosana; angiboni-ke. Ngoba ngiyafohlozela nje!<sup>45</sup>

If I had a teacher I would be seeing [writing and reading] better; but I do not. Because I am just stumbling!

As it had become customary in the forum, writers thanked Fuze for sending letters and also passed their word of appreciation to the writer, Dinuzulu. But while writers had shared the idea that *Inkanyiso YaseNatali* was a forum for discussion, they also had specific ideas of the deep meaning and the materiality of the new *Ibandla*.

### **The printing machine and the colonial capital<sup>46</sup>**

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> UDinuzulu kaCetshwayo, "UmNtwana wakwaZulu / Zulu prince", *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, January 14, 1892.

<sup>45</sup> UDinuzulu kaCetshwayo, "UmNtwana wakwaZulu / Zulu prince", *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, January 14, 1892.

<sup>46</sup> Administrative capital in Isizulu is called Komkhulu. Some of the writers used this Isizulu expression to refer to Pietermaritzburg or Emgungundlovu.



“What will arouse us? Asked *Ipepa Lo Hlanga* through the pen of its editor, Radebe, on December 14, 1900. The answer was, “meeting together, *Ipepa Lo Hlanga* and the [Natal Native] Congress,” he told readers.<sup>47</sup> This question foreshadowed a series of articles that sought to question the status quo in the colony of Natal and Zululand. Such articles covered a wide range of issues namely: (1) Exemption from Native Law, (2) What will be the outcome of the Native Question? (3) What will be done after the War? (4) The white of the present day, and (5) what was our condition before they came? When colonial authorities read the paper there was much disquiet. The above questions unsettled government authorities and they were quick to react.

On February 27, 1901, the Under Secretary for Native Affairs [USNA] interviewed two owners of the paper about their views on the articles. “I read over some of the articles for their information,” the USNA wrote to the SNA, “and asked them if they approved of them.”<sup>48</sup> The two proprietors, who were also chiefs, Isaac Mkhize and J.M. Majozi are said to have replied, “not at all.” And that “they [had] spoken to the editor about the tone of their paper and strongly deprecated it.”<sup>49</sup> What made the articles in the paper more immediate or seditious in the eyes of colonial authorities was the fact that the paper was published in the city, in fact, few blocks from the Secretary for Native Affairs offices.

In addition not only were the offices of the company close to the seat of government but also Radebe’s business was at the corner of Oxford and Boom streets and

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<sup>47</sup> *Ipepa Lo Hlanga*, December 14, 1900.

<sup>48</sup> SNA, vol. 1/4/9.

<sup>49</sup> SNA, vol. 1/4/9.

his house on No. 10 Gertrude Lane. The three owners, Isaac Mkize, Bryant Cele and Walter Mzamo had offices on No. 323 Greyling Street. But colonial authorities' reaction was more calculated than the residents' response to Radebe's views in the *Ipepa lo Hlanga*. For, on February 5, 1904, *Ipepa lo Hlanga* had to issue an editorial to those who harassed the Radebe family. The editorial read:

There are some cowardly Europeans of low breed who have on three occasions pelted the residence of Mr. M.S. Radebe at the corner of Oxford and Boom Streets, doing some damages. By what motives these dastardly whites are prompted it is hard to tell. The remarks they often make when committing these assaults are the only means by which one can understand why they behave so unseemly. All sorts of names such as "nigger," "black nigger's store," "stuck up kaffir" & are used. These are some of the "advantages" of civilization! What have the Police got to say?<sup>50</sup>

But to the editor of the paper, Radebe as we saw in the introduction, writing and publishing was not necessarily a seditious act. For his friends at Ekukhanyeni had been publishing different works on various topics in the past 50 years.

And, on this issue Radebe was correct. When Fuze and Nondenisa received a used printing machine from their friends in Britain, they wasted no time. They started reprinting the Ekukhanyeni books that had been originally published from 1859 to 1865. In doing this, they were encouraged by the letters that came to the station asking for books. At this time, it seems, the printing press had acquired much more significance than in earlier times. Owning a printing press meant, in the words of N. Luthuli of Groutville, that a society was self-sufficient or had come of age.<sup>51</sup> Masuku, one of the writers to Ekukhanyeni tried unsuccessfully to get a printer to start his newspaper. In his

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<sup>50</sup> *Ipepa lo Hlanga* Editorial, February 5, 1904.

<sup>51</sup> M.N. Luthuli, "Kumhleli wePepa Lo Hlanga", *Ipepa Lo Hlanga*, August 7, 1903.

attempts, he enlisted the help of Ekukhanyeni.<sup>52</sup> Because by now Ekukhanyeni writers like Fuze thought that “it [was] wonderful to have this paper (*Inkanyiso*) because we are able to know each other; ... / Madoda, limnandi lelipepa letu ngoba siyazana ngalo...”<sup>53</sup> But for other writers, owning a printing press and publishing a newspaper was not sufficient to create a sense or feel of a public forum. In this case, *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*—while it had created a forum for people to express their views—it lacked some of the vital elements of the old *ibandla*.

The missing element was that the founder of *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, Rev. Greene and the forum (*ibandla*) did not have poets. And, because of this fact readers could not praise (praise = in its artistic or dialectical meaning) the editor for he had no praises (*izibongo*). “Indeed, son of Greene,” one writer wrote, “we lack the praises to thank (praise) you for your great work / Yebo mfo ka Green si swele nezibongo enga si ku bonga, ngesenzo sako esikulu kangaka.”<sup>54</sup> And, from the time this view was expressed, it would take three years for the forum to have a poet. To writers, the period between 1887 and 1900 was referred to as a sphere without poets until Tand’ uHlanga (Patriot or Lover of his people), a poet of Zululand emerged.

*Inkanyiso YaseNatali* stopped circulation in late 1897. But in its short life, it established a readership and a critical audience. So that when it went out of circulation, *Ipepa lo Hlanga* newspaper came into its place. This switch, according to M.N. Luthuli of Groutville, represented something wholly new. For Luthuli things had never been this

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<sup>52</sup> Z. Masuku to Harriette Colenso, January 28, 1908. A204 Colenso Collection, box 71.

<sup>53</sup> Magema Magwaza, “Nkosi Mhleli / Dear Editor”, *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, June 25, 1891.

<sup>54</sup> Solomon Khumalo, *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, April 27, 1889.

exciting. Moreover, the fact that three years after the founding of *Ipepa lo Hlanga* another newspaper called *Ilanga lase Natali* emerged and that both newspapers had their own printing machines meant that editors had control of print media in Isizulu. Luthuli, in a letter to the editors and readers of *Ipepa Lo Hlanga* and *Ilanga Lase Natali*, wrote: “the editors now have printing machines borrowing has come to an end, support this Zulu, unite Zulu so we can trap them / Abahleli sebe nemicindezelo kupelile ukwetekela sekelani Zulu, hlangana Zulu sibatiye.”<sup>55</sup> To him, the existence of the two newspapers meant that “Natal has reached the ultimate or end point / iNatal isifika ekugcineni.”<sup>56</sup>

He asked fellow readers, “someone can tell me what is beyond *Ilanga lase Natali* and *Ipepa lo Hlanga*? / seningezwa ngomuntu esengityela ukuti konje yini engalapaya kwe *Langa no Hlanga*?”<sup>57</sup> The sun (*ilanga*) “warms the soil for vegetation to grow and [it] gives life to humans and animals / Lifundumeza inhlabati kumile konke kupile umuntu nezilwane.”<sup>58</sup> So *Ilanga Lase Natali* would fulfill all the needs of nature, human beings and life itself. Perhaps this was more to expect from a newspaper unless one reads Luthuli’s article figuratively: that when people read the paper they would nourish themselves through the information they received, as is the case with book learning. Writers at this time had a particular relationship with written words which cause them to liken words to edible things. But in this case, unlike book readers in ..., these newspaper readers would not only nourish themselves but also warm themselves at the society of men and women—*bothe ibandla*.

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<sup>55</sup> M.N. Luthuli, “Kumhleli wepepa Lo Hlanga”, *Ipepa Lo Hlanga*, August 7, 1903.

<sup>56</sup> M.N. Luthuli, “Kumhleli wepepa Lo Hlanga”, *Ipepa Lo Hlanga*, August 7, 1903.

<sup>57</sup> M.N. Luthuli, “Kumhleli wepepa Lo Hlanga”, *Ipepa Lo Hlanga*, August 7, 1903.

Luthuli continued to “enlighten / khanyisela” his fellow readers on the meaning of *uHlanga* (original source). According to him *uhlanga* meant a nation (Isizwe). He emphasized that, “a nation is not the work of one person, in one’s locality / isizwe akukulunywa ngomzamo kabani, ngesifundana sako bani.”<sup>59</sup> But he realized that this point needed clarification. He, then, drew from the Zulu past and suggested that, “The Zulus were a small nation / Uzulu wabe eyisizwana nje.”<sup>60</sup> But through “unity, bravery and going forward and love of their land or nation,” he continued, “they died for it” / ngokuhlangana ngesibindi ngokuya pambili ngokutanda izwe lakubo ngokulifela.”<sup>61</sup> Luthuli also had a message for the editors of the two newspapers (*Ipepa Lo Hlanga* and *Ilanga Lase Natali*) which was, “Unite, be one, and feel each others pain and joy / hlanganani nibe munye, nizwane, nizwelane ubuhlungu nobumnandi.”<sup>62</sup> He saw the two newspapers as more than just sheets of paper containing information. For him, newspapers represented the journey that Africans had traveled. So to create a sense of comradeship, Luthuli drew from the history of the Zulu kingdom and from that part which contained episodes of sacrifice and people’s intense feeling of togetherness.

Of course, according to conventional scholarship in the social sciences, Luthuli’s essay would fall into a nationalist narrative. But the author of the article suggests more than just nationalist feelings. Unlike other articles before it, the article sees the sphere or space provided by the newspapers as a lifeline of this community of the literati. And not

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<sup>58</sup> M.N. Luthuli, “Kumhleli wepepa Lo Hlanga”, *Ipepa Lo Hlanga*, August 7, 1903.

<sup>59</sup> M.N. Luthuli, “Kumhleli wepepa Lo Hlanga”, *Ipepa Lo Hlanga*, August 7, 1903.

<sup>60</sup> M.N. Luthuli, “Kumhleli wepepa Lo Hlanga”, *Ipepa Lo Hlanga*, August 7, 1903.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

only the literati but also even those who did not read would get warmth by the mere existence of these newspapers. Luthuli concluded his letter by stressing that had it not been because of space, he would have continued his discussion on the meaning of newspapers in Natal and Zululand. But as a “servant (incku yenu) of readers,” he had to abide by the conventions of the forum.<sup>63</sup> Common in letters like the one of Luthuli is the way they created an illusion of enjoying the labor of writing so that it could appear painless and exciting. Could it be that writers wanted to show how the new forum differed from earlier forms of *ibandla* including the contemporary forums that magistrates controlled? For, especially about the latter, writers were critical of the ways in which magistrates addressed people at their offices in their attempts to disseminate government information. Because of this dissatisfaction, the *Ipepa Lo Hlanga* insisted that government information would be better publicized on its pages.

However, after publishing critiques of government policies, the colonial government was not keen on sending its notices to the paper. For it found most notices on *Ipepa lo Hlanga*'s pages subversive. For instance, writers would publicize notices of land sales that were, according to government, “willful misrepresentation of facts” that had become “intolerable.”<sup>64</sup> But a question still remains: how big was the circulation of the newspapers or the reach of the new *ibandla*? Or, rather, did people read newspapers? One may not know exactly, but sources suggest that papers—a category that included newspapers, newsletters and advertisements—circulated at mission stations and locations

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> SNA 1/1/308: Extract from *Ipepa Lo Hlanga* Notice concerning a meeting to be held for the purpose of planting sugar cane on Location Lands.

where the writers lived. Below is a table that gives approximate figures of the written materials which suggest that newspapers were distributed to various mission stations.

The table suggests that in the south, midlands and northern parts of Natal, people had access to papers. And, that the number of papers that circulated at the mission stations varied. The Northern mission station of Groutville received an increasing number of papers. A few factors might have contributed to this. First, economic activities in the area made people to want to keep up with current news. Second, people's interests in politics led them to want to be part of the discussion in newspapers, as we have seen above with M.N. Luthuli. Umzumbe mission station on the other hand show that the number of papers rose between 1894 and 1896 but, then, declined in 1897.<sup>65</sup> Edendale mission station in the midlands also shows decline in numbers between 1896 and 1897.

1893-94

Groutville	Esidumbeni Mission Station	Umzumbe Mission Station
Papers: 2,964	Papers: 650	Papers: 1,287
1896		

**Table 1: showing the number of papers delivered via the Post Office between 1893 and 1894<sup>66</sup>**

1896

Edendale	Esidumbeni Mission Station	Groutville (north coast)	Umsunduzi Mission Station	Umzumbe (e) Mission Station
Papers: 2,106	Papers: 1,066	Papers: 3,068	Papers: 286	Papers: 1,456
1897				

<sup>65</sup> See population figures in .....

<sup>66</sup> *Natal Colony Blue Books*, 1893 and 1894.

Papers: 1,807	Papers: 1,287	Papers: 3,822	700	Papers: 1,261
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**Table 2: showing the number of papers delivered via the Post Office in 1896 and 1897<sup>67</sup>**

But, of course, statistics do not tell us about the actual reading practices of people at these mission stations. One can only rely on the actual newspapers themselves where writers mentioned their places of abode. What is evident is that newspapers were delivered to these mission stations via the postal system.

### **The politics of the page**

Besides its controversial stance on Natal politics, *Ipepa Lo Hlanga* inaugurated a new form of newspaper design and ownership of the printing press. The ZP&PS that published the paper had offices at Georgedale in Cato Ridge east of the Capital. A.S. Mtimkhulu was its Secretary and Treasure in 1903. The cover page—written in bold and large print—primarily contained advertisements. And, in selling the newspaper as an Anglo-Zulu newspaper, the founders sought to attract a big and diverse readership. The manager, especially, wanted readers to dress themselves in the new fashion wear, as demonstrated in figure 15.

Most prominent was the fashion adverts from Mark Radebe's Boutique store on 187 Commercial Road and Mrs. Radebe's restaurant at the intersection of Oxford and Boom Streets, where she also sold firewood. Both businesses were in the capital. The advert provided directions to buyers by mentioning the Boutique store's proximity to Gebuza's office, an Isizulu name for the Secretary of Native Affairs, Arthur Shepstone.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> *Natal Colony Blue Books*, 1896 and 1897.

<sup>68</sup> *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, August 4, 1892, No.30.



The message from the Inkanyiso newspaper was that people who read the paper ought to fashion themselves in the new imported fashion.

Indeed, some heeded the call. In the final decade of the nineteenth century, derby hats slowly replaced head-rings and top hats. As urban centers mushroomed in most of Southern Africa, a “new” culture emerged. It was this urban culture that shaped men’s style of dress. Simultaneous with this cultural development was the emergence of African nationalist ideas. In this context, Andre Odendaal observed that, “Dinuzulu, the Zulu king, was regarded as the symbolic head of the African tribes in South Africa.”<sup>69</sup> Writers expressed similar views in African newspapers at the time.

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<sup>69</sup> Andre Odendaal, *Black Protest Politics in South Africa to 1912*, 106.

**IMALI YEPEPA IMINGALO-LUHLOBO.**  
 E Natal ngonyaka . . . . . 10/-  
 E Natal nkekawata . . . . . 3/6  
 Ngapandhie kwe Natal ngonyaka 13/-

# Ipepa lo Hlanga

THE ZULU NATION  
 AN ANGLO-ZULU WEEKLY NEWS

INTENGO, 3d.

PIETERMARITZBURG, NATAL, FRIDAY, MAY 17, 1901.

## MARK S. RADEBE, KWA RADEBE.

Umfu wangishiya ngisese Swazini njulo ngisauyinyipele zindaba zakona namhlanje 'IPEPA LABANTU' linkifumanisa sengise Melika nase Spain (Spanish American War.)

Kubi e Melika nase Spain, ezakona ziqeda itemba ungati noma ufuna ukutenga apa e Mgunghlovu uti amlungu.—*Lompahla kamina hai fikile mina cabanga lomungu ka Spain bambile yena kwa Radebe ke akunjalo, usaqeda kuvula amabhokit ishumi anyahla ezivutiweyo.*

### Zifikile ku £200 —Lapa kukona ama :

BHULUKWE aqala ku :-	5s, 6s 6d, 7s 6d, 10s 6d, kuze kube ku	15s 6d
AMABANTSHI	5s, " " " "	20s
oDABULA (abamnyama)	15s 6d " " " "	22s 6d
AMAYEMBE (obusika)	1s 6d, 2s, 2s 6d, 3s 6d	7s 6d
DNEKISTAYI (bows and ties)	9d, 1s, 1s 6d	2s
AMAJAZI (ever coats)	15s 6d, 20s, 25s	7s 6d
AMASOKISI	6d, 9d, 1s, 1s 6d	2s
AMASHOLO (Wulu)	2s 6d, 3s, 3s 6d, 5s 6d	2s
" (amakulu)	5s 6d, 9s, 10s 6d, 15s	17s 6d
AMASHUSI (LADIES)	5s, 5s 6d, 6s 6d, 7s 6d	8s 9d
ZICATULO	7s 6d, 8s 6d, 10s 6d, 12s 6d	15s 6d
ZINGUBO (zokulala)	5s, 8s 6d, 10s 6d, 12s 6d	15s 6d
ZIKAFU (scarves)	1s, 1s 6d, 2s	
AMASTOKANISI	1s, 1s 6d	2s
AMADUKU KASILIKI	2s, 2s 6d, 3s 6d, 5s 6d	6s 6d
IZITOFU (suits)	15s 6d, 20s, 25s, 30s	

*Nezinye umpahla ezinjengo:—Send' amayembe angapantsi Amabhulukwe angapants Izigqoko nomakapi, njalo, njalo.*

**M. S. RADEBE,**  
 187, COMMERCIAL ROAD, PIETERMARITZBURG.

**ISAZISO ESIBUKALI**

W. GWAMANDA & CO.,

Baqale "IKAYA LEZI HAMB" nezi "Hapeki," ku 567, 69 Pietermaritzburg.

Intenga Ipepa lo Hlanga,  
 Pietermaritzburg,  
 Commercial Road, Pietermaritzburg,  
 e.

Figure 1: showing Mark Radebe's Advert.

For example, on December 24, 1907, a reader of the African newspaper *Izwi Labantu* stated that, “we are all Zulus, Mr. Editor, every black man under the sun is a Zulu practically.”<sup>70</sup> For “every man under the sun” to claim Zulu identity and see Dinuzulu as the symbolic head of all Africans in South Africa, he had to transform himself into a *new* African monarch. This study proposes that he attempted this refashioning through attire. African newspapers published numerous photographs of Dinuzulu, dressed in western suits. The papers circulated throughout South Africa before 1910.<sup>71</sup> One such newspaper was *Izindaba Zabantu*. A bi-monthly newspaper published by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Mariannhill west of Durban. Between 1911 and 1913, *Izindaba Zabantu* featured Dinuzulu’s photographs. But it was not just pictures. The publishers of the newspaper also published Dinuzulu’s biographies from his early life to exile in St. Helena.<sup>72</sup> A striking feature of early twentieth century photographs is that most men, especially western educated men, no longer wore head-rings but sported top hats and derby hats instead.

In spite of this façade of comradeship among men in the *Ibandla le Nkanyiso* (the council of enlightenment) as Sililo called it, there was a looming threat to male power. For, while writers were keen to refashion the old *ibandla* and unsettle its foundations, they were not, at least some of them, willing to give power to women. And, writing to *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, Sililo aired his displeasure at what he saw at a church congregation at the intersection of Chapel and Church Street in Pietermaritzburg. According to Sililo,

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> These newspapers were *Ilanga LaseNatali* (KwaZulu/Natal), *Imvo Zabantsundu* (Cape Town) and *Izwi Labantu* (Johannesburg)

<sup>72</sup> See *Izindaba Zabantu*, June 1, 1911 and November 1, 1913.

at this church service the pastor asked three congregation members—one of them a woman—to come before the congregants to say a few words to the leaders of the church. According to Sililo’s recollection of what happened at the church, a woman stood up and declared that she was “not ashamed to stand before the congregation (*ibandla* in the third sense);” doing so, when she knew that this was not an accepted behavior in the old meaning of *ibandla*.<sup>73</sup> For this incident, Sililo and other members of the congregation blamed the pastor for allowing a woman member of the church to stand before them. What is striking in Sililo’s article is the conflation of the meaning of *ibandla* as defined in the introduction. This suggests that for some writers, while *ibandla* was being transformed before their eyes on the pages of *Inkanyiso Yase Natali* and *Ipepa lo Hlanga*, they still had a sense that it essentially meant a highest council of state and was *normatively* a male domain.

But it would be wrong to create an impression that writers allowed all kinds of exclusions to flourish. Magma Fuze among others was very critical of the way in which exempted Africans excluded those who were not. And he strongly felt that what they did was counter productive. For, “a cup of coffee would be tasteless without sugar / nekofi lingebe lona lingatelwe shukela,” he wrote. Fuze made this point particularly to urge writers especially those who had been exempted from Native Law to include all Africans in their meetings and associations. As he asked:

Ngiti yini ukuba bangamemi nje bonke  
abanye abanamandhla okuya  
enhlanganweni, abapumileyo  
nabangapumile, kona kungavela  
mahlaumbe izwi elingaze lize uhlanga

I say, why do they not invite all those who  
have the means of attending their meetings,  
exempted and those who are not exempted,  
so that, perhaps, a word that can help  
people can emerge.

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<sup>73</sup> A. Sililo, Mngane / Friend, *Inkanyiso Yase Natal*, January 24, 1891.

Iwakiti.<sup>74</sup>

Fuze's view signaled the initial desire to have an organization that drew people from all walks of life and his call predated the formation of the Natal Native Congress in 1900. And, eight years after Fuze's call, *Ipepa Lo Hlanga* drew readers' attention to the importance of unity: "proclaim the Congress so that it may belong to all natives and be the place of the natives to warm themselves."<sup>75</sup> Indeed, this call supports the contention in the introduction that the events leading to the formation of regional congresses and, then, SANNC in 1912 was a rather protracted process. It owed much to transregional and transcontinental epistolary connections.

### Conclusion

The transformation of *ibandla* from the highest council of state toward a virtual community of readers and writers—while it held up a promise of broad inclusion—was never completed. Because in the first decade of the twentieth century writers and readers of newspapers retained the old meaning of the *ibandla*—that of a council constituted by men. Thus, they saw *ibandla le Nkanyiso* (council for the enlightenment) as essentially a male domain. This retention of the old meaning had consequences for the issues that writers discussed. For the most part, discussions centered on male concerns, for instance, *lobola*.<sup>76</sup> Such discussions revolved around the question of how and what to discard and

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<sup>74</sup> Magema Magwaza, "Mngane / Friend," *Inkanyiso YaseNatali*, January 28, 1892.

<sup>75</sup> SNA, vol. 1/4/9, Extract from the *Ipepa Lo Hlanga* of December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1900, January 4<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>, 1901.

<sup>76</sup> The conventional translation of *lobola* in the anthropological literature is bridewealth.

retain in this practice of *ukulobola*. Clearly, the views of women in the matter are conspicuously absent.

But the question remains, in view of the above transformation of this male domain, can one conclude that *Ibandla le Nkanyiso* remained within the confines of the old *ibandla*—the highest council of state. But it is also important to note that *ibandla le Nkanyiso* was not the only sphere that writers used to share ideas. There existed networks of letter writers—one of them was associated with Ekukhanyeni mission station. In view of the above exclusions in the *ibandla le Nkanyiso*, perhaps, no wonder most women writers wrote to Ekukhanyeni asking for advice.<sup>77</sup>

Another explanation of why the transformation of *Ibandla* took the shape it did is that the individuals who were involved in re-figuring its inner-meaning were themselves at the margins of colonial society. And, in their attempts to enter into the mainstream, they ignored other individuals who were in similar if not more precarious social conditions.

...paper continues...

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<sup>77</sup> It was also possible for writers who wrote letters-to-the-editor to use masculine names.