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THE TRANSITIONAL ROLE OF THE XHOSA ORAL POET IN CONTEMPORARY  
SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY

THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis outlines the changing role of the Xhosa imbongi in contemporary South African society. The changing socio-economic and political scenario in South Africa, and the way in which the imbongi is adapting in order to accommodate new pressures created by these changes, form an integral part of this thesis. The effects of education and increasing literacy on the tradition are outlined. The interaction between oral and written forms is explored in chapter 2. The role of the imbongi within the religious sphere is included in chapter 3. Xhosa preachers within the independent churches often make use of the styles and techniques associated with oral poetry. Iimbongi who are not necessarily preachers also operate within this context. The relationship between the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the African National Congress and iimbongi has also been researched and forms part of chapters 4, 5, and the epilogue. The modern imbongi is drawn towards powerful organisations offering alternative leadership to many of the traditional chiefs. In the epilogue collected poetry is analysed in the context of Mandela's visit to Transkei in April 1990. Interviews have been conducted with chiefs, iimbongi attached to chiefs as well as those attached to different organisations. Poetry has been collected and analysed. In chapter 5, three case studies of modern iimbongi are included. The problems facing these iimbongi in their different contexts, as well as the power bases from which they draw, are outlined. Finally, an alternative definition of the imbongi is offered in the conclusion.

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## PRELIMINARIES

### GENERAL REMARKS

Mafeje (1963:91) defines the imbongi as

A praise poet who frequented the chief's great place and travelled with him in traditional Nguni society. His distinctive feature is that he can recite poems without having prepared them beforehand.

If one takes into account the socio-economic and political changes which have taken place in South African society over the past years, this definition no longer seems to reflect the reality of the situation. This is so even in the more rural areas such as Transkei. Opland, in his book Xhosa Oral Poetry: Aspects of a black South African tradition, has included a chapter entitled 'Change in the Tradition', but an in-depth study of these changes and how they have affected the tradition has, as yet, not been made. Although Opland (1983:33) acknowledges that

The actual situation today is complicated by social processes such as urbanization, assimilation, and formal education ...,

there has been very little research done on the movement from, for example, **orality to literacy** and the effect this has had on Xhosa oral and written poetry. Also, **religion** (especially in oral poetry) as a thematic resource has been left largely unexplored. Opland's work is therefore limited and concentrates mainly on the traditional imbongi attached to chiefs. The manifestation of Xhosa oral poetry in the urban areas, say for instance within **trade unions**, has also not been researched. The

effects of urbanization in general among the Xhosa people, and the impact this has had on praise poetry, is in need of discussion. Political changes have also affected the tradition and an analysis of these needs to be undertaken. The research for this thesis arises therefore out of the need to determine the effects of socio-economic and political changes on the age-old tradition of the Xhosa imbongi in the Transkei, Ciskei and Eastern Cape.

At the outset, it would seem necessary to provide definitions for some Xhosa terminology such as imbongi, ukubonga, isibongo, (more commonly izibongo) etc. which relates to iimbongi and their poetry. Kropf, (1988/1915:42) in his dictionary, defines ukubonga as follows:

To praise, extol loudly and impromptu by songs or orations; to praise, magnify, laud, celebrate the deeds of a chief, or the feats of race oxen, or the valour of an army. Old men of the chief's clan, though distant, creep out of their huts at daybreak and loudly celebrate his praises. Phr. lento umntu iyemka noko ibongwayo, man goes away, though he is celebrated, i.e. the most renowned must die.

The noun imbongi (plural iimbongi) is defined as 'the poet who praises; an improvisator,' and the joint entry for isibongo and umbongo (idem) is:

Praise, poetry; the song or hum of a nurse to lull a child to sleep. Plur. izibongo, poems descriptive of the feats and character of chiefs or heroes. Among the Abambo, <sup>1</sup> isibongo is the clan name, e.g. Mabengu, Dlamini, Radebe; in greeting or thanking a person the clan name is used.

At this stage, it would seem necessary to point out that the term

'praise poet' is indeed a controversial one and, even today, is used with a certain amount of reservation. The reason for this is that the traditional role of the praise poet was indeed not only to praise but also to criticise the chief. According to Mafeje (1967:193), the term 'praise poet', though it is '(i)n all probability ... the nearest one could get to the African term "mbongi" ...', may still be misleading.

He continues (idem):

... the translation itself is misleading in that it over-emphasizes the wrong aspect of the institution. As Jordan has clearly pointed out, the institution of 'mbongi' was not limited to 'praising' or 'adulation' of the chief; it went further than that ...

Mafeje (op. cit.) therefore makes use of the more neutral translation of 'bard', but states that,

Though the term 'bard' occurs in the literature, it does not seem to have been used with any amount of consistency. In most cases it has been used as synonymous with 'praise-poet'.

Nevertheless, most of this terminology, including words such as bongainq and bongaed which are a combination of English and Xhosa, are now firmly entrenched. In my opinion, these words and phrases are unacceptable. I shall therefore use the term imbongi as far as possible (in order to avoid any confusion resulting from the translation 'praise poet', which may provide a distorted view of the role of the imbongi) and attempt to avoid any English-Xhosa combinations.

It would seem appropriate to point out, though, that the term

'praise poet' may well be applicable in certain instances today and may not be as misleading as Mafeje (supra) has made it out to be. It will become evident that in many cases there is very little room for criticism on the part of the imbongi. Because of political changes he is often no longer in a position to fulfil his traditional role of both praising and criticising chiefs. As we shall see later, the role of the imbongi in relation to the chief has indeed changed. If it is found that there is a need to redefine the position of the imbongi, this will be undertaken in the conclusion of this thesis. For the purposes of this thesis, we shall use the term imbongi (plural iimbongi), bearing in mind, though, that this term and its English translation, 'praise poet', may indeed have undergone certain changes which, if proven to be the case, will be commented on in the conclusion.

In view of the changes which are taking place in our society, it is important that any speech event should not be divorced from the context in which it is taking place. The discourse which is used by iimbongi today is therefore moulded within the context in which they find themselves. The context is subject to constant change, however, which in turn introduces change within the tradition itself. Although the Oxford dictionary (1976:905) defines tradition as '(o)ral transmission of knowledge or belief from one generation to another, the body of such knowledge ...', it would be naive to consider such tradition as static. Tradition is subjected to change because the society within which we find ourselves is also constantly changing. This thesis is therefore concerned with providing an analysis of these changes.



This study is ethnographic in the sense that participant observation forms a major part of it. Such a study should show that the communicative event cannot be divorced from the social context within which it occurs.

For the sake of convenience, this thesis has been divided into six chapters, excluding the preliminaries, the epilogue and appendices. Each chapter is further subdivided, offering a micro view of particular aspects related to the changing role of the imbongi. These chapters can be viewed as entities on their own. However, for a holistic portrait, the chapters must not be seen in isolation, but rather in the macrocosmic sense.

#### **OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THESIS**

The goals of this thesis and the topics to be investigated are summarised below.

#### **CHAPTER 1**

The traditional imbongi is introduced. This incorporates an analysis of some of the previous work done on the traditional imbongi. Reference is made to the nature of the changes and pressures to which the traditional imbongi is being subjected, and the effect this is having on the institution of the imbongi and his role in society.



## CHAPTER 2

This chapter looks at the movement from orality to literacy among the Xhosa people and the effect this has had on their poetry. A theoretical framework based on works such as Walter Ong's (1982) Orality to Literacy: the technologising of the word and Finnegan's (1988) Literacy and Orality is established in order to achieve this aim. The changes which education have brought about and how these have influenced Xhosa oral and written poetry are looked at. Has there been a change in the structure, style and content of their poetry? The use of formulaic expressions within both written and oral poetry is also commented on. Also, the effect of literacy on the oral memory forms part of this chapter. A case study which attempts to analyse the visual aspects of oral poetry (available on the accompanying video) which are lost in the written poetry is also included.

## CHAPTER 3

Religion as a thematic resource in Xhosa written and oral poetry is analysed. To what extent is religious poetry produced in the form of izibongo during religious ceremonies? Is there also reliance on formulaic expression? The interaction between orality and literacy in this context is also discussed.

## CHAPTER 4

Oral poetry produced in trade unions as well as the role iimbongi play within these is looked at. Poetry is collected and analysed

in order to determine how it differs from the poetry of the traditional poets and also what role it plays in awakening political consciousness. A case study is included.

#### CHAPTER 5

Case studies of three contemporary iimbongi are undertaken. Monde Mothlabane is an imbongi living in Grahamstown. His role as an imbongi in an urban area (but not attached to any particular organisation) will be ascertained. Collected poetry will also be analysed. Likewise, the role of an imbongi living in a 'rural' area in Transkei will be analysed, viz. Melikhaya Mbutuma. The poetry of Bongani Sithole, an imbongi living in Umtata, will also be analysed. What are the factors which influence these three iimbongi in their different environments? These case studies should serve to highlight the problems which modern iimbongi face and their strategies for coping. Similarities and differences between these iimbongi in their different contexts also emerge.

#### CHAPTER 6

A conclusion will be formulated, which will attempt to analyse possible future trends. Will the imbongi survive in the urban, or even the rural context? Is there not a need to redefine the imbongi, or his role, due to his reculturalisation (if this is found to have occurred)?

## EPILOGUE

The poetry which was produced during Nelson Mandela's visit to Transkei (22-29 April 1990) is analysed. The purpose of including this material in an epilogue is that it provides one with the opportunity to see the modern imbongi in action and to analyse the poetry in context. This epilogue is intended to encapsulate the very essence of this thesis on the changing role of the Xhosa imbongi in contemporary South African society. Mr Mandela's visit provided an opportunity to document change, not only in the role of the imbongi but also in society in general, of which the poetry produced is a reflection. In short, this epilogue hopefully represents a recent, living illustration of contemporary izibongo.

#### FOOTNOTE

1. The Abambo or Mfengu were originally Zulu who fled from Shaka and settled in the South among Xhosa-speaking people; in my experience the singular form *isibongo* is not current in Xhosa either for a surname, as it is in Zulu, or for a poem (Opland 1983:16).

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCING THE IMBONGI

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Reference to the existence of Xhosa oral poetry can be traced back to the early nineteenth century, with the arrival of missionaries, travellers, traders, hunters and European administrators in South Africa. Although few of them realised the importance of the Xhosa imbongi and the role which he played within this traditional society, they were responsible for recording and commenting on some aspects of the tradition.

As early as 1807, Ludwig Alberti, a traveller, described the events surrounding the return of a Xhosa hunting party and makes clear reference to the singing of praises (1968:77):

When a hunting party has returned to the neighbourhood of its village, the one who inflicted the first wound on the lion ... is hidden from view by shields held in front of him. At the same time one of the hunters leaves the troop and praises the courage of the slayer with a screaming voice, accompanied by a variety of leaps, and then returns again, when another one repeats the performance...

Clearly, Alberti is making reference to the age-old institution of praising. He refers to the use of a guttural voice characteristic of the poet, and of praising the individual for his deeds, which is an essential part of the tradition.

Although such a poet may not necessarily have been a professional imbongi, but rather an amateur, reference is also made to the professional praising of chiefs. Between the years 1864 and

1866, the traveller Gustav Fritsch (1872) came into contact with the Xhosa people and makes specific reference to Xhosa poetry concerning chiefs and cattle. Likewise, Ralph Deakin (1925:83), a British journalist who reported on the Prince of Wales' tour of the empire in 1925, makes reference to:

The mbongo, the poet who walks before any great chief, summoned the tribesmen to bow down and tremble. He chanted the izibongo ...

One of the earliest references to the imbongi and his performance was made by William Shaw, an 1820 settler and Methodist missionary who visited Hintsá, the Paramount chief of the Gcaleka people, in 1825. Opland (1983:12) makes reference to Shaw's observations concerning the imbongi. Shaw equates the imbongi to a jester who

cried aloud his usual public announcement of the events of the day. Mixed up with many highly complimentary praises about his master ...

William Scully also provides a somewhat humorous account of his experiences with an imbongi. He once served as colonial administrator among the Bhaca. Scully (1913:270-272) talks about how he was considered a chief and therefore worthy of being praised by an 'imbonga' or 'praiser':

After I had heard a circumstantial account of my own supposed mighty deeds and a catalogue of quite mythical illustrious ancestors, recited over and over again with ever-increasing poetic licence for several days in succession, I felt I had had more than enough, so I presented my "imbonga" with an old blanket, and he departed, apparently content.... A few months afterwards, however, the "imbonga" returned. Again he extolled me to the skies; again he called upon the



heavens above and the earth beneath to do homage to my majesty and worth. Again he compared my beauty to that of a lofty tree and my somewhat meagre figure to that of the fattest black ox in the Baca pastures. But my self-esteem was unmoved: the novelty had worn off; I had heard it all before, and too often. I ordered him to depart, but he praised me all the more ... for a fortnight. In the end I surrendered, but not unconditionally. I agreed to give him half a crown and an old shirt, he making a solemn promise never to praise me again ..., my praises ... ascended the hillside, rending the heavens with the clamour of his poetic eulogy. But he kept his promise, for I neither saw nor heard of him more.

Rather than regard this as a great honour, Scully lacked the cultural insight to appreciate the magnitude of this event. Even so, according to Opland (1983:16-17), his

... extended account of his encounters with a Bhaca imbongi are of value because they refer to the animal imagery, genealogical data, and allusions to personal qualities and deeds that constitute staple ingredients of the Xhosa eulogy.

During the nineteenth century, probably the most unbiased and accurate accounts of Xhosa poetic activity were reported by the Xhosas themselves. John Knox Bokwe published, between 1878 and 1879, an account of Ntsikana.<sup>1</sup> Tiyo Burnside Soga wrote a book about Xhosa traditions entitled Intlalo KaXhosa. Poetic activity among the Xhosas has also been accurately recorded by authors and scholars such as S E K Mqhayi,<sup>2</sup> whose novel Ityala Lamawele draws heavily on izibongo, and A C Jordan. Constant reference to the imbongi is made in their literature. Scholars like Archie Mafeje have also been responsible for recording Xhosa izibongo and providing some commentary on the tradition.

Clearly the tradition is an age-old one which has been the focus

of much scholarly attention. However, since these times the tradition has been subjected to many pressures, which have resulted in changes which now need to be documented and analysed. Already in the nineteenth century, Tiyo Soga makes reference to certain changes which are occurring (Cory Library Ms 16369): 'Today you don't find praisers, they have sunk down with the kingdom and humanity of Xhosa.' He is referring here to the presence of iimbongi at initiation ceremonies. Scully (1913:270) also hints at changes when he states: 'In those days the "imbonga" or "praiser," was still a recognised institution.'

The tradition of the iimbongi has therefore never been a static one, but one which has been subjected to constant change. As Opland (1983:236) puts it,

The dynamic element is necessary in our approach since the tradition of Xhosa oral poetry has clearly changed and is continuing to change with changes in Cape Nguni society. Tradition is not a lifeless thing; It alters and adapts to new social circumstances.

Many of the elements of the tradition will therefore have been dropped or adapted. Nevertheless, the concept of singing praises still retains an identifiable character which is based on the tradition in the past. The speech act itself must, however, be viewed in its social context, and its value or function in society must be taken into account. The iimbongi's relationship with his audience and the role which his izibongo play within that particular society are of utmost importance. Any analysis of the tradition will then have to take into account the changes which have taken place with regard to the context of the

performance, the audience itself and the function or role of the imbongi in a society which is subjected to constant socio-cultural and political pressures. It would seem that the tradition has now simply grown and adapted to its new environment. It should be viewed as a 'dynamic' tradition. It is clear that the tradition has undergone changes, especially in the last twenty years. Urbanisation, the impact of education, the formation of independent homelands, the changing nature of the chieftainship, the emergence of black nationalism, and the recent release of political prisoners have all had their effect on the tradition.

#### THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE IMBONGI

G P Lestrade (1959:292) makes the following comment with regard to traditional literature, in which he distinguishes between prose and verse, although he makes it clear that there is no hard and fast dividing line:

Prose embraces two main categories: Narrative Prose, including Myths and Legends, Fables and Tales, and Didactic Prose including Proverbs and Riddles in verse, and the miscellaneous Verse-Lore of tribal initiation; Lyric and Dramatic Verse, including all the various kinds of Songs; and finally that genre intermediate between the epic and the ode which we have in the Bantu Praise-poems.

Traditionally, these praise poems fulfilled different social uses or functions.

Oettlé (1973:1) divides these praises into various categories. These include praises related to the following: 1) Babies and children, 2) Boy initiates, 3) Women, 4) Dancing, 5) Ancestors,

6) Commoners (men), 7) Chiefs and heroes, 8) Other tribes, 9) Clan praises, 10) Divining bones, 11) Animals, 12) Inanimate objects. Of these, she regards the praises of chiefs as the most important. The imbongi who praises a chief therefore provides us with only one kind of praise poetry.

It would seem, however, that praising is today not limited to the chiefs, and has been extended to other facets of life which did not previously exist in Xhosa society. The universal concept of praising includes the praising of chiefs. It has now been extended to include the poems which are performed, for example, at trade union meetings.<sup>3</sup> Opland's view, therefore, that the contemporary tradition contains four types of poetry may be misleading. He refers (1975:186) to tribesmen who have the ability to compose poetry spontaneously, tribesmen who have memorised a few traditional poems about their clans, the tribal poet or imbongi, and finally, the literate poets. However, the changes which have occurred may require this definition to be broadened.

Today one finds poets singing praises at trade union meetings and political gatherings. This may be an adaptation of the tradition. One also finds iimbongi who not only recite orally, but produce poetry in writing. But when does something become tradition? There is surely no fixed time. If tradition is an on-going process where change can be expected, then the poets who exist in the urban areas are as much a part of the tradition as are the traditional iimbongi living in the rural areas. There has



developed a modern imbongi whose poetry is based and moulded on the reality which he and his people are experiencing in the contemporary context.<sup>4</sup> It is important that the protest element which still exists in Xhosa poetry, and which is encouraged by the reality of the situation in which we find ourselves, should not be excluded. These social factors which exist in our society cannot be ignored when one talks of Xhosa iimbongi, or of praising in general. For this reason, a separate chapter will be included on the effects of political and economic change on the imbongi in the trade union context. If a holistic view of the tradition is to be sought, then there is no point in limiting oneself to a romantic view of the imbongi as someone who is fast dying out and disappearing. It is these changes in the role of the imbongi that will be documented.

Due to these factors the definition which has previously been afforded to the imbongi may, as pointed out earlier, have to be re-defined or broadened. Opland's view (1983:67), as presented below, seems no longer to apply today:

Not only can the imbongi use ribald language, he also enjoys the licence to criticize with impunity persons in positions of power. Both licences seem to be acknowledgements that the imbongi in performance is not to be held responsible - perhaps is not responsible - for what he says.

The use of ribald language may, however, still be acceptable. If one looks at Rubusana (1860), we find that the use of ribald language abounds. In Mtirara's izibongo, concerning a Thembu chief (ibid:202), we find reference to the following:

Liramb' elinendevu lakwa-Mtirara,  
Elabonwa ngabafazi bakwa-Mbanga bepangela ...

It is a bearded puff-adder of Mtirara,  
That was seen by the women of Mbanga whilst working ...

The metaphor here is sexually explicit and the imbongi is possibly criticising Mtirara for his sexual exploits with Mbanga's women. This type of language use was quite acceptable then and still seems acceptable today. If one looks at Manisi's poetry produced about Chief K D Matanzima we also find the use of ribald language. Opland (1983:114) quotes a poem produced by Manisi at the 1974 University of Fort Hare graduation ceremony. The poem was produced in honour of Chief K D Matanzima. Lines 5, 6 and 7 contain a similar metaphor to the one used above:

Where is this lofty one of Matanzima,  
The son of the bearded puff-adder of Tato,  
Which was seen by Mbanga's women on the way to work.

Even today, the imbongi does not seem to be held responsible for such language. However, it seems to be the inclusion of politically sensitive issues in his poetry which are not condoned. For these, the imbongi is personally responsible. This is clear from the number of iimbongi who have been harassed and arrested in recent years because of their criticism of certain political issues. The arrest and harassment of iimbongi such as Mbutuma, quoted in Mafeje (1967), and Qangule (quoted in Opland 1983:266-7), during the Dalindyebo-Matanzima dispute concerning independence, as well as Nojozi (during the Transkei-Ciskei feud of 1987 and 1988 which was quoted in the Daily Dispatch, 4 August 1988) is clear evidence of this.<sup>5</sup> It would



seem that the imbongi is today often used by chiefs as a political tool in order to enhance their own positions of power.

Lestrade (1959:295-6), in an attempt to define the tradition, points out that:

These compositions are regarded by the Bantu themselves as the highest products of their literary art. They are a type of composition intermediate between the pure, mainly narrative, epic, and the pure, mainly apostrophic, ode, being a combination of exclamatory narration and laudatory apostrophizing.... In content they consist of phrases and sentences in praise of some tribe, clan, person, animal, or lifeless object which, as a group or individually, is the subject of the poem.... Persons ... of higher status have theirs composed by professional bards, the praise-poets and reciters, the only type of professional literary artist known to tribal Bantu life ...

However, he continues by making reference to the influence of Westernisation and modernisation on the imbongi:

Such poets, under modern conditions of Bantu life, have naturally often taken as the subjects of their poems not only the personalities of tribal community and the material objects of Bantu culture, but also the personalities and objects with which contact with Western civilization has made them familiar; and the more emancipated of them have given their poems not only new forms as well, largely under the influence of European poetic form.

Mafeje (1967:193) points out that, traditionally:

The 'praises' of the chiefs deal primarily with happenings in and around the tribe during the reign of a given chief, praising what is worthy and decrying what is unworthy, and even forecasting what is going to happen; ...

Because of the influence of Westernisation, the imbongi's verbal repertoire has been broadened. He is no longer restricted to

events in and around the tribe. Also, iimbongi in urban areas for example no longer praise the chief, but rather trade unions and political organisations. Ewels (1981:13) states the following:

It should be noted that the contemporary imbongi's themes show great diversification encompassing national as well as local concerns. The contemporary movement has been towards identification with larger wholes, accompanied by a decrease in ethnicity.

The imbongi's role is therefore to interpret what is happening around him - his role is that of a social critic and political commentator. He should be in a position to comment on matters which are of local concern as well as matters of national concern, such as the effects of South African government policies. Unfortunately, his role as a political critic of this nature seems to have been severely restricted by the fear of criticism which surrounds politicians today, whether it be constructive criticism or not. The role of the imbongi as mediator is being seriously undermined. As pointed out earlier, the term 'praise poet' is deceiving in the sense that traditionally his role was both to praise the chief, and also to criticise with impunity where he felt the necessity to do so. The imbongi therefore acted as the chief's political adviser or councillor. Opland (1983:51) quotes Jordan writing in his obituary of Mqhayi that

one of the essential qualities of ubumbongi (being an imbongi) was true patriotism, not blind loyalty to the person or the chief, but loyalty to the principles that the chieftainship does or ought to stand for.

Opland (idem) continues:

The imbongi comments in his poetry on current affairs, expressing his attitude as one member of the chiefdom, criticizing, when he sees fit, behaviour that he considers excessive or beyond the norm. In order to act in this way as a spokesman, as a political commentator he must be the composer of his poems.

Oettlé (1973:59) states that

Praise poetry greatly strengthened loyalty to the chief; it was a powerful means of political propaganda, so important that the bard was paid to do nothing but perfect his craft.

Although it would seem that the bard was not paid, but presented with a gift from time to time, clearly his role was indeed political. However, today this role has been severely restricted and it is doubtful whether the imbongi is always permitted to compose his own poems and to speak his mind. This is supported by recent interviews with prominent chiefs.

In an interview with the late Chief M Ndamase (Acting Paramount Chief of the Western Mpondos) and some of his councillors during 1987, the following conversation was recorded:

KASCHULA: Would the imbongi be allowed to criticise the chief?

CHIEF: Yes, of course. The imbongi can say anything in public.

KASCHULA: Maybe this is a bit of a touchy issue, but do you think that this would still happen today? In other words, is the imbongi free to speak his mind? I know that Transkei has section 12 of the Public Security Act which says that you cannot say anything which is derogatory towards a chief, etc.?

CHIEF: Now this is rather political, isn't it? (Laughter.) This

is, as you say, a bit touchy.

MAKUBALO: If you do so, well, it is at your own risk.

KASCHULA: Do you think that the imbongi would be imprisoned?

MAKUBALO: Yes, why not? If he has said something that is political.

KASCHULA: So tradition must give way for politics, or the changing of times?

CHIEF: Yes.

The conversation was then continued with an elderly man of approximately eighty years of age.

KASCHULA: I wonder how Mr Sitshako would feel about that?

SITSHAKO: Even then, he was never allowed to swear, but he spoke his mind.

CHIEF: We don't mean swearing, but being derogatory ...

KASCHULA: But he was never put in prison?

SITSHAKO: Yes, he was never imprisoned no matter what he said.

CHIEF: But some things are no longer permitted.

KASCHULA: So the law does not permit the chief to be criticised?

CHIEF: Yes.

KASCHULA: If he does, then he does so at his own risk?

CHIEF: Yes.

KASCHULA: Is there a damper on the imbongi today, bearing in mind that he may speak his mind only at his own risk, knowing that he may be arrested? How would your imbongi feel about that chief?

CHIEF: I think ... hh! he may speak his mind. Yes, and taking

him into custody or giving him over to the police depends on the person he is 'bongaing'.

KASCHULA: So you would not do that?

MAKUBALO: Let us say there were members of the security police at that particular gathering, and they hear him say those words which can lead to his detention ..., he could be detained for what he said at that meeting. That would be proper for them.

KASCHULA: Traditionally it would be improper?

CHIEF: But before the imbongi 'bongas', he must consult the chief.... My imbongi must 'bonga' me, not another person. He must refer to me. Let us say that while he is 'bongaing' me he mentions something that is subversive whilst 'bongaing' (against the state), he can be arrested. He must not have such a speech. If he does, the security will come and detain him.

KASCHULA: Then it will be out of your hands?

CHIEF: Yes. I may try to intervene, but I may not succeed in defending him.

KASCHULA: Would the major changes be related, on the whole, to the changes in the structure of government? Does anything remain of the tradition, as you see it, as it did in the past?

CHIEF: I think there are going to be some changes, because on a number of matters, someone who wanted to be my imbongi, they (the iimbongi) want me to give them what they should say, or what books they should use in connection with the traditions of the Mpondos. Now that seems to control them and not allow them to say what they feel.

KASCHULA: So you in a sense are the editor of what they are going to say?



CHIEF: Yes.

KASCHULA: So that is a major change?

CHIEF: Yes.

KASCHULA: Do you think that impedes their spontaneity?

CHIEF: Yes, it would.

It is clear that in certain instances the imbongi will have to conform or be destroyed. The imbongi faces a situation where it is virtually impossible to keep the tradition as it was in the past. His role of mediating between the ruler and the ruled, and of enforcing his social duty of ensuring that the chief does not misuse his power, no longer exists as it did in the past. Traditional imbongi attached to chiefs face one of two options: either they conform and refrain from criticising the chief, and thereby lose all credibility with the people. Their role will be diminished to one of entertaining only. On the other hand, they speak their minds and accept the consequences which may follow. If the imbongi succeeds in fulfilling his role as mediator, then according to Ewels (1981:14), '... he will enjoy public support and may be labelled "imbongi yesizwe".'

Ewels (ibid) correctly continues as follows:

His (the imbongi's)<sup>6</sup> status is directly dependent on the response of the people. By synthesising social and political roles, the imbongi creates a balance of power between the ruler and the ruled. The integrity of his role and the validity of his protest is preserved by his loyalties to the people and the chief. A perversion of this role, for example to that of a political stooge or propagandist, is immediately discredited by the people.

The opinions of the people should therefore play an important

role in determining what the imbongi will say. He should not be expressing the opinions of one man, namely the chief, but rather the opinions of the people themselves. The imbongi should be in a position where he can express the truth of his convictions. According to Chief Ndamase, he is the 'editor' of his imbongi's poetry. His imbongi no longer says what he wants to say, but only what the chief allows him to say.

Clearly, not all iimbongi will be prepared to do this. Indeed, could one classify this man as a true imbongi in the traditional sense? Mr Mbutuma (an imbongi from the Transkei) said in an interview (1987) that he would continue to speak his mind, no matter what the consequences. However, it is my opinion that ultimately, the imbongi will have to become aware that he will only be allowed to comment on certain issues at his own risk. Even Mr Mbutuma (after receiving warnings from the police) stopped praising for a long period of time. There is a definite decrease in the poetry which Mbutuma produces after 1976, bearing in mind that according to Mr Mbutuma he was arrested in 1976 on a charge of inciting the people against Chief Kaiser Matanzima.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps section 12, which prohibits any criticism or interference with chiefs or headman has had an effect - even if it is a subconscious one. It may well be difficult to establish what can and what cannot be said. This is clearly illustrated in the following extract from the Ndamase interview where Mr Sitshako (who belongs to the traditional school of thought) expresses this view:



SITSHAKO: Now it seems there are things which they are not allowed to say.

KASCHULA: Do you still see them in the future?

SITSHAKO: They will not be there because of the changes which will affect them.

MAKUBALO: What do you think will finish them?

SITSHAKO: No, I don't know, but I see how you talk here, saying there are things that are forbidden. I see it in that way as it may be difficult to understand what is forbidden.

CHIEF: I am sorry, old man, but there is something I don't agree with. An imbongi is someone who just grew himself, and he praised and criticised. He could be called to 'bonga' so as to inform the people.

SITSHAKO: No, you are not wrong, you are right, but now there are forbidden areas. The imbongi is not going to know that, just like I didn't know.

KASCHULA: But only if he is told?

SITSHAKO: Yes. He will finish himself because he will not have been told. Those who say what they want - like an imbongi should - will destroy themselves.... The better imbongi will be the educated one as there are certain areas which he must learn to leave behind. They will be afraid. They must learn. Iimbongi are being put in a corner in this way.

MAKUBALO: Iimbongi will have to be educated that they know what is happening in the world and around them (between countries, including negotiations), so that they can comment on them. He might draw on something that has been negotiated and which now annoys the neighbouring country, so that is why they must learn.

He must be aware of political changes. If he does not, he will cause problems.

SITSHAKO: There seem to be issues which, unlike the old days, must be avoided. He must be given a way to understand this through education. Because he will otherwise act in the old way.

CHIEF: ... and get caught.

What Mr Sitshako seems to be saying here is that the more educated imbongi will be able to survive in the sense that he will be aware of the sensitive areas which need to be omitted from his poetry. This again emphasises that his role as both critic and praiser, and also as mediator between the ruler and ruled, has changed. In this way, if he complies and thereafter writes down his poetry, he may be able to get his poetry published and perhaps even prescribed in the schools.

This point can be amplified further by the experience of G Ngabeni, a student at Fort Hare University in the Ciskei. He is an imbongi whose experiences seem to illustrate the fact that the imbongi's role is indeed changing. During the proceedings at a particular conference at Fort Hare (1988) at which a number of academics were present, a woman (dressed in traditional dress) entered the hall and began to praise. She came from outside and had at no time been present at the conference. She had therefore not been inspired by anything which had been said and, according to Mr Ngabeni, was merely an entertainer. Ngabeni said that at one point during the proceedings he had to force himself to refrain from praising, even though he felt inspired to do so.

The reason for this is that he now holds a senior position in a school, and therefore if he said something critical or derogatory this may count against him in the future. He has stopped praising altogether, but now writes down his poetry. This affords him the opportunity to edit his poetry. Previously he was the imbongi to Charles Sebe in the Ciskei. It would therefore be to his detriment if he continued praising orally, as he pointed out that often he was unaware of what he was saying at the time because of the intensity of the atmosphere which prevailed whilst he praised. It was sometimes pointed out afterwards that what he had commented on was a highly sensitive or contentious issue. In order to protect himself, his family, and his career, he has stopped producing oral poetry. <sup>8</sup>

Although Mafeje (1967:196) states that the imbongi's role is characterised by some measure of freedom to criticise those in authority, whether subtly or openly, this is clearly not substantiated by the interviews referred to above. It is doubtful whether they would be allowed, in the traditional sense, to offer even subtle criticism without impunity.

#### THE EFFECTS OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE

There is no doubt that the Xhosa tradition of Eulogy is alive today, over one hundred and fifty years after our earliest records of its existence, but it has clearly changed in many ways over the course of time. Many aspects of this tradition have responded differently to new social, economic and political forces or environments.

Beinart and Bundy (1987:2) note that changes were already occurring during the period 1860 to 1894:

These were the entrenchment of labour migrancy; the diminishing ability of the majority of the people to produce sufficient food for subsistence; the intensification of state control and constraints in everyday life; the limited but increasing spread of Christianity. Interwoven with these changes were the shifts in consciousness and ideology that we attempt to capture ...; in short, how they sought to comprehend and come to terms with their historical situation.

If one views change as an on-going process, then it does not seem incorrect to state here that these changes are still taking place today and that the imbongi is no doubt in a position where he is still trying to come to terms with his historical situation which is directly linked to the ever-changing socio-cultural, economic and political environment in southern Africa. Economic pressure on the individual, in terms of the need to become self-sufficient, the influence of Westernisation, and the awakening of political consciousness among the Xhosa people have all had an effect on the imbongi and his role in society, both rural and urban. One needs only to look at the restrictions which have been placed on the rural imbongi as outlined in this chapter, and also the number of iimbongi who are operating in the urban areas. Monde Mothlabane is an extremely versatile imbongi living in Grahamstown who produces poetry at any occasion where he feels inspired. This may be at the opening of a new school, or perhaps at the funeral of a comrade killed as a result of political friction and violence. Daniel Songwigi is, for example, a trade union (COSATU) poet residing in Uitenhage. Likewise, Alfred Qabula produces poetry within COSATU. The contributions of these



iimbongi to Xhosa oral poetry will be discussed in later chapters. Clearly, both rural and urban iimbongi are fighting to come to terms with their new and changing environments.

Both Chief M Ndamase and Chief K D Matanzima (Paramount Chief of the emigrant Thembus) agreed that certain aspects of the tradition had in fact not changed: opening formulas such as 'A!' and closing formulas such as ncincilili still existed. Certain social changes have, however, affected the content, more so than the structure of the poems. Due to education, the modern imbongi may be aware of happenings on a global scale rather than only in his village. Opland (1983:244) states that, because of this,

... his izibongo may contain a relatively greater incidence of allusions to the immediate or the wider context of the performance or a higher proportion of such allusions in relation to the relatively fixed praises he has assembled about his chief.

There has, for example, been a decline in the use of animal metaphor, probably due to the fact that animals no longer roam freely, as they did long ago, and are therefore less useful as poetic metaphors.

Education has also contributed to social changes which have affected the tradition in the sense that the modern imbongi can write down his poetry and have it published. As was seen earlier, according to Chief Ndamase, the education of his imbongi has in a sense afforded him an opportunity to edit what he will say: he is given books to read and to quote from and must not say anything which is derogatory or critical of his chief. If he

does, the imbongi does so at his own risk and at the risk of being arrested. This is totally contrary to the traditional role of the imbongi; to act as mediator between the chief and the people and to praise and criticise with impunity. Chief Ndamase regards the imbongi simply as an entertainer today and stated that there were very few in Western Mpondoland. Although there are more iimbongi among the Thembus, definite evidence exists of the erosion of their original role in the traditional society under the Matanzima regime. <sup>9</sup>

Social changes have also altered the performance of the imbongi. Although his dress in the traditional areas is sometimes still characterised by the leopard skin and wielding of spears, often, with the use of the public address system, the imbongi does not need to raise his voice, which was characteristic of the traditional imbongi. He also remains rooted to one spot and is therefore unable to gesticulate.

Perhaps one of the most prominent social changes which has affected the tradition is urbanisation. This has also been encouraged by economic need, in the sense that people are drawn to urban areas in order to make a better living. Shaw (1860:480) makes it clear that the imbongi was closely associated with the chief's residence, the great place. This is no longer the case. Few modern iimbongi live near the great place. Even though Chief Matanzima had an imbongi present at Qamata when I visited there, his official imbongi lived about fifty kilometres away. Iimbongi normally work in the towns and cities and are sometimes only free to perform over weekends. They are therefore rarely involved in

the day-to-day affairs of the great place. The chief may in fact have to go out and find an imbongi to accompany him. This results in an imbongi serving different chiefs. Likewise, the urban imbongi may praise different chiefs who may visit his location. The imbongi has as a result of urbanisation lost the intimacy and familiarity which he once shared with the chief. Opland (1983:258) states that:

..., the result is a lesser reliance on fixed praises, a deemphasis on genealogical and ethnographical material, and a growing attention ... to context, and to current affairs...

Wainwright (1979:15) notes that the imbongi on the mines has limited opportunity to practise his craft. Thus the extent to which he can operate as an imbongi while at work is naturally limited by his working commitments.

Urbanisation has therefore changed the setting within which the poet or imbongi operates. The reality which is experienced in the townships has afforded the imbongi with a new impetus for his poetry. His poetry is still bound together with the social situation or context in which he finds himself. There is still an inextricable link between the imbongi and the reality which the people are experiencing. In this way, perhaps the contemporary imbongi is still representative of the voice of the people. Although the tradition is constantly changing, it is factors such as these which will ensure the future existence of the tradition of Xhosa oral poetry.

It is indeed doubtful whether an urban imbongi would even praise



a chief today. Any power or credibility which the chiefs may have had in the cities has been eroded by the severe hardships which the people have experienced in the townships over the past years. Many of the chiefs are viewed as government 'sell-outs' and their cooperation with the government is often seen as contributing to the hardships which the people are experiencing. They are no longer regarded as the means to peace and upliftment, but rather the cause of hardship. Already in 1963 Mafeje notes that the people's attitudes towards the chiefs were changing; not their attitudes towards the institution of the chieftaincy, but their attitudes towards those occupying these positions. They no longer seem to be chiefs by virtue of the fact that the people want them to be there, but politicians who are regarded as government puppets who are no longer able to represent the people and do anything about the hardships which they are still experiencing. Mafeje (1963:96) comments as follows:

The Westernized ... section of the African community, whose status depends more on education and wealth than traditional positions, rejects the traditional authority as unenlightened, conservative, and incompetent. The African system is no longer the classical tribal system. It has been profoundly altered by the modern economic and political systems.... The most powerful agents of this change are the capitalist economy and modern education.... Modern political and technical ideas, competitive cash economy, and wage labour, have increased the individual's self-reliance to a point that makes him less solicitous of the welfare and stability of other members of his lineage or tribe. This has helped to loosen kinship ties and tribal obligation, at the same time, it has completely undermined the position of the Chief.... In the urban areas ... this process is so advanced that it cannot be reversed.

Urbanisation has therefore led the imbongi on a different path

and has resulted in severe changes in the tradition; not only changes in the content of the poetry, but more importantly attitudinal changes which have encouraged the imbongi to praise not the chiefs, but other organisations. These are the organisations to which the people now look for help and assistance in overcoming the hardships which they are experiencing in the townships, and which are often indirectly blamed on the chiefs themselves. The emergence of nationalism and politicisation of blacks in urban areas is now the focus of the modern imbongi. Mafeje (1963:98) concludes:

It seems, then, that emergent South Africa has no room for Chieftainship. In South Africa things have gone so far that by the time there is a change, the Chief will have lost all the support he has ever enjoyed. As a conservative regretfully put it, 'There is no longer Chieftainship; Chieftainship is long past and gone.'

The movement of the Xhosa people from the rural areas to the cities has therefore had a profound influence on their poetry. The poetry which is being produced in the urban areas has been adapted to this contemporary context and is removed from its traditional roots. Opland (1983:13) states:

The imbongi in the cities performs before diversified audiences not necessarily familiar with or even interested in the rural chiefs and their chiefdoms; he cannot count on an urban audience to appreciate the arcane illusions that characterise the poetry of a rural imbongi performing before his regular audience of intimates. If he wishes to communicate with his audience, the urban imbongi must learn to be more flexible and less parochial than his rural counterpart; in the urban milieu he may not have many opportunities to perform or he may not indeed choose to perform very often. Some iimbongi may not master the transition from rural to urban life and may cease to produce oral poetry.

Linked to the above is perhaps the most important economic pressure which has contributed to change in the tradition of the imbongi: the need to earn money. Chief Ndamase confirmed that he could no longer keep an imbongi, feeding and clothing him. The imbongi now has to look after himself. For this reason many have moved to the towns where they can earn money. According to Chief Ndamase, long ago the imbongi stayed with the chief and at the end of each month he was given a cow or a bag of mealies. This is no longer the case today and many potential iimbongi (and established iimbongi) move to the labour centres. The chief also stated that the need for individuality and independence today has contributed to this move.

Over the last twenty years there have been drastic political changes, both in the rural and urban areas. These have in turn affected the tradition of the imbongi. I would like to comment on two areas here: developments in the Transkei, and the effect of trade unions on the imbongi in urban areas. It may be desirable to comment briefly, at this stage, on these developments. As pointed out earlier, the effect of these changes will later form an integral part of this thesis.

Mafeje (1967) highlights the conflict between Matanzima (who supported Transkei independence) and Chief Sabata Dalindyebo (who opposed it). The imbongi whom he studies (Melikhaya Mbutuma) supports Dalindyebo and constantly criticises Matanzima. I might add that Matanzima denied these criticisms: 'I am not aware of that ...'; whereas Mbutuma in our interview referred to Matanzima

as 'a liar ...' Nevertheless, Mbutuma was constantly harassed by the police and even briefly detained for, according to the magistrate, <sup>10</sup> '... inciting the people against Matanzima.'

Mafeje (idem) concludes that Matanzima's imbongi is no longer representative of the voice of the nation, but rather of Matanzima's voice. Even the imbongi who performed on the day of our interview at the chief's great place did not dare criticise him. Matanzima stated that he was never criticised. This was in itself strange, if one bears in mind that the interview took place on the day during which the Matanzima regime (then led by Prime Minister George Matanzima) was ousted by the government of Stella Sigcau (September 1987). Sigcau's government was again ousted 86 days later in a coup, and replaced by General Holomisa's Military Council. This took place amidst charges of corruption by the Sigcau and Matanzima governments. Nevertheless, on the occasion of the September visit the imbongi compares Matanzima to Moses who led the Israelites away from Pharaoh. No mention is made of the existing turmoil in Transkei at the time. <sup>11</sup>

Kwakuthiwa mntan'enkosi unguMosis waninina wena?  
Kuba yena wathunywa kwilizwe lakwaFaro,  
ayekukhulul'abantwana bakwaSirayeli.

It will be said, son of Chief: Moses of which times are you?  
Because he (Moses) was sent to the land of Pharaoh,  
To release the children of Israel.

In 1977 (after independence), section 12 of the Transkei Public Security Act made it an offence for any person to make a statement (either verbally or in writing) which interfered with



the authority of the chief. In other words, if the imbongi criticised the chief, he was liable to be arrested. Both Matanzima and Ndamase agreed that the imbongi may well be arrested. Ndamase, however, stated that he would not encourage such an arrest but he would have no control if 'the state' intervened and arrested the imbongi. This emphasises the fact that the chiefs are no longer chiefs, but politicians. Although Ndamase supported this, Matanzima vehemently denied that he was a politician. Nevertheless, Mbutuma stated to me that he would speak his mind and not be influenced by section 12. For many iimbongi, however, this section will be a deterrent and they will no longer be able to criticise with impunity. A change of this nature in the tradition will also influence the spontaneity of the performer. Contrary to what Mbutuma stated, there seems to have been a definite decline in his poetry since 1976. The future of the imbongi is now linked to modern political developments in the Transkei. It also seems that it is not always the chiefs whom the imbongi must fear, but the state. The action which was taken against Mbutuma on the instruction of Chief Matanzima is clear evidence of this. <sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, the oral izibongo genre continues to exist even in the urban areas, and wields significant power in contemporary culture and politics. This is explored further in chapters 4 and 5, as well as the epilogue.

Although the tradition has changed, and the imbongi often finds himself trapped between, for example, the power wielded by 'homeland politicians' and the force of public opinion ranged

against him, in the sense that he may lose credibility with the people, orally produced poetry is alive and well in contemporary contexts and urban areas. Gunner (1986) states that it has been adapted to these contexts and often performed within trade union movements such as FOSATU, MAWU and SAWU. The contribution of the worker poets who exploit izibongo is a crucial new development in contemporary black culture and it shows that orally based poetry is not redundant but, according to Gunner (1986:37), '... holds the center stage in the attempt to define contemporary worker consciousness in South Africa.'

Another poet who draws on traditional styles and techniques but produces primarily in English is Mzwakhe Mbuli. He has become known as 'The People's Poet'. Mbuli's performances should be seen in the context of protest poetry. His performances would differ from those of the imbongi in the sense that they are not necessarily spontaneous, though they are performed orally. He performs before large audiences using English as a lingua franca in order to reach more people. Although his techniques include repetition and parallelism which are common in traditional izibongo, he makes use of what one could call 'African English'. His pronunciation is heavily accented and is distinctly African. This use of English would seem to be a relatively new phenomenon in the performance of oral poetry. Most of the poetry analysed in this thesis, however, is produced in Xhosa.

It would seem that Xhosa oral poetry will survive, but it will be subjected to continuous change, especially during this turbulent



political era which we are witnessing. In urban areas, worker poets are emerging and the tradition lives on in many ways, even though it is seldom a chief who is being praised. In the rural areas the imbongi has become isolated from the chief's great place. His freedom to comment independently and voice the protests of the people has also been undermined by modern political developments. He is no longer allowed to praise and criticise with impunity and to speak his mind. It would seem that praise poetry will survive in contemporary contexts but that the institution of the imbongi may soon be in need of reclassification (if one bears in mind the extensive changes which the tradition has undergone). Many of the characteristics which qualified a poet as an imbongi have indeed undergone drastic changes and for this reason the traditional definition given, for example by Mafeje, is no longer relevant to or accurate in the contemporary context.

## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. Ntsikana: one of the first converts who became a Christian bard. He was responsible for the writing of Xhosa hymns. Gerard (1971:30;42).
2. S E K Mqhayi: One of the greatest Xhosa literary figures. He can be regarded as the founder of modern Xhosa poetry and was responsible for the transition from traditional izibongo to modern poetry. His novel Ityala Lamawele published in 1914 ensured that Mqhayi was accepted as one of the best Xhosa writers. Scott (1976).
3. For further analysis see chapter 4.
4. See also chapters 4, 5 and the epilogue.
5. The case studies in chapter 5 provide further evidence of harassment of the modern imbongi. See also appendix 2.
6. My brackets and insertion.
7. Mbutuma forms part of three case studies in chapter 5.
8. The recent coup in Ciskei (1990) may affect the state of affairs there. Freedom of speech seems to be emerging within the broader South African context - given the present political climate in this region, including Ciskei and Transkei.
9. Further evidence of this can be obtained from chapter 5.
10. See chapter 5.
11. The full poem and translation can be found in appendix 1A.
12. The recent coup in Transkei (1989) seems also to have resulted in more freedom of speech. Mandela's recent visit to Transkei and the poetry produced during his visit is a clear indication of this. See epilogue for further detail.

## CHAPTER 2

### ORALITY, LITERACY AND THE IMBONGI

#### INTRODUCTION

The first chapter has already established the changing role of the imbongi within our society. This chapter will be devoted to the influence of education, and more specifically, the effects of writing on what Ong (1982) calls 'primary oral' and 'secondary oral' cultures.<sup>1</sup> It would seem that oral culture also permeates writing in societies making the transition to literacy. Written Xhosa poetry is often characterised by oral formulaic style and technique. The central theme of this chapter will be to create an awareness which is different from that created by many scholars (including Ong), namely, that the 'great divide' between literate and oral societies (with special reference to the Xhosa imbongi) should not be over-emphasised. There exists rather an interaction between the written and the oral. The introduction of writing has by no means led to the extinction of oral poetic forms.

Mzamane (1984:147) states that,

In dealing with creativity among blacks most scholars tend to deal with either oral or written forms, but very seldom with both, as if these entities are not mixed within the creative process of black writers in South Africa. In practice, this distinction between traditional oral modes and Western literary forms does not exist, or, at least, is never clearly demarcated. Black writers often operate, unconsciously most of the time, within both traditions. Their work is conceived within the assumptions of both the traditional and the Western literary forms of composition. Despite

the remarks sometimes made by literary critics about the work of Can Themba, Casey Motsisi, Lewis Nkosi and a host of others, the African writer who has been Westernized to the extent that he has been cut off completely from his roots does not exist in reality. 'Tradition lives alongside the present', Ezekiel Mphahlele argues in Voices of the Whirlwind. Literary criticism which ignores either of the two worlds of the African writer, with their respective aesthetic norms, dabbles in half-truths.

In view of this, this chapter has been structured to include an introduction; some comment on Ong's (1982) 'primary' and 'secondary' orality characteristics, as well as some of the psychodynamics of orality and the way they have been affected by the influence of writing. An analysis of the extent to which written culture permeates orality (and vice versa), as well as the effects of writing on the consciousness of Xhosa oral poets who have begun writing down their poetry is also undertaken. The degree of interaction between the written and oral forms will be discussed. The persistence of oral formulaic expressions in Xhosa written poetry (and their significance for old Anglo-Saxon poetry) is also commented on. A case study involving the analysis of differences between an oral poem (available on accompanying video) and the transcribed version of the same poem is included. Finally, a conclusion follows.

A pioneering analysis of spoken and written versions of the same narrative was undertaken by Tannen (1982a) who concluded that features which have been associated with oral discourse can be found in written discourse. She adds that the written version of the narrative which is literary rather than expository, combines syntactic complexity expected in writing with features which

create involvement expected in speaking. In the final analysis she concludes that, since both literary language and ordinary spontaneous conversation focus on interpersonal involvement, they share some devices previously considered to be purely literary. What Tannen is suggesting here is that, at some point, interaction between the written and oral forms is inevitable.

This chapter will explore and comment more fully on some of the above aspects; as well as the place of the oral within the written, or perhaps one could also say with regard to the imbongi, the place of the written within the oral, and the place of writing within the process of educating someone who is already part of a secondary oral culture. According to Ong (1982:6),

Recently, however, applied linguists and sociolinguists have been comparing more and more the dynamics of primary oral verbalization and those of written verbalization.

At the outset, it may be necessary to comment on what Ong (1982) refers to as 'primary oral' and 'secondary oral' cultures. The primary oral culture is one where writing has never played any part. On the other hand, the secondary oral culture is one where writing and the oral mode of thought and reproduction co-exist side by side in a society that has been introduced to writing, having previously relied solely on the oral mode of thought.

#### PRIMARY AND SECONDARY ORALITY

Oral cultures will therefore include cultures in which, as Ong (1982:68) points out,



... by contrast with high-technology cultures, courses in action and attitudes towards issues depend significantly more on effective use of words, and thus on human-interaction, and significantly less on non-verbal, often largely visual input from the 'objective' world of things.... We are expanding its use here to include all cultures that retain enough oral residue to remain significantly word-attentive in a person-interactive context (the oral type of context) rather than object-attentive.

A list of the specific characteristics associated with primary orality can be found in Ong (1982:68). However, it would seem redundant at this point to try and apply these characteristics to pre-colonial Nguni life. This has already been attempted by Opland (1983). Ong's characteristics would seem to apply naturally to pre-colonial Nguni life. Perhaps more important are the effects of secondary orality on present Xhosa society. In addition, oral societies are often characterised by the use of oral formulaic expression. Formulas are used as a point of departure in order to facilitate recall in the sense that these formulas may reoccur, for example in an imbongi's poetry. The use of oral formulaic expression in oral cultures and its place within societies which were previously oral, but which have been introduced to writing, will be looked at later in this chapter.

In a recent article which was first published in the journal Oral Tradition, Ong (1987:371-72) states that:

By contrast with 'primary orality,' which is the original orality of human beings totally unacquainted with even the idea of writing, the world of secondary orality for its coming into being and its operation demands writing and print and now, more and more, computers themselves.

Secondary orality would therefore include a society which has



been introduced to writing, and which to a lesser or greater extent exists within a system where technology is the obvious corollary.

If one now turns to the Xhosa imbongi, it seems that he would be living in a transition period. The influence of secondary orality on what was previously a primary oral society with which the imbongi was associated is inevitable (due to the influence of Westernisation accompanied by education and literacy), and it is also a reality. It would seem that many imbongi are now existing in what one could call a post-primary, pre-secondary (in the more rural areas) and secondary orality stage. This implies therefore a transition period where the imbongi are now not only producing oral poetry but also writing down their poetry, either in the form of original written poetry or transcribed versions of previously orally performed poetry.

#### SOME PSYCHODYNAMICS OF ORALITY-LITERACY

In a primary oral culture, the main form of communication is the successful use of language (speech). For this reason, the emphasis is on the use of speech in a manner acceptable to a particular society. On the other hand, cultures which are literate place emphasis not only on speech as a communicative channel, but also on writing. When an oral culture comes into contact with a literate culture (as is the case with the Xhosas and by implication the imbongi), then some changes will occur. The impact of writing on an oral culture may, for example, cause changes in the oral memory or thought patterns and structures.

We are dealing here with communication which is centered on people and contemporary events, as opposed to a society where writing allows one the opportunity to ensure that events become static in time and place. Writing and reading therefore isolate one from the initial context, whereas the oral spoken discourse unifies the context with the performance. Writing allows for speech to become permanent and, by implication, to be reordered and inspected in order to allow for a refining of sentences and sometimes even words. According to Finnegan (1988:17), 'The most obvious property of writing is that it gives permanence to verbal expression.' She continues (ibid:18), 'A further effect of the use of writing ... is the divorce between audience and speaker, reader and author.' Writing therefore allows for an 'independent and withdrawn author.' Finnegan (ibid:51) then comments as follows in regard to the literature of the Limba people (living in the north of Sierra Leone):

Again, people's characters are lightly but vividly commented on in the dramatic way in which dialogues in stories are performed and presented, and humour and observation come out in such passages as, say, ... a local chief walking forward in his voluminous robes and speaking with pompous dignity. Many of these touches fail to come across in a written or translated version, away from the artistry of the actual narrator and from the situation and characters which he is portraying.

Finnegan (idem) also concludes that there are four basic presuppositions about the nature of oral literature which further distinguish it from written literature: 1) The text of oral literature is variable and dependent on the occasion of performance, unlike the fixed text of a written book. 2) Oral

literature is composition in performance - not prior composition divorced from the act of performance. 3) Composition and transmission of oral literature is not through word for word memorisation. 4) In oral literature there is no concept of an authentic or correct version.

Although the introduction of writing will have obvious effects in terms of, for example, divorcing a performance from the context in which it occurs, both the written and the oral media can be used in a variety of different ways. They should be viewed as autonomous on the one hand, but complementary on the other. In terms of the aims and functions of literature, there is little difference between them and they are both fuelled and moulded by the culture which underlies them.

With regard to writing restructuring human consciousness, Ong (1982:78) is of the opinion that '(m)ore than any other single invention, writing has transformed human consciousness.' Similarly, Goody (1977:37) states that:

The specific proposition is that writing ... made it possible to scrutinise discourse in a different way by giving oral communication a semi-permanent form; this scrutiny favoured the increase in scope of critical activity, and hence of rationality, scepticism, and logic to resurrect memories of those questionable dichotomies. It increased the potentialities of criticism because writing laid out discourse before one's eyes in a different kind of way; at the same time increased the potentiality for cumulative knowledge, especially knowledge of an abstract kind, because it changes the nature of communication beyond that of face-to-face contact as well as the system for the storage of information; in this way a wider range of 'thought' was made available to the reading public. No longer did the problem of memory storage dominate man's intellectual life; the human mind was freed to study static

'text'..., a process that enabled man to stand back from his creation and examine it in a more abstract, generalised, and 'rational' way.

In Xhosa society, with particular reference to the imbongi, the introduction of writing should in theory change the mode of production of the poetry, and perhaps also the consciousness of the people who are producing the poetry, as well as that of the audience. Ong (1982:85) states that:

Because it moves speech from the oral-aural to a new sensory world, that of vision, it transforms speech and thought as well.

#### INTERACTION BETWEEN THE WRITTEN AND THE ORAL

Ong (1982:34) states that with regard to an oral culture,

... you have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped by ready oral recurrence. Your thought must come into being in heavy rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulary expressions, in standard thematic settings (the assembly ...), in proverbs which are constantly heard by everyone so that they come to mind readily and which themselves are patterned for retention and ready recall, or in other mnemonic form ...

The question is whether or not Xhosa iimbongi, having been introduced to literacy, will now make less use of mnemonic devices associated with oral cultures. Goody (1987:82) is of the opinion that:

... no 'oral' form can be unaffected by the presence of written communication, especially as the latter is so often associated with high status of one kind or another.

As yet, the exact impact of writing on human thought and



consciousness with regard to the Xhosa poets has been left unexplored. It would seem, though, that the Xhosa society and the changing tradition of the imbongi is today open to a study where the impact of writing on the oral mind can be assessed. This is so because the Xhosa have a relatively brief history of writing (approximately one hundred and fifty years) and were previously, prior to the arrival of the missionaries during the early nineteenth century, a 'primary oral culture'. The 'cross-over' poet who makes use of both written and oral forms in composing poetry is a reality within Xhosa society today, and therefore provides us with the opportunity to conduct such a study. Clearly, the influence of writing on the poetry of the imbongi will have had some effect, whether it be in the mode of production, the content or the structure of the izibongo. Xozwa, a 'cross-over' poet, <sup>2</sup> in comparing himself to the traditional imbongi, commented as follows:

KASCHULA: Do you praise other things in life as you would praise the chief?

XOZWA: Yes. Our scope is broader. Those traditional poets who are not educated have a very narrow scope which is limited to the chief and certain individuals in the area. They do not, for example, praise nature.

Although topic choice may have been affected by education, Yali-Manisi, an imbongi, was of the opinion that the content of his written and oral poems remained much the same, though aspects such as punctuation would obviously be more refined in the



written version. <sup>3</sup> Izibongo which are produced today will also vary in terms of topic choice. Traditionally it was mainly the chiefs who were praised. Today this is no longer the case.

The importance of the oral and its influence on writing can also not be underestimated. One must therefore be careful not to regard orality as in some way inferior to literacy. As far as the imbongi is concerned, he finds himself in a secondary oral culture. Iimbongi no longer rely solely on the oral mode of production but are transcribing and writing down their izibongo. This either occurs immediately after an oral performance, or alternatively, an imbongi may sit down and deliberately use the method of writing in order to produce his poetry. There is clearly a difference between an oral poem reduced to writing, and a written poem which incorporates oral formulaic expressions. This is supported by all the 'cross-over' iimbongi whom I interviewed and observed, including Reverend Xozwa who stated the following:

KASCHULA: So, whenever you feel inspired you produce poetry orally?

XOZWA: Yes, Sir.

KASCHULA: Orally?

XOZWA: If I compose orally, then sometimes, in most cases, I write the poetry down.

KASCHULA: Afterwards?

XOZWA: Yes, afterwards.

There are also, however, literate iimbongi who do not write any

original poetry or transcribe any of their orally performed poetry. Bongani Sithole, an imbongi living in Umtata, is one such poet. <sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Mothlabane, a well-known imbongi living in Grahamstown, <sup>5</sup> stated the following:

KASCHULA: Do you produce orally and spontaneously?

MOTHLABANE: Yes, I produce orally and spontaneously.

KASCHULA: Do you write the poetry down afterwards, or not?

MOTHLABANE: There are poems that I have written down which are going to be published by Via Afrika.

KASCHULA: Now, is that poetry different from your initial spontaneous poetry?

MOTHLABANE: Actually, it is not totally different.

KASCHULA: So, what is the difference?

MOTHLABANE: It has punctuation, or where the poem is not produced orally initially, it may have rhyming.

The interaction between the traditional oral forms and the more Western forms is clear. Mothlabane, therefore, like Manisi, produces not only written, but oral forms as well. They agree that the differences between these two forms are not necessarily that great in terms of content. However, one produces poetry orally and writes poetry for two completely different audiences; influenced by different contexts, the one being immediate, the other being more detached. Taken out of context, a transcribed poem may therefore be severely lacking. <sup>6</sup>

Ong (1982:14) is of the opinion that

Oral cultures indeed produce powerful and beautiful

verbal performances of high artistic and human worth, which are no longer even possible once writing has taken possession of the psyche.

In view of the developments in Xhosa poetry, the latter part of this statement is questionable, and it would seem that the oral constantly interacts with the written.

There were very few indeed, if any, iimbongi, chiefs or ordinary people who felt that writing would replace the verbal performance entirely. Reverend Xozwa (June 1988) summed this up as follows:

KASCHULA: Do you think that your children will one day simply produce written poetry (in the Western sense) or will they still produce oral poetry?

XOZWA: Most of them will still draw on the traditional side as well. There will always be that variety.

This suggests some kind of continued interaction between the written and the oral forms. <sup>7</sup>

The question to be asked here (with reference to the imbongi) is the following: Can writing perhaps destroy the oral memory (which relies on formulaic expression) over a period of time? <sup>8</sup> If so, then how can one account for the use of oral formulaic expression in written Xhosa poetry which is being deliberately written, and not transcribed after an oral performance? This leads me to think that the oral therefore permeates the written and possibly always will, even though the oral formulaic expression may no longer be necessary to assist the oral memory.

Below are some examples taken from Xozwa (1988). Having already

pointed out that Xozwa considers himself an imbongi and an author, producing both orally and in writing, thereby fulfilling the role of a 'cross-over' poet, it is clear that in this collection of poetry, traditional style and technique play a vital role. Repetition, personification, opening and closing formulas, and formulaic expression, all features of orally produced poetry, permeate these written poems. Below, for example, is the first stanza of the first poem entitled Izinyo. It is also interesting to note that this poem is an adaptation of a traditional Xhosa riddle, again showing the adaptability of Xhosa oral traditions:

#### **Izinyo**

Phantsi kwaloo miqolomba kamlomo,  
Kwezoo ngontsi nemisethuluka kamilebe,  
Umise apho umzukulwana kamihlathi.  
Uzinze apho unyana kantsini;  
Ubhelu olumhlophe lwemiqolomba kamlomo,  
Inyathi eyambeth' ikhephu yakulontlekisa.

#### **Tooth**

Under those caves of mouth,  
In those gorges and steep places of lips,  
The grandson of jaws is residing there.  
The son of gums resides there;  
The off-white one of the caves of mouth,  
The buffalo that wears snow of the home of laughter.

It is clear that in this poem the poet is making use of personification, namely of the tooth. The use of personification would seem to permeate both traditional and Western poetry. In the poem Inj'edl'umniniyo the poet also makes use of personification. Xozwa stated in regard to Izinyo, when he wrote that poem 'I am talking about the tooth but in fact when I

wrote Izinyo I started to think about who is the tooth'. He carries on to make the point that 'sometimes in our traditional izibongo we do have personification.'

Xozwa also makes constant use of closing formulas characteristic of izibongo style. Izinyo is ended with Ncincilili ('I disappear'.) Likewise, if one looks at pages 10, 21, 39, 46, 53, and 58, these poems are all ended with traditional closing formulas such as Vovololo, Nde-e-e ntshobolololo. Traditional opening formulas such as Vityo vityi vityi vityoodo on page 18 and Aa! on page 59 can also be found.

KASCHULA: Is ncincilili a traditional formula which has been included in your written poetry?

XOZWA: Yes, in order to indicate the closing of the poem.

Repetition of what one could call formulas in Xozwa's originally written poetry also seems to be common. For example, in the poem which appears on page 11, Umtyangampo wobizo lobumbongi, the phrase Ivumba lomthombothi (referring to the smell of a substance made from a tree with a highly scented wood, which is normally used as a charm) <sup>9</sup> or Ngevumba lomthombothi is repeated ten times during the course of this poem. Again, this is characteristic of orally produced poetry (in the form of formulaic expression) or it could be considered a refrain in the Western sense. It would seem therefore that the Western and traditional forms complement and interact with one another and are not as different as some scholars have made them out to be. The phrase Vuyo lweliso lam ('pleasure of my eye') which is also the title of the poem



appearing on page 17 is also repeated at the end of each stanza. Likewise, the poem on page 59, IXhwane lomngamlezo, is characterised by an expression which is repeated at the end of each stanza, namely, Gamakhulu kwizizukulwana! ('the one revered for generations and generations'). One could argue that the frequency with which these sets of expressions or ideas recur in this written Xhosa poetry stems directly from the characteristics associated with traditional Xhosa oral poetry.

Although I would agree with Ong (1982:147) that

... the maker of the text, now properly an author, acquires a feeling of expression and organization notably different from that of the oral performers before a live audience,

there are still aspects of the oral tradition which heavily influence Xhosa writers, not only poets but also authors producing fiction and drama. One need only consider Mqhayi's Ityala lamawele where the use of traditional izibongo forms an integral part of the novel.<sup>10</sup> Although there may be no verbatim memorisation among oral cultures (as Lord and Parry found among the Yugoslav people), formulas are used in order to enhance memory. These may be joined together differently on each occasion. According to Ong (1982:60), 'The fixed materials in the bard's memory are a float of themes and formulas out of which all stories are variously built.'

It is therefore the formulas which will be committed to long term memory and not every single word of the poem. Perhaps the use of formulaic expression among oral cultures can be equated to the

learning of a skeleton outline by a literate person. However, as Goody (1987:87) points out, '... oral singers are often pushed towards variation, by their own ingenuity, by their particular audiences or by the wider social situation.'

The introduction of writing and print, however, will place less demand on memory. From an analytical point of view, the introduction of writing has restructured consciousness. Goody (1987:18) is of the opinion that:

Writing, indeed any form of visual transcription of oral linguistic elements, has important consequences for the accumulation, development, and nature of human knowledge.

Written poetry would give not only the reader, but also the author/imbongi, an opportunity to go back, to reorganise and to restructure his initial thought patterns. The writer can therefore reconsider and revise whereas in an oral performance this cannot be done. A written poem can be thought of as a structured unit with structured paragraphs, sentences, and even words. The poet may in this instance be more selective of the words and ideas which he is about to write down. This will encourage a structure which is tighter than the oral poetry. The poet can also experiment with Western forms. Any redundancies will be edited and omitted. Xozwa had the following to say:

KASCHULA: When you write these poems down are they different from when you compose them orally?

XOZWA: That is always the case, if you have been doing something orally, without looking at it, on a piece of paper it cannot be

exactly the same.

With spontaneous, as opposed to written poetry, there may be structural differences. Goody (1987:xiii) states:

So when I compose orally (in my head) the sentences that I now write, I compose sentences for writing, ones that are adapted to the written channel.

Ong (1982:150) continues that

The very reflectiveness of writing - enforced by the slowness of the writing process as compared to oral delivery as well as by the isolation of the writer as compared to the oral performer - encourages growth of consciousness out of the unconscious.

The poetry which is produced in writing will therefore be more tightly organised but would not necessarily be devoid of oral structure, style and technique. Likewise, a poet may experiment with Western forms. Goody (1987:106) states that

The very existence of writing leads to the creation of verse forms which would be so inconceivable in a purely oral culture as, say, the kind of mathematical table that decorates the back cover of an exercise book, a copy book. Yet once learnt, such a table or such a verse form (the hexameter, perhaps) may appear as part of the 'oral tradition', or at least of oral manipulation, in a literate culture; people may internalize the stanza formation of a sonnet just as they do a table.

There are further differences between oral and written memory. It is necessary to point out, that the use of oral formulas in traditional Xhosa izibongo affords the imbongi with a point of departure from which he can build up his poem. There is therefore no verbatim memorisation. However, with the introduction of writing, this may well change. According to

Goody (1977:109-110),

It encourages reflection upon and the organisation of information, quite apart from its mnemotechnic functions. It not only permits the reclassification of information of those who can write, and legitimises such reformulations for those who can read, but it also changes the nature of the representations of the world (cognitive processes) for those who cannot do so, whether they are the non-reading element of societies with writing ... or the population ... that have not reached the point in time when they can read, either because they do not yet have the ability or because they do not yet have the opportunity.

The written text now affords the imbongi with the opportunity to memorise verbatim. However, in my opinion, the fact that the imbongi regard their ability to produce oral poetry as an inner unexplainable gift (stemming from some central inspiration point) will always ensure that the use of oral formulaic expression will continue, regardless of whether the poet is producing orally or in writing. The oral and the written will exist side by side for the foreseeable future. However, if this stylistic technique does permeate the written, it will not in itself encourage verbatim memorisation. Writing the poetry down forces it to become static. This detracts from the need to re-compose in an on-going oral performance. The mere fact that the poetry is being transcribed or written will encourage verbatim memorisation. According to Goody (1987:186),

What writing does is to provide auditory information with a visual, and hence a spatial frame. In fact it changes the channel of communicated language from an auditory to a visual one.

This in turn will allow for a greater ordering of facts and it

will add a visual element to recall which will provide for more accurate recall. The visual aspect of writing will also allow for rehearsal so as to perfect recall.

Perhaps a future trend will be the increasing memorisation of poems due to the introduction of writing. Although Xozwa made it clear that he does produce poetry spontaneously, he also stated that at times he would memorise some of his poetry which he had now written down.

KASCHULA: When did you start writing your poetry?

XOZWA: I was doing standard six, as early as 1962.

KASCHULA: Have you ever repeated a poem orally that you have written down?

XOZWA: Sometimes I do.

KASCHULA: That means you must have memorised it in the Western sense?

XOZWA: Yes.

KASCHULA: And you repeat it to an audience.

XOZWA: I repeat it to an audience, especially if I am going to praise someone who has passed away, I can sometimes memorise a poem.

KASCHULA: So it is like a recitation?

XOZWA: Almost like a recitation.

KASCHULA: When you begin writing down your poetry, do you think that you could ever lose that ability to improvise spontaneously?

XOZWA: Never, no, never.

KASCHULA: You have a gift?

XOZWA: It is inspired by God, it is a gift.



KASCHULA: So the fact that you write it down will not affect the oral part of it?

XOZWA: Yes.

The obvious corollary to Western education and writing is word for word memorisation. Visiting numerous schools in the Transkei and Eastern Cape has also made it clear that recitation is encouraged. These recitations are interestingly enough also characterised by the use of a guttural voice as well as motion or movement. At All Saints School (September 1988) near Engcobo in the Transkei, I met a number of scholars who produced poetry. Most of them produced recitations using the guttural voice and also gesture. Nevertheless, some of the poems had been written by them. At least one of the scholars, David Nyatela, was able to produce poetry spontaneously without prior memorisation. He regarded himself as possessing a gift which enabled him to do so. It will be interesting to see whether or not at some point some of these students at this school will also be able to do this. These are the iimbongi of the future. It would seem that the above is characteristic of most schools. The mere fact that many of these schools possess scholars who can produce poetry spontaneously will possibly ensure that the oral will live alongside the written. Having visited five schools in Grahamstown, I found that each school had its recognised poet - normally someone who produces both orally and in writing. At Nombulelo Secondary School, for example, Thobile Lamati, a standard seven student, could be considered a potential imbongi. He has the ability to improvise and to produce on the spur of the

moment. He does, however, also write poetry. At the opening of Nombulelo Secondary School there were three iimbongi who performed. (See performance C on accompanying video for snippets of Lamati's and Mothlabane's performances.) It was interesting to note that one imbongi (dressed in a blanket and carrying a spear) read his poem from a piece of paper. He had obviously written it out beforehand. The other two iimbongi (Lamati and Mothlabane) produced their poems spontaneously. Again this shows the interaction between the oral and the written word in this context. Below is an extract from Lamati's poem:

1. Mna namhlanje andithethi nto,
2. Mna namhlanje ndamulekile,
3. Andazi kwabajonga ngentanyongo.
4. Baphin' oothambodala bathethe?
5. Baphin' oodizadala bahlombe?
  
6. Liphumil' ilanga mzi waseRhini,
7. Nank' umz' omhle umi ngasempumalanga.
8. Usithi khawume ujonge ndithethe noQamata.
9. Sith' amagqirha makaze kuvumisa,
10. Lo mhlola uyachwayitisa.
11. Vulcan' ingqond' ingadodobali imfund' eNombulelo.
  
1. Today I have nothing to say,
2. Today I am filled with pleasure,
3. With those who cannot see the future clearly I am stunned.
4. Where are the experts so to speak?
5. Where are the experienced to pay respect?
  
6. Grahamstonians here we see a bright future,
7. We see a beautiful institution, here in the east.
8. The attraction it has causes me to praise the Lord.
9. Let everybody come and see,
10. This miracle is a happy one.
11. You ought to be intelligent - education never loses its value.

Lines 1 and 2, as well as 4 and 5, contain parallelisms by initial linking where the first few words in a line are repeated in the line following. This technique is used here by Lamati to

link ideas. The doubt about the future which is raised in lines 1-5 is eliminated in lines 6-11 where education is portrayed as a 'miracle'. Essentially the poem praises Nombulelo in a positive way.

The following extract was produced by Mothlabane:

1. A! MaNdlovu ... thina siyakhahlela.
2. Titshala uzubambe ngomonde olu cwambu lweAfrika,
3. Mfundu uzufund' uyahlohl' utitshal' apha.
4. Hayini kaloku ndiyekeni ndiyihloniphe le Nombulelo.
  
5. Khawume kaloku ndenz' amaggabantshintshi,
6. Khawume kaloku mfondini sithethe ngamabal' engwe,
7. Sibethe koomofu sibethe koozelekazi.
8. Sithetha ngombambo zinomongo,
9. Int'ethi yakuthetha kude kudilik'iindonga ...

1. A! MaNdlovu - We salute.
2. Teacher, may you educate these children of Africa with  
patience,
3. Student, pay attention to your studies, this teacher is a  
skilled one.
4. Oh no, leave me so as to pay respect to Nombulelo.
  
5. Wait so that I should mention a few points,
6. Wait, my colleagues, so that we may talk about a few points,
7. Let us brief each other let us be brief.
8. We talk about something interesting,
9. What an eloquent one when he speaks ...

Lines 5 and 6 contain a parallelism by initial and final linking. The relationship between teacher and student is highlighted in lines 1-4. A praise name MaNdlovu is used in line 1 to refer to Mrs Dwane, the school principal. She is saluted by one of her clan praises. This praise name is derived from the noun indlovu 'elephant.' This animal metaphor depicts Mrs Dwane as a woman of strength and power, someone who is steadfast and capable, who can be relied upon. Both poems were produced in her presence and

to a large extent are aimed at her. However, the poetry is moulded by the context (the opening of a school) in which it occurs.

Another example is the poem produced by one of the scholars at the opening of Qhayiya School in Bathurst. <sup>11</sup> Likewise, at the opening of Fikizolo and Tantiyi Primary Schools poetry was produced. At Tantiyi poetry was again produced by Mothlabane as well as a young girl who recited a poem which had been memorised beforehand. This again shows the interaction between spontaneously produced oral poetry and memorised oral poetry. Mothlabane produces prolifically on such occasions. <sup>12</sup>

The attire which such poets wear varies from person to person, but there is virtually always some aspect of traditional dress. Mothlabane, for example wears a skin head-dress and carries a spear. Lamati wears an impressive skin head-dress as well as a lot of bead work and a skirt made out of skin. Likewise, the young girl who produced at the opening of Tantiyi School was dressed in this way. Even in schools, therefore, oral poetry still lives alongside the written poetry. Although there seems to be more memorisation than was the case in the past, there are still iimbongi like Mothlabane who produce orally and spontaneously in these contexts.

#### ORAL FORMULAIC EXPRESSION

Albert Lord and Milman Parry were the first scholars to awaken some interest in the contrast between the oral and written modes of expression. This arose out of the controversy surrounding

the origins of the Homeric poems, the Iliad and the Odyssey. Parry showed that Homers' poetry was formulaic in style. Lord, (1960:4) defined this formula as 'a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea.' Ong (1982:26), with whom I would agree, states that,

Unless it is clearly indicated otherwise, I shall understand formula and formulary and formulaic here as referring quite generically to more or less exactly repeated set phrases or set expressions (such as proverbs) in verse or prose, which, as will be seen, do have a function in oral culture more crucial and pervasive than any they may have in a writing or print or electronic culture.

By 1934, Parry had established that the Homeric poems made use of a system of verbal formulas. According to Ong (1982:21),

Parry's discovery might be put in this way: virtually every distinctive feature of Homeric poetry is due to the economy enforced on it by oral methods of composition.

He concluded that Homeric poetry was orally composed. He then studied Yugoslavian oral traditions (specifically oral performances by singers or guslars) and applied his conclusions to the Homeric poetry. After his premature death, Lord, who had been one of his pupils, continued this work and finally published The Singer of Tales in 1960.

With regard to the Yugoslav guslar, Lord found that the guslar sings by using formulas or 'expressions of set ideas' which form a common stock from which the guslar can draw. However, it was clear that the guslar never memorised his songs, that he composed



a new song each time he performed, and that this song was adapted to suit the occasion. There was therefore no need to commit any version of his song to memory as he was able to compose his song anew each time. Lord concludes that the presence of a high proportion of formulas indicates an orally composed text; that if the composer were literate, he would have time to organise his thoughts, to consider his words, and would therefore not have to rely on the use of oral formulaic expression. He also held that his conclusions were valid for all oral poetry. This has been the focus of much criticism. Smith (1977:142) stated that

It is unfortunate that, instead of acknowledging the limited nature of the material available to him, Lord should have sought to give the impression that his analysis was universally valid.

When one looks now at Xhosa poetry, perhaps one can draw some analogies (mutatis mutandis) with the work done by Lord and Parry on the Homeric poetry, and also highlight some possibilities which have not been considered so far - possibilities which may account for the existence of oral formula, especially in written Xhosa poetry. If one strictly applies the formulaic theory, then there would be no need for the oral formula in written poetry; writing being a type of formalisation in its own right, perhaps the most extreme form of formalisation. However, if one compares Xhosa poetry with Homeric poetry, clearly oral formulaic expressions exist in Xhosa written poetry. There seems to be a definite relationship between the oral forms and the standardised written forms. <sup>13</sup> It would therefore be difficult to agree with Lord (1960:129) that

The written technique ... is not compatible with the oral technique, and the two could not possibly combine, to form another, a third, a 'transitional technique'.

This style (which was always characteristic of what Ong would call a 'primary oral' culture) has now been transferred into the written poetry. The Xhosa poets are then living in a transition period where there is an overlap between the written and the oral.<sup>14</sup> By implication, it would be incorrect to conclude that the existence of formulaic expression within written Xhosa poetry implies poetry which was initially orally composed. Many of the poets whom I interviewed stated that this is a deliberate style which is used, even when the poet intentionally and deliberately writes his poetry. It is therefore possible that even Homer may have been living in a transition period. Perhaps the Iliad and the Odyssey were then not orally composed but written by a man who was witnessing and experiencing a transition period from the oral stage to writing - hence the existence of oral formulaic expression in that poetry. However, this will remain only a hypothesis as it would not be possible to prove. If one considers the Odyssey, one finds that towards the end of it there is very little formulaic expression in comparison to the beginning. Remembering that the poem was composed over a couple of hundred years, perhaps one can account for this by saying that the transition from orality to literacy had been completed and that the poetry was now being composed by a literate poet. Considering that the Xhosas were only introduced to writing in the early nineteenth century, perhaps this accounts for oral

formulaic expression in written poetry. It may be interesting to see whether there has been a decrease in the use of formulas in a couple of hundred years' time. In Xhosa written poetry, the existence of formulas can be ascribed to this transition period. In the same way as Western written poetry is characterised, for example, by rhyming, why can African (and more specifically Xhosa) poetry not be characterised by features which are unique to that society - oral formulaic expression?

Lord (1960) also concludes that the presence of oral formulaic expression can only be associated with poets who improvise. This is no longer the case. In Xhosa society, one may today have literate poets who at times produce orally and spontaneously, or write poetry, memorise it, and then produce what could be called a recitation which would be formulaic in style. Smith (1977:144) also gives the following example: 'In the Indian state of Rajasthan, two epics exist which are sung in front of long narrative cloth-paintings called pars: that of Pabuji Rathaur, and that of Devnarayan of the Bagravats.' He contends that in the epic of Pabuji, there is use of formulaic expression even though it is non-improvisatory. This combination of features being impossible according to Lord's theory, he concludes at (ibid:150) that '... there must be something wrong with that theory.' Xhosa iimbongi who today both write poetry and produce poetry orally therefore rely on the traditional style in their written poetry. For this reason oral formulaic thought permeates writing. This style is therefore embedded in the conscious and unconscious, thereby affording the Xhosa iimbongi with the

cognitive ability to produce the poetry which he does, poetry which is unique in this sense.

One must also bear in mind that there may be different cultural practices at work here within different contexts. These may call for different uses of language, that is, written and orally produced literature. This may largely be determined by the cultural context - a funeral, an initiation etc. (which may encourage oral production), versus a school textbook which would obviously require the written mode of production. Language (both written and oral) must be seen in its cultural context.

Clearly, the use of oral formulaic expression in written poetry will remain as long as the Xhosa imbongi retains his traditional roots. In view of the fact that imbongi regard this ability to produce poetry spontaneously as a gift which comes from within, regardless of whether one is literate or illiterate, it would seem therefore that one can conclude that this oral form will for a long time permeate the written form within Xhosa culture. Although the effects of writing may change cognitive structures in the long run, this will not affect the use of formulaic expression within the written forms, at least not in the very near future.

In 1953, Magoun drew the attention of Anglo-Saxon scholars to Parry's work, with the publication of an article in which he claimed that Beowulf was orally composed. Magoun applied Parry's conclusions to Anglo-Saxon poetry on the assumption that what is true of the Yugoslav poetry is true in all respects of oral poets



in general. His critics contend that, although Yugoslav guslars may have been illiterate performers, this may not be true of Anglo-Saxon poets. Perhaps Anglo-Saxon poetry could have been written by literate monks. In the same way that Lord and Parry assumed that Homeric poetry was orally composed, Magoun assumes that these texts were orally composed and dictated by illiterate singers and written down by literate writers. Others oppose this, stating that literate singers could have written traditional poetry. If one is to take the inference from the Xhosa case, it would suggest that literate writers are using traditional praise songs as a basis for their poetry. One need only consider Xhosa poets such as Xozwa, Mothlabane, Yali-Manisi and Burns-Ncamashe. Perhaps, as Opland points out (1973, 1980), the Anglo-Saxon texts were written then by literate people who had grown up and were still living in an oral tradition which influenced the poetry they wrote. A study of oral traditions in Southern Africa could therefore modify significantly the conclusions of scholars about medieval oral traditions. This would require extensive research which does not form part of this thesis.

#### FROM ORAL TO WRITTEN: A CASE STUDY

##### INTRODUCTION

The complexity of spoken language cannot be underestimated. Beaman, in Tannen (1984:79) states the following:

Thus it seems that many forces are at work, pushing and pulling discourse in different directions. Though written language should exhibit greater complexity because of a lesser degree of spontaneity, a relatively



greater degree of formality, and the increased planning time afforded the writer, militating against this is the lack of visibility and extralinguistic factors to disambiguate the written text and the emphasis on clarity and simplicity of style by writing teachers. In addition, the consequential and more permanent nature of most instances of writing causes writers to be more conservative in their expression than speakers need to be.

The above can be supported further by commenting on Adams' study of a Wolaamo fable (1972). He compares this North Ethiopian tale told by a local storyteller with one which has been transcribed by a more educated Wolaamo. He finds that changes in the written version include the following: correction of performance errors, elimination of repetition and redundancy, omission of formulaic abstract and coda, and deletion of suspense-building parenthetical paragraphs.

Erving Goffman (1981) also notes some interesting differences between a lecture and a printed text. He concludes that the lecturer is not only the author of his text, he is also a performer. The lecture is also a social affair whereas reading is not. The lecturer must also take account of his audience and adapt his remarks in order to suit the occasion. There are also more opportunities for spontaneity and intimacy in lecturing than in writing.

Spontaneity can, for example, only occur at the beginning, in a deviation from the text, or at the end of the lecture. Even though Goffman is merely referring here to reading aloud from a written text, we see that certain changes or adaptations are noted. Halliday (1979) points out that writing and speech differ

in certain respects. These include immediacy, relation to context, lexical density and grammatical complexity. He concludes that spoken language is grammatically more complex than written language and that informal spontaneous conversation is the most complex of all.

Likewise, within the poem which follows, certain changes take place which to some extent correlate with what has been found in the above-mentioned two case studies. Besides the fact that characteristics related to visibility are lost, the question is whether the changes in the written poetry are really that dramatic. There is an immediate connection between the imbongi, his audience and the context in which he finds himself. On the contrary, written forms allow for a more detached analysis of the poetry, whereas the spoken involves a more immediate and involved interaction or interface between the performer and the audience for whom the poetry is produced.

The purpose of producing this particular case study is to determine exactly what takes place when oral forms are transcribed. As far as the Xhosa tradition of producing praise poetry is concerned, there is no doubt interaction between the oral and the written. An interesting aspect which I would like to consider is the transferability of Xhosa oral poetry to the written form, and the changes which occur during this process.

The immediate effects of transferring oral poetry to written forms seem to include the following: written forms allow for the poetry to be produced in a more detached manner. Not only is the

poetry detached from the audience, but also from the context in which the poetry was initially produced. The written poetry is also clearly lacking in terms of visibility. An attempt will be made at assessing the contribution which gestures make to the poetry, or the contribution made by the audience and so on.

Manisi's two performances (available as performance A and B on accompanying video) will also be contrasted. This serves to highlight the influence of the context on the performance.

#### SETTING:

D L P Yali-Manisi produced poetry at a conference hosted by the Natal Oral Documentation Centre in 1985. This is one of the few instances where the imbongi's poetry has been videotaped and later transcribed by the imbongi himself. The performed version of this poem can be seen on the accompanying video cassette (performance A). As a point of departure, this allows for analysis between the written and the oral in order to further our understanding of the visual aspects which contribute to poetry, and which are lost in the transcribed version.

#### TRANSCRIPTION OF POEM:

##### YASUKA YAHLAL'INTAKA YAMAHLATHI

1. Yasuka yahlal'intaka yamahlathi,
2. NguWotshetshe ke lowo,
3. Usibunu sentaka yimilenze,
4. Kub'ithi yakuchopha bathi yahlala,
5. Bathi yasuka bathi yagidima.
6. Bhotani mabandlandini.
7. Ndibon'ucwamb'oluhle lokhanyo,
8. Iintw'eziingqondo zikhany'iinkwenkwezi kwakunye nenyanga,
9. Kuloko namhla zingxamel'ukubamb'ilanga:

10. Kulok' isuke le nkwenkwez' ilanga
  11. Ibhentsuze ngobushushu
  12. Aqal' amadod' asemhlabeni abe zizithwanyula.
  13. Bhotani mabandlandini.
  14. Bhotani makhosazana.
  15. Bhotani madun' amahle,
  16. Mathol' onyawo zabezolo,
  17. Iint' ezingoyiki ukufa,
  18. Ezawel' ulwandle zisimelela ngenkanunu nemfakadolo,
  19. Iint' ezaluwel' ulwandle ziqakatha,
  20. Zafik' iAfrika zayiphunzisa,
  21. Kuba kwakudiban' entilini
  22. Yalal' imikhuthuka macal' omabini,
  23. Kodwa hay' imfakadolo yaseMlungwini
  24. Yamngengqa yamqungquluzis' umAfrika!
  25. Xa kulapho ke sinivile nithetha nitywatyula,
  26. Nayihlukanisa nade nayihlakahleza
  27. Iintetho neelwimi zezizwe,
  28. Nibonis' imbadu kwakunye nembunda-ndimunye,
  29. Kodwa naxa kulapho sibulela ntonye,
  30. Kub' anizishiyang' iimbali zomz' oNtsundu.
  31. Ndithetha ngabakwaZulu nabakwaXhosa -
  32. Nakub' andivanga nto ngoMsheweshwe naSekroma -
  33. Kub' intetho ziya zagxininisa kwabaseBunguni
  34. (Andazi nto ngeSwayile.)
  35. Kha niphakame ntondin' ezibuchopho
  36. Buphathama kwakunye neenkwenkwezi nenyanga,
  37. Niphakame nithabath' iintonga
  38. Khe niphengulule niqongqothele
  39. Niyek' ukuphikisana ngokwenziwa kweentsomi:
  40. Niphikisane ngokudaleka kweentetho,
  41. Siyabulela thina basemaXhoseni,
  42. Ngokufika kweento zooRose nezooBheni
  43. Ukuz' amaXhos' avulek' ingqondo
  44. Kulo mhla yaqal' ukubhalwa le ntetho,
  45. Intethw' engqongqotho yasemaXhoseni.
46. Ncincilili!

#### THE BIRD OF THE FOREST GROWS RESTLESS

1. The bird of the forest grows restless,
2. One who never refuses when sent, that one,
3. The bird that squats when it sits,
4. When it perches they say there it stays,
5. When it takes off they say there it goes.
6. Greetings, you crowds of people.
7. I see neat and tidy men and women,
8. Things with minds aglitter with the stars and the moon:
9. So today they rush to grab the sun
10. It is then that the sun-like star
11. Overpowers them with its heat
12. So that the men of the earth lie stunned.

13. Greetings, you crowds of people.
  14. Greetings, ladies.
  15. Greetings, handsome gentlemen,
  16. Sons of heroes of old,
  17. Things who don't fear death,
  18. Who crossed the sea leaning on cannon and breachloader,
  19. Things who crossed the sea enthusiastically,
  20. They came to Africa and raped it,
  21. For when they met in battle
  22. The warriors fell on both sides,
  23. Because oh the breachloaders of the whites
  24. Laid the African low and defenceless!
  25. So then, we've heard you covering everything in your speech,
  26. Probing and prising
  27. The lore and the tongues of nations,
  28. Showing how they come into being and fall by the wayside,
  29. But even then we're thankful for one thing,
  30. That you've included the stories of blacks.
  31. I'm talking of the Zulu and Xhosa -
  32. Although I've heard nothing of Moshweshwe and Sekroma -
  33. Because your talks stressed the Nguni languages
  34. (I know nothing about Swahili.)
  35. Please arise, you things with brains
  36. That fly 'mongst the stars and the moon,
  37. Arise and take up sticks
  38. So that you do research with rigour
  39. And stop splitting hairs over trivial folktales:
  40. Rather split hairs over where languages come from,
  41. We're thankful, we of Xhosa,
  42. For the arrival of Ross and Bennie
  43. Who ignited the mind of the Xhosa
  44. On the day they first wrote down the language,
  45. The unshakable language of Xhosa.
46. I disappear!

#### TRANSCRIPT VERSUS ORAL PERFORMANCE

An analysis using the following as guidelines will be attempted: immediate differences between the written and the oral version, intonation and voice quality, punctuation, audience reaction, emphasis, devices used to keep audience's attention, etc.

#### ANALYSIS OF GESTURE AND SOME EXTRALINGUISTIC FACTORS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE A:

Manisi raises both hands in a slow and deliberate way prior to



beginning. This creates a sense of anticipation on the part of the audience and serves as a way of catching people's attention. He also carries a stick in his left hand which replaces the traditional spear which is continually used in a stabbing motion.

1: Yasuka yahlal' intaka yamahlathi

There is some correlation between word syllables and hand gesture. Ya/su/ka, for example, produces three hand gestures - his hands are extended forward and upwards.

There is also a deliberate pause after line 1. Manisi moves back with his hands lowered, indicating a break and again creating a sense of anticipation among the audience.

2 : NguWothsethse ke lowo  
3 : Usibunu sentaka yimilenze

Here he uses raised right clenched fist, again in unison with word syllables.

4 : Kub' ithi yakuchopha bathi yahlala

Yakuchopha ('when it squatted') in line 4 is acted out. Manisi moves into a squatting position. Gesture here plays the vital role of encouraging the audience's understanding of the poetry.

5 : Bathi yakusuka bathi yagidima

Manisi moves to the right in a crouching position in order to indicate motion - the bird taking off.

Bathi yagidima - The stick is also extended upwards in order to indicate motion. There is also a lengthy emphasis on the penultimate syllable.

6 : Bhotani mabandlandini

7 : Ndibon' ucwmb'oluhle lokhanyo

These lines are produced in a deliberate way - line 6 is formulaic in style. The word ucwamb' in line 7 has a rounded sound which is supplemented by the gentle rolling movement of the open hand.

8 : Iintw' eziingqondo zikhany' iinkwenkwezi kwakunye nenyanga  
9 : Kuloko namhla zingxamel' ukubamb' ilanga  
10 : Kulok' isuke le nkwenkwez' ilanga

The poet raises hands upwards whilst referring to the sun and stars.

11 : Ibhentsuza ngobushushu

Here his arms are moved separately - perhaps to indicate some kind of struggle.

12 : Aqal' amadod' asemhlabeni abe zizithwanyula

At the end of this line Manisi moves back and pauses.

13 : Bhotani mabandlandini  
14 : Bhotani makhosazana  
15 : Bhotani madun' amahle

What follows is a number of greetings produced in a very slow manner - again formulaic. In contrast to this, one notices the quick downward movement of the hand on several occasions.

16 : Mathol' oonyawo zabezolo  
17 : Iint' ezingoyiki kufa  
18 : Zawel' ulwandle zisimelela ngenkanunu nemfakadolo  
19 : Iint' ezaluwel' ulwandle ziqakatha  
20 : Zafik' iAfrika Zayiphunzisa  
21 : Kuba kwakudiban' entilini

There are no pauses.

22 : Yalal' imikhuthuka macal' omabini

Here he uses his hands in a downward movement in order to indicate the falling of the warriors.

23 : Kodwa hay' imfakadolo yaseMlungwini  
24 : Yamqengqa yamqungquluzis' umAfrika  
25 : Xa kulapho ke sinivile nithetha nitwatyula

Pause.

26 : Nayihlukanisa nade nayihlakahleza  
27 : Intetho neelwimi zezizwe  
28 : Nibonis' imbadu kwakunye nembunda-ndimunye  
29 : Kodwa naxa kulapho sibulela ntonye  
30 : Kub' anizishiyang' iimbali zomz' oNtsundu  
31 : Ndithetha ngabakwaZulu nabakwaXhosa  
32 : Nakub' andivanga nto ngoMsheweshwe noSekroma  
33 : Kub' iintetho zenu ziya zagxininisa kwabaseBunguni  
34 : Andazi nto ngeSwayile  
35 : Kha niphakame ntondin' ezibuchopho  
36 : Buphathama kwakunye neenkwenkwezi nenyanga  
37 : Niphakame nithabhath' iintonga  
38 : Ke niphengulule niqongqothele  
39 : Niyek' ukuphikisana ngokwenziwa kweentsomi  
40 : Niphikisane ngokudaleka kweentetho  
41 : Siyabulela thina basemaXhoseni  
42 : Ngokufika kweento zooRose nezooBheni  
43 : Ukuz' amaxhos' avulek' ingqondo  
44 : Kulo mhla yaqal' ukubhalwa le ntetho

Here less body motion is used, though there is still extensive use of hand gesture.

45 : Intethw' engqongqotho yasemaXhoseni

He again uses hand motion in unison with the syllables of the word engqongqotho. The stick is also moved from one hand to the other.

46 : Ncincilili!

Clearly one can draw a distinction between the sharper movements and the more deliberate movements, often involving open-handed gestures. This may also serve to keep the audience's attention. Gesture also plays the important role of making the poetry real for the audience and also enhancing the audience's understanding of the message the poet is trying to convey. One is also aware of the intense concentration on the face of Manisi.

## PROSODIC CHARACTERISTICS:

### PUNCTUATION AND RHYTHM

Punctuation is of utmost importance in written language and forms the basis for prosodic characteristics such as rhyme, etc. The spoken form strings numerous clauses together in a sentence, whereas these are more clearly delineated/definable in the written form. This is directly attributable to the use of punctuation. The use of rhythm which correlates to word syllables is also prominent in the oral performance. The immediate effects of rhythm are lost in the written version.

### DEVICES USED TO KEEP AUDIENCE'S ATTENTION - EXTRALINGUISTIC FACTORS:

#### EMPHASIS AND SPEED

The performance is characterised by a particular delivery style which includes emphasising certain phrases and words as well as varying the speed of the delivery. If one takes lines 14-16, for example, one notices that Manisi slows down completely. This contrasts directly with the lines that follow and also serves to create variation so as to keep the audience's attention.

#### TIMING - INCLUDING PAUSES

Manisi detracts purposefully from his easy flowing style which prevents the audience from becoming bored. Pauses are also used to break any monotony and possibly to give the performer time to think about what he is going to say next.

## CONTEXT

According to Goody (1987:158),

The whole process of literate education becomes a matter of absorbing abstracted knowledge through mediators, either directly from books or indirectly from teachers.... Knowledge here has been separated off from 'artistic' activity, which continues to be associated more with inspiration, with dissociation, with direct communion with the forces of nature, than with the bookish learning of the schoolroom.

Oral poetry is a performance in context rather than a more permanent static creation. The inspiration which flows from the context of the performance and which spurs on the performer does not exist in written literature. In performance B, for example, Manisi, having been asked whether or not his poetry is improvised, answers by jumping up and performing a poem which is inspired by the context in which he finds himself. Like performance A, this poem is inspired by the immediate context of the conference and the audience, and it is ultimately directed at the academic who posed the question (who happened to be of European origins). Clearly, the last two lines of the poem are directed at him as they refer to the French and the Germans. The question posed was the following: 'My question is about improvisation. Has not David Manisi been building up his poem in his mind over the last, let's say three days? He came down from Queenstown to this conference. He listened to many of the papers. Was this not preparation and what is the difference between this and jotting down notes on a piece of paper?'

Manisi then immediately produced the following poem:



1. Xa kulapho ke,
2. Nkunuz' edl' eziny' iinkunzi dla libhavuma,
3. Wathetha ngentetho yakwaXhosa nakwaZulu:
4. Uyamaz' uZulu noXhosa?
5. Uvela phi na kub' ezakowenu ziyabasind' abakokwenu?
6. Wayeken' amaXhosa noZulu
7. Ahlale nesiNguni sawo,
8. Kuba lo mhlab' uxakekile.
9. Sasigqibele sibantu kodwa hay' ishwangusha lethu
10. Lokufika kooyihl' amadun' asentshonalanga!
11. Basidlavula besibhulusha,
12. Kub' amaNges' asigatsinga,
13. Ay' amaBhulw' esiqunyuya,
14. Ay' amaFulan' esifulathela,
15. Namhlanje sijanyelwe ngamaJamane.

1. So then,
2. Bull that eats other bulls, that mumbles while it eats,
3. You speak of the languages of Xhosa and Zulu:
4. Do you know anything at all about Zulu and Xhosa?
5. Where do you come from, for the affairs of your people  
are your own affairs?
6. Leave the Xhosa and the Zulu alone
7. To look after the Nguni languages,
8. For this country is in trouble.
9. Once we were people, but oh our misfortune
10. The arrival of your fathers, the gents of the west!
11. They shattered and scattered us,
12. For the English ground us underfoot,
13. While the Boers blunted our horns,
14. And the French turned their backs,
15. Today the Germans just watch us.

Performance B was inspired directly by the question which was asked by Professor Sienaert (Head of Department of Spanish and French at Natal University). In his introduction, Manisi sarcastically criticises any foreigner's right to query any aspect of Xhosa oral poetry. Manisi also manages to link the immediate context with historical factors which led to the downfall of the Xhosas as a nation. This poem, though fuelled by the immediate context and the question which was asked, carries a message of general suspicion of Westerners.

## INTONATION AND VOICE QUALITY

The use of the guttural voice serves to catch the audience's attention. The use of high/low tones seems to remain the same as it would in ordinary spoken discourse. The difference, though, is that there is a lot more emphasis on the high/low tones. This is evident from performance A and B. The following extract (from performance A) is included with tonal markings:

1.  $\bar{Y}$ asuka  $\bar{y}$ ahlala  $\hat{i}$ ntaka  $\bar{y}$ amah $\hat{l}$ athi,
2.  $\bar{N}$ guwoth $\bar{s}$ eth $\bar{s}$ e  $\bar{k}$ e  $\bar{l}$ owo,
3.  $\bar{U}$ sibu $\bar{n}$ u  $\bar{s}$ entaka  $\bar{y}$ imilenze,
4. Kub'  $\bar{i}$ thi  $\hat{y}$ akucho $\bar{p}$ ha  $\bar{b}$ athi  $\bar{y}$ ahlala,
5.  $\bar{B}$ athi  $\hat{y}$ akusuka  $\bar{b}$ athi  $\bar{y}$ agidima.

The high/low tones are very clearly definable, supplementing the use of guttural voice and serving to maintain audience attention. The only difference between the written and the oral versions is that the oral version is more emphatic.

## DRAMATISATION

According to Horton & Finnegan (1973:129),

There is a great deal of evidence to show how important the individual composer can be in non-literate as in literate societies. In both cases he is to some extent conditioned by conventional patterns but this can of course give scope as well as limits to his genius. In respect of actually communicating his words, the oral performer has even more opportunity for individual expression than one who must commit his imagination to the written page. He can enhance and point his words by his mode of utterance, embellish them with music, movement and even on occasion dance, bring out the intended humour or pathos or irony of his vision by his expression or tone.

She continues (ibid:135-136),

The actual enactment of the literary piece is necessarily a vital part of its impact and this fact can be exploited in many ways by the oral poet. His audience, furthermore, sees as well as hears him and the skilful composer/performer takes advantage of this fact. Characterization, for instance, need not be expressed directly in words when it can be as clearly and as subtly portrayed through the performer's face and gestures.... This is something which is essential for us to bear in mind when we attempt to read publications of literature originally designed for oral delivery. When one misses the interplay of ear and eye, of audience and performer, which is an essential part of oral literature, it is hard for it not to seem pale and uninteresting.

Dramatisation plays a vital part in the performance. The enacting of certain words and phrases gives the poetry life, whilst at the same time serving to gain the audience's attention. For example, in line 4 of performance A, the imbongi moves into a squatting position in order to illustrate the bird which sits. Such characteristics are completely lost in the written version.

#### CONCLUSION

It would seem then that the main differences between the written and oral versions lie not so much in the content or meaning of the words, as in the absence of occasion, context, audience and other extralinguistic factors in the written version. Goody (1977:44) sums this up as follows:

Speech is no longer tied to an 'occasion', it becomes timeless. Nor is it attached to a person; on paper, it becomes more abstract, more depersonalised.

The written version will also allow for more careful analysis. Goody (1977:128) states that

Writing is critical not only because it preserves speech

over time and space, but because it transforms speech, by abstracting its components, by assisting backward scanning, so that communication by eye creates a different cognitive potentiality for human beings than communication by word of mouth.

Due to factors such as these, the written or transcribed version of izibongo will not have the emotional intensity and impact of the oral version. The immediate emotional link between the imbongi and his audience to which Gunner (1986) makes reference will no longer be present.

There is also no question of writing having the effect of killing oral literature - at least not in the immediate future. Finnegan (1988:120-121) comments as follows with regard to oral literature in the Pacific:

Is oral literature bound to 'die out' and disappear? This question is often asked, and creates a sense of urgency in many collectors.... In one way, perhaps the extensive use of writing does mean some decline in the relative position of oral literature. For there are now other kinds of literature as well as that expressed orally. But in another sense, oral literature shows no signs of disappearing. Songs (and the dances that often go with them) continue to be composed and performed, oratory is a constant feature of the Pacific scene, and stories are still exchanged based on recent events as well as oral traditions.

Xhosa poets account for the ability to create oral literature as coming from a central inspiration point. It is my opinion that because of this, Xhosa oral literature will not die out unless a conscious effort is made to use the written rather than the oral mode. Xhosa oral literature is still flourishing, one hundred and fifty years after the introduction of writing. Although certain changes may take place, and the position of oral

literature may be diminished, it still plays a vital role in society and has managed to adapt to new and contemporary environments such as trade unions. (This will be explored later.) The view therefore that writing will ultimately kill the oral is questionable - although it does have obvious effects on the oral as outlined in this chapter.

Kirk's view (1965:30) that writing will eventually lead to the disappearance of formulaic expression is perhaps a little presumptuous. Kuiper and Haggo (1984:229) state, with regard to stock auctioneers, that they clearly make use of oral formulaic expression, even though they, as well as their audience, are literate. One should therefore not talk of orality and literacy in simple terms which conjure up all kinds of thoughts: civilisation versus non-civilisation, structure versus non-structure, literacy versus illiteracy, etc. Oral and written literature are literature in their own right; interacting at some point, remaining autonomous in many ways, backed by the same culture and society and performing the same function of commenting on that society. A Western ethnocentric view places oral literature in a bad light - something which one associates with an illiterate uncivilised society. One must remember that oral literature preceded writing, lives alongside writing, influences writing, and yet also manages to stand alone. It is a well developed, firmly established form of literature which has always included, for example, lyrics, religious poetry, prose narratives, panegyric poetry, etc. (cf. Horton and Finnegan, 1973). Finnegan (1988) states clearly that there are many



continuities between oral and written literature in terms of subtlety, scope for insight and individual creativity. If one bears this in mind, it is difficult to foresee the immediate disappearance of this form of literature in Xhosa society.

## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. Cf. Ong (1982); also the section dealing with primary and secondary orality - pp.42 to 44 of this chapter.
2. At the time this research was conducted, Reverend Xozwa was a minister of religion living at Tafalehashe near the Transkei Wild Coast. He has since moved and is now resident at Qunu near Umtata.
3. This is clear from the case study included in this chapter.
4. Sithole's poetry is analysed and discussed in chapter 5 and the epilogue. Cf. also performances G and H on the accompanying video.
5. Mothlabane is a teacher living in Grahamstown. Cf. also performance C (second imbongi) on the accompanying video.
6. This is clear from the case study which forms part of this chapter.
7. Imbongi like Manisi, Xozwa, Mothlabane and Mbutuma produce both orally and in writing.
8. Cf. section on formulaic expression in this chapter, also Lord (1960).
9. Cf. McLaren's Xhosa-English Dictionary (1981:162).
10. Cf. chapter 16 entitled Imbongi, njalo-njalo.
11. This poem which was published in the Grocott's Mail (Grahamstown) of 16 and 30 August 1988 can be found in Appendix 1B.
12. Analysis of Mothlabane's poetry will be undertaken in chapter 5.
13. Cf. analysis of Video performance A (infra).

14. For further evidence of contemporary iimbongi see case studies in chapters 4 and 5.

### CHAPTER 3

#### PREACHERS AND POETS: XHOSA RELIGION AND IIMBONGI

##### INTRODUCTION

Peteni (1980:42) in his novel Kwazidenge<sup>1</sup> creates the following setting: a church service where one of the elders (Ntabeni) is about to pray. The author states;

Ngamanye amaxesha wayethandaza ngokungathi yimbongi yakomkhulu ibonga inkosi eyaziwayo ngemini yetheko elikhulu, ngamanye abengathi uyamcenga uThixo, ecengela isiqu sakhe, emthe chu ngesandla, ethetha naye ubuso ngobuso.

Sometimes he prayed as if a praise poet was speaking praises to a great chief at an important ceremony. At other times his appeal was more personal. It touched on his own transgressions. He prayed as if he held God by the hand and was speaking to him face to face.

(1979:50).

It is the purpose of this chapter to comment on the use of praise poetry technique and style by Xhosa preachers in order to establish how this tradition has been adapted to this context. This chapter begins with an introduction followed by some comment on early Xhosa religion. The arrival of the missionaries and the birth of a poetic style of worship, including Ntsikana's great hymn is then outlined. A discussion of religion as a poetic activity (including a case study) follows. The interaction between orality and literacy as it pertains to religion is also commented on. Finally, a conclusion follows.

The Christian religious tradition as a thematic resource in written Xhosa literature, including poetry, came about as a

result of the arrival of the missionaries in the early nineteenth century. This is true of both oral and written literature. The first of these missionaries to arrive was Van der Kemp, a member of the London Missionary Society. Even among the first Xhosa converts and writers, poets emerged who were producing poetry in honour of God. Among them was Ntsikana who produced the first Xhosa hymn, drawing on the traditional Xhosa style of izibongo and praising God in a similar way that a chief, for example, would have been praised. The interaction between religion and Xhosa poetry has therefore existed for a long time. Whether or not the traditional God Qamata was also praised in a poetic way has not been documented and it is not the purpose of this study to do so. Although the Xhosa have always been religious people, it is the concern of this chapter to explore the relationship between religion and poetry since the early eighteenth century up to the present. It is my impression that Christian worship among the Xhosa people is permeated by the traditional style and technique of Xhosa oral poetry. This is true, for example, of Reverend Xozwa's style of worshipping which will be explored in this chapter. It is important to remember that he is not only a minister of religion, but also an imbongi. Similarly, Ntsikana developed this dual role.

As a corollary to the chapter on orality and literacy, the use of formulaic expression within Xhosa worship and the interaction between forms which are essentially oral and those which are essentially literate will be commented on. It is my impression that Xhosa preachers rely heavily on the use of oral formulaic



expression. If this is so, then one can again query the findings of Lord, Parry and Magoun that the presence of formulaic expression can be associated only with oral societies. This will be explored later.

### EARLY XHOSA RELIGION

The supernatural being Qamata is associated with traditional Xhosa religion. It was only once the missionaries arrived that the term Thixo (presumably a borrowing from the Khoi San languages - cf. Hodgson 1982:55) was introduced to refer to the supernatural as defined by Christianity. According to J H Soga (1931:149-150), the Xhosa

have a conception of a Supreme Being clearly defined: a God who is the creator of all things, who controls and governs all, and as such is the rewarder of good and the punisher of evil. Worship is never directly offered to Him, but through the medium of the ancestral spirits, who in the unseen world are nearer to Him, and know more than men on earth.

The Xosa name for God is u-Dali, i.e. the Creator or Supreme Being.... Other names by which He is known are Tixo and Qamata. Both of these latter are of alien origin. They are a legacy from the Hottentots or possibly the Bushmen.... The widespread use of the term Tixo dates from the time of the first advent of missionaries to the Ama-Xosa. It has moreover become universally accepted by the South-Eastern Bantu, to express a fuller idea of God than was possessed before that time, together with its Christian implications.

There are also numerous other traditional praise names which are used to refer to the supernatural, for example, uNkulunkulu ('the great one'), uMdali, uMenzi ('the creator'), uHlanga, iNkosi yezulu, ('the king of the skies'), etc. Early Xhosa religion has always been associated with a supernatural being who

was able to control all. 2

As far as this thesis is concerned, what is interesting to note are the changes which have occurred since the arrival of the missionaries and the introduction of Christianity. This created certain social changes in the sense that different values and beliefs were being instilled in the people by the missionaries. Elements of the traditional way of life such as circumcision were forbidden by the missionaries and no provision was made for the traditional way of life within the Christian faith. This is no longer the case today. The traditions of the past which still remain and the Christian way of life seem to co-exist side by side. This accounts for the use of the izibongo style which is used by many preachers today in churches such as the Methodist Church in Africa, Zion Christian Churches and the Order of Ethiopia. An attempt was made to find an indigenous theology which would be suitable to the African way of worship. This is evident with the development of these independent or separatist movements. According to Oosthuizen (1968:7-8),

The African's view of life and his experience of reality are in many respects different from those of the Westerner. This fact should be accepted, and the African personality should find expression in different fields such as liturgy, theology, ... hymnology and other spheres. Attention should be seriously given to the development of an indigenous liturgy. There are Churches which transplant what they have received in toto, with the result that no spontaneous development can ever take place. Every form of indigenous expression has been discouraged, without ever being studied. The Church in Africa was forced to continue a parasitic mode of existence because no scope was given for its spontaneous development.

In an attempt to find this independent indigenous theology there was some reliance on traditional forms of oratory which had a particular appeal to the African people. Consequently, the izibongo style survived. While one of the traditional roles of the imbongi was to mediate between the people and the chief, in the religious context the preacher could be said to be mediating between the supernatural and his congregation. This being the case, the izibongo style would be particularly attractive to the Xhosa way of worship.

Today there seems to be a resurgence of traditionalism within Xhosa religious worship, even though it is firmly embedded within the Christian faith - hence the use of traditional styles such as the izibongo style. The concept of ukuthwasa among the Xhosa is for example, still common, but it is given a different interpretation or definition as to what it had in the past.<sup>3</sup> It is now regarded as someone who is filled with the Holy Spirit and not necessarily someone who has some special relationship (implying communication) with the ancestors.

#### THE MISSIONARIES AND THE FIRST CHRISTIAN IMBONGI

With the arrival of the first missionaries, the Xhosa were introduced to the Christian religion. According to Hodgson (1980:1), Dr J T Van der Kemp was the first missionary to introduce the Gospel to the Xhosa people at the end of 1799. He was followed by James Read (senior), and later by Joseph Williams who founded a mission station near Fort Beaufort in 1816. A permanent mission was not established until 1820.

Conversion to Christianity initially required an acceptance of a completely alien set of values and morals which were vastly different from those which were adhered to by the Xhosa. The missionaries, for example, repudiated many of the traditions such as circumcision. The converts had to forego much of their traditional culture. This new life therefore created many difficulties and led to much hardship for the newly converted.

Although this may have been the case, the traditional style of worship which is similar to izibongo survived right from the beginning. Ntsikana, possibly one of Van der Kemp's first Christian converts was such a poet. Even Van der Kemp's style of preaching seems to bear similarities to that of Ntsikana's. In the pamphlet, 'The Natives and their Missionaries,' a Xhosa minister named Reverend I W Wauchope, quotes from Tse, a Xhosa convert living at Van der Kemp's Debe Nek mission:

The preaching of van der Kemp was of a conversational character.... van der Kemp told them that

There was God in heaven,  
He created all things,  
The sun, the moon, the stars.  
There was one, Sifuba-sibanzi,  
(The Broad-breasted one)  
He is the leader of men,  
Was heralded by a Star,  
His feet were wounded for us,  
His hands were pierced for us,  
His blood was shed for us.

It is interesting to note that Van der Kemp makes use of the traditional praise name Sifuba sibanzi which was probably used to refer to the traditional God Qamata, and with which the people could identify. The style is loose without any regular metre.



Perhaps Van der Kemp had already established that this style of worship was necessary in order to gain the attention of the African people.

Prior to his conversion, Ntsikana was a traditional imbongi. After his conversion he used this gift in praise of God - hence his famous hymn which is constructed in the traditional style of Xhosa izibongo. It seems also true to say that today the African way of worship retains many traditional aspects and is particularly African. There seems to be a definite resurgence of tradition within Christian worship. It no longer means, for example, that if one is circumcised one will be ousted from the Church. One need only consider the Zion Christian Church. Cloete (1988:42), having conducted a case study in rural Transkei, includes the following comment:

Nowinile has given up smoking and alcohol in accordance with Zionist custom. She says her religion is 'not against her participating in traditional rituals' so long as she does not lose her faith. For example, she says that 'even Christians have to be circumcised to be accepted into manhood'...

Whatever has happened between the time of the missionaries' arrival and now, one traditional aspect of the Xhosa way of life has survived throughout and still forms a very relevant and real part of Xhosa worship, that is, the use of the traditional style of izibongo in worshipping. It is the sermon which is characterised by this style. <sup>4</sup>

According to Hodgson (1980:3), Ntsikana was the son of Gaba, and belonged to the Cira clan. His father was also a hereditary



councillor to Chief Ngqika.

She continues (ibid:3-4) and gives a description of his conversion;

The story goes that early one morning, as he was admiring his cattle in his kraal, he saw a bright ray of light from the rising sun strike the side of his favourite ox, Hulushe. But a young boy rounding up calves saw nothing peculiar. There are said to have been further strange happenings later that day when Ntsikana took his family to a dance at a neighbouring kraal. Three times, as he started to dance, a raging wind arose out of clear blue sky forcing all the dancers to stop. Tradition has it that he now became aware that the Holy Spirit had entered him, but the people thought him bewitched. He promptly took his family home and they were amazed when on the way he washed the red ochre from his body in the Gqora river, as a sign of his entry into his new life.

It was from this point in time that Ntsikana began his conversion to the Christian faith. Although the missionaries strove for total conversion in the sense that most traditions were now forbidden, Ntsikana was to fight for an indigenous theology which has persisted up to the present, a theology where Christianity has the opportunity to appeal in a very direct way to the aspirations of Africans, their culture and traditions. Hodgson (1980:4) states that

An indigenous theology was born when Ntsikana added to the expression of the new religion in ritual the expression of the new religion in a language of faith. For him this conceptual aspect was the word of God and he articulated it in the form of preaching, prophecies, prayers and praise.... His hymns show how he made wide use of imagery and symbolism relating to fighting, hunting and the pastoral life to convey the meaning of his message, so matching new concepts with such of the old as were common in their everyday experience.

This kind of imagery and symbolism is also found in traditional izibongo. Ntsikana was therefore working within the tradition in order to appeal to the people rather than working against it. Ntsikana composed four hymns which all bear distinct resemblance to Xhosa izibongo. Let us consider some examples from these hymns which were sung during the course of worshipping.

Iintsimbi Ka Ntsikana ('Ntsikana's Bell') is the hymn which is said to have been used by Ntsikana to summon people to worship. According to Hodgson (1980:7-8), Ntsikana would then settle the congregation down by singing the next hymn, Dalibom ('Life Creator'):

He! Nankok' u Dalibom; Wases' Kolweni.  
He! Nankok' u Dalibom; Os' bizesihleli.  
He! Nankok' u Dalibom; Wasinga pezulu.

See! there stands the life creator; He of the School.  
See! there stands the life creator; Who calls us to rise.  
See! there stands the life creator; He has ascended.

The use of repetition here in praise of the creator is clearly a traditional technique and is often used in the production of praise poetry. Using the praise name Dalibom is in itself directly linked to traditional poetry where the chief has numerous praise names which are used by the imbongi when singing the chief's praises. The people were therefore encouraged to praise God through the singing of these hymns. The singing of these hymns, being steeped in tradition, may or may not have been accompanied by dancing, which traditionally accompanies song. Today, however, where this style of worshipping is being observed, one finds that it is almost invariably accompanied by

dancing and clapping. In services in Transkei, this is certainly a common phenomenon.

Ntsikana's 'Great Hymn' is entitled Ulo Thixo omkhulu ngosezulwini, ('He, the great God in Heaven'), which again highlights the African flavour which was introduced to the Western concept of Christianity and which is still observed today. This hymn has been handed down orally from one generation to the other - again this can be likened to the praise poem. It was first reduced to writing by Brownlee. Pringle published the hymn based on this version in the New Monthly Magazine in 1827: <sup>5</sup>

1. Ulo Tixo omkulu ngosezulwini;
2. Ungu wena-wena Kaka lenyaniso.
3. Ungu wena-wena Nqaba lenyaniso.
4. Ungu wena-wena Hlathi lenyaniso.
5. Ungu wena-wena 'uhlel' enyangwaneni
6. Ulo dal' ubom, wadala pezulu.
  
7. Lo Mdal' owadala wadala izulu.
8. Lo Menzi wenkwenkwezi noZilimela;
9. Yabinza inkwenkwezi, isixelela.
10. Lo Menzi wemfaman' uzenza ngabom?
  
11. Lateta ixilongo lisibizile.
12. Ulongin' izingela imipefumlo.
13. Ulohlanganis' imihlamb' eyalanayo.
  
14. Ulomkokeli wasikokela tina.
15. Ulengub' inkul' esiyambata tina.
16. Ozandla Zakho zinamanxiba Wena.
17. Onyawo Zakho zinamanxeba Wena.
  
18. Ugazi Lako limrolo yinina?
19. Ugazi lako lipalelele tina.
20. Lemali enkulu-na siyibizile?
21. Lomzi Wako-na-na siwubizile?
  
1. He is the Great God who is in heaven;
2. Thou art Thou, Shield of truth.
3. Thou art Thou, Stronghold of truth.
4. Thou art Thou, Thicket of truth.
5. Thou art Thou who dwellest in the highest.

6. He who created life (below), created (life) above.
7. That Creator who created, created heaven.
8. This maker of the stars, and the pleiades.
9. A star flashed forth, it was telling us.
10. The Maker of the blind, does he not make them on purpose?
11. The trumpet sounded, it has called us.
12. As for his chase He hunteth for souls.
13. He who amalgamates flocks rejecting each other.
14. He, the Leader, who has led us.
15. He whose great mantle we do put on.
16. Those hands of Thine, they are wounded.
17. Those feet of Thine, they are wounded.
18. Thy blood, why is it streaming?
19. Thy blood, it was shed for us.
20. This great price, have we called for it?
21. This home of Thine, have we called for it?

According to Hodgson (1982:22),

What is significant in the literary style of Ntsikana, however, is that he expressed the new language of faith in the traditional mode of a praise-poem or isibongo, rather than in an adopted foreign style, so using the old form for the new content.

We notice the use of repetition and parallelism in the above poem or hymn which is characteristic of traditional izibongo style. This can be seen for example in lines 2, 3, 4 and 5. There is also no regular rhyming. There is a loose style and irregular number of lines characteristic of the imbongi's style. The praise names which are used to refer to God, for example, in lines 7 and 8, Lo Mdal' and Lo Menzi, are also reminiscent of traditional praising of chiefs. The use of metaphor is also essentially a traditional poetic device, for example, in line 2, Unqu wena-wena Kaka lenyaniso.

Ntsikana was therefore contributing to the beginning of some kind

of indigenous theology with which the Xhosa people could identify and which did not particularly upset the missionaries. This being the case, the izibongo style has always been used, particularly in the independent churches.

According to Hodgson (1982:23),

...., just as the imbongi was expected to extol the prowess of the chief, recount his exploits and recall the great deeds of the past, so did Ntsikana extol God's greatness, recount His acts of creation and relate the story of Christ's death and resurrection, using the imposing epithets and highly figurative language typical of izibongo.

Bearing in mind that the Xhosa language is very powerful and can be used to stir up people's emotions, the use of this style in expressing Christianity is important and allows for religious expression to become an emotional experience.

#### CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION AS A POETIC ACTIVITY: A CASE STUDY

At the outset, one should draw a distinction here between the Zionist churches and the Ethiopian churches. Each of these have many breakaway sects. Sundkler (1961:38-64) outlines the development of these churches. The Order of Ethiopia was the first to emerge under the leadership of Dwane in 1900. It would seem that the Order of Ethiopia arose among the Xhosa, whereas the Zionist movement was influenced to a much greater extent by the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion which was founded in 1896 in the United States. Although they are both independent church movements, they nevertheless arose under different



circumstances. However, the Ethiopian churches on the one hand are modelled on white churches in all respects of doctrine, liturgy and church government - only insisting that the personnel must be black. There is little fusion with traditional African religion. On the other hand, the Zionist churches openly combine Christianity with elements of traditional African religion.

It was within these movements that an 'African Christianity' was encouraged - hence the African way of worship which exists today and which includes the poetic style of the traditional iimbongi.

Although Ntsikana's Great Hymn is probably the first Xhosa hymn drawing on the traditional style and technique, it is my contention that many Xhosa preachers exploit this style during the course of their sermons in an attempt to indigenise theology. There are many iimbongi operating within the independent Christian movements today, fulfilling exactly that role which was fulfilled by Ntsikana way back in the eighteen hundreds.

A Xhosa iimbongi who fulfils such a role is the Reverend Lordwyck Xozwa who is a preacher in the Methodist Church In Africa, more commonly known as 'The Donkey Church', a group which broke away from the white dominated Methodist Church. He not only produces poetry spontaneously and on the spur of the moment in praise of God, but has also written and published poetry.

In any event, his sermons are characterised by the traditional style of producing oral poetry which has been discussed above. This production in a poetic style which strongly resembles the traditional style of izibongo therefore still exists today,

primarily in the sermons of preachers who are either consciously or unconsciously influenced by this style.

In an interview (November 1988), Xozwa stated the following:

KASCHULA: Do you see your poetry as a gift from God?

XOZWA: It is a gift from God, yes.

KASCHULA: Do you produce that poetry sometimes when you are preaching?

XOZWA: Sometimes, the way I express myself when I preach, it is in a poetical way. I preach in a poetical way.... I do not know how to preach as if I am lecturing in a lecture room. I am just a born poet and this applies when I am in the pulpit. This is a gift from God.

Xozwa (known as the Xhosa calabash poet), in his publication on the Methodist Church in Africa entitled Methodist Church In Africa (1989:4) states: 'I as a poet of today, I cannot stop singing but praise the Saviour above and the founders of the Church...'

In this history he looks at how the separatist churches came about and how black Methodism developed. He analyses political, social and religious factors which have contributed to the emergence of these independent movements. He states (1989:4) that this church (Methodist Church in Africa) is a church for the black nation, of the blacks themselves, formed, motivated, and propagated by the blacks of southern Africa themselves. The way of worship has therefore been africanised and is suitable for the

use of izibongo style when worshipping.

Xozwa (1989:7) states that

In most of these Mission Churches, freedom of worship was not practised; since people were taught to worship according to the old styles of the Western civilization, in order to show their honour to the Lord by humbling themselves before the altar etc. etc. This was contrary to the African way of worship which is done by praising God in poetical language, clapping hands, dancing, playing their bands of the old tradition, and moreover, singing in the highest tones to show their love, loyalty, honour, and jubilation unto the Lord.

Xozwa (1989:7-8) continues by pointing out that ancestor worship was no longer permitted and that,

Since then, most Africans from the Catholic origin separated from the mother Churches and formed many Zionist and Apostolic Churches in order to accommodate their Saints and the African ways of worship, believed by them as acceptable to God.

In the light of the above, it is clear that the way in which Xozwa worships is distinctly African. Extracts from a sermon which was recorded at the dedication of a new church in Tafalehashe in December 1988 will be analysed in order to substantiate this point of view. The sermon will be divided into sections of approximately ten lines each and commentary will be provided. Theoretical concepts which have been applied to izibongo (cf. Ntuli 1984; Wainwright et al. 1979), such as method of delivery, oral formulas, parallelisms, personification, metaphor, simile, etc. will be analysed. Each line consists of what could be called a 'breath unit' in the sense that there is a pause for breath after each line. This is also true of traditional izibongo. Where the pitch of the preacher's voice is

raised there is also what could be called a 'grunt' or 'audible gasp for breath' at the end of each line.

Xozwa begins as follows:

1. Phakamisani iintloko zenu masango
  2. Angene ukumkani wobungcwalisa
  3. Isk'ingathi makhe ndithethe kancinane ngokumkani  
wobungcwalisa,
  4. Lo selezile kule ntente.
  5. Lo kumkani sithetha ngaye bahlobo bam,
  6. Ngeny'imini ukhe wahambela uMoses entlango,
  7. Ethafeni leHorebhe,
  8. Alusile apho iigusha zikaYitro, umkhwe wakhe mshumayeli  
waseCaweni.
  9. Lo mfana wabona kuvuth'ityholo lingaphel,
  10. Wancama wasondela.
- 
1. Lift up your heads oh gates
  2. That the King of Glory may enter
  3. It seems as though I should talk a little about this Holy  
Lord,
  4. This one who has already come to this tent.
  5. This Lord whom we are talking about, my friends,
  6. One day he approached Moses in the desert,
  7. In the veld of Horeb,
  8. Where he was herding Jethro's sheep, this preacher.
  9. This man saw the veld burning without end,
  10. He came closer.

The preacher begins by talking. He quotes a passage from the Bible, namely, lines 1 and 2 of psalm 24. This seems to be a regular feature of this kind of worship. This passage is then used as a type of formula throughout the sermon. These lines will recur throughout (with some variation) and can be considered as an oral formula on which the preacher relies. It is an expression which recurs although there is some variation in metre and content. The meaning which is expressed, however, remains the same. At the beginning of line 7 he begins to raise his

voice. Xozwa successfully contrasts raised and lowered speech as a device to keep the audience's attention, which is also characteristic of the traditional imbongi.

The sermon continues:

11. Wathi wakusondela kweli tyholo lo mfana,
12. kwakho ilizwi eliphum'aph'etyholweni lisithi,
13. 'Hayi sukusondela ngoba indawo ome kuyo ingcwele, khulul'izihlangu ezinyaweni.'
14. Wathi akubuza ukuba ungubani na,
15. Impendulo ndinguye endinguye.
16. Igama elinye elithi endinguye bantu bakowethu,
17. Belingabizwa ngabantwana, ngamakhosikazi.
18. Kowethu apha ke kuthiwa nguQamata,
19. NguTayi uSifuba Sibanzi bantu bakokwethu.
20. Abanye kuthiwe nguNkulunkulu, nguMveli-Nggangi.
21. Wakufika phaya eLesotho kuthiwe nguModimo, bantu bakokwethu.

11. When this man came close to this bush,
12. There was a voice which emerged and said,
13. 'No do not come closer because the place where you are standing is holy, take off your shoes from your feet.'
14. When he asked who it was,
15. The reply was I am who I am.
16. Another name that says, I am he, people of my home,
17. It was not mentioned by children, by women.
18. Here at home we call him Qamata,
19. The Broad Chested one, people of my home.
20. Others call him The Great One, The first born of Creation.
21. In Lesotho he is called Modimo, people of my home.

In this extract one can see how the minister actually refers to God through the use of praise names, Qamata, Tayi, Sifuba Sibanzi, Nkulunkulu and Mveli-Nggangi. This occurs in lines 18, 19 and 20. The use of the copulative ng form when formulating these praise names is typical of traditional Xhosa izibongo. It is significant that the phrase bantu bakokwethu, ('people of my home'), in lines 16, 19 and 21 recurs throughout and also resembles Lord's oral formula. It would allow the preacher a chance to formulate what he is going to say next.



The preacher continues:

22. Mzi wakwethu ke ezimhloniphayo uThixo ukuba ngukumkani wobungcwalisa.
23. Yiva wethu ndikhawulezile. Lo kumkani endithetha ngaye,
24. Ith' incwadi yaseCaweni,
25. Umfana kaAmotsi ogama linguYisaya,
26. Ngeny'imini ukhe wambona etempileni,
27. Ziwambuzela bantu bakokwethu,
28. Ehleli kwitrone ephakamileyo ende kubukumkani bakhe,
29. Apha ecaleni kwakhe naphezu kwakhe,
30. Kwakukho izipha,
31. OoKherubhime nooSerafine.
32. Ingulow' enamaphiko ngamathandathu,
33. Ngamabini ephaphazela,
34. Ngamabini efihl'inyawo,
35. Ngamabini efihl'ubuso ukuze angamboni ukumkani wobungcwalisa.
36. Ukuze inyawo zakhe zinganyatheli apho kunyathele khona ukumkani wobungcwalisa,
37. UThixo oligorha uSonini nanini.

22. Our people who respect the name of God because he is the Holy One.
23. Listen, I have hurried. This Lord that I am talking of,
24. The Bible says,
25. Amos's child whose name is Isaiah,
26. One day he saw him in the temple,
27. People of my home, with flowing robes,
28. He was sitting on a high long throne,
29. At his side and above him,
30. There were many
31. Cherubim and Seraphim
32. Each had six wings,
33. With two it fluttered,
34. With two it hid its feet,
35. With two it hid its face so that the Holy Lord should not see it.
36. So that its feet do not tramp where those of the Holy Lord did,
37. God who is brave, the Everlasting.

According to Cope (1968:41),

A comparison between two types of parrallelism shows that perfect parallelism repeats the idea with different words, whereas parallelism by linking advances the idea by means of an identical word or stem or root.

In the above extract there is clear use of what Cope has defined

as parallelism. Repetition which amounts to parallelism occurs in lines 32, 33, 34 and 35. Lines 33, 34 and 35 are an extension of the idea presented in line 32. The words Ngamabini, ('with two') represent an initial parallelism by linking which is common in izibongo. Again this extract is taken from the book of Isaiah (chapter 6) and presented in poetic style to fit in with what the preacher is saying. Line 37 is also praising God. Lines 24 and 27 are also repeated throughout. One could compare, for example lines 16, 19 and 28 as well as line 43. One could conceive of these as oral formulae. The phrase Yiva wethu in line 23 is also repeated, for example, in line 38.

The minister continues:

38. Yiva wethu yangulo mfo ulapha etempileni wamemeza komnye,

39. Uyingcwele, uyingcwele uyingcwele,  
 40. UYehova, uThixo wemikhosi.  
 41. Izulu lizele, kwanomhlaba,  
 42. Bubukhulu bobungcwalisa.

43. Ith'ibhayibhile,  
 44. Ithi: iminyango le yetempile yadidizela yafun' ukuqhaqheka.  
 45. Ewe ke bantu belizwe lokuthandaza.  
 46. Ithi ke, naxa se ididizela,  
 47. Yazala indlu ngaphakathi,  
 48. Ngums'ongaziwayo aph'avela ngakhona,  
 49. Ngoba wawuphum'esibingelelweni sobukhosi bukaThixo.

38. Listen, each man in the temple shouted to the other,  
 39. He is Holy, He is Holy, He is Holy,  
 40. Jehovah, God of hosts.  
 41. The heavens are filled, and so is the earth,  
 42. With your great Holiness.

43. The Bible says,  
 44. It says: the doors of the Temple shook and wanted to tear.  
 45. Yes, people of the world of prayer.  
 46. Whilst it shook,

47. The room filled inside,
48. With smoke which no one knew where it came from,
49. Because it came from the altar of God's Kingdom.

The preacher begins here (in lines 39 to 42) by praising God with biblical phrases. Line 43 is basically a repetition of line 24. In lines 48 and 49 Xozwa successfully uses what one could consider as negative versus positive parallelism. Ngums' ongaziwayo, ('Smoke which no one knew'), in line 48 is contrasted with Ngoba wawuphum', ('because it came from'), in line 49. From line 43 the preacher's voice becomes louder and a very rhythmic style emerges.

The sermon continues as follows:

50. Wasuka omny'umfo xa kucaca ukuba le ndodana iyoyika,
51. Wasuk'omny'umfo,
52. Lo mfo esalila apha sel'eyinyityholo,
53. Eyingxididi ekhal'inyembezi Mm.
54. Athi ke mna, ngokuba ndithe shwaka ngokuba amehlo am  
    abon'uYehova uThixo wemikhosi,
55. Utsho lo mfo,
56. Uyalila zange wayibon'into ongummangaliso ebubungcwalisa.
57. Zajik'izinto kuye,
58. wabubon'ubukumkani nobungcwalisa,
59. Savel'esam isono, saphamb'kwakhe,
60. Ath'umfana kaJese,
61. Ngoba izigqitho zam ndizazi,
62. Isono sam sisebusweni bam futhi.

50. But a certain man stood up, when it was clear that the other  
    one was filled with fear,
51. There stood up another man,
52. Whilst this man was bitterly crying,
53. Tears running down crying, Mm.
54. And I having vanished, my eyes have seen the Lord God of  
    hosts,
55. So said this man,
56. He cries, he had never seen glory as something so mystical.
57. Then in him things changed,
58. And he saw the kingdom and glory,
59. My sin was seen before him,
60. So said the young man of Jesse,
61. As I know my transgressions,

62. My sin, always in front of my eyes.

Lines 50 and 51 contain parallelism. Wasuk' omnye umfo in line 51 is paralleled in line 52. Likewise lines 52 and 53 contain parallelism expressing the idea of crying. Lines 50 to 57 are produced in a lower tone. From line 58 to 62 a loud guttural rhythmic tone is used.

The sermon continues:

63. Bantakwethu bendlu yokuthandaza.  
64. Yiva wethu yiva.  
65. Ith'incwadi yebhayibhile,  
66. Lo mfana, wathi kwakufika indoda eyayinguye, iwunduzela,  
67. Yeza ipheth'ilahle elivutha ngumlilo libomvu,  
68. Liphuma phakathi esibingelelweni,  
69. Yalibek'emilebeni yalo mfana yathi,  
70. Uyabon'ukuba unelilahle nje emilebeni yakho,  
71. Bususiwe ubugwenxa bakho,  
72. Isono sakho sicanyagushelwe,  
73. Ububi bakho, buphelisiwe,  
74. Lizisiwe kuwe namhlanje, itarhu, ngoba lifikile ilahle,  
75. Emilebeni yakho.  
76. Wathi lo mfo akugqiba ukuva la mazwi,  
77. Zavuleka iindlebe zakhe,  
78. Wamamela ukuba kuza kuthiwa nina ke ngoku, kuba uxolelwe.  
79. Intliziyo yakhe yanyibilika,  
80. Zaphel'iinyembezi emehlweni akhe.  
81. Ubuso bugcwel'uvuyo,  
82. Bagcwal'uchulumanco.  
83. Wazimisela ukuba uza kwenza intando kaYehova.

63. My brethren of the house of prayer.  
64. Listen, oh listen.  
65. The Bible says,  
66. This young man when there came a man who was with him with  
    flowing garments,  
67. He came around with a burning coal, red with fire,  
68. From the altar,  
69. And put it on the lips of this young man and said,  
70. As you have this coal on your lips,  
71. Your iniquities are removed,  
72. Your sin has been atoned,  
73. To your disaster an end has come,  
74. Today mercy has been offered to you because the coal has come,  
75. On your lips.  
76. When the young man heard these words,  
77. His ears were opened,

78. Now he was listening to what was going to be said because his sins were forgiven.
79. His heart became soft,
80. In his eyes tears were no longer seen.
81. His face full of joy,
82. Filled with delight.
83. He was determined to do God's will.

Lines 73 to 79 are produced in a lower tone. Thereafter a very rhythmic pattern develops. Lines 63, 64 and 65 are again variations of the formula mentioned in, for example, lines 16, 19, 24, 27, 28 and 43. Lines 69 and 70 contain what could be called an oblique parallelism, <sup>6</sup> that is, where words in the middle are repeated either at the beginning or at the end of the sentence following or vice versa, for example, emilebeni yalo ('his lips') and emilebeni yakho ('your lips'). This is also based on Isaiah, chapter 6. Line 72 is an extension of line 71 through the use of the parallel possessives sakho and bakho. Likewise, lines 81 and 82 contain oblique parallelism through the use of the words derived from gcwala, ('full'). The vivid symbolic use of the burning coal in lines 67 and 74 metaphorically represents the cleansing of sin and iniquity.

Xozwa continues as follows:

84. Yiva ithi incwad'yaseCaweni,
85. Ngokukhawulez'okukhulu,
86. Kwakh'ilizwi elithi,
87. 'Ndiyakuthuma banina, ngubani na oya kusiyela?'
88. Lo mfana wakhawuleza wavuma, wathi:
89. 'Ndikho Bawo thuma mna.'
90. Bayayazi ke abantu baseCaweni loo ngongoma,
91. Andizokuya kuyo kakhulu.
92. Ndizama ukuchaza ngobukumkani bobungcwalisa.
93. Andizokuya kuloo micimbi yoIsaya,
94. Bayayazi abantu baseCaweni.
95. Ndizama ukuchaza kakuhle.
96. Ndifuna ukuba ndizobe kubo ezingqondweni umfanekiso-ngqondweni wobukumkani bobungcwalisa.



97. Inokuba injani na le nto ibubukumkani wobungcwalisisa?
84. Listen, the Bible says,  
 85. In a moment,  
 86. There was a word which said,  
 87. 'Whom shall I send, who shall go there for us?'  
 88. The young man quickly agreed and said:  
 89. 'I am here oh Lord, send me.'  
 90. The people in Church know the story,  
 91. I shall not go far with it.  
 92. I am trying to tell something about the Kingdom of Glory.  
 93. I won't go as far as Isaiah's affair,  
 94. The people in Church knew that.  
 95. I try to explain this explicitly.  
 96. I want to draw in their minds a picture of the Kingdom of  
 Glory.  
 97. What can the Kingdom of Glory be like?

A low tone is used in this passage. Again the recurring formula appears in line 84. Lines 90, 91, 92, 93 and 94 present an interesting poetic play on words. If we take the first word in each of these lines, we see how Xozwa uses them interchangeably for effect:

- a Bayayaz....  
 b Andizokuya....  
 c Ndizama....  
 b Andizokuya  
 a Bayayaz....  
 c Ndizama....

The sermon continues:

98. Yiva wethu, ith'incwadi yaseCaweni,  
 99. Lo kumkani, lo kumkani wobungcwalisisa,  
 100. Uthe ngeny'imini xa wayesihla,  
 101. Evela emazulwini, ez'ezantsi emhlabeni,  
 102. Wath'umshumayeli ohamba phambi kwakhe,  
 103. Kwakho intombazana egama linguMariya wathi,  
 104. 'Ubabalwe wena, kuba uza kuzal'umntwana uz'umthiye igama  
 uthi nguYesu,'  
 105. Kuba uza kubasindisa, abantu bakhe, ezonweni bantu  
 bakowethu,  
 106. Ngukumkani wobungcwalisisa, kunjalo nje.  
 107. Bona abantu abamvayo uThixo kufuneka bangabi nazono,  
 108. Babemsulwa abantu baseCaweni,  
 109. Kuba bajongene nokumkani wobungcwalisisa,

110. Abasindise eziphosweni zabo.

98. Listen, the Bible says,  
99. This King, this King of Glory,  
100. When one day he was descending,  
101. From heaven on to earth,  
102. A preacher walking in front of him said,  
103. There was a woman by the name of Mary, he said,  
104. 'For you have found favour with God, because you will bear a  
son and you will call him Jesus,'  
105. Because He shall save his people from sins, people of my  
home,  
106. He is also a King of Glory.  
107. People who can listen to God, they should not be sinful,  
108. They must be innocent people of the Church,  
109. Because they look forward to the King of Glory,  
110. And they are saved from their evils.

The tone changes here to one which is loud and rhythmic with distinct accompanying 'breath units'. Again we have a combination of recurring formulae in line 98, Yiva wethu and ithi incwadi yaseCaweni. Line 99 contains a repetition which is characteristic of Xhosa oral poetry.

The minister continues:

111. Yiva xa afikayo ngale mini afika ngayo,  
112. Iyikwayara yamazulu apha ngasentla.  
113. Yehla ezulwini,  
114. Yanqamla isibhakabhaka abantu beyijongile ngobusuku.  
115. Yathi ivum'ingoma yayilixesha lokuqala ukuba mayaziwe  
ngeendlebe zabo ngabantu.  
116. Yafika sekungeniswa ukumkani wobungcwalisa.  
117. Ndiyibhaqa xa ivum'ingoma,  
118. Uzuko kuThixo enyangweni,  
119. Uxol'emhlabeni inkolelo ebantwini.

111. Hear what happens on the day he arrives,  
112. There was a choir from heaven above.  
113. It descended from heaven,  
114. At night it crossed the sky while people were looking.  
115. It was singing for the first time to people who had never  
heard it before.  
116. It arrived when the King of Glory was to be ushered in.  
117. I spotted it while singing a song,  
118. Glory be to God in heaven, Glory to God in the Highest,  
119. Peace on earth and goodwill among people.

Lines 112 and 113 contain a parallelism in the sense that they are both referring to heaven. The phrase yamazulu, ('of the heavens') and ezulwini, ('in the heavens') make up an oblique parallelism. In this instance the root of the word remains the same. The possessive construction in the former is changed to a locative construction in the latter. This is sufficient to justify oblique parallelism.

Xozwa continues as follows:

120. Phakamisani, phakamisani iminyango,  
 121. Nivule amasango,  
 122. Kuvele ubukumkani obukumkani obubungcwalisa,  
 123. Angene ukumkani wobungcwalisa,  
 124. Ith'incwadi yaseCaweni,  
 125. Ukuba mhlawumbi akuvanga ngendlebe,  
 126. Loo ngoma itshoyo yayiyesigqibo,  
 127. Ngaloo mini kuba uyivile ingoma yasezulwini.  
 128. Makhe siyaph'eBhetelehem sibon'indawo.  
 129. Kanti nezibhakabhaka ziyangqina  
 130. Kwakumnqamleza, inkwenkwez'enkulu eyiplaneti,  
 131. Isuke empumalanga, yajong'entshonalanga,  
 132. Itsheke isenza umtyangampo womtsheko ukubhek'empumalanga.  
 133. Ithi incwadi yebhayibhile,  
 134. Izazi ngaloo mini zisempumalanga.

120. Lift up, lift up the gates,  
 121. And open the doors,  
 122. That the King of Glory, the King of Glory,  
 123. That the King of Glory may come in,  
 124. So says the Church book,  
 125. If you have not heard with your ears perhaps,  
 126. That song you hear, it was the last,  
 127. In that day you will have heard the song of the heavens.  
 128. Let us go to Bethlehem and see the place.  
 129. And the sky also is a witness  
 130. There crossed a big star, a planet,  
 131. From the East to the West,  
 132. It had a tale and crossed to the east.  
 133. So says the Bible,  
 134. In the east were the wise men.

Again the tone of voice is raised here. Lines 120 and 121 are a variation of the formula used in lines 1 and 2. Lines 122 and

123 contain a parallelism which emphasises the presence of the King of Glory. The exact repetition in line 122 is elaborated on in line 123. Line 124 is also repeated elsewhere, perhaps in a slightly different form, for example, in line 133 and elsewhere.

The sermon continues:

135. Abafana abathathu behla bebaleka,  
136. Ukubheka eBhetelehem,  
137. Behamba bebuzis'indlela, bantakwethu,  
138. Ekho nomfana waseAfrika, uAkheyi ngaloo mini,  
139. Bepethe igolide nemore nentlak'emphe,  
140. Bakumisa kukumkani wobungcwalisa.  
141. Lo kumkani sithetha ngaye, singayanga kude bahlobo bam,  
142. Nankuya efika kwintaba zeGolgotha emngamlezweni.  
143. Uth'akuma phezu kwentaba yezono,  
144. Phezu kwentaba yoKhakhayi,  
145. Engukumkani wobungcwalisa,  
146. Ezele yintlambuluko ephelileyo,  
147. Ezele kukukhazimla, wema kwintaba eyiGolgotha.  
148. Wath'akuvula izandla emngamlezweni,  
149. Ith'incwadi yeBhayibhile,  
150. Ilanga labubona ukukhanya kobuqaqawuli bobuso bakhe,  
151. Lawacima awalo amehlo.  
152. Kwath'ukuba liwavale amehlo  
153. Kwamnyam'elizweni kwakhany' emngamlezweni. Kwathi  
kwaba mnyama elizweni

135. Three young men ran down,  
136. Towards Bethlehem,  
137. All along seeking the direction, you friends of mine,  
138. A young man from Africa was present that day,  
139. Carrying with them gold, myrrh and frankincense,  
140. They came upon the King of Glory.  
141. The King we are talking about, before we go any further, my  
friends,  
142. There he arrives across the mountains of Golgotha.  
143. When He stood on the mountain of sins,  
144. When He stood on top of the mountain of a skull (Golgotha),  
145. Being the King of Glory,  
146. Filled with complete purification,  
147. Filled with brightness, He stood on a mountain Golgotha.  
148. When He spread his hands on the cross,  
149. The Bible says,  
150. The sun saw the shining light on his face,  
151. And closed its eyes.  
152. When it had closed its eyes  
153. There was darkness over the land and light on the cross.  
There was darkness on land.

Lines 143 and 144 also contain a parallelism which refers to Christ's presence at Golgotha. Lines 146 and 147 contain parallelism by way of initial linking, where Christ's purity is emphasised. Line 149 is a recurring formula. Lines 151 and 152 contain personification of the sun. These are all characteristics of Xhosa izibongo. The darkness which is referred to in line 153 is symbolic of man's sinful nature. The preacher successfully contrasts this with the light image which is centered on Christ. The style is loose and informal accompanied by irregular metre and distinct 'breath units'.

Xozwa continues:

154. Ith'incwadi yeBhayibhile,
155. Kwadidizela isiseko sendlu yetempile,
156. Kwathasuluka imigubasi,
157. Lakrazuka phakathi,
158. Ikhusele lengcwele kangcwele,
159. Laziziqwenga ezibini kuba ukhon'ukumkani wobungcwalisa umi phezu kwentaba.
160. Ikhon'inyath'emaxhoba yakulomzuluka.
161. Ukhona okaThixo umntana bantu bakokwethu,
162. Ukhona okaThixo umntana,
163. Athi umbali wencwadi yeBhayibhile
164. Yingwevu entlokw'emhlophe,
165. Ema phezu kweelwandle.
166. Zathi cwaka, azabi nakuthetha nakancinci phambi kobuso bakhe.
167. Lazulazul'ilizwe zawa inkwenkwezi, esibhakabhakeni,
168. Kub'umntakaThixo, umzalwa tanci,
169. Kuyo indalo, okaThixo unyana,
170. Ukumkani wabantw'abangcwele,
171. Ukumkani, wamalungisa,
172. Ukumkani ongunaphakade kaThixo.
173. Ith'incwadi yeBhayibhile,
174. Wath'akuvuma loo ngoma yobungcwalisa bantu bakokwethu,
175. Kwamnyama elizweni, boyik'abantu basemhlabeni.
176. Yiva, yiva xa ejongayo,
177. Ekuloo ntaba evul'umlomo, bantu bakokwethu.
178. Loo mbongi yasemazulwini,
179. Imbongile evul'umlomo.
180. Uthi 'Bawo baxolele abayazi into abayenzayo.'
181. Ngaloo mini, nezikhanduvana,



182. Noomlahlwa, nooncanyiwe, neempula zikaLujaca, Noontengento,  
183. Baxolelwa baxolelwa nguThixo bahlanjululwa ngelakhe igazi,  
184. Kubantwana bakaThixo kuba kungene ubukumkani bobungcwalisa.  
185. Phakamisani, phakamisani iintloko zenu masango,  
186. Nani minyango yaphakade,  
187. Kuze kungena ubukumkani bobungcwalisa.

154. The Bible says,  
155. The foundation of the temple building shook,  
156. The door frames were ripped off,  
157. Torn in two,  
158. The curtain of the most holy,  
159. It was torn into two pieces because the King of Glory is  
standing on the mountain.  
160. There the greatest was present.  
161. The child of God exists, our friends,  
162. The child of God exists.  
163. The writer of the Bible says,  
164. Grey headed men in white,  
165. Standing on sea.  
166. They kept quiet and could not utter a word in the presence  
of his face.  
167. The world was disturbed and stars fell from heaven,  
168. Because the child of God, the first born,  
169. The son of God in creation,  
170. The King of the Holy people,  
171. The King of the righteous,  
172. The King of the virtuous.  
173. The Bible says,  
174. When he sang that glorious song, our people,  
175. There was darkness over the land, the people on earth were  
frightened.  
176. Listen, listen, when he looked around,  
177. On that mountain, opening his mouth, my friends.  
178. That poet from the heavens,  
179. Praises him, opening his mouth.  
180. He said 'forgive them, Father, for they know not what they  
are doing.'  
181. On that day, even the nonentities,  
182. The rejected, those beyond redemption, the destitute and the  
useless,  
183. They were forgiven, they were forgiven by God and cleansed  
by his blood,  
184. God's children, so that the King of Glory could enter.  
185. Lift, lift up your heads, doors,  
186. And you, eternal doors,  
187. So that the King of Glory may enter.

Xozwa's tone is again raised from line 170. Lines 154 and 173  
again repeat the recurring formula ithi incwadi yeCawe ('the  
Bible says'). Lines 161 and 162 contain a parallelism where a

phrase is repeated word for word. Lines 170, 171 and 172 contain an extended parallelism with God being praised as Ukumkani, ('The King'). It is interesting to note that the preacher in line 178 refers to a poet of the heavens. Lines 185 to 187 are again an extension of the formula which appears in lines 1 and 2. As pointed out at the beginning of this case study, it seems common for this recurring formula to be taken from the Bible and then repeated throughout the sermon.

The preacher continues:

188. Singathi xa sichaza ngobukumkani bobungcwalisa,  
 189. Ith'iBhayibhile lathi ingcwaba lakukhamisa ukuba limgingye,  
       Alabi           nako  
 190. Ukunyamezela iintsuku ezintathu,  
 191. Engaphakathi engcwabeni,  
 192. Ith'incwadi, aphosek'amagwala aw'ecaleni,  
 193. Wavuka ngaphandle, ukumkani wobungcwalisa,  
 194. Wavuk ngaphandle ukumkani wobungcwalisa,  
 195. Wabon'ukuba ehleli, yiyo loo nto ethi imbongi yamaWesile,  
 196. Xa ijongile, ithi ngemini yeCawa kwindawo ngeendawo,  
 197. Kwindawo ngeendawo noThixo wavuka ekufeni,  
 198. Wabonwa ehleli,  
 199. Yiva wethu imimoya, amafu, bantakwethu,  
 200. Isibhakabhaka savul'izandla ukuba zimamkele,  
 201. Ukumkani wobungcwalisa.

188. When we speak of the Kingdom of Glory,  
 189. The Bible says, when the grave opened ready to swallow him,  
       it couldn't  
 190. Bear keeping Him for three days,  
 191. In the grave,  
 192. The Bible says, the cowards threw themselves alongside,  
 193. Outside the King of Glory awoke,  
 194. Outside the King of Glory awoke,  
 195. He saw that he was alone, that is why the Wesleyan praise  
       singer says,  
 196. When he was looking, he says every Sunday all over,  
 197. Everywhere, the Lord rose from the dead,  
 198. He was seen alive,  
 199. Listen to the wind, clouds, our people,  
 200. The sky opened its hands to receive,  
 201. The King of Glory.

In line 189 the grave is personified. The term 'the Bible says' is again repeated. Lines 193 and 194 contain a parallelism, in the sense that the words in line 193 are repeated exactly in line 194. The last two words in line 196 form the first two words of line 197 - hence an oblique parallelism. In line 200 the sky is personified savul' izandla, ('it opened its hands'). Again, personification is not uncommon in Xhosa izibongo.

The sermon continues as follows:

202. Niyabonani enqaml'isibhakabhaka esiya ezulwini, ethi  
kubafundi bakhe:  
203. 'Vuyani kuba nina niloyisile ihlabathi.' Lulo ke olu  
loyiso....  
204. Bahlobo bethu ubukumkani bobungcwalisa.  
205. Nank'wenyuka kancinane ejong'esibhakabhakeni,  
206. Enqaml'isibhakabhaka, eyokusithela ngaphaya kwenkwenkwezi,  
207. Bejongile abafundi bakhe,  
208. Le ndlela emka ngayo esiya ezulwini uThixo wobungcwalisa,  
209. Uya kubuya kwangayo, eze nabasezulwini,  
210. Nomkhosi wezinto zezulu,  
211. Eze engukumkani,  
212. Eze kuba ngumgwebi kwabahleliyo nabafuleyo.

202. See him crossing the sky towards heaven, saying to his  
disciples:  
203. 'Be glad, for you have conquered the earth.' This is  
victory....  
204. Our friends, the Kingdom of Glory.  
205. Here he slowly ascends looking at the sky,  
206. Crossing the sky and disappears on the other side of the  
stars,  
207. His disciples, looking on,  
208. The way the God of Glory went towards heaven,  
209. He will come back by the same way,  
210. With the host of heavenly bodies,  
211. Coming as a King,  
212. Coming to be a judge to the living and the dead.

An oblique parallelism occurs in lines 205 and 206 where the sky is repeated. Again a parallelism is used in a positive and negative way in lines 208 and 209. Initial linking also occurs in lines 211 and 212. Xozwa again contrasts voice patterns.

From line 205 his voice is raised. Symbolism is effectively used in line 206, where Christ is described as crossing the sky - beyond the stars. This reveals a sense of all-embracing power - even to the point of overcoming death.

Xozwa continues:

213. Nguloo kumkani, okwasa ngenye imini,
  214. Omnye umfo, emangcwabeni eGadala,
  215. Eligeza engabotshwa, ngantambo nangamatsheyini,
  216. Nangamatyathanga ewaphul'imigokozo, bantu bakokwethu elila,
  217. Ith'incwadi yaseCaweni wahlala elila.
  218. Owu bantu bakokwethu ... alile aph'emhlabeni angayiva into ebuhlungu,
  219. Kuba uliliswa yingxaki elapha kuye emzimbeni,
  220. Engena kunyangwa mntu.
  221. Amagqirha noogqirha baselizweni babemncamile lo mfana waseGadala.
  222. Ith'incwadi yasecaweni,
  223. Abazali bakhe, izihlobo zakhe zimncamile,
  224. Naye emkil'ekhaya, ehlala nabantw'ababhubhileyo,
  225. Emangcwabeni ethi incwadi yebhayibhile,
  226. Emangcwabeni apho way'ezisika ngamatye.
  227. Andazi noba way'eziqaphula na ezama ukuba iidemon zingangeni kuye.
  228. Zaye sezingaphakathi, zingenako ukuthintelwa,
  229. Sezingaphakathi.
- 
213. It is that King who one day in the morning,
  214. A man in the graveyard at Gadarene,
  215. A lunatic, refusing to be bound by rope or chains,
  216. The chains, he broke crying, oh people,
  217. The Bible says he sat crying.
  218. Oh our people ... crying here on earth not feeling the pain,
  219. For he cried of the problem in his body,
  220. Nobody could heal him.
  221. The witchdoctors and the doctors from afar had given up everything about this man from Gadarene.
  222. The Bible says,
  223. His parents, his friends had given up hope,
  224. He also had left home, living with the dead,
  225. In the grave yard, the Bible says,
  226. In the grave yard, there he cut himself with stones.
  227. I do not know whether he was making incisions trying to avoid or counteract the demons.
  228. They were already inside not to be counteracted,
  229. They were already inside.



Lines 216 and 217 contain what could be termed an indirect oblique parallelism. The formula 'The bible says' is again repeated in lines 217, 222 and 225. Lines 225 and 226 contain a parallelism by initial linking. Likewise lines 228 and 229 contain a parallelism which emphasises the presence of the demons. The preacher here becomes extremely emotional, his tone is raised and his voice is guttural - to the point of being barely audible. Distinct 'breath units' are discernible. The parallelisms contribute towards the rhythmic pattern which the preacher has developed here.

The sermon continues:

230. Ikhona ingxaki yokuba umntu athi:  
231. 'Hayi ndiza kunyanga esi sifo sakho.'  
232. Athi engekakhuphi esi sifo sakho mntan'omNtshilibe,  
233. Aqale ngokuqaphula.  
234. Azifake ngaphakathi zingabi saphuma.  
235. Lo kumkani wobungcwalisa uthi akufika kulo mfo,  
236. Ith'incwadi yebhayibhile zambon' iidemoni kuba zingcolile;  
237. Zamoyika, zakhala zingabethwanga,  
238. Zimbona nje ngamehlo,  
239. Zaya kuye zikhalaza,  
240. 'Yintoni enawe nathi Yesu waseNazarethe?'  
241. Ungasithuthumbisi bantu bakowethu,  
242. UYesu makavul'umlomo,  
243. Makaphakamise umnyango.

230. There is a problem when a person says:  
231. 'No, I am going to heal your disease.'  
232. Before he heals you, child of Ntshilibe,  
233. He starts by inflicting cuts on you.  
234. He puts the demons inside so that they cannot come out.  
235. The King of Glory when he comes to this man,  
236. The Bible says the demons saw him and because they were  
unclean;  
237. They were afraid of him,  
238. They only looked at him,  
239. Went to him with complaints,  
240. 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?'  
241. Do not torment us, our people,  
242. Let Jesus open his mouth,  
243. Let him lift up the door.



Xozwa refers to 'child of Ntshilibe'. Mr Ntshilibe was part of the congregation. Likewise, the imbongi is often influenced by his audience. Again 'the Bible says' is repeated in line 236. In lines 237 and 238 there is initial and final linking. The formula used in lines 1 and 2, etc., is again repeated (with some variation) in lines 242 and 243. Xozwa here makes use of vivid language related to the sinfulness and uncleanness of mankind which only God can forgive.

The minister continues as follows:

244. Nasi ke esi sigidimi sithetha ngaso,  
245. Phakamisani iintloko zenu masango,  
246. Mayivuleke imilomo bantu bakowethu,  
247. Mayivuleke imilomo, umntu axele, axel'intzukaphi,  
248. Axel'imvelaphi, axel'into yokuba uyintoni na elizweni,  
249. Wathi akubuzwa ukuba ungubani igama lakhe,  
250. Yaphakam'intloko, wajonga kuYesu, wavuleka umlomo wakhe,  
251. Wavuleka umnyango ongumlomo wakhe.

244. Here is this messenger we are talking about,  
245. Lift up your heads, oh gates,  
246. Let the mouths be opened, oh people,  
247. Let the mouths be opened. One must tell and tell his  
origins,  
248. He must tell where he comes from and tell what he is on  
earth,  
249. When he was asked what his name was,  
250. He lifted up his head and looked at Jesus, and his mouth  
opened,  
251. The door that was his mouth opened.

Again lines 245 and 246 contain the recurring formula which is used at the beginning of the sermon and thereafter. In line 247 the formula is developed into a parallelism where it is repeated. Lines 247 and 248 are also linked by an oblique parallelism which emphasises man's accountability on earth. Lines 250 and 251 are a positive affirmation of the request which manifests itself in

the formula referred to in lines 245 and 246.

The sermon continues:

252. Ivesi ithi, ndinguMkhosi, wazixela ndinguMkhosi.  
253. Baninzi abangaphakathi kwam,  
254. Ababamb'ipalamente, bantakwethu,  
255. Wazixela ukuba ulidlavu, unguncanyelweni bantakwethu,  
256. Ungumhangqolo waseParadesi.  
257. Abanye abantu abaninzi baye bathi,  
258. Ndiva kusithiwa ndiyint'ethile.  
259. Ath'omnye hayi, mna bayandityhola bathi ndiyint'ethile.  
260. Lo mfana ukumkani wobungcwalisa wazibona ukuthi ndilikholwa.  
261. Yiva, uthi kuMkhosi ongaphakathi emfaneni,  
262. 'Phumani kuye niye ezihagwini.'  
263. Kuthiwa zemka ngaloo mini.  
264. Zoyika ihagu ezineedemon mfo kaDandala,  
265. Ukuhlala emhlabeni onokumkani wobungcwalisa.  
266. Zaya zaya kutshon'emfuleni zafa zonke ezo hagu ngoba,  
267. Zoyika ukuhlala nokumkani onobungcwalisa.

252. The verse says, my name is Legion, I am Legion.  
253. For many demons have entered me,  
254. They hold parliament inside him, my people,  
255. He tells of being a ragged one, the one beyond correcting,  
our people,  
256. A nonchalant of paradise.  
257. Many other people usually say,  
258. I heard people saying I am such and such a thing.  
259. And some say no, they accuse me saying I am something else.  
260. This man the King of Glory saw himself to be a Christian.  
261. Listen, he says to the demons which have entered the man,  
262. 'Come out of the man and enter the swine.'  
263. It is said that they left on that very day.  
264. The swine with demons are afraid, son of Dandala,  
265. To stay on earth which has the King of Glory.  
266. They rushed down the steep bank and all perished because  
267. They are afraid to stay together with the King of Glory.

Lines 258 and 259 contain what could be termed a positive-negative parallelism, expressing the same idea by using opposites. In line 264 Xozwa again makes reference to Dandala, someone who was in the audience, thereby linking the audience directly with what he is saying. Lines 266 and 267 also contain a parallelism with initial linking. Again here the preacher creates an image of demons possessing one's soul, which only God

can destroy.

The minister continues:

268. Ebhaga umfo enuka,  
269. Ingathi kwakusekuntsuku engcwatyiwe lo mfo,  
270. Euka ebolile kowabo sele kuziliwe. Kwaxangxathwa  
kwaggitywa,  
271. Kwagodukwa bantu bakokwethu,  
272. Kwalilwa kwayekwa bahlobo bam,  
273. Kufunwa ubukumkani bobungcwalisa.  
274. Athi ke amjonga athi,  
275. Ukuba ubulapha kumkani wobungcwalisa ngengafanga umntakwethu  
276. Wasuka hayi ukholo aluvumi.  
277. Nankuya esiya emangcwabeni,  
278. Lamjonga ingcwaba alabi nakumelana naye.  
279. Wathi akumemeza lo mfana athi,  
280. 'Lazaro vuka, Lazaro vuka,'  
281. Khwaphululu wema ngeenyawo uLazaro,  
282. Ukufa akwabi nako ukujongana nobukumkani bobungcwalisa.

268. He, coming across a dead man in odour,  
269. He has been dead and buried for days,  
270. Smelling and rotten at his home, they were already in a  
state of bereavement. Preparations were done and  
completed,  
271. Ultimately the people all went home, fellowmen,  
272. The people cried and stopped crying, my friends,  
273. They wanted the Kingdom of Glory.  
274. And they looked at him and said,  
275. King of Glory, if you have been here, my brother would not  
have died  
276. He just could not live.  
277. There, Jesus went to the grave,  
278. The grave was looking at him and could not withstand his  
presence.  
279. When he cried with a loud voice saying,  
280. 'Lazarus wake up, Lazarus wake up, Lazarus come out,'  
281. There and then Lazarus came out and stood on his feet,  
282. Death could not stand in the way of the Kingdom of Glory.

Lines 268, 269 and 270 contain repetition by way of a triple parallelism. This serves to create a vivid image of death and dying. Likewise in lines 272 and 273 there is a parallelism as well as a positive-negative repetition. In line 278 the grave is again personified. In this extract there is vivid language use

by Xozwa, for example, in line 270. This enhances the image of death.

Xozwa continues:

283. Ith'ibhayibhile bonke abantu abamamkelayo lo kumkani  
bangabantwana bakaThixo.  
284. Kukuwe ke nani minyango yaphakade.  
285. Vulekani ke ngoku ukuze nibe nenyanyiso kuDaveti intliziyo,  
286. Intliziyo ethi,  
287. Umntu ngamnye ke ngoku avul'intliziyo  
288. Makamvume uYesu ukuba uyinkosi owaseCaweni.  
289. Into ebangela ukuba ibe ngowaseCaweni uDaveti.  
290. Ukhe wathi ngenye imini uJeremiya,  
291. Wathi intliziyo ixabile enenkohliso,  
292. Iyingxaki sisilwana esinenkohliso,  
293. Id'ikhohlise nomnikazi wayo,  
294. Angaboni kakuhle ukuba ims'elishweni.

283. The Bible says all those who believe in this King are the  
children of God.  
284. It is with you then and with you, oh eternal doors.  
285. Open up therefore so that you may tell the truth to David,  
286 The heart that says,  
287. Each person should open his heart.  
288. He must confess that Jesus is Lord.  
289. The reason why David is a Christian.  
290. One day Jeremiah said,  
291. The heart is unwilling and deceiving,  
292. It is a problem. It is a deceiving animal,  
293. It can even deceive its owner,  
294. So that he should not see clearly that it sends him to  
misfortune.

This extract is introduced with the formula 'The Bible says'.  
Lines 284 and 285 are an extension of the formula on which the  
sermon is based. Lines 286 and 287 contain a parallelism which  
is extended in line 288. Likewise lines 291, 292 and 293 form a  
triple parallelism where the heart is portrayed as a deceiving  
animal. Again this serves to symbolise man's sinful nature.

The sermon continues:

295. Ikhe yambamba. uAbasalom ngeny'imini,



296. Yamkhupha kokwabo ebukumkanini bakokwabo eyindlalifa,  
 297. Yamthoba emthini wehlazo,  
 298. Ngesimanga sentliziyo yakhe intliziyo ekhalayo,  
 299. Intliziyo egcwele likratshi,  
 300. Egcwele indzondo,  
 301. Egcwele ukuziphakamisa.  
 302. Hayi hayi kusasa nje bantu baseTafalehashe,  
 303. Hayi bantu bakokwethu,  
 304. Ingulowo nalowo makaze nentliziyo yakhe,  
 305. Ayibeke phezu kwetafile,  
 306. Avule isitshixo kuze kungene ngaphakathi kwayo,  
 307. Ubukumkani bobungcwalisa.  
 308. Athi akungena ukumkani wobungcwalisa,  
 309. Ilunge intliziyo yomntu.

295. One day it caught Absalom,  
 296. It removed him from the throne being the heir,  
 297. Sent him to the tree of disgrace,  
 298. Through his strange heart, his unhappy heart,  
 299. The heart which is full of vanity,  
 300. Full of grudge,  
 301. Full of obstinacy.  
 302. No, no in the morning people of Tafalehashe,  
 303. No, my fellowmen,  
 304. Each one of you must come along with his heart,  
 305. And put it on the table,  
 306. And open the lock so that inside this,  
 307. The Kingdom of Glory should enter.  
 308. When the Kingdom of Glory enters,  
 309. The heart of man is made right.

The heart image is continued in this extract. Lines 298 and 299 contain repetition and parallelism which again serve to enhance this image. Lines 300 and 301 contain initial linking by repetition. This is also true of lines 302 and 303 where Xozwa draws on the immediate context of his surroundings. Lines 304 to 309 are an extension of the recurring oral formula 'open up your hearts, oh doors'.

The sermon continues as follows:

310. Utsho umntakaThixo àbe nobubele.  
 311. Abantu bexabana nje ngaphandl'apha,  
 312. Bengavani becalulana, bazondana ngemibala,  
 313. Bengafanani benento eninzi abazimisayo phambi kwabantu  
     ezithi zilunge,



314. Kodwa kukufa kwabanye abantu isimanga esinye,
315. Ezabo iintliziyo, ezabo iintliziyo,
316. Zikude nokumkani wobungcwalisa.
317. Ivaliwe iminyango yemfesane,
318. Iminyango yenceba.
319. Uyabona mfo kaKaschula,
320. Abantu baxakekile phandl'apha.
321. Bayabazonda abantu abamnyama abafuni nokubabona.
322. Nemithetho enzima engqwabalala kumnt'omnyama,
323. Ngedyokhwe ekhohlakeleyo.
324. Bagcwel'inzondo bantu bekokwethu ngenxa yesizathu esinye,
325. Bengavumi ukuvulela ukumkani wobungcwalisa.

310. Then the child of God becomes generous.
311. The reason why the people are at loggerheads in the world,
312. Quarrelling, despising each other, bearing grudges because  
of colour,
313. Denying each other and placing obstacles in the way of other  
people,
314. And death for other people, strange enough,
315. Their hearts, their hearts,
316. Are far from the Kingdom of Glory.
317. The doors of sympathy are closed,
318. The doors of mercy.
319. Listen, son of Kaschula,
320. Outside the people are perturbed.
321. They have an ill will against the black men, they do not  
want to see them either.
322. With tough discriminatory laws on blacks,
323. A cruel yoke.
324. Full of grudge, you people, because of one reason,
325. They refuse to let in the King of Glory.

The imbongi was always a political and social commentator. It is interesting to note that Xozwa here makes mention of the contemporary situation as he sees it. Perhaps lines 311, 312 and 313 can be regarded as a perfect parallelism as they express the same idea using different words. In line 319 Xozwa makes reference to Kaschula, the only white in the audience, thereby drawing the audience closer to what he is saying. Lines 321, 322 and 323 also refer to the hardships which blacks have had to endure under the apartheid laws. This is reminiscent of contemporary protest poetry today, such as that analysed in chapters 4 and 5 as well as the epilogue.

Xozwa continues:

326. Ndoyiswa yile nto mntakaDandala.
327. Into endoyisayo emagqobhokeni.
328. Omnyama, nomhlophe bayafana.
329. Ubulisa ngesisandla,
330. Ngesisandla singapha ugush'ibhoso aza kwenzakalisa ngalo,
331. Apha unobuhlotyana,
332. Int'innye kuvaliwe endlini,
333. Umnyango waphakade entliziyweni,
334. Kungene ubukumkani bobungcwalisa.
335. La madoda amhlophe athe nawo akufika phakathi kwabantu abantsundu,
336. Aba nobuhlobo obukhulu,
337. Ngapha amanye wawo agush'ibhoso,
338. Agush'itrongo, agush'inkohlakalo agush'ukungevani,
339. Uyabona mntakaKaschula siqhumisa uthuli sibulise.
340. Kanti ngapha sazi kakuhle ukuba sigush'inzondo,
341. Sigush'umona, kwanenkohlakalo,
342. Abanye bethu bahleli phantsi benza iplani,
343. Simchithe umntu apha phakathi kwethu,
344. Ngalo eli xesha akakavumi ukungena ukumkani wobungcwalisa ezintliziyweni zethu,
345. Esuke uYesu apha endlwini kaZakeyu, indlu yomoni, indlu yesela, indlu yomrhango bantu bakokwethu,
346. Angene entliziyweni abuse kuyo,
347. Thixo wobomi obungunaphakade kuphethwe ngumntakaThixo.
348. Ngoba kungene ubukumkani bamazulu.

326. Son of Dandala, there is one thing which conquers my brain.
327. That which baffles me about Christians.
328. Blacks and Whites are the same.
329. He greets with this hand,
330. In the other he is hiding a big knife with which to harm.
331. Somehow he has the feeling of shame,
332. But there is one thing, the house is closed,
333. The everlasting door in the heart,
334. So that the Kingdom of Glory can enter.
335. When the white men came together with the black people,
336. They became great friends,
337. This side some are hiding a big knife,
338. They hide a jail, hide cruelty, hide differences,
339. Do you see this, son of Kaschula, that we greet each other in passing.
340. And yet we clearly know that we are hiding hatred,
341. We hide envy and also cruelty,
342. Some of us are sitting down planning,
343. We chase away a person from our midst,
344. In all this time the Kingdom of Glory refuses to enter into our hearts,
345. When Jesus left the house of Zacchaeus, the house of a sinner, the house of a thief the house of a rogue, we people,

346. He enters the heart and abides with it,  
 347. God of the everlasting life the son of God dominates.  
 348. Because the heavenly Kingdom has entered.

Lines 330 and 338 gusha, ('hide') as well as lines 340 and 341 contain an oblique parallelism using the same words. The word 'hide' is also repeated for emphasis. This is again true of line 345 where indlu ('the house') is repeated. Lines 337 to 344 are produced in a loud voice. Again in this extract there is some comment on the contemporary South African situation, whites and blacks are portrayed as suspicious of one another. The heart image is again used in lines 333 and 346, the heart is symbolised by a locked door which can only be opened by God.

The sermon continues:

349. Yiva xa ndiza kuyeka,  
 350. Ayikho into ethi mandiyeke,  
 351. Yiva nali isela, nal'isela lesigebenga,  
 352. Ith'incwadi yebhayibhile,  
 353. Ngumdal' weziphithi phithi lo mfo,  
 354. Apho kutrayigwa uphambili esitrayigini,  
 355. Ith'incwadi yasecaweni lo mfo ubanjiwe,  
 356. Ubanjiwe waza waxhonywa apha emnqamlezweni, wasecaleni kuYesu,  
 357. Uhamba netshomi yakhe egama linguOmri bantakwethu itsh'incwadi yaseCaweni,  
 358. Lo mfana wathi akujonga apha kuYesu athi,  
 359. Uzundikhumbule xa uthe wema phambi koyihlo,  
 360. Ajike uYesu alijonge eli bhada hayi torhwana kakuhle wamjonga,  
 361. UYesu wathi namhla,  
 362. Kanti uYesu ujong'ezantsi entliziyweni,  
 363. Wathi namhla ndinawe eParadesi, ndinawe eParadesi,  
 364. Wathi namhla ndinawe esophuka ilungu lentamo,  
 365. Waphum'umphefumlo ukumkani wobungcwalisa uhamba naye.

349. Listen while I am about to stop,  
 350. There is nothing which makes me stop.  
 351. Listen, here is a thief, a giant of a thief,  
 352. The Bible says,  
 353. This man is a creator of disturbances,  
 354. Wherever there is a strike he is the ringleader,  
 355. The Church book says this man is arrested,

356. He is seized and crucified next to Jesus,  
 357. He is going along with his companion by the name of Omri,  
       so says the Church book,  
 358. When this man looked at Jesus he said,  
 359. Remember me when you stand in front of your father,  
 360. Jesus then turned and looked at this robber,  
 361. Jesus said, today,  
 362. Jesus was deeply thinking in his heart,  
 363. He said, today I am with you in paradise, with you in  
       paradise,  
 364. While he said, today I am with you, he broke his neck,  
 365. He breathed his last, the King of Glory goes with him.

Lines 349 and 350 contain a positive-negative parallelism. Ndiza kuyeka parallels with Ayikho into ethi mandiyeke, ('I am about to stop ... there is nothing which makes me to stop'). The repetition in line 351 is a repetition for emphasis whilst line 352 contains the recurring formula used throughout this sermon. This extract is produced in a loud voice. Xozwa concentrates here on the crucifixion. The style is still loose and rhythmic, typical of traditional Xhosa oral poetry.

The preacher continues:

366. Lo kumkani wobungcwalisa uthi umntu akuhamba naye abe  
       nobubele,  
 367. Abe noxolo, abe nemfesane, abe novelwano,  
 368. Makangene ukumkani wobungcwalisa.  
 369. Bantu bakokwethu asile nto umnt'ohleli aph'emhlabeni  
       waphoswa,  
 370. Lelo lungelo lokuba amkele ubukumkani bobungcwalisa  
       entliziweni yakhe,  
 371. Ayibuyise intliziyo yakhe,  
 372. Ayilawul'intliziyo yakhe,  
 373. Ayilawul'impilo yakhe ngokumkani?  
 374. Uthi wakufika umhla wokubhubha,  
 375. Angayiboni into ebeyenzile,  
 376. Yazi kakuhle ukuba uyiphosile,  
 377. Uphoswe yipassport yokuma phambi kobuso bukaThixo.
366. When a person goes along with the King of Glory, he is  
       filled with generosity,  
 367. Peace, feeling and sympathy,  
 368. Let the Kingdom of Glory enter.  
 369. Our people, is it not that a person on earth should be lost,



370. The privilege to accept the Kingdom of Glory in his heart  
exists,  
371. By drawing his heart back,  
372. By controlling his heart,  
373. And through the King control his health?  
374. When the Day of death comes,  
375. He would not see that which he has done,  
376. He will know if he has missed it,  
377. Has failed to get the passport to stand in front of the  
Lord.

Lines 372 and 373 contain initial linking through the use of Ayilawul ('control'). Whereas lines 171 and 172 contain final linking with the use of the possessive yakhe ('his'). Lines 366 to 375 are produced in a loud rhythmic voice. The heart image is again explored in lines 370, 371 and 372.

Xozwa continues:

378. Mfo kaKaschula indoda ingakwenza konke okusemhlabeni,  
379. Ukuba iphosiwe bubukumkani bobungcwalisa,  
380. The King of Glory. The King of Glory, he is not there,  
381. Blood in his heart. draining in his heart,  
382. Ruling his heart, his life,  
383. He must certainly know, he may not enter this kingdom of  
God.  
384. He will not be there when he is calling from above,  
385. Yazi kakuhle mntakwethu,  
386. Wonke umntu nobe njani na nobemhlophe,  
387. Nobemnyama, nobelivila,  
388. Nobemnyama, nobemhlope,  
389. Uphose ithuba lokuvula,  
390. Avul'umnyango amkele uYesu,  
391. Njengenkosi nomsindisi wakhe,  
392. Ayibuse intliziyo yakhe,  
393. O ndibabonile bantu bakowethu.

378. Son of Kaschula, a man can do whatever he wants on earth,  
379. If he failed to get the Kingdom of Glory,  
380. The King of Glory, the King of Glory, he is not there,  
381. Blood in his heart, draining in his heart,  
382. Ruling his heart, his life,  
383. He must certainly know he may not enter the Kingdom of God.  
384. He will not be there when he is calling from above,  
385. Note well my brother,  
386. Everybody whether white or black,  
387. Even if he is black or a sluggard,  
388. Even if he is a black person or a white person,



389. Who has missed the chance to open,  
 390. To open the door and accept Jesus,  
 391. And the Lord his saviour,  
 392. And bring back his heart,  
 393. Oh I have seen them, our people.

Line 378 again refers to the audience. Lines 381 and 382 contain repetition and oblique parallelism thereby enhancing the 'heart' image. Again in lines 386, 387 and 388 there is a triple parallelism which emphasises that blacks and whites are equal in the eyes of God. The phrase bantu bakokwethu, ('my/our people') is again used in line 393. Xozwa here again comments on the contemporary relationship between blacks and whites, stating that before God everyone is equal.

The minister continues as follows:

394. Behla benyuka abanye bethwele iimbombozi zamanzi,  
 395. Bebheka eMount Frere beyokufuna amanzi empilo,  
 396. Bamshiya ukumkani wobungcwalisa ngasemva, baya kufika,  
 397. Bawafumana amanzi, weza nawo umntu ekhaya,  
 398. Ayitshize indlu yakhe,  
 399. Kuvel'inyoka kuvel'isele, kuvel'iingxabano,  
 400. Ndoda imchithe umfazi wayo kuba uyathakatha.  
 401. Ndiyiqondile amanzi axelile ukuba,  
 402. Kungene ukumkani ongenguye wobungcwalisa,  
 403. Ukumkani ongenguye ukumkani oyinkohlakalo,  
 404. Kungene isidungamzi,  
 405. Amadoda anamakhosikazi kwakugula umntu aph'ekhaya',  
 406. Hayi kufuneka khe sithathe iintonga siyaph'ehlathini,  
 407. Siye kuvumisa,  
 408. Nankuya ebheka egqirheni khona apho,  
 409. Nangaph'ezantsi ...  
 410. Lo mfo ongengowobungcwalisa aqale ukuvula,  
 411. Akhabe umgubasi ongaphakathi entlizweni yomntu athi,  
 412. Vumani bo, kholwani bo,  
 413. Bath'abantu siyavuma O siyavuma.  
 414. Impethe inkohlakalo ngaphakathi,  
 415. Ingxoliso nolahlekiso,  
 416. Athi ukufa kusendlini,  
 417. Oku kufa kuze ngokhuko,  
 418. Bantu bakokwethu, asimntu nje, yile nkosikazi yam  
     uMamZongozi,  
 419. Yiyo le ithakatha gqitha,  
 420. Iwugqibile umzi wam,

421. Emva kokugxoth'inkosikazi agxoth'usapho,  
 422. Kutsho kulilw'ekhapha,  
 423. Abesentluphekweni zilahleke iinkomo zakhe,  
 424. Into yakhe yonke,  
 425. Uyokufela kookumkani ookumkani benkohlakalo,  
 426. Kuske kuvele bona, bayimosh'intliziyo yakhe.
394. Others go up and down carrying plastic containers full of  
 water,  
 395. Going to Mount Frere there to fetch the water of life,  
 396. They left the King of Glory behind, they arrived there,  
 397. They got the water back home,  
 398. Sprinkled his house,  
 399. There appears a snake, a frog, trouble arises,  
 400. A man chases his wife away because she is a witch.  
 401. I understand this, the water has indicated that,  
 402. There entered a King who is not glorious,  
 403. A King who is not a King, a cruel one,  
 404. Here enters the one who breaks up the home,  
 405. Married men, when someone falls ill in this home,  
 406. Oh no, it is necessary that we take action,  
 407. We should go to diviners,  
 408. There he goes to a witchdoctor,  
 409. Down he goes ...  
 410. This inglorious man starts to open,  
 411. Kicking the doorpost which is inside the heart of man,  
 412. Accept what I say, believe in me,  
 413. And the people say, oh we accept, we accept.  
 414. Inside he is ruled by cruelty,  
 415. Scolding and deceit,  
 416. Saying that the sorcerer (death) is within the home,  
 417. The sickness is caused by a woman (wife) in this home,  
 418. My friends, it is not just a human being, it is my wife  
 MamZongozi,  
 419. A great witch she is,  
 420. She has destroyed my house,  
 421. After chasing away his wife, children follow,  
 422. In this home everybody cries.  
 423. Those in distress lose their cattle,  
 424. All of his belongings.  
 425. Dies with kings, cruel kings,  
 426. There they appear and abuse his heart.

The preacher makes reference to witches and to witch hunting as well as to the curing of these witches. This is common in the traditional way of life and it is something with which the congregation can identify. The animal images of the snake and the frog in line 399 (animals which are associated with witchcraft) support his statements concerning witchcraft. The

destruction caused by witchcraft in this instance culminates in line 426 with the heart again being closed and consequently abused. Again the mode of delivery is loud and rhythmic.

The preacher continues:

427. Bantu bakokwethu masivume ukuboniswa nguYesu,  
428. Ukuboniswa nguYesu,  
429. Uthi akukubonisa uYesu iphel'inzondo.  
430. O iphel'inkohlakalo.  
431. Awu zifik'izifo ndibabonile bahlobo bam ooTomose,  
432. Amany'amadoda uwabiza,  
433. Ubukumkani bobungcwalisa babushiy'apha bemka bay'eZigodlo  
eZigodlo,  
434. Ukhon' apho umthandazel' obhetel' apho,  
435. Ukhwel'iimoto,  
436. Ezifun' imali,  
437. Bayafika eziGodlo bafika lo mfo,  
438. Ewangazelisa wawangazelisa ngezandla,  
439. Hayi ndimhle nje ngulo Mthandazeli,  
440. UYesu umkile.

427. My friends, let us accept what Jesus exposes to us,  
428. To be directed by Jesus,  
429. When Jesus directs your revenge dies.  
430. Oh cruelty dies.  
431. Oh diseases come, I have seen Thomas, my friends.  
432. Some of the men you called,  
433. They left behind the Kingdom of Glory and went to Zigodlo,  
434. There is better prayer there,  
435. You drive in cars  
436. That require money,  
437. When they arrived at Zigodlo that man,  
438. Waving his hands beating about the bush,  
439. No the beauty I have is through that faith healer,  
440. Jesus has left.

'My friends' in line 427 is again a recurring formula. An oblique parallelism occurs in lines 428 and 429 where the idea of being directed and controlled by Jesus is furthered.

Xozwa continues:

441. Nangoku abany'abantu ba-busy kwelizw'kaTomose,  
442. Nalapha kweliTafalehashe becinywa,

443. Abanye babo bagajiswa,  
444. Asikhange sigabhise mntu apha,  
445. Ubulahlile nobukumkani bobungcwalisa,  
446. Uthe akungena zonke izinto ziguquke.  
447. Owu, zilungele ekhaya,  
448. Imizi echithakalayo, iyadibana,  
449. Amakhaya adlakadlaka ayalunga,  
450. Kuba kungen'inyathi ematyhoboza,  
451. OkaThixo umntana,  
452. Indlovu edl'igoduka,  
453. Ath'incwadi, incwad'asecaweni,  
454. Athi nguQamata,  
455. USifuba Sibanzi.

441. Even now the people are busy in the land of Thomas,  
442. And also here at Tafalehashe they are made to purge,  
443. Some of them are made to vomit,  
444. We have not made anybody here vomit,  
445. You have thrown away even the Kingdom of Glory,  
446. When he entered everything changed.  
447. Oh make yourself happy when at home,  
448. Ruined homes are again moulded,  
449. Ragged homes are reconstructed,  
450. Because here enters a buffalo full of strength,  
451. The child of God,  
452. An elephant which eats while going home,  
453. The Church book says,  
454. It is God,  
455. The Broad Chested.

Lines 442, 443 and 444 contain a triple parallelism, all expressing the same repulsive idea of vomiting. Notice the vivid use of language here which Xozwa uses in order to get his point across. Line 452 contains an interesting metaphorical reference to God as an elephant. Also in line 450 an animal metaphor is used which compares Christ to a buffalo - strong and powerful. The use of animal metaphors is common in traditional Xhosa izibongo. Line 453 contains a recurring formula. Again in line 455 a praise name is used to refer to the Almighty, Usifuba-sibanzi, ('the Broad Chested').

The sermon concludes as follows:

456. A! ngumveli ngqangi, nguye owadala izulu nomhlaba,  
 457. Kwakusekuqalekeni wayekhona,  
 458. Enze zonk'izinto enguThixo,  
 459. Zonke izinto zenziwe ngaye,  
 460. Kunjalo nje nale ntliziyo yakho,  
 461. Yenziwa kwanguye,  
 462. Yiva intombi kaSpoldini imemeza,  
 463. Ixele'abantu isithi nguye yedwa onamandla,  
 464. Nguye yedwa onamandla okuphilisa,  
 465. Nokunceda bantakwethu,  
 466. Onceda iziqw'ezixakekileyo neyakho angayibuza neyam  
     wayibuza,  
 467. Mkheth'uYesu inkosi yethu Amen.

468.           Phakamisani iminyango yenu namasango,  
 469.           Kungene ubukumkani bezulu,  
 470.           Abantu mabangene emhlabeni.  
 471.           Inkosi isikelele ukufundwa nokushunyayelwa,  
 472.           Kwezwi layo ngoku nangonaphakade.  
 473.           AMEN.

456. A! Alpha. He who created heaven and earth,  
 457. In the beginning God was present,  
 458. Created everything being God,  
 459. Everything is made in his image,  
 460. And even your heart  
 461. Was made by him,  
 462. Listen to Spolding's daughter shouting,  
 463. Telling people that he is the almighty,  
 464. He is the only one with healing strength,  
 465. With help, my friends,  
 466. Who helps the needy bodies, he can ask yours because he has  
     asked mine,  
 467. Choose Jesus our Lord AMEN.

468.           Lift up your doors and gates,  
 469.           That the Kingdom of heaven may come in,  
 470.           Let the people on earth come in.  
 471.           May the Lord bless the reading and the preaching  
 472.           of his word now and forever.  
 473.           AMEN.

Lines 458 and 459 contain an oblique parallelism based on the root enza, ('make'). In lines 468 and 469 the recurring formula which is used at the beginning of the sermon is again repeated. It is used as both an opening and a closing formula. This is a common phenomenon in sermons of this nature. In this closing extract the preacher's style is less emotional and emphatic and



takes on a pensive mood.

#### XHOSA RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION AND THE ORALITY-LITERACY DEBATE

It is interesting to observe that at the level of religious expression there also seems to be interaction between the written and the oral modes of thought. Preachers often combine oral spontaneous sermons with readings from the liturgy as well as singing of published hymns. Reverend Xozwa, for example, will begin by reading from the Bible and also by following the liturgy. It is once the readings from the Bible and liturgy are completed that the oral once again comes into play. At this point he will discard all papers and books and the sermon will be delivered in a distinctly oral style (cf. Supra). The poetic devices which are made use of during the course of the sermon are supportive of this oral poetic style. The sermon may also last for up to two hours or more without any reliance whatsoever on the written word.

According to Goody (1987:85),

Indeed the oral tradition was characterized by continual creation; it was the written which encouraged repetition at least of established texts.

In view of this, orality and literacy in the context of Xhosa religion may not be contradictory, but rather complementary. Although Xozwa, for example, reads extensively from the written liturgy prior to the sermon, the sermon itself can be regarded as a creation in progress. This is made possible through the use of poetic devices and techniques which have been associated with the

production of spontaneous poetry by Xhosa iimbongi. The style is formulaic, repetitive and copious with no regular metre. The preacher has immediate contact with his audience. He draws them into his sermon through a direct emotional link which exists between him and his audience. The emotional intensity with which the sermon is produced is clear evidence of this.

The use of formulaic expression is another interesting facet of these sermons. These spontaneous sermons have a definite formulaic quality. According to Rosenberg (1970b: 4),

We find such a tradition of oral composition in the American oral sermon.... Originally from the South, most of them Negroes, the preachers of this type of sermon preferred to compose spontaneously by using techniques identical to those employed by Lord's guslars.

If one considers that there are distinct similarities between the guslar and the imbongi (in terms of spontaneity and formulaic expression, etc.), then it would not seem incorrect to assume that Xhosa oral sermons also resemble those produced by the Afro-American and therefore contain certain parallels with Xhosa izibongo (as do American sermons with the Yugoslav guslar). Lord's work can therefore be further continued by looking at Xhosa sermons and applying his findings to them.

Rosenberg (ibid:5) points out that,

As with the guslars of Yugoslavia, formulas develop through the performer's attempts to fit his language to the metrics of his art...

Likewise, with the Xhosa sermon there seems to be a distinct

format. His language is made to be rhythmical and in order to achieve this the preacher fits in his language between the 'breath units' of which he makes use. This allows for the developing of poetic techniques such as parallelisms and formulaic expression. One finds phrases like ithi incwadi yeCawa, ('the Bible says') and Yiva wethu, ('listen, people') as well as bantu bakokwethu, ('people of my home, my people') repeated 21, 8 and 8 times respectively. In a four hundred and seventy line sermon this would seem to be more than merely coincidence. It is strongly reminiscent of Lord's formula, that is, 'a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea.' Perhaps the use of these formulas allows the preacher to formulate what is to come next and they are therefore not randomly used but rather strategically placed. It would seem though, that they are not always used under the same metrical conditions as the metre is often irregular. These formulas allow the preacher to choose what he wants to say next.

The analysed sermon is clear evidence that parallelism, which is essentially an oral style, appears in abundance. Firstly, a line may retain the syntax of the previous line but the words are changed. Secondly, one or more words, either at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a sentence are retained. Thirdly, syntax and words differ but the idea expressed is the same. If, as Lord propagates, this oral formulaic style is associated with oral societies and cannot co-exist with literacy, then how can one account for the existence of these formulaic

expressions, not only in written Xhosa poetry but also in sermons which are often produced by educated preachers like Xozwa? Literacy is therefore not necessarily linked to preaching style. One needs to be careful not to be rigid in one's views of what exactly should make up orality as opposed to literacy in a society where both clearly co-exist side by side.

#### CONCLUSION

Observation reveals that the production of Xhosa sermons often tend to be produced in a distinctly oral style, using many techniques which have been associated with the Xhosa imbongi. Even though the missionaries brought with them the Bible, a static text, as well as literacy in the form of education, the oral has survived and still survives today. From the days of Ntsikana up to the present there seems to be a style of worship which is distinctly poetical. The use of praise names to refer to God as well as the style used (supra) seems to be clear evidence of this. These factors have in turn contributed to the establishing of an indigenous Xhosa preaching style which has a certain appeal to the people. Quite clearly these sermons are again evidence of the interaction between literacy and orality within the Xhosa society.

The use of iimbongi and the izibongo style and techniques within Xhosa religion can be said to stem directly from the social changes which have taken place in Xhosa society. The arrival of the missionaries and the introduction of literacy have led to the imbongi being absorbed into the religious sphere. Not only do

preachers make use of this izibongo style with which the congregation can identify, but many well-known iimbongi like Mothlabane, <sup>7</sup> who are not necessarily preachers, perform in this context. This is particularly interesting if one considers the traditional role of the imbongi (attached to chiefs) as being one who mediates. God the Almighty is now being praised in a similar way in which a chief would have been praised in the past. The imbongi can be seen as a mediator between the people and God.



### FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. This is a translation of Peteni's book Hill of Fools which was first published in English in 1979. The English translation of the quoted extract is taken from Hill of Fools.
2. Cf. Shropshire, pp. 333-373.
3. Xozwa's definition of ukuthwasa has been broadened to encompass not only an emotional moment of intensity affording one access to the ancestors, but as a Christian, being filled with the Holy Spirit would also fall within the ambit of ukuthwasa.
4. This is further supported by the analysis of Xozwa's sermon (infra).
5. Cf. Hodgson (1980:19).
6. Cf. Ntuli, The Poetry of B W Vilakazi, pp. 190-200.
7. Mothlabane's poetry is analysed in chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 4

### STYLES, THEMES AND THE ROLE OF IIMBONGI WITHIN

#### TRADE UNIONS

##### INTRODUCTION

We have established in the preceding chapters that the imbongi is fighting to come to terms with an ever-changing society. <sup>1</sup> The socio-economic and political environment in South Africa has also been responsible for the development of political oratory within trade unions, particularly the oratory of the imbongi. The imbongi is essentially a political and social commentator, and as a result has been absorbed into trade unions, which represent the interests of workers in our society.

According to Elizabeth Gunner (1986:33),

both Zulu and Xhosa praise poetry ... because they exploit powerful cultural symbols with such ease, appeal in a very direct way to their listeners' emotions and attitudes. They intrinsically combine political and aesthetic appeal and perhaps for this reason represent valuable 'property' in any ideological struggle.

The importance of the imbongi's political oratory therefore remains unchanged. Ethnographers of speaking interested in politics have come to realise the benefits of studying speech in political contexts, for clearly a political order exists only insofar as various values, ideas and philosophies are communicated among its members. The study of figures such as the imbongi also require analysis within the contemporary contexts

within which they are found, as they are usually incumbent within a particular social setting. The purpose of this chapter is then to comment on the changing role of speech in politics with specific reference to the imbongi within the trade union context, thereby showing also that speech is linked to the ever-changing social norms and values which exist in any particular society.

According to Cronin (1989:35),

To talk about this poetry, produced over the last two or three years, we must contextualize it within the rolling wave of semi-insurrectionary uprising, mass stayaways, political strikes, consumer boycotts.... An emergent (and insurgent) national political culture is an integral part of this rolling wave of mass struggle. Journalists, photographers, and television crews are the only ones so far to have described some of the features of this emergent culture from the outside. Very little academic analysis has yet been done.

The need for such research is therefore self-evident. This chapter should however be seen in the light of the overall theme of this research (concerning the changing role of the imbongi) and not in isolation.

This chapter begins with an introduction. The relationship between COSATU and culture and the way in which COSATU views the use of culture in the awakening of worker consciousness is then commented on. D Songwigi, a trade union poet is introduced. This is followed by the introduction of A T Qabula, another trade union poet. Qabula's poetry is also analysed. An analysis of the similarities and differences between traditional Xhosa izibongo and contemporary worker poetry follows. Finally, based

on the above, a conclusion is reached.

Political oratory takes place within the wider social, political and cultural context (the macro situation) of a particular society; and this is also true of the imbongi's poetry today. For example, with the awakening of Black Nationalism and political consciousness among the Xhosas, and the greater need for recognition within the work place (including equal opportunities and remuneration), poetry in the form of traditional izibongo is alive and well within the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) as well as other unions. Cronin (1989:39) observed the following concerning a trade union imbongi:

Later, an African shop steward in her mid-thirties steps forward.... She wears animal skins, or at least a cut-out and pinned-up plastic bag imitation of skins. On stage she takes the microphone boldly in hand and begins to pace to and fro as she incants at a furious pace, like an old-style imbongi (praise poet). She delivers a praise poem to the union and to the collective strength of the workers.

In support of this, any ethnographic study of iimbongi as political orators or social critics would have to take place within the broader social and cultural context. Any romantic view of the present-day imbongi as a traditionalist attached only to chiefs would be redundant and naive.<sup>2</sup> The fact that there are many women iimbongi performing today is also clear evidence of deviation from a tradition which was previously dominated by men. Nise Malange, for example, produces oral poetry within COSATU. (For further examples of women performers see video performances D and E on the accompanying video.)<sup>3</sup>

It would seem necessary also to point out that the collection of data for this chapter has posed certain problems, which in turn have created certain constraints. At the time this material was gathered, the research was hampered by the political situation in the country - the state of emergency, restrictions on freedom of speech and so on.<sup>4</sup> It has often been difficult to collect information and poetry. People have often been reluctant to let me have their poetry or to tell me anything about their lives for fear of possible reprisals. This again only proves that the imbongi today operates in a situation where he has to take the risk for whatever he says.<sup>5</sup> I am therefore deeply indebted to ALFRED TEMBA QABULA who so willingly gave of his time and energy to tell me about his life and poetry.

This chapter will involve a case study of Qabula's izibongo and his role within COSATU as an imbongi recognised by the union and by the people. Because Qabula works in the Durban area, much of his poetry is produced in Zulu due to the fact that his audience is mainly Zulu speaking. However, as he is a Xhosa, much of the poetry which he produces is based on the Xhosa tradition of izibongo.

Mention will also be made of DANIEL SONGWIQI, a Xhosa imbongi living in Uitenhage who also produces poetry within COSATU. Having been an active member of the Mass Democratic Movement, he also has suffered, and as a result has been in hiding from time to time. Other iimbongi within COSATU include Mandela Shezi, Madlizinyoka Ntanzu and Mi S'Dumo Hlatshwayo. These iimbongi are



all in the mould of Qabula and have been influenced by him.

The point I hope to prove in this chapter is that, as a result of socio-economic and political changes, the tradition of the imbongi has been absorbed into the Mass Democratic Movement as a tool to awaken political consciousness among blacks. This is probably the single most important happening of the eighties as far as the survival of the imbongi is concerned. <sup>6</sup> The style, the technique and the role of the imbongi within these organisations distinctly resembles that of the traditional imbongi. The exact nature of this role will be explored in this chapter. Poetry produced by Qabula will also be analysed.

#### COSATU AND CULTURE

At this point it would seem necessary to make some mention of COSATU's views as far as culture is concerned. It is important to know that culture within these progressive organisations is highly valued. Although culture implies in this instance something traditional and therefore perhaps unsuited to an organisation such as COSATU, it has been developed in a way which is acceptable to the people. It has been unlocked from its traditional roots and explored in a manner which takes cognisance of contemporary events in our society. Perhaps even the toyi-toyi which is often danced at political and other meetings today can also be seen as reminiscent of the traditional Xhosa war songs which were sung long ago in order to encourage the warriors in battle. Wauchope (1908:10) states the following: 'And to urge the warriors on to death custom was always ready with the

imbongi and the war song.' 7

As pointed out at the beginning of this thesis, tradition is not static but dynamic. It is within this paradigm that the modern imbongi operating within the Mass Democratic Organisation falls.

According to Von Kotze (1988:18),

COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) has employed a full-time national organizer for culture so that in the days ahead workers will get more support for their projects. A resolution to COSATU's second national congress said 'culture cannot be left in the hands of the enemy.' -The plays of the DWCL and associated Locals bear witness to the fact that workers have begun to take culture into their own hands.

The Dunlop Play which originated out of the Dunlop strikes in Durban was initiated by Qabula. This was one of the first attempts at using culture in order to awaken worker consciousness and it was well received. Thereafter, the Durban Workers Cultural Local (DWCL) was formed in 1983. As yet, there does not seem to be any co-ordinated movement in the Eastern Cape. However, the unions have encouraged the use of culture within their organisations and this has led to a revival of traditional cultural techniques. Even within the Dunlop play there is a poem in traditional style which was produced by Qabula. The cultural revival therefore not only includes plays, but poetry and song as well.

According to Von Kotze (1988:40), 'THE DUNLOP PLAY spelt the beginning for a unified cultural movement of workers in and around Durban.'

The important use of culture within the unions is therefore beyond dispute. Von Kotze (ibid:8) states that

... it is only over the last few years that workers have organized to fight their oppression on the cultural front. In their poems and plays and songs they put forward their own views about how they see the world and how they would like to change it. They tell stories of their exploitation, they talk about their history of struggle against oppression and about their organizations and their leaders.

As a social and political commentator the imbongi's role has always been to comment on society and the happenings around him. It is therefore nothing really new that the imbongi is still fulfilling this function today within progressive organisations. A quotation from a letter received from Professor Opland (July 18, 1989) bears witness to this:

I would argue, though, that izibongo are inevitably political, so the appearance of poetry in modern political situations strikes me as nothing substantially new, except for the absence of chiefs and the desacralisation of context.

It was also always the imbongi's role to include historical perspectives in his poetry concerning, for example, the chief's genealogy as well as some comment on the history of the peoples in the same way as the trade union imbongi may comment on the history of the struggle.<sup>8</sup> Culture has therefore become a very real tool in the hands of workers in their attempts to make people aware of their plight, and to consolidate their positions so as to be able to negotiate a more suitable package for themselves.

Although the role of the imbongi may be threatened on the one hand by the power which is often wielded by homeland politicians, izibongo are without doubt surviving in the contemporary context.

Nelm News (Grahamstown, May 1987) states the following:

THE VITALLY IMPORTANT ROLE PLAYED BY poetry in pre-colonial African society is being re-enacted in the altogether different context of the black labour movement and political struggle in South Africa today.

According to Mi Hlatshwayo, imbongi and cultural co-ordinator for COSATU, there is a very definite role for the imbongi within worker movements. In the New Nation (November 17-23, 1988), Hlatshwayo gives the following example:

Madlizinyoka Ntanzu, a praise poet in Natal, was recruited to the National Union of Mineworkers of South Africa (NUMSA). In his own words, he (Ntanzu) says: 'I left (traditional) praise poetry after being exposed to new dynamics. I realised that praising chiefs was no longer relevant; it was no longer serving my own interests. My new chiefs became the democratic forces, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), Numsa.' In his (Ntanzu's) poetry, he does not only take the content of praise poetry. He also puts a new form, a new style, a new form of dancing, into it. That is a great achievement.

#### DANIEL NKULULEKO SONGWIQI: HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

At the outset it is necessary to point out the purpose of including this material in this chapter. It would seem that the imbongi is being absorbed into COSATU, for example, at a much faster pace in Natal than in the Eastern Cape. One could hypothesise that the reason for this is the greater militancy which operates in Natal due to the war situation which exists

there. COSATU falls within the Mass Democratic Movement, which includes the African National Congress and the United Democratic Front. Greater organisation within this region could be attributed to the on-going war which is being waged by KwaZulu leader Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's INKATHA on the one hand and the Mass Democratic Movement on the other. The high level of organisation and the many meetings which are held have attracted iimbongi.

Besides Songwiqui, who is not a regular performer, it has been extremely difficult to find someone who resides in the Eastern Cape who performs within COSATU on a regular basis, especially in view of the fact that most of the Congress meetings are held in the Transvaal. Songwiqui supported this with his opinion that 'in this Eastern Cape region we don't have many iimbongi performing....' The reason for this would seem to be that COSATU has organised and co-ordinated cultural events in the other provinces, but as yet, not within the Eastern Cape, probably due to the fact that the degree of militancy which exists in Natal between INKATHA and the Mass Democratic forces does not exist in the Eastern Cape.

It is for this reason that I have therefore chosen to analyse the poetry of an imbongi who originates and resides within my research area (Transkei and Eastern Cape) but who works in Durban and therefore also produces poetry within the Durban area, namely A T Qabula. Daniel Songwiqui is the only person whom I have come across in the Eastern Cape who has also produced poetry within COSATU but resides and works in the Eastern Cape. For this



reason I find it necessary to mention him, his origins and the source of his inspiration whilst performing. Much of what he says also reinforces Qabula's point of view. Songwiqui has only performed on limited occasions and his poetry has never been recorded. His poetry is completely spontaneous and there is no written record, either before or after the performance. It is therefore not possible to analyse any of his poetry as he is no longer active within COSATU where he was previously a shop steward. Although this is the case, much of the information I have gained during our discussions is highly relevant to the present study.

Songwiqui was born in Cradock in the Eastern Cape. He now lives in Uitenhage and works for the Goodyear Tyre Company. Although he has produced poetry in the Ciskei and also during his youth whilst living in Cradock, he also produced poetry during 1985 at the COSATU Second National Congress. Qabula incidentally also remembers this occasion. Songwiqui states that

At COSATU, I did izibongo when the executive was taken out, there was then the election. So before Barayi goes out with the others I may praise if there is something that needs to be praised. I may criticize if there is something funny in the long run, in their period. So I did it when they were going out. They were re-elected.... Barayi and his colleagues had worked and progressed. So I felt that I could do something, that is why I made a poem quoting from what they had done. For instance, he made a call that they want the amapasi down. We gave the State President six months and after that there was no more amapasi. It was from Barayi's announcement in the first Congress. There were three imbongi's in front of me who performed first.

Songwiqui went on to describe exactly how he came to the point of

producing this poem within COSATU. He stated:

I never prepare anything. Now if unesipho, you may attend a gathering. In that gathering, if unesipho, you are going to make a poem.... You cannot write down your poem, if sisipho sakho, you will see it there, a situation will tell you that, you only listen to the speakers, and you see the situation and you stand up and do it.

Although this may be proof of the spontaneity of the poem, Songwiqui also states that to some extent he may be influenced by something which he has read.

Now if we are discussing about the freedom charter in our meeting, before we finish or end off everything I have listened and I have learned. Maybe it's thirty years ago. Now this influenced me - my speech - what I am going to tell. I have taken some part of it from what I have read.

This again supports the finding today that the modern imbongi is seldom untouched by literacy and the ability to write.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the tradition is adapting within this paradigm. Oral poetry still survives today.

Songwiqui also made some comments on the role of the imbongi within COSATU today. He acknowledged the role of the imbongi as political commentator within COSATU but also made the point that it depended largely on the individual imbongi as to what the topic of his poem would be and how he saw his role. 'In COSATU we are still different people. There are some from the amaXhoseni, there are some from the urban areas. The one doesn't think exactly the same as the other.' He also acknowledges that for the imbongi to be successful there must be an emotional link between him and his audience. Songwiqui was of the opinion that

You should show the people you feel about what you say like a preacher. You cannot preach as an English preacher, you have to preach as a Xhosa preacher. <sup>10</sup>

He also stated that the imbongi should be able 'to praise the leadership plus the members and to criticise the leadership ... if there is something that they forget you bring it forward.'

#### ALFRED TEMBA QABULA: HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Alfred Temba Qabula was born in the Transkei (Flagstaff) on 12 December 1942. He remained in the area until he had completed his standard six. Like most of his contemporaries he was destined to life as a migrant worker. Although his family still lives in Flagstaff he now resides in Durban but often commutes to Flagstaff over weekends in order to see his family.

Qabula left the rural area in which he was born in 1964 when he went to work in Carltonville. He had just completed his plumbing diploma at a school in Kokstad. He worked in Carltonville during 1964 and 1965. At this point he had not produced any poetry but had been involved in producing short plays whilst living in the Transkei, especially around Christmas time.

In 1966 Qabula moved to Durban where he worked at Mount Edgecomb. After he left Mount Edgecomb, he moved into Durban itself and worked for a firm of plumbers. However, conflict between him and his employer resulted because of insufficient pay. Qabula left the plumbing firm in 1974. During the same year he managed to secure work as a fork-lifter at Dunlop, a tyre company in Durban.

It was at this point that Qabula's association with trade unions began. During this time he was to discover his full creative potential as an imbongi, playwright, and political orator.

On his arrival at Dunlop worker representation was restricted to a labour committee. He was voted onto the committee and his job was to organise the other workers. This remained the case until 1983 when an agreement was signed which legally allowed a union to operate within Dunlop. This was the Metal and Allied Workers' Union which Qabula joined.

In order to introduce workers to the union, Qabula decided to devise a stage play which would explain the union and how it operated. This was during 1982/83. It was at this point that Qabula also realised the powerful nature of poetry and decided to include a poem in this play. Qabula stated that, although he would never produce praises about any chief, he 'liked the way of the traditional style.' It was at this point that he began to exploit the traditional style and techniques of Xhosa izibongo in order to awaken worker consciousness.

Qabula's disapproval of the chiefs did not therefore mean that his gift as an imbongi was to be wasted. Qabula now regarded trade unions as having taken the place of chiefs in the sense that long ago people looked to the chiefs for guidance whereas now, according to Qabula, they were merely puppets. He also tells of the 1959/60 troubles in the Transkei where chiefs accepted the betterment scheme which led to a rebellion in that region. This was done without consulting the people, many of

whom had to move, which created conflict. Qabula sums this up as follows:

KASCHULA: So the fact that you don't produce about chiefs is a personal thing because you do not believe in their policies?

QABULA: Yes, because they can take decisions by themselves without consulting the people. I am against it, that's why I can't praise the chiefs.

This was later to lead to much conflict between Qabula and Inkatha, who represent Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Chief Minister of Kwazulu. <sup>11</sup>

Although the poem which Qabula produced for the Dunlop play was a written one, he makes it quite clear that he is also in a position to produce poetry on the spur of the moment. Again this supports the findings in chapters 2 and 3 concerning the orality-literacy debate. <sup>12</sup>

#### THE POETRY OF ALFRED TEMBA QABULA

I would now like to comment on some poetry produced by Qabula. The first poem was produced by Qabula at the MAWU AGM at Curries Fountain in 1984. It is a praise poem to FOSATU. It deals essentially with the formation of FOSATU and the problems which were facing the trade unions at the time. Qabula gives some advice on how these problems should be approached. Due to the length of the poem (approx. 200 lines) selected extracts of it will be analysed. <sup>13</sup>



1. Nguye wavela!
2. Basho bonke bathi wavela!
3. Wena hlathi elihambayo laseAfrika.
4. Ngifike amawele elilelana
5. Kanti ngabasebenzi,
6. Abasebenza ezimbonini,
7. Bexoxelana ngezinkinga,
8. Ezibahlupha ezimbonini,
9. Abazisebenzela eAfrika.

1. It is he who has appeared!
2. They all said that he had appeared!
3. You moving forest of Africa.
4. When I arrived the twins were all crying
5. These were the workers,
6. Industrial workers,
7. Discussing the problems,
8. That affect them in the industries
9. They work for in Africa.

In line 3, FOSATU is portrayed as a moving forest which creates the image of a powerful organisation on the move. Lines 5 and 6 also contain parallelism where the one line is extended into the other and can express a similar idea, in this instance, the workers. The linking word in this instance is abasebenzi - workers.

The poem continues:

10. Ngibone omunye eduduza abanye,
11. Ebesula izinyembezi emehlweni.
12. Ngibone umhlola
13. Ngoba nakuye zisuke zagobhoz'izinyembezi emehlweni.
14. Basebenzi ngowani na lowo Maye!?
15. Nikhala nje ngubanina onihluphayo?
16. Balekani ningene kulelohlathi,
17. Hlath'limnyama elabonwa ngabaqashi balibalekela labonwa
18. Ngabasebenzi.
19. Bathi: 'ngelethu masingeneni sicashe
20. Ukuze siphephe kubazingeli bethu.'
21. Bangena kulelihlathi baphuma,
22. Sebelashwe uvalo nengebhe
23. Yokwesaba izitha zabo.

10. I saw one of them consoling others,

11. Wiping their tears from their eyes.
12. I saw wonders because even in his
13. Eyes the tears did flow.
14. Worker, about what is that cry, Maye!?
15. You are crying, who is troubling you?
16. Escape into that forest,
17. The black forest that the employers saw and ran away from  
for safety.
18. The workers saw it too.
19. 'It belongs to us,' let us hide they said.
20. 'Let us take refuge in it to be safe from our hunters.'
21. Deep in the forest they hid themselves, and then came out,
22. And when they came out
23. They were free from fear.

FOSATU is here being praised as the black forest, a traditional praise used for Cetshwayo. This metaphor is extended to portray FOSATU as the protector of the people, a forest in which the workers can hide and seek protection.

It continues:

24. Sikhukhukazi esimaphikw'abanzi,
  25. Okufukumel'amatshwele aso,
  26. Sifukamele nathi,
  27. Ngalawamaphiko akho angena ubandlululo.
  28. Sikhukhumeze nathi,
  29. Ukuze sihluzele'ingqondo sihlakaniphe.
  30. Anolak'amadodana akho,
  31. Ingabe uwachela ngaluphi uhlobo lwentelezi.
  32. Sichele nathi,
  33. Ukuze siwafuze senze njengawe.
  34. Uzele phela FOSATU.
  35. Amadodana akhe angcwele iAfrika yonkana.
  36. Nangaphesheya onyana bakhe bakhona.
  37. FOSATU ulibhubesi,
  38. Elingquma ePitoli eseNyakatho.
  39. Unezihovisi zenyunyane kulo lonke.
- 
24. You are the hen with wide wings,
  25. That protects its chickens,
  26. Protect us too
  27. With those sacred wings of yours that knoweth no  
discrimination.
  28. Protect us too,
  29. So that we gain wisdom.
  30. Militant are your sons and daughters,
  31. One wonders what kind of muti they use.

32. Sprinkle it so that we take
33. After them and act likewise.
34. FOSATU has given birth.
35. Its sons are spread all over Africa.
36. Even overseas you find its sons.
37. FOSATU, you are the lion,
38. That roared at Pretoria North.
39. With union offices everywhere...

FOSATU has been personified as someone who has given birth to sons and daughters, personification being a common feature of traditional izibongo. There is also use here of animal metaphor, another common feature of traditional Xhosa izibongo. FOSATU is portrayed as a hen which protects its chickens; in other words, an organisation which protects its people. FOSATU is also praised as the lion that roared - a symbol of power. Lines 25 and 26 also contain parallelism (expressing the idea of protection).

The poem continues:

40. FOSATU sukukhethile,
41. Ukuba sihole kade sasibakhetha abaholi.
42. Sikhetha abantu esasibathemba,
43. Abantu esazalwa nabo sakhula nabo,
44. Abantu abalwaziyo lonke usizi lwethu,
45. Nesasigqilazeke kanye nabo,
46. Sabakhetha ngoba sasikholwa,
47. Ukuthi balubhaqa Olunkhanyisa indlela yethu eya  
enkululekweni,
48. Kanti kuzothi sesibaphakamisele...
49. Basiphedukela,
50. Basithuthela izimpimpi,
51. Zasihlupha...

40. FOSATU, we have chosen you to lead us,
41. Time and again we have been electing leaders,
42. Electing people we trusted,
43. And with whom we were born and with whom we grew up,
44. People who knew all our sufferings,
45. Together with whom we were enslaved,
46. We had elected them because we believed,
47. They found a lamp to brighten our way to freedom,

48. But to our dismay...
49. They turned against us,
50. They brought impimpis into our midst to inflict
51. Sufferings upon us...

Lines 41 and 42 contain parallelism (expressing the idea of electing leaders). Qabula is here issuing a warning to FOSATU or rather to the leader of FOSATU not to become a sell-out, and he is also subtly criticising previous union leaders. This is important when one bears in mind that the role of the traditional imbongi was both to praise and criticise the chief. However, the role of the contemporary union imbongi seems to be not only to praise and criticise leaders, but the union itself.

The poem continues:

52. Amathambo ami nabalozi bangitshela ukuthi,
53. Yebo uzele amadodana akho mahle.
54. Futhi ahlakaniphile ekanti aphilile kodwa,
55. Kukhona isifo esingukufa,
56. Enye indodana akho iyagula impela,
57. Lesisifo esingukufa,
58. Singawathelela namanye amadodana akho,
59. Nawo agcine onke esegula,
60. Ngempela eguliswa yisifo esibi kakhulu,
61. Isifo somdlavuza, ewe umdlavuza.

52. My bones and my abalozi are telling me this,
53. Yebo, handsome are your sons.
54. Intelligent and healthy,
55. But a deadly disease threatens them,
56. One of your children is ailing,
57. And this disease called Death
58. May infect your other sons,
59. Leaving them all sick,
60. With this horrible disease,
61. Cancer, yes Cancer.

The imbongi is here subtly alluding to the split within the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU). He is saying that such splits should be avoided in order to preserve unity. Again this

resembles traditional izibongo where problem areas were subtly alluded to and blatant criticism was not encouraged. The image of death and disease is successfully used to highlight this split within MAWU.

The poem concludes as follows:

62. Ngikubhekile konke  
63. Okwenzayo!  
64. Ulibinda FOSATU!  
65. Bayethe!  
66. Amandla kubasebenzi.

62. I am watching all that you are  
63. Doing!  
64. You are great, FOSATU!  
65. Bayethe!  
67. Hail! Power to the workers.

The poem ends with an acknowledgement of the potential which FOSATU has - You are great FOSATU. This is followed by bayethe which is a Zulu greeting, showing respect towards FOSATU. There is also a final word of encouragement to the workers - Amandla kubasebenzi, ('Power to the workers') - which could be regarded as some kind of closing formula resembling those used by the traditional Xhosa imbongi, for example, Ncincilili.

One of Qabula's latest poems was produced at the Mayday culture week celebrations in Durban in 1989. (This poem was recorded and is available as the second poem on video performance F. The first video performance is a variation of the same poem, performed on a different occasion.) An analysis of the transcribed version follows. Again it has been sub-divided into sections, with accompanying commentary, for the sake of



convenience.

1. Kulobu busuku ndandilele ubuthongo.
2. Ndivuswe yimbumbulu ngumsindokazi omkhulu,
3. Nokuzamazama komhlaba,
4. Ndivuke ndagqoka.
5. Ndathath'ibrukhwe,
6. Ndathi ndiyagqoka,
7. Ndasuka andangokeka.
8. Ndithathe ingubo ndazambeza yasuka yawa phantsi.
9. Ndibone imbezu nestena ndabhozomela,
10. Umncedi azange abesawufika ngoba bekuphuthuma.

1. On that night I was in a deep sleep.
2. Anger of evil intention awoke me,
3. And trouble on earth,
4. I awoke to dress.
5. I took a pair of trousers,
6. As I began to dress,
7. I just could not dress.
8. I took a blanket and wrapped it around me but it just fell down.
9. I saw a race of people and a brick and became angry,
10. A helper never arrived.

Qabula is here referring to the state of affairs in the country. He makes reference in line 3 to trouble on earth. One gets the feeling of a man who is confused and waiting for direction. This confusion is created, for example, in lines 4 to 7, especially lines 6 and 7. Here Qabula makes use of a positive-negative parallelism creating a sense of despair and failure. The use of final linking here is used to create effect and emphasis. One immediately becomes aware that the poem is a comment on the present state of affairs in the country. This poem could also be viewed as a socio-political commentary.

The poem continues:

11. Ndandihakwa yimvungu yabe izwakal'emnyango,
12. Yabavuma namaculo, akhal' amagubu namaxilongo,
13. Ndiphume ndabheka isimo sezulu,
14. Inyanga neenkanyezi andifanisanga,
15. Isibhakabhaka besingozwe zintuli,
16. Ndizwe ela izw' elililiselayo,
17. Lathi, amaphut' enu athand'ubuthongo,
18. Ngoba andikalazi usuk'olukhulu,
19. Lokubuya Kwamaghaw' aseAfrika.
20. Amaghaw'angafunanga ukunikwa nkulumbuso,
21. Ngabasemzini.

22. Hish da dum ... Hey Hey

11. I became insane because of the senseless talking that could  
be heard from the doorway,
12. Hymns were sung, drums and bugles could be heard,
13. I went outside to see how the weather was,
14. I could not compare the moon to the stars,
15. The sky was in complete darkness,
16. I heard the clammering of a voice,
17. Saying, you deaf people like to sleep, that is where you  
fail,
18. You have not even heard about the great day,
19. Of the coming of the African heroes.
20. Heroes who would not allow themselves to be given  
premiership,
21. By foreigners.

22. Hish da dum ... Hey Hey

The imbongi is subtly alluding to or criticising those people who do not get involved in the struggle and who remain apathetic. This becomes clear in lines 16, 17 and 18. A very powerful metaphor is used in lines 14 and 15 where the stars and the moon are described as very different and the sky as dark. This could be taken as a reference to the divisive society within which we live and the darkness which generally prevails. In line 22 the type of refrain which occurs in Qabula's poetry is found. This is referred to as a refrain rather than a formula because, although it recurs, it does not express any set idea. It can,

however, be regarded as a 'breather' giving the imbongi time to regroup his thoughts. It is also accompanied by dancing and the stamping of feet, which adds a new dimension to the production of izibongo and also contributes to the visual impact of the poem. An oblique parallelism also occurs in lines 19 and 20. The word 'heroes' is repeated. Lines 19, 20 and 21 are again referring to the present situation where certain chiefs have accepted independence from the South African government which has led to the creation of independent homelands. The poet does not include these chiefs in his list of heroes.

It continues:

23. Ndivuke ndagqoka ngabheka isimo sezulu,  
 24. Izandla makhe ziphathisane,  
 25. Besingamoshwanga zintuli,  
 26. Ndiz lizwakele ilizwi elililiselayo,  
 27. Kwath'amaphuth'enu athand'ubuthongo,  
 28. Akalaz' usuku olukhulu lokubuya kwamagaw'aseAfrika.  
 29. Ngivuke ngahlikihl'amehlo ngisula imbici,  
 30. Ngabuza ngibone bani?  
 31. Hawu! NguMakana, nguShashangane,  
 32. NguMzilikazi kaMashobana, nguCetywayo owalwa,  
 33. Waza wajikiselwa esiqithini saseRobben Island,  
 34. Wajikiselwa ekwelamaNgesi.  
 35. Uthe ebuya wabuya sekuhleli uMasheshengwana esihlalweni sakhe sobuKhosi.

23. I woke up and dressed to inspect the weather,  
 24. Let us unite,  
 25. We are not spoilt by darkness or differences,  
 26. The clamouring voice is being heard,  
 27. Saying that your mistake is that you enjoy sleeping,  
 28. Not knowing the coming of the African heroes on that great day.  
 29. I woke up and rubbed my eyes and wiped out tears,  
 30. I asked myself whom did I see?  
 31. Hawu! It was Makana, Shashangane,  
 32. Mzilikazi of Mashobana, Cetywayo who fought,  
 33. And he was ultimately sent to Robben Island,  
 34. He was sent to Britain before. But when he returned  
 35. He found out that Masheshengwana occupied the chieftainship

post.

Again here the imbongi is making reference in line 25 to the darkness - this time in a positive way; stating that some people are not affected by this darkness which prevails. Line 29 expresses an awakening. When one bears in mind that the role of the imbongi is also to comment on present affairs, it is fitting that Qabula appeals for unity in the present situation. Qabula also contrasts the present with the past. Again one must bear in mind here that even though the imbongi's poetry is a reflection of the present, it also draws on historical factors. The names of people whom he regards as heroes are listed. These heroes come from the past and serve as a reminder to the present generation of the hardship the people have endured. This serves as inspiration for those enduring hardship today.

The poem continues:

36. NguDingane owabathumayo abasemzini,
37. Awabathuma ukuthi baland'iinkomo zakhe kuSigonyela kuba bazintshontsha.
38. NguBhambatha kaMatitso owalwa amaZulu anendawo yokub'ayaku catsha kwaMaputo,
39. Engadinwa ukuthakatha ikhanda lakhe yena nabantu bakhe.
40. Dudum dudum dudum dum

36. It was Dingaan who sent the foreigners
37. To go and fetch his stolen cattle from Sigonyela.
38. It was Bhabatha Matitso who fought against the Zulus, then hid themselves in Maputo,
39. He never forgot to practise witchcraft, together with his people.

40. Dudum dudum dudum dum

Qabula here quotes from the history of the Zulu people. It is

evident that these figures and actions are seen in a negative light. Again line 40 can be seen as a refrain giving the imbongi time to think about what is to come next. This is accompanied by dancing and stamping. These chiefs are associated with witchcraft in line 39 which is again seen in a negative light.

The poem concludes as follows:

41. NguMoshoeshoe owayehamba phezu kwentaba Bosigo wayiqandul'eyasemzini ngamatye.
42. NguCetywayo, nguMakana laba ngamaghave azilwa izinto ezinzima zaseAfrika.
43. Vukani maghave,
44. Vukani zimbongi,
45. Bantu vukani nilalele nizekuva ukukhala kwezinkuku,
46. Nive ubumnandi bamahubo, namabutho nibuse,
47. Sibanye vukani nilalele nina,
48. Bahlangabezeni ngabahubo,
49. Bahlangabezeni nangentsholo,
50. Bahlangabezeni ngokusina, ngokukhala kwezinkuku nokulilisela.
51. Kikikiki kikikiki kikikikikiki
52. Livakel'izwi lomntu onamandl'amakhulu, nanti laba
53. Ngabanye bezimpi zaseGcuwa,
54. Ngabantu abavisisana, nombuso waseAfrika ngabasemzini
55. Yebo, balwa, bafa.
56. Namhlanje lusuk'olukhulu babuyel'ekhaya,
57. Babuya ngamaZulu,
58. Babuya ngokuzamazama komhlaba,
59. Babuya ngokuduma kwezulu,
60. Babuya ngamaxilongo,
61. Ukukhala kwezinkuku nokukikiza, kikizana nina bokukikiza,
62. Gidani nina bokugiba,
63. Culani nina bokuhlabelela,
64. Bahlangabezeni ngamaculo nibamkel'ekhaya.
65. Dudu dudu dudu dudu dudu

41. It was Moshesh on Mount Bosigo who hurled and rolled stones on foreigners.
42. It was Cetywayo and Makana, the heroes who fought the difficulties in Africa.
43. Arise you heroes,
44. Arise you poets,
45. Arise you people and listen to crowing cocks,
46. And come so that we can all enjoy a life of ease and comfort,
47. We are one, united, awake and listen.
48. Meet one another in singing,
49. Meet them in noisy excitement,



50. Meet them while you are dancing and the cocks crow.
51. Kikikiki kikikiki kikikikikiki
52. The word from the almighty is heard, here it is,
53. All these, they are the portion of the army from Butterworth.
54. These are the people who may be combined with the foreigners  
to govern Africa,
55. Yes they fought and died.
56. Today is a red letter day, they are coming back home,
57. They came back with the skies,
58. They came back with worldly trying,
59. They came back in thunder,
60. They came back with bugles,
61. The crowing of cocks and dances,
62. Dance you dancers,
63. Sing you singers,
64. Sing to them hymns and welcome them home.
  
65. Dudum dudum dudum

Lines 41, 42 and 43 again refer to heroes. Qabula contrasts these heroes with the preceding section where he quotes deeds which in his eyes were not heroic. He refers to Makana and Cetywayo. Lines 43, 44 and 45 can be seen as a triple parallelism with initial linking expressing the notion that people should arise and fight as the heroes from the past did. Lines 48, 49 and 50 express the idea of meeting one another - creating a unified nation. Again this can be seen as a triple parallelism. The reference to the crowing of the cocks can be seen as a metaphor expressing the dawning of a new day symbolising the arrival of a new era. Line 51 again allows the imbongi an opportunity to reorganise his thoughts. Lines 60 to 65 are a grouping expressing the idea of the return of the great heroes, alluding to the return of those presently in exile. The use of initial linking here furthers the notion of the return of exiles. The poem again ends with the common refrain accompanied by dancing and audience participation.

## SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES: TRADITIONAL VERSUS WORKER POETRY

The similarities between trade union worker poetry and that of the traditional imbongi seem to be more obvious than the differences. This is so because of the worker poet's attempts to emulate the tradition of izibongo. The worker imbongi is operating within this tradition rather than against it.

In support of this the situation as depicted in Qabula's poetry could be summarised by comparing the following: dress, method of delivery, stylistic techniques (including the use of metaphor, personification and parallelism), role and theme.

### **DRESS:**

Iimbongi operating within the trade unions do not necessarily have a uniform dress, or any particular style of dress at all for that matter. It depends entirely on the individual performer. By and large this is also true of the 'traditional' imbongi today who no longer always wears his traditional robe of animal skins and an animal skin hat. Traditionally he also used to carry a spear. However, one often sees iimbongi wearing remnants of the traditional dress such as an animal skin hat whilst dressed in a suit.

According to Cronin (1989:42),

The clothing of the performer should also be noted. As often as not it is unexceptional. However, quite a few poets, especially those who adopt a more bardic tone, don dashikis as an integral part of their performance. The several trade union praise poets also tend to wear special clothing, traditional skins and ornamentation,

or a modern-day facsimile of the kind already noted.

Qabula, on the other hand, has created his own dress style which is unique to him. This includes wearing a pair of trousers and a shirt which have been torn and shredded. The trouser legs are torn into strips. At the same time he wears a tie. These rags are symbolic and represent poverty, especially the pain and suffering which the working class often have to endure. The tie, on the other hand, depicts the capitalist world with its bosses and overseers. The contrast which is created here is extremely powerful. (See video performance F.)

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:**

Cronin (1989:41) makes the following general remarks with regard to contemporary oral poetry:

The poetry is, clearly, largely a performance. The bodily presence of the poet becomes an important feature of the poetics. Arm gestures, clapping, and head nodding are often used expressively and deictically. The poets also draw freely from the current political lexis of gestures: the clenched fist salute of people's power (amandla ngawethu)...

The style of delivery also resembles that of the traditional imbongi although there are differences. For example, the guttural voice which is characteristic of the traditional imbongi has not been retained. The reason for this is that the trade union imbongi wishes his audience to hear and understand each word so as to learn from the performance. The loudness and speed with which the performance takes place are however, reminiscent of the traditional imbongi. There is also the use of what could

be called 'breath units' in the poetry. Each line is the equivalent of one breath.

Although the imbongi normally holds a microphone which can be an inhibiting factor, there is still a lot of movement and the imbongi is never stationary. Gesture is therefore still an important part of the performance. The performance as a whole plays an integral part in keeping the audience's attention. It also enhances or supports much of what the imbongi is saying. Qabula has also developed a type of dancing (which strongly resembles the toyi-toyi) which accompanies his poetry performances. Shouts of amandla accompanied by audience response are also common. At times he will also break into song thereby varying the form of presentation. These are important new developments. There is also a great deal of audience response, especially during the 'refrains'.

#### STYLISTIC TECHNIQUES:

Those which are generally associated with the production of traditional izibongo include personification, use of metaphor and simile (which are closely linked and involve elements of comparison). The metaphor, on the other hand, according to Untermeyer (1968:225),

... is usually more effective than a simile because it makes an instant comparison and an imaginative fusion of two objects without the use of explanatory prepositions.

These devices are used by poets such as Qabula as well as the traditional iimbongi as devices to create imagery, an important

part of poetry. Cronin (1989:42) states that

The most notable verbal stylistic features are those commonly associated with principally oral cultures: the style tends to be additive, aggregative, formulaic, and 'copious'.... The repetitive and formulaic features assist the performing poet mnemonically. But these features also assist the audience to hear and understand the poem.

This links up with the stylistic technique of parallelism which includes linking. Parallelism allows for a certain degree of repetition.

Clearly, these forms abound in the poetry produced by trade union iimbongi including Qabula. This can be seen in the analysis of Qabula's poetry (supra). Metaphors, especially animal metaphors are common. An example would be where FOSATU is compared to a hen which has the ability to look after its little ones as well as a lion which is all powerful (supra, lines 24 and 25 as well as lines 37 and 38 of the praise poem to FOSATU).

Another form of metaphor which abounds is the use of personification. Kreuzer (1955:100) states the following,

Personification is a special form of comparison. It is defined as 'representation of an inanimate object or abstract idea as endowed with personal attributes'.

In Qabula's poetry we see that the trade unions are often endowed with human qualities, presented, for example, as organisations which are able to give birth to sons and daughters. Perhaps this serves to emphasise the greatness of the union - endowed with human characteristics and thereby allowed to be elevated to a position of equality with humanity.



The use of parallelism is another interesting and useful device. It allows the imbongi to develop a particular idea, either by initial, final or oblique linking in a sentence. This technique is exploited by Qabula and to a large extent by most imbongi. In lines 41 and 42 of the praise poem to FOSATU, for example, as well as lines 43, 44 and 45 of the May Day poem where ideas are repeated using different words, at least one word is kept exactly the same as it was in the previous sentence, or in a different position, perhaps at the end as opposed to the beginning of a sentence. These repetitions also assist the audience in their understanding of the meaning of the poem.

#### ROLE:

The role of the imbongi as mediator, and as political and historical commentator has been retained. Qabula sees his role as that of mediator between the people and the union which he represents, in the same way as the traditional imbongi mediated between the chief and the people. His role is, however, also an educational one, and as such contains references to the history of the struggle. As a corollary to this, his role is to awaken political consciousness. Gunner (1986:35) states that

The izibongo are a unique tool in raising workers' consciousness of their union and its role in their lives as workers. Yet they are also quite clearly an expression of a strong and old art form with its roots deep in social and political awareness.

As a historical commentator he therefore fulfils a very important role. This can be equated with the traditional imbongi's

constant reference to historical aspects such as the genealogy of the chief and the history of the people.

#### **THEMES:**

Although these have changed, or perhaps been added to, they have simply been adapted to accommodate new pressures. The traditional iimbongi (attached to chiefs) were concerned mainly with events which were taking place in the immediate area where the chief lived. Historical themes also permeated their poetry. Today, the trade union iimbongi are concerned with factors and events which are affecting his/her life and it is these which form the basis of his/her poetry. Their poetry is therefore still fuelled by present-day events, the audience's response, etc. It also contains historical perspectives regarding the origins of the struggle. The themes have changed because the political and social environment of which the poetry is a commentary has also changed. <sup>14</sup>

#### **CONCLUSION**

Clearly, worker poets and other contemporary oral poets also make use of traditional stylistic techniques, regardless of language choice. The poetry analysed in this chapter and the epilogue is evidence of this. Parallelism, repetition and reference to animal metaphor can be found in contemporary poetry. Take also, for example, the following stanzas from a poem entitled 'FOSATU "SON OF VICTORY"' by M L Mokhawane which appeared in Staffrider (1986):

1. Years ago in South Africa
2. A son named federation of South African
3. Trade Unions was born,
4. Some call him FOSATU
5. A son so young, talented, respected and feared,
6. Brought everything to victory,
7. Oh, what a miraculous child he was,
8. Son of victory
9. FOSATU, your birth so broad and fair,
10. Won hearts of young and old,
11. Male and Female,
12. While some asked, 'Will he make it?'
13. And some pointed fingers at him,
14. Son of victory,
15. FOSATU, you brought light where there was darkness,
16. You came like water in flood onto the vicinity of Sasol,
17. You fell like snow onto the heads of the oppressors,
18. As the years went by and by,
19. You grew from strength to strength,
20. You brought everything to victory,
21. Son of victory,
22. FOSATU, because of your respect,
23. To both young and old,
24. Struggling and Oppressed,
25. Mother luck will always be with you

FOSATU is clearly being personified and praised in a similar way to what a chief would have been praised. The repetition of 'Son of Victory' provides a formula which the poet uses as a point of departure.

The role of speech and the role of the imbongi seem to be changing and are being adapted to the contemporary contexts. However, the importance of the imbongi's political oratory remains. Cronin (1989:44) is of the opinion that

There are, in South Africa, strong indigenous traditions of praise poetry. We have already noted the existence, specifically within the trade union movement, of a proletarian reworking and updating of this tradition.

Political processes themselves are undergoing constant change.

This chapter has attempted to show that this in turn affects the role of speech and also the position of those concerned with producing political oratory, such as the imbongi. There may well be a need to broaden the definition which has previously been afforded to the imbongi as someone attached mainly to chiefs and concerned with events and happenings surrounding the chiefdom. An ethnographic analysis of the situation seems to show that the patterns and rules which govern political speech and its functions are controlled by the social contexts within which the speaking takes place. Due to the fact that the communities and the social contexts themselves are subject to constant socio-cultural and political changes, any ethnographic study confirms that political oratory within most traditional political processes has also been adapted accordingly.

There has been an attempt to show that the trade union imbongi strongly resembles the traditional imbongi in style and technique. There are also distinct similarities in his role as mediator, critic and praiser (of the trade union). Qabula has also, for example, designed his own dress (as the traditional imbongi also had, viz. skins and spear). Qabula wears rags which symbolise poverty and the people's struggle for upliftment. The themes which recur in this poetry do not seem to resemble those in traditional izibongo. They are concerned mainly with the trade union environment and the struggle against capitalism, exploitation and bad working conditions.

It should also have emerged that the importance of speech and the

value attached to it within the contemporary izibongo tradition and African political processes remain unchanged. The trade union imbongi forms part of a living tradition, fulfilling a vital role as educator and mediator.



#### FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. Cf. chapter 1 for an overview of the socio-economic and political changes which are influencing the tradition.
2. This thesis attempts to prove that the iimbongi who praise chiefs today only represent one facet of a tradition which has been exposed to new dynamics. Hence the iimbongi draws on a wide variety of themes today, including, for example, trade union activities which are used as thematic material.
3. These performances are not of iimbongi performing within the trade union context, but were filmed at a 'Traditional' Day in Ciskei which was hosted by the University of Fort Hare.
4. At the time this research was conducted a state of emergency existed in South Africa. This state of emergency has since been partially lifted (June 1990) with the exception of Natal.
5. Already in 1967, Mafeje in his article 'The Role of the Bard in a Contemporary South African Community', suggests that the autonomy of the iimbongi is being threatened. Cf. also chapters 1 and 5.
6. The tradition is a dynamic one - cf. Opland (1983).
7. South African Pamphlets, Vol. 1 Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.
8. Cf. analysis of Qabula's poetry. The past and the present are often inter-related. For example, in line 42 of the May Day poem, Cetywayo and Makana are mentioned as heroes.
9. Cf. chapter 2.
10. Cf. chapter 3. The uniqueness of Xhosa oral sermons is explained here.

11. Due to certain poetry performances there was an attempt on Qabula's life by Inkatha members.
12. It is yet another instance of interaction between the oral and the written.
13. The full poem and translation, provided by Qabula, can be found in appendix 1C.
14. Cf. chapter 1 in this regard.

IIMBONGI IN CONTEXT: CASE STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

In order to further the aims of this thesis, namely to ascertain the role of the imbongi in our changing society, research has been conducted in both rural and urban areas. Although in the urban areas there are iimbongi attached to specific organisations like COSATU, <sup>1</sup> there are also those iimbongi who in a sense can be called 'freelancers'. They perform on any occasion which inspires them, whether it be political, religious or social. In the same way that not all traditional iimbongi were attached to chiefs but produced poetry about their oxen or about nature, for example, there are some iimbongi today who produce oral poetry independently of any organisation or chief.

The aim of this chapter is to introduce three iimbongi: one living in a more rural area associated with more 'traditional' values, one from an urban area but not attached to any particular organisation, and another from an urban area in the Transkei. The purpose of this is to ascertain the problems facing each of them in order to attempt to highlight the general situation as it exists today. The iimbongi whom I will introduce are Monde Mothlabane who lives in Joza township - Rini (Grahamstown); Melikhaya Mbutuma, a well known imbongi living in the rural Transkei area of Engcobo; and Bongani Sithole who lives in Ngangelizwe township in Umtata. They will be introduced in terms of their backgrounds and a number of their poems will be analysed

in particular contexts. Some of the problems and challenges which they face will also be outlined.

#### MONDE MOTHLABANE: HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Mothlabane was born on the 25th of March 1955 at Mpofu (Seymour) in the Ciskei. He attended Balfour School until the end of standard six. Thereafter he attended school at Nxukwebhe (Healdtown) near Fort Beaufort. Having completed standard eight, he left for Sada near Whittlesea (Ciskei) in 1978. Here he completed a teaching course at the Sada College of Education. Due to unforeseen circumstances in 1979 (a rugby injury which left him temporarily paralysed), he was unable to complete the course. He returned in 1980, having recovered, and duly completed the course. He then began teaching in 1981 in the Seymour area at Readesdale Farm School. His parents resided in this area. Although there is no history of imbongi in his family, there were members of his family who were composers of songs which were sung by the family. Mothlabane was at this point unaware that he was gifted as an imbongi.

According to Mothlabane it was at a parents' meeting in 1981 where he suddenly felt inspired to produce spontaneous oral poetry. 'Kwango1981 njalo ndavela ndaphakama ndandanduluka ndabonga.' ('It was in 1981, I just got up and let go.')

It is interesting to note that Mothlabane grew up in a white farming area, where there were no chiefs. Mothlabane's ancestors were also Sotho. Even so, Mothlabane has absorbed the

tradition of Xhosa izibongo. His lack of affiliation with chiefs could have resulted in his versatility as an imbongi (not attached to any particular chief).

Mothlabane left Seymour in December 1982 and settled in Grahamstown in January 1983. Having performed on that one occasion, he also began to write poetry. He continued to do so even after his appointment as teacher in January 1983 at Archie Mbolekwa School in Grahamstown. At present Mothlabane is still teaching at Archie Mbolekwa and produces oral poetry on numerous occasions. As pointed out earlier this imbongi is versatile. However, the three areas which seem to inspire him most are the church, school and politics. These are probably the three most important areas of Mothlabane's life. His versatility is therefore accommodating his role as a social and political commentator within a system which no longer simply revolves around the chief and his kingdom.<sup>2</sup> These areas of importance can also be interlinked (and commented on simultaneously) in a given poem produced in any particular context.

#### MOTHLABANE AND THE CHURCH

Mothlabane, being a Christian, attended the Church of the Order of Ethiopia after his arrival in Grahamstown. He states that

Ngony'imini ndaya eCaweni eTiyopiya. Kwakukhw'into  
eseCaweni apho. Ndafika phaya ndahlala. Mna ndandiye  
kubukela nje. Ndavakalelwa, ndaphakama ndandanduluka  
ndathetha.

One day I went to the Church of the Order of Ethiopia.  
There was an occasion there. I was just going to  
observe. I just got up and let go and spoke.



He noticed that the people liked and accepted his performance and this set the scene for many such performances.

On 10 December 1989, at a farewell church service for two Methodist ministers from Grahamstown, Mothlabane produced the poem below. <sup>3</sup> For the sake of convenience the poem is divided up into paragraphs with accompanying commentary.

1. Kaloku umlomo awuze wabekwa siziba.
2. Kude kwalaph'uThixo enathi,
3. Ar'umnt'akaziwa ezinzulwini zamazantsi,
4. Phantsi kweenzima uza kuhoya,
5. Phantsi kwamahlwantsi namahlwembembe.

1. Of course, a mouth is supposed to be used.
2. Until now God has been with us,
3. A person is never known deep down,
4. Under difficulties you will care,
5. Under the flakes of snow and the worst.

The imbongi intimates here that difficulties create a caring attitude. One also gets the feeling that all is not well, especially from line 3. The image created by the falling flakes of snow in line 5 symbolises the many difficulties which one faces in life.

The poem continues:

6. Kwakhu! Azi bafondini kodwa le nto ndiza kuyithini na?
7. Kuba kaloku ndawala ndidume ngokuthetha,
8. Ndisuke ndaxakek'emphefumleni,
9. Ndiyoyik'ukuthetha ngani bafondini,
10. Hleze nindikhangel'ezinyaweni zithi kanti zinentsente,
11. Kuba kaloku ukuza kuni kukuziqhugh'iintakumba.

6. Oh! I wonder my friends as to what I am going to do with this thing?
7. Because of course I am famous for talking too much,
8. I'm just confused in my heart,
9. I'm afraid to talk about you my friends,
10. Maybe you will look at my feet and say my heels have dirt,

11. Because coming to you is to get rid of fleas.

In line 9 the imbongi states that he is afraid to talk about ministers. Again one gets the impression that all is not well with their departure - perhaps that there is a reason for this. Previous ministers had left the congregation amidst rumours of corruption. The imbongi fulfils his mediating role, however, by indirectly acknowledging in line 10 that everyone has their faults.

The poem continues:

12. Siyabhotisa mathol'onjongande kudlelana,  
13. Nditsho kuwe nto kaGushu nawe nto kaMdaka,  
14. Ngendisithi ngenene masiguqe sithandaze,  
15. Bafondini ind'indlel'ebhek'ezulwini,  
16. Sofika sineenduma sityabuk'amanqina.

12. We greet you, bona fide great men,  
13. I say to you Mr Gushu and Mr Mdaka,  
14. I would say let's kneel and pray,  
15. My friends, the way to heaven is long,  
16. We'll get there with bruises and chafed feet.

The imbongi now talks directly to the ministers, pointing out that difficulties are to be expected on the way to heaven. This is made clear in lines 15 and 16.

The poem continues as follows:

17. Hambani bafondini inkosi ngumncedi nomomelezi,  
18. Hambani bafondini nishumayele mbombo zone zomhlaba,  
19. Nigutyul'iirhanga namanxowa,  
20. Nityal'inyaniso nithi nants'indlela nab'ubom,  
21. Oogxeka bekhola nabahedeni nabo bonilandela,  
22. Ngokuthi ninkqonkgoze kwezo ntliziyo ngeentliziyo.

17. Go well, my friends, may God save you and have mercy on you,  
18. Go well, my friends, and preach to all provinces,  
19. And sweep out dirt and deserted homesteads,  
20. Spread the word and say here's the way, here's the life,

21. Even those who mock and prefer heathens will believe and follow you,
22. If you can knock on their various hearts.

Parallelism occurs in lines 17 and 18 by way of initial linking. It is used here to emphasise the preacher's departure. The imbongi here plays the role of adviser, advising the two ministers as to what their approach to life should be, spreading the Word of God to all.

Mothlabane continues as follows:

23. Madoda khokhelan'isizwe sakowethu,
24. Nixel'uMosisi erhuq'amaSirayeli ewarhugel'eKanaana.
25. Umhambi kaloku uvuyiswa bubunzima bendlela,
26. Kub'isabelo sakhe simlindile ngaphambili,
27. Sithetha kamnandi kuba nina niyamazi uNkulunkulu,
28. Ewe kaloku nina niziz'bane ezimi phezu kwentaba,
29. Sakulamb'emphefumleni kaloku sodliswa nini.

23. Men, lead your country,
24. Like Moses, dragging Israelites, dragging them to Canaan.
25. A traveller is made happy by the difficulties of the road,
26. Because his share is waiting for him ahead,
27. We say this nicely because you all know our Heavenly Father,
28. Yes of course you are lamps put on the mountain,
29. We will deep down know the Word through you.

Here the imbongi continues to advise the ministers and also comments positively on their role. They are compared to Moses in their task of leading people. They are seen as lamps perched on top of a mountain, thereby it is implied that they are to lead people to light and away from darkness and evil. In lines 25 and 26 they are portrayed as travellers whose journey is fraught with difficulties, but nevertheless the rewards will follow the hardships endured.

The poem continues:

30. Sithi ndlela ntle kuni makwedini,  
31. Taru Ntezinkulu zakwaThixo,  
32. Sibamba ngazibini ngenkonzo yenu phakathi kwethu,  
33. Hambani madoda ingw'idla ngamabal' ayo,  
34. Yang'inkos'inganisikelela,  
35. Yatsho inkwenkwe yenu yemihla nezolo.

30. We say go well to you, younger boys,  
31. Gosh, have mercy great man of God,  
32. We hold both hands for your services,  
33. Go well, men, a leopard lives by its colours,  
34. May God bless you,  
35. Says your boy of today and yesterday.

In a final greeting the imbongi wishes them well. In line 33 an interesting metaphor is used. The ministers are compared to a leopard - an animal which fights for survival and which prides itself on its magnificent pelt. In other words, they must pride themselves on their appearance and deeds. Their actions and deeds will be noted.

The poem ends with the following closing formula:

36. Tsiha! yaguqa yakhothama Ndee gram!

36. Oh! There it knelt and lowered. Here I stop!

In this poem Mothlabane criticises previous ministers and the congregation: the ministers for their alleged corruption, and the congregation for making the accusations in what he terms an unchristian manner (hence the emphasis on the difficulties which face one in life in this poem). The latter criticism is clear from lines 21 and 22 as well as the following extract from an interview. These interviews were conducted mostly in Xhosa - hence the Xhosa text as well as the English translation are

included.

KASCHULA: Uthi kule poem yakho ke ngoku ikhona le ndawo e-critisiza abantu?

'You say that in this poem of yours there is criticism of people?'

MOTHLABANE: Ya, e-critisiza bona plus nabantu.

'Yes, that criticises them as well as the people.'

KASCHULA: Why abantu, bebenze ntoni bona?

'Why the people, what did they do?'

MOTHLABANE: Abantu kaloku mandithi ngelinye ixesha abana evidence yale nto.

'Sometimes the people do not have any evidence of these things.'

The way in which Mothlabane handles the situation in his poetry again emphasises his ability to mediate and offer subtle criticism where he feels it is necessary. Mothlabane states that '... andinacala ...' ('I do not take sides.')

#### MOTHLABANE AND EDUCATION

Being a teacher by profession, Mothlabane's life is devoted to the youth and their schooling. It is from this platform that his inspiration comes on many occasions to perform oral poetry. Many school functions including the opening of new schools present such opportunities. It is also interesting to note that the first time he performed orally was at a parents day gathering attended by pupils, teachers and parents.

It is not uncommon to attend a school function in Grahamstown and see Mothlabane performing. During the last two years he has



performed at the opening of all Grahamstown's new schools. These include Fikizolo Primary, Nombulelo Senior Secondary as well as Tanti Primary. (Extracts of his, and another young imbongi, Lamati's, performances at Nombulelo can be seen on video performance C.) Mothlabane states that, with regard to his poetry, 'ndiba kuloo atmosphere yaloo nto yenziwayo. Injongo ikukubonisa the value of education.' ('I enter into the atmosphere of what is happening. I wanted to show them the value of education.') An analysis of the poem produced at Tanti Primary follows: <sup>4</sup>

1. H-e-e-e!
  2. Khawume kaloku mfondini,
  3. Ndithi khawume kaloku sithethe,
  4. Sigxanyagxanyaze sigxanye,
  5. Singakwenzanga oko kaloku,
  6. Singanetyala phambi koThixo.
- 
1. H-e-e-e!
  2. Wait a little, my friend,
  3. I say, wait a little so that we may talk,
  4. That we may talk and move forward,
  5. Which if we do not do,
  6. We may be guilty before God.

Line 1 contains an opening formula. Lines 2 and 3 serve the purpose of attracting the audience's attention. This is further enhanced by the use of repetition enabling these two 'breath units' to parallel, expressing the same idea. Line 4 is an excellent example of the imbongi's use of alliteration by effectively combining the gx click. Lines 5 and 6 contain initial linking through the use of Singa... ('We can...') In line 6 the imbongi brings in religion, making people answerable to God.

The poem continues:

7. Ewe kambe sobetha sibuyelela,
8. Sixel'izulu laseMthatha,
9. Siqube sibuyelela sixel'izinja emigidini,
10. Yinale bafondini?
11. Le nto kude nathi mayilo sisikwe yinimba.
12. Awu-u-u-u

7. Yes, we shall actually do that repeatedly,
8. Just like the thunder bolt of Umtata,
9. Going to and fro like dogs at a party,
10. What is this all about, my friends?
11. This situation in which we find ourselves is pathetic.
12. Awu-u-u-u

In this section the imbongi is commenting on the unsatisfactory situation as it exists today, pertaining to education, especially in line 11. Line 12 can be equated to a lament of this 'pathetic' situation.

Mothlabane continues as follows:

13. Bafondini kodwa niyandivuselela,
14. Namhlanje nithi mandithethe,
15. Kodwa nisazi nje ukuba ndinguntliziyo-intununtunu,
16. Xa nisithi namhlanje iTantyi Lower iyavulwa,
17. Mna namhlanje andithethi nto.

13. My friends, you revive me,
14. Today you say I should speak,
15. But well knowing that I am a poor speaker,
16. When you say that today Tantyi Lower is being opened,
17. I today am not saying a thing.

Lines 14 and 15 contain a positive-negative statement. This technique is again repeated in lines 16 and 17. This serves subtly to question the system of schooling in the Department of Education and Training. There is a feeling of hesitancy in lines 16 and 17. Although he is thankful that another school is being

opened, there is much left which is unsaid, especially in line 17. This subtle criticism is characteristic of Mothlabane's poetry, indeed it is the mark of any talented imbongi.

The poem continues:

18. Yiyekeni le ngwavuma uBhunguza ithethe,  
19. Taru nzwan'enkulu yakwaStaude,  
20. Bhunguza sakhono sisemfundweni ,  
21. Uhlelel' iintsunguzi kwimithombo yemfundo,  
22. Ngumagwaza ngezemfundo eluhlangeni,  
23. Axhobe axhakazele nezemfundo.

18. Let this important personality, Bhunguza, speak publicly,  
19. Hail! most dignified son of Staude,  
20. Bhunguza, we are receiving education,  
21. With your presence the sources of education exist,  
22. He is a warrior in the educational affairs of our nation,  
23. And he gives a new lease of life to education.

In this section the imbongi introduces Mr Staude, the Regional Director of Education and Training in the Cape Province. He is praised for his commitment to education. In line 22 he is compared to a warrior in battle - the battle being for fair and equal education for all.

The poem continues as follows:

24. Nguthambo-dala kade bemgongotha,  
25. Udiza-dala kade bemkhwaza,  
26. Ubhulukhwe zinengwatyu ngathi zezikayise'mkhulu,  
27. Int'ethi yakunyathel'ubon'ukuba kunyathel'ukhonkolo,  
28. Ingquvele ixel'inkab'ebhokhw'enekloko,  
29. Awu, mfondini ndiske ndizek'ezantsi ukucinga.

24. They have long been deriving knowledge from him,  
25. They have long been sapping his knowledge,  
26. The trousers are loose as if he borrowed them from his  
grandfather,  
27. The one whose gait is undoubtedly majestic,  
28. His steps are like those of a goat wearing a small bell,  
29. Oh, my friend, I start thinking deeply.

In this extract the imbongi highlights certain of Staude's personal characteristics. In line 28, for example, an animal metaphor is used where Staude is compared to a goat. In line 26 there is an affectionate reference to his baggy trousers which could have belonged to his grandfather. This section is personalised, which is common in Xhosa izibongo.

The poem continues:

30. Into zooStaude nezoPahl,  
31. Indoda kaloku ibonwa ngemigudu yentlalo,  
32. Imisebenzi yakho yohlal'isindlekwa mfondini,  
33. Sohlala sikukhankanya kwimbali yesizwe,  
34. Sihlale sikuyaleza kophezul'enyangweni.  
35. Kwakhu-u-u!

30. Sons of Staude and Pahl,  
31. A man is known by his attempts to do difficult things in society,  
32. Your works are appreciated, my friend,  
33. We shall keep on mentioning your name in the history of our nation,  
34. And keep on sending messages to the heaven above.  
35. Kwokhu-u-u!

Line 30 is of historical significance. Professor Pahl is a well known scholar of the Xhosa language and much is owed to him. Likewise, Staude is being placed on a par with him. Lines 33 and 34 make use of the poetic technique of parallelism, which allows for the imbongi's point to be emphasised. Staude is being committed to the annals of history. In line 35 the imbongi is overcome with emotion and this is reflected in his inability to continue coherently.

The imbongi continues as follows:

36. Iyavulw'iTantyi Lower namhlanje aniboni na?  
37. Siyabulela ntombi kaNyarashe,

38. Ukusosulel'imikhunyu kwimvekwana zakowethu,
39. Loo nto xa uyiphathiswe nguThixo yigcine ntomb'akowethu!
40. Ukwanda kaloku kwaliwa ngumthakathi,
41. Mzali woncumo mzali wothando.

36. Tentyi Lower is being officially opened today, can't you see?
37. We thank you, daughter of Nyarashe,
38. For nurturing our small children,
39. That which God places under your care, keep it my sister!
40. It is only a witch who does not like progress,
41. Mother of which we are proud, a loving mother.

Mothlabane now turns to the headmistress of the school - Ms Linda Nyarashe. She is described as the loving mother of the nation. The imbongi praises her in a positive way culminating in line 41.

The poem continues:

42. Nantso ke, ziko lemfundo noqeqesho,
43. Ukwenjenje namhla simumath'umbulelo,
44. Kuba kaloku namhla iTentyi Lower iyavulwa,
45. Ukuz'imfundo siyidle sibhukuxe,
46. Iingqondo zixhaph'ulwazi zibe rhonorhono.

42. There you are, the Department of Education and Training,
43. As we are here today we are filled with gratitude,
44. Because today Tentyi Lower is being officially opened,
45. So that we may receive education to our satisfaction,
46. So that the brains should absorb knowledge and be seen to be doing that.

In this extract Mothlabane expresses satisfaction at the opening of a new school. Line 45 also subtly criticises the position as it pertains to education. The poet hints that the situation is in fact unsatisfactory.

Mothlabane continues as follows:

47. Iyavulw'iTentyi Lower namhla aniboni na?
48. Iyavulw'iTentyi Lower aniboni na?
49. Kub'itsal'abantwana ngemfundo,
50. Ukuze kuphel'amabatha namakhwiniba,
51. Ukuze bangeyeli kumgxobhozo kaThisayo,
52. Ukuze kuvel'iingcaphephe neencacholo,



53. Kwaye nobomi bafondini ndiyabazi,
54. Inzima zamavila neentw'ezimbi,
55. Ephandel'enye ngenenthole kaloku,
56. Kaloku kuqala kubil'ibunzi ngokomthetho waphezulu,
57. Sobhonela kuni ke zimfundimani zesizwe.

47. Tanti Lower is being officially opened today, can't you see?
48. Tanti Lower is being officially opened, can't you see?
49. Because it attracts the children with its education,
50. So that there may be no problems or difficulties in life,
51. So that they may not find difficulties with the teacher's lesson,
52. So that there may be experts and expertise,
53. I know what life is like, my friends,
54. The difficulties of sluggards and filthy things,
55. The one who fends for the other is the one with children,
56. Usually, first comes the sweating of the forehead, according to the rules above,
57. We will turn to you educated people of our nation.

In lines 47 and 48 the imbongi makes use of parallelism, emphasising the very essence of the gathering on that day. This extract is also particularly didactic. Lines 49, 50, 51, 52 bear witness to this and express a similar sentiment. Line 49 is expanded in the lines that follow immediately thereafter. This is further facilitated by the use of parallelism through the use of initial linking in lines 50, 51 and 52. Line 56 is also metaphoric. This is a biblical metaphor which emphasises the fact that education does not always come easily.

The poem continues:

58. Umz'omi phezu kwentaba awunakufihlakala,
59. Kananjalo abafani,
60. Malukhanye ngokunjalo ukhanyiselo lwenu phambi kwabantu,
61. Ukuze bayibone, imisebenzi yenu emihle, imfundo! imfundo!

58. A house situated on the mountain cannot be hidden,
59. And also they are not similar,
60. Let your light be bright before the people,
61. So that they may see your good work, education! education!

Again here the imbongi is advising educationalists to continue

with their good work. The imbongi makes use of the 'light' image in line 60, a light which leads people away from inferior education. In this metaphor education is compared to a bright light which will lead people away from the darkness which is associated with illiteracy.

Mothlabane continues:

62. Imfundo kaloku ngumthi omagqab'aluhlaza,  
63. Imfundo kaloku yijezi mini ngengqele,  
64. Imfundo kaloku yidyasi mini ngeemvula ezinamatye,  
65. Mandiyiyeke nothi ndiyayithethelela.

62. Education is indeed a tree with green leaves,  
63. Education is a jersey on a cold day,  
64. Education is an overcoat for all weathers,  
65. Let me leave it alone, you may think I am pleading for it.

Lines 62, 63, and 64 contain triple parallelism with initial linking. Again this is a descriptive passage. Education is described in a didactic way through the use of metaphor. In line 62 education is compared to a tree with green leaves - something which is appealing and growing. Line 63 compares it to a jersey which can protect one against the elements - it will always be there to protect one during hard times. Line 64 contains an interesting metaphor where education is compared to an overcoat, something which will protect one against storms, etc., implying that if one is educated then life will be more bearable and one can use education as a shield.

The poem concludes as follows:

66. Thath'into yakho Bhunguza mfondini,  
67. Hleze ndibe ngoxokayo ebantwini,  
68. Yatsho ke inkwenkwe yenu yemihla nezolo,

69. Yaguqa yakhothama.

70. Tsiha, ndeevu! Vevelelee!!

66. Take your thing Bhunguza, my friend,  
67. In case I may be seen as a liar by the people,  
68. So says your junior of all times,  
69. Now I fall on my knees and kneel down.

70. Tsiha, ndeevu! Vevelelee!!

This concluding paragraph contains some interesting aspects. In lines 66 and 67 the imbongi uses an affectionate reference to Staude - referring to him as Bhunguza, someone stout and steadfast. This could also be regarded as a praise name which has been formulated for Staude and derived from the word 'Knobkierie' - a stick used to protect and attack. Line 70 also contains an interesting closing formula which has no meaning. It simply consists of three separate exclamations, thus providing a climactic ending to the poem.

#### MOTHLABANE AND POLITICS

The imbongi can never be detached from the environment in which he finds himself as it is this environment which gives him the inspiration to produce poetry. It is therefore understandable that the modern imbongi would be inspired not only by socio-economic factors which affect him and the people he represents but also by political factors - especially when one bears in mind the nature of South African society. It is politically volatile and undergoing constant change. Mothlabane, in the Grahamstown context, has lived through the turbulence of the eighties (consumer boycotts, strikes, stay aways, student protests, mass funerals of comrades, etc.) and this is reflected in his poetry.

Extracts from an interview bear witness to this.

MOTHLABANE: Kwafikelela kwithuba lika1986, le riots. Ndamana ukuya kubonga estadium kwimingcwabo yamaqabane adutyulweyo.

'There came a time in 1986 when the riots came about. I used to often go to the stadium to sing praises for those comrades who had been shot.'

KASCHULA: Bekukho iirally nemingcwabo?

'Were there rallies and funerals?'

MOTHLABANE: Ewe. Then ke ndifike nditsho, nditsho, kuvokotheke.

'Yes. Then I would produce and produce and produce.'

KASCHULA: Ngaba le mibongo iyafana?

'Is this poetry the same?'

MOTHLABANE: Ayifani because imeko ngoku i-political.

'It is not the same as the atmosphere is now political.'

This again reinforces Mothlabane's versatility as an imbongi or 'freelancer' in Grahamstown.

The true imbongi cannot operate in isolation, or for that matter ignore certain happenings around him. His poetry is a reflection of that very society and context in which he finds himself. This of course also creates certain pressures on the imbongi. There are many different political organisations and different points of view today. If the imbongi is seen taking sides with any particular organisation then it is possible that he is opening himself up to attacks from opposing forces. Mothlabane openly admits that as a 'freelancer' he has at times feared for his safety. The fact that he has often been questioned by the

security police makes it clear that he has been regarded as a threat. This again makes the point that his role as an imbongi is an extremely influential one, influential enough to be a threat to the state.

With regard to the violence and riots of the mid-eighties, he has the following to say:

KASCHULA: So ke le nto yepolitics ayizange ikunike ingxaki?

'So this business about politics, has it ever caused you any hardship?'

MOTHLABANE: Ewe, indinika ingxaki kakhulu kuba ndithi ndakuba ndibongile ndibone ndizokuingcelwa kusasa.

'Yes, politics has given me much hardship because as soon as I produced poetry there I would see that I am being closed in on by the next day.'

KASCHULA: Ufikelwa ngabantu?

'Were you visited by people?'

MOTHLABANE: Ewe ndifikelwa ngamapolisa kusasa.

'Yes, I would be visited by police in the morning.'

KASCHULA: Bayazi njani?

'How would they know?'

MOTHLABANE: Mhlawumbi baneempimpi zabo.

'Maybe they have their informers.'

KASCHULA: Bafike apha kuwe?

'They came here to you?'

MOTHLABANE: Bafike apha kum. Bandibuze ngayo yonke le nto ibiqhubeka phaya. Ndithi mna well, no, mna bendibonga about death qha.



'They came here to me. They ask me about everything that went on there. Then I would say well, no, I was just producing about death, that is all.'

Mothlabane goes on to point out that they returned on many occasions, possibly to intimidate him so that he would stop performing. They would often ask for written versions of the poetry which he had produced and he would give them poems which he had written about death, which had nothing to do with what he had actually said on the particular occasion. He tells of another imbongi who was living in Grahamstown at the time who eventually went into hiding and left Grahamstown because of this constant harassment. This must have some effect on the imbongi's production of poetry. To some extent the ability to produce freely and without restraints is infringed upon, either consciously or unconsciously. The following extract from our interview bears witness to this:

KASCHULA: Ngaba akukhathali nokuba kukho amapolisa?

'Do you not care even if the police are present?'

MOTHLABANE: Well, kwakufuneka ndiqale ndiqiniseke ndiqonde because nam ndiyoyika ndithathwe. Ukuba ndibanjwe, that is going to be very frustrating. Ndine commitments, ezininzi. Ekhaya kudala bebuza andikoyiki ukubanjwa na?.

'Well I must first make sure as I do not want to be taken. If I am caught, that is going to be very frustrating. I have commitments. Even at home they have been asking 'am I not afraid of being caught?'

Not only his personal commitments but also his family are

external factors which he must take into account. Mothlabane also tells of the recent protest march held in Grahamstown during 1989. If he had not feared for his safety he would have performed on this occasion.

The political fear no longer only comes from the security police but now also from other organisations which may oppose anything which he says. Mothlabane was recently asked to attend a meeting to commemorate the release of Nelson Mandela but he openly states that he fears possible reprisals from other organisations. These are nevertheless everyday pressures which modern imbongi have to take into account.<sup>5</sup> Again here the effect of this must be some kind of conscious or unconscious self-censorship by the imbongi.

Not only has Mothlabane therefore faced threats from the Security Branch, but also from organisations which may disagree with his own political statements in his poetry. Nevertheless, Mothlabane seems to cope. On one occasion, having performed at the funeral of a comrade killed by police in Grahamstown during the height of the 1986 uprising, Mothlabane was approached by the Security Branch and asked to produce a copy of what he had said at the funeral. He gave them a copy of a poem (see appendix 1D) which he had previously performed and written. Besides the fact that it dealt with death, it had nothing or little to do with what he had actually said on that occasion. Although Mothlabane realises that there is a threat to his safety, he nevertheless produces poetry. But he is of the opinion that as an imbongi one must create one's own escape route as it is possible that one may need

it.

MOTHLABANE: Kufuneka ucingele nokuba xa kuziwe waza kuphuthunywa, ukwazi ukuziphendulela. Uyiguqule ngendlela yakho, uthi hayi bendibonga ngolu hlobo nolu hlobo qha ke.

'You must think about the fact that if you are picked up, you must be able to answer for yourself. You change it in your own way, and you say 'no, I was praising in the following way, that is all.'

Mothlabane states that once one has overcome the fear of intimidation one will continue producing poetry and if need be rely on one's defence mechanisms. As an imbongi he states that he is never direct in his poetry and it is usually difficult to pick up the real message which is often hidden.

#### MOTHLABANE AS A PERFORMER: GENERAL REMARKS

##### 1. SPONTANEITY

The fact that Mothlabane still has the ability to produce spontaneous oral poetry is borne out by the following extract from an interview:

MOTHLABANE: Kwa ngo '81 njalo ndavela ndaphakama ndadubuleka. Yaba yinto eyazenzekelayo kulo nginginya yabantu.

'It was in '81 when I just got up and produced poetry. It just happened because I saw the crowd of people.'

KASCHULA: Xa ubonga i-poem ayiphumi ngolo hlobo oluthile, iphuma ngokuzenzekela?

'When you produce a poem, it does not come out in a premeditated particular way, it just comes out by itself?'

MOTHLABANE: Ya, that's right. Because uyayicinga, mhlawumbi iza kuhamba ngolu hlobo, you see, then ke uyigibisele nokuba uyigibisele njani na.

'Yes, that's right. Because you think about it, perhaps it will develop in a particular way, you see, then you present it in whatever way it presents itself.'

KASCHULA: And if emva koko ndithi kuwe, Monde, phinda uyenze laa poem, ingaphuma ngoluphi uhlobo?

'And if thereafter I say to you, Monde, produce that poem again, how will it come out?

MOTHLABANE: Ayinakufana.

'It will never be the same.'

KASCHULA: Why is that?

MOTHLABANE: Because, akuyazi wena. Uthetha nje, ngelaa xesha usemoyeni.

'Because I mean, you do not know, you see. You just talk, you see, at that time you are filled with emotion.'

KASCHULA: Ungayazi le nto uyithethayo ukuba yintoni na, but iyaphuma nje?

'So you don't really know what you are saying, but it just comes out?'

MOTHLABANE: Ya, iyaphuma. I-emotional kakhulu.

'Yes, it comes out. It is very emotional.'

Mothlabane continues as follows:

Yavela le nto, yathi mandithethe, ndathetha ke ndadubuleka nje ndathetha ndabonga. Kwacaca into yokuba abantu bayayithanda le

nto kakhulu.

'This thing came, and it said I should talk, and I spoke - I exploded and spoke and praised. It became clear that the people liked this thing a lot.'

There also seems to be some link here between the concept of ukuthwasa<sup>6</sup> and the emotional state which Mothlabane speaks of.

Furthermore, in support of this element of spontaneity, I remember visiting Mothlabane on one particular occasion while accompanying a journalist who wanted to take some photographs. We had not been there for a minute when Mothlabane began producing a lengthy poem - perhaps a couple of minutes long - in his house, his sole audience being myself and the journalist. I asked him to write the poem down immediately afterwards as I had no recording equipment with me. His answer was simply that he could not as it would never be the same. He said it would be impossible to remember exactly what he had said and his inspiration had obviously come on the spur of the moment.

## 2. ORALITY TO LITERACY

Linked to spontaneity is the orality-literacy debate. Mothlabane is clearly in a position to produce both written and oral spontaneous poetry. The two modes of production therefore exist side by side. A manuscript of poetry has already been submitted by him for possible publication. On the other hand, the poetry which he produces orally is often never recorded by him. The poet also has time to think and arrange his poetry accordingly in the written version.



MOTHLABANE: Ndiyayibhala ndize ndiyihlole kwangokwam. So, encwadini kufuneka noko ibe structured.

'I write it, then arrange it. So in a book it is necessary for it to be structured.'

Mothlabane makes it clear that he produces both orally and in writing:

KASCHULA: Uyakwazi ukubhala i-poem apha endlwini, ngomso uye eCaweni ube inspired u-produce eny'into e-spontaneous?

'You can write a poem here in your house, tomorrow you go to church and you are inspired and you produce something else which is spontaneous?'

MOTHLABANE: Ya, e-spontaneous.

'Yes, that is spontaneous, yes.'

Mothlabane is also of the opinion that the children of today write a lot of their poetry. There is not so much emphasis on the oral, except in the form of recitation.<sup>7</sup> Again this will have some effect on the production of spontaneous poetry. Mothlabane recognises three groups of imbongi today which he classifies as follows:

a) Iimbongi Zomthonyama. This is the traditional imbongi who only produces oral spontaneous poetry. Such a person would not necessarily have been exposed to the dynamics of education.

b) Iimbongi Zosiba. This is the imbongi who writes his poetry, an educated man.

c) There is also a group of iimbongi today who operate within both these paradigms. In fact, it would appear that today many iimbongi are in the position to produce oral as well as written

poetry. Motlabane places himself within this category.

### 3. UBEKIWE - BEING PLACED

With regard to the imbongi's status within society, it does not seem as though much has changed. It would still seem that he must gain the recognition of the people before he is regarded as an official imbongi.

KASCHULA: Imbongi yakudala kwakusithiwa ibekiwe. Apha eRhini wena ungathi ubekiwe?

'It was said that long ago an imbongi was placed. Here in Grahamstown do you think that you have been placed?'

MOTHLABANE: Ya ndingatsho.

'Yes, I would say so.'

KASCHULA: Mandithi u-accepted ngabantu apha eRhini?

'Let me say, you are accepted by the people in Grahamstown?'

MOTHLABANE: Ewe bayandazi, bayandithanda.

'Yes, they know me, they like me.'

In order to be liked and accepted by the people as the official imbongi in Grahamstown, Motlabane could never produce poetry about homeland leaders like Sebe and Matanzima. This is probably true of most iimbongi today who have been exposed to the media and what is happening on the political scene today.

MOTHLABANE: Abantu baza kuthi suka akunako ukubonga ngabo bantu. Abafunwa abo bantu. Kodwa if kufika uMandela okanye uBishop Tutu, I would easily jump up.

'People would say, get away, you will not produce poetry about such people. These people are not wanted. But if Mandela or

Bishop Tutu arrived, I would easily jump up.'

Clearly the imbongi today, as was the case in the past, gains his credibility as someone who has been placed, by remaining contemporary and praising recognised leaders, leaders who are recognised by the people. Failing this, the imbongi would be regarded as a puppet or a sell-out. An imbongi today would have to take into account the credibility of the person whom he is praising as his own credibility will flow from this person, or from the institution which he is praising. The imbongi requires acceptance by the people as well as the organisation or person he is praising in order to be recognised officially. <sup>8</sup>

Another interesting aspect which accompanies traditional imbongi who have been placed to praise a chief is the acquiring of gifts of cattle or maize from time to time. These would be given by the chief as a token of his appreciation. Mothlabane is of the opinion that these tokens of reward served not only as a motivating factor for the imbongi but also gave him a sense of security. Today this is no longer the case. This results in the writing of poetry as the royalties provide some kind of reward. Even so, Mothlabane states that the gift which enables him to produce oral poetry will never leave him until the day he dies. By implication he will never stop producing, although there are times when he feels very despondent, especially in view of the fact that there is no reward forthcoming.

#### 4. MEDIATOR

With regard to his role as an urban imbongi, Mothlabane acknowledges that his role is both to mediate and also to educate. He states:

Umsebenzi wam is just to - ukuba ndithi motivate abantu. I mean ukuba motivate mhlawumbi ukuba educate in a certain way. Njengoko benditshilo xa kuvulwa izikolo, ndibonise the value of education. Naxa mhlawumbi just like phaya eWesile ngokuya bendibonga phaya.

'My work is just to - to motivate people, you see. Perhaps to motivate them, perhaps to educate them in a certain way. Just like I said when they were opening the schools, I show up the value of education. And also at Wesley when I praised there.'

Mothlabane acknowledges that his role is both that of a mediator as well as an educator. By implication there is a moral or didactic element in much of his poetry. This is strongly reminiscent of William Gqoba's poetry: the Discussion between the Christian and the Pagan as well as the Great Discussion on Education.<sup>9</sup> The didactic element is a result of Mothlabane's taking what he perceives as good and worthy in Western society and emphasising that.

Mothlabane can therefore be seen as a 'freelancer' within an urban environment where he is a recognised and accepted imbongi by the people. Mothlabane sees his future as fulfilling the dual role of both oral poet and writer. His wish is to 'follow in the tracks of our former popular praise-singers like S E K Mqhayi and others.'

## MELIKHAYA MBUTUMA: HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Mbutuma was born on the 25 June 1928. He attended the Matanzima Secondary School near Cala in Transkei. Thereafter he attended Blythswood after which he completed a two year teacher training course. Mbutuma now lives permanently near Engcobo. His place of residence is Egoso Store, where he owns a small shop. He also runs a taxi service to the nearby town of Engcobo.

Like most iimbongi Mbutuma states that he has isipho sokubonga ('a gift to praise'). This is an inborn gift which led him to produce oral poetry. He later became known as the official imbongi to the late Paramount Chief Sabata Dalindyebo of the Thembus in Eastern Thembuland. Perhaps the highlight of Mbutuma's career as an imbongi was his support for Chief Sabata during his anti-independence stance in Transkei which comes through in his poetry. Mbutuma is of the opinion that Chief Sabata was the most powerful chief in the region at the time. In 1957 he accompanied Chief Sabata on a visit to Cape Town and his opposition to the pass laws formed an important part of his poetry.

Mbutuma has also had some of his poetry published in local Xhosa newspapers. One of his collections of poetry was also published in 1977 as Isife Somzi. A collection of short stories, two novels, and two collections of poetry by Mbutuma, as well as a collection of newspaper clippings are presently housed in the Cory Library at Rhodes University in Grahamstown for safekeeping.



## MBUTUMA AS IMBONGI IN TRANSKEI

The poetry which was produced by Mbutuma prior to Transkei independence (from the 1960's), as well as post-independence poetry up to the present, will be commented on. It is hoped that this will highlight not only what his role is in rural Transkei, but also the problems and challenges which he faced and still faces as a modern imbongi in this context.

Mafeje (1967) published an analysis of Mbutuma's poetry during the pre-independence days. He also comments on the problems that this created for Mbutuma. The translations are those given by Mafeje. In his poetry Mbutuma condemns Matanzima for his pro-South African government approach and his willingness to accept the Bantustan policy and independence for Transkei.

For example, in December 1962, when the final discussions on a future constitution for an 'independent' Transkei were being discussed, Mbutuma produced a poem which referred to Matanzima as follows:

Phezu komthombo weNdlunkulu sisimanga.  
Ndifike kuncokola iqaga noxam.  
Uthi uxam, 'Kuyolile emanzini phantsi kwelitye.'  
Ath'ugaga, 'Kuyolile phezu komhlaba elangeni.'  
Acelana amadodana ngokuvavanya indawo,  
Waphum'uxam wagcakamela ilanga wonela,  
Laziphosa iqaga esizibeni kwabandayo amanzi.  
Kumhla laphuma libolile umva walo.  
Zolule iingalo zakho zoxolo zikhusele!  
Yehova inceba yakho ingunaphakade.

At the top of the Ndlunkulu River is a miracle;  
There, I found a pole-cat and a leguan having a conversation.  
The leguan says, 'It is nice and cool in the water below.'  
The pole-cat replies, 'It is nice and warm in the sun above.'  
They continued, challenging and daring each other.  
The leguan came out and basked in the sun to its satisfaction.

Behold! the pole-cat jumped into the depth of the lake.  
That was the end of it, for it came out rotten and stinking.  
Our heavenly father, stretch your arms and protect us;  
Jehovah! your mercy is everlasting.

(Mafeje 1967:202-203)

In this extract the imbongi refers to Matanzima as a pole-cat and a leguan. He makes use of this animal metaphor in order to point out that Matanzima is trying to get the best of both worlds, both black and white. A leguan is an animal which can live both in the water and on land. The imbongi also states that this will eventually lead to his downfall, that the pole-cat will come out 'rotten and stinking'.

Although this poem was produced in 1962, it is in a sense prophetic. The downfall of Matanzima has already come and gone. He no longer wields any power within the government of Transkei.

It is interesting to note that Mbutuma considers himself a prophet. In view of this he is able to comment on future happenings in his poetry. This is further supported by a discussion which I held with Mbutuma where he told me the following story: in 1961 he accompanied Chief Mtikrakra, a Thembu chief, on a trip to Cape Town. During this time he had a vision. He saw Chief Sabata sitting on the top of a mountain which was surrounded by long grass which was on fire. The flames finally engulfed Chief Sabata. Mbutuma took this as a warning to Chief Sabata. He told him to be careful of Chief K D Matanzima (represented by the flames). In 1981, twenty years later, this vision came true when Chief Sabata was deposed by Chief K D Matanzima and he fled Transkei to live in Zambia where he later

died. At the time when Chief Sabata was deposed, Mbutuma was again harassed by the authorities because of his criticisms of this move.

In another poem which was produced in February 1963, Mbutuma again comments on the problems facing Transkei regarding independence. Again he vehemently denounces independence and supports Chief Sabata Dalindyebo and condemns Chief K D Matanzima. He also comments on the chieftainship and its erosion due to westernisation as follows:

Yinkosi engaphezulu kuK.D.Matanzima,  
Kuloko akafundanga ufundisiwe,  
Wada wafundiswa nokunikwa ubukumkani,  
Namhla abaThembu bazishwayimbana,  
Bayayishwabulela imfundo nabafundi bayo;  
Ilisikizi, kubantwana beenkosi inenggalekiso.  
Kungoku iyabaphanzisa ibahluth'ubukhosi.

The only difference is that Matanzima has been educated to the point of indoctrination;  
He has been taught even how to achieve chieftainship.  
It is for this reason that today the Thembu are stunned and speechless;  
They curse modern education and those who have received it.  
They have found it ruinous and degrading to the African ethic,  
For it has perverted and prostituted chieftainship, as known to them.

(Mafeje 1967:205, 209)

In this extract the imbongi points out that Western education has contributed negatively to the chieftainship. Firstly, the people do not trust educated blacks but on the other hand they need them for leadership. Secondly, Mbutuma points out that education has allowed for chiefs to be indoctrinated, presumably by the Pretoria regime.

In another poem produced in March 1963, Mbutuma, having again criticised Matanzima, advises him as follows:

Hay'umlungu madoda waninceda,  
Kungoku uyasirhalisela umfo kaMhlobo,  
Usirhalisela kukubi, uhamba ngentaka.  
Kumkani wesizwe zola uthi cwaka,  
Ubundlobongela abuze buncede mntu.  
UKaizer Matanzima ngumntu wakho kanye,  
Ulahlekiswe kukulandela iintlanga,  
Kungoku akafuni kuzithoba agobe kuwe.  
Hayi yimfundo ukufundiswa kundilahlekisile;  
Kanti ubukumkani nobukhosi abufundelwa.

The white Government is your source of strength,  
Time and again we find you, son of Mhlobo, in lofty positions,  
You fly over us like an eagle.  
Honourable chief, take stock and reconsider your position.  
Crudeness and barbarity never make a man.  
Kaiser Matanzima, you are one of us but you have been misled by  
our enemies.  
You have been misled by foreigners.  
You are now too proud and stubborn.  
You thought you were being educated, and yet you were being  
brain-washed.  
Chieftainship is one course that is not studied in the classroom.

(Mafeje 1963:214, 218)

The poem concludes as follows:

Ebhotwe mfo kaMatanzima siya kudinga,  
Inggondo yomntu omnye iyoyiswa bubudenge,  
Yini na ntamb'ende ethi isongwa ibisombuluka.  
Emva mfo kaMhlobo esisekweni sendalo,  
Kunjenje kuwe ngunyana wakho ngomso.  
Kubi mntwan'enkosi, nceda rhoxa;  
Athi ke mna mbongi yesizwe ibuyambo,  
Ibuyambo madoda;  
Ubunganga bobuzwe busithwe nguwe,  
Ebhotwe mntwan'enkosi kwinkomo yomzi.

We also appeal to you, grandson of Matanzima, to return to the  
senior Thembu chiefs.  
Remember a single mind is more liable to stupidity and blunders.  
Why must you press on at the peril of your own life?  
Son of Mhlobo, you are not only ruining your future but also that  
of your children.  
It is you today, and it will be your son tomorrow.  
Be advised, abandon the course you have chosen;

Things are bad enough as it is.  
You are the weak link in the chain;  
You are continually undermining our unity.  
Return to the other Thembu chiefs, I appeal to you.

(Mafeje 1963:215, 219)

The imbongi here again chastises Matanzima: 'Crudeness and barbarity never make a man.' He tells him that he has been brainwashed through his education and that chieftainship cannot be studied at school. In a final attempt to try and win Matanzima over he appeals to him to come back into the fold of the other senior Thembu chiefs. The imbongi here plays the role of advising the chief as to what political stance he should take in order to please the people and to create unity among them.

The political content of Mbutuma's poetry at the time created many problems for him. He was harassed and detained on numerous occasions for his anti-Matanzima poetry. Mafeje (1963:221) notes that,

Once he was summoned to appear before the chief magistrate of Transkei because Chief Matanzima had complained that he was 'inciting the people against him'.

One of Mbutuma's more recent poems also bears witness to such intimidation. The following poem was produced at the beginning of August 1987 at the funeral of the late Lwandle Obose, a well known Transkei educationalist and principal. This took place at Bojane location near Engcobo. There were many people present as well as Chief K D Matanzima.

1. Ntyuntyu hay'umntu,
2. Hay'umntu mzi waseNgcobo.
3. Unqabil'umntu zizwe woz'ujonge phaa nje,



4. Kanti hayi sijonge kuwe,
5. Ujonge phaya nje wena,
6. Isikrokro sakho siphaya nje,
7. Thina sikrokrela wena.
8. Myeken'uLwandl'agoduke.

1. Oh! you know, a person,
2. A person, people of Engcobo.
3. It's hard to know a person, you can only look there,
4. But we are looking at you,
5. You are looking over there,
6. Your suspicion is there,
7. We are suspicious of you.
8. Let Lwandle go home.

Immediately the imbongi begins by commenting on the very sensitive issue of Obose's death by suggesting that there are certain persons of whom the congregation should be suspicious. This suggests that his death was not natural. This is clear from lines 6 and 7 where the imbongi, through the use of parallelism, intimates that there are certain suspicions concerning Obose's death.

The poem continues:

9. Ndikho, mini wazi wasutywa kukufa,
10. Saze sangab'isizwe.
11. Ndikho, mini wakutyhila ukunqaba kwakhe,
12. Waze wak'fungela.
13. Ndikho ndinamadoda atheth'izinto ngezinto.
14. Hayi madoda ndiyekeni, andenzanga nto.

9. I was there the day death took him by surprise,
10. After that people were scarce.
11. I was there the day he revealed his being,
12. And he made an oath.
13. I was there with men who were saying different things.
14. No, men, leave me alone, I have done nothing.

Here again the imbongi raises the question of Obose's death. Having pointed out (supra) that Mbutuma was often critical of Chief K D Matanzima, the last line in this extract is of

particular interest. On this particular occasion a member of the Transkei Parliament went up to Mbutuma and requested that he stop praising - lest he face the consequences. The imbongi then incorporates into the poem Hayi madoda ndiyekeni, andenzanga nto. (No, men, leave me alone, I have done nothing.)

The imbongi continues:

15. Ndikho, ekucekiseni ngenxa kaVitoliya ngesiselo sakhe, <sup>10</sup>
16. Ebhekisa kwititshala zakhe ezingongozisa.
17. Nawe uyakrokrelwa kuba ngani, wakhe wakuphatha kakubi.
18. Ungxolil'imihla ngemihla,
19. Ekuyala nawe ekutyityimbisel'umnwe ekubonisa,
20. Esith'ezizinto zasemLungwin'azilunganga.

15. I am there when it comes to condemning alcohol abuse, <sup>10</sup>
16. And making a point to his teachers.
17. Even you people have suspicions about you because he once  
ill-treated you
18. You have talked day in and day out,
19. He himself warning you, pointing a finger at you, trying to  
correct you,
20. Saying these foreign things are no good.

Again here the imbongi points out that Obose had enemies because of his purist stance. He condemned alcohol abuse especially among teachers in Transkei. Throughout this poem one gets the impression that Obose did not die from natural causes - that there was someone to blame for his death.

Mbutuma continues as follows:

21. Ungakulibali nawe, kuYehova kukhwizinto ngezinto,
22. Athi ke mna, mntufunukuthetha,
23. Hamba mfo kaObose uyashiywa.
24. Nants'inzwakazi phambi kwakho, idiniwe,
25. Isikhukukazi esafukuma amaqand' amathathu,
26. Kwaganduselw'amabini kuphela.
27. Uggoloma, ingqanga nokhozi, ingwe nengonyama.
28. Tsiba mfondini, usivulel'amasango.
29. Kamb'ukufa kulungile, kuba sisiphel'esihle sendalo.

30. Hamba mfo kaObose.

21. You must not forget, in God there are many things,
22. I am the one who wants to say,
23. Go, son of Obose, you are being left behind.
24. There is a lady before you, she is tired,
25. The hen that laid three eggs,
26. And only two eggs hatched.
27. The python, the bateleur eagle and the martial eagle, leopard and the lion.
28. Jump and open the gates for us, man.
29. You know, death is a good thing because it is the good way of ending life.
30. Go, man of Obose.

In the above extract the imbongi refers to the recent death of Chief K D Matanzima's mother, Nogate Matanzima, who was buried at Qamata Great Place. The hen that laid three eggs symbolises her. The imbongi also successfully makes use of animal imagery in line 27 to refer to her two sons, Chief K D and George Matanzima. In this instance animal imagery which is generally associated with chiefs is used.

The imbongi concludes as follows:

31. Ibindim nje ngam na kodwa, kwaba kulo Mpendulo.
32. Ukuze zonk'izizwe zikhale, musan'ukulila, musan'ukulila.
33. Khawundiyeke Mphathi singxobo ndithethe,
34. Kub'ezi zinto zifun'ukuxelwa,
35. Musan'ukulila madoda,
36. Kub'ezi zinto zifanelekile,
37. Musan'ukulila.
38. Zosulen'inyembezi,
39. Le ndodan'izilile.

31. But it was I who was in that answer.
32. So that all the nations shout, don't cry, don't cry.
33. Leave me alone, the carrier of life, let me speak,
34. Because these things need to be said,
35. Stop crying, men,
36. Because these things are supposed to happen,
37. Don't cry.
38. Wipe your tears,
39. This man is mourning.

40. Ndee ncam. Ncekelele!

The imbongi here appeals to the people to dry their tears and to let Obose go in peace. Again he points out in line 34 that certain things need to be exposed concerning Obose's death.

#### MBUTUMA AS A PERFORMER: GENERAL REMARKS

##### 1. SPONTANEITY; ORALITY TO LITERACY

Like Mothlabane, Mbutuma is able to produce spontaneous oral poetry. He never writes the poetry beforehand but only transcribes the poetry, or what he can remember, after the performance. Although there has been some influence of writing here, one can say that Mbutuma still retains his oral roots. He is primarily an oral performer.

##### 2. UBEKIWE - BEING PLACED

Like Mothlabane and Sithole (see *infra*), Mbutuma is a poet by virtue of the people. He is accepted by the people and was accepted by Chief Sabata as his official imbongi. Since Sabata's death things have changed somewhat. Although he has continued his mediating role, it has caused problems because of lack of acceptance by Chief K D Matanzima of his criticisms and opinions which, according to Mbutuma, represent those of the people. He is of the opinion that if a rightful chief were to take over he may again be placed in the proper position of mediator between the people and the rightful chief.

### 3. MEDIATOR

Mbutuma's role as mediator also cannot be denied. It was he who pointed out the differences between Matanzima and Dalindyebo and who mediated the people's point of view as opposed to that of the chiefs concerning independence. This created many problems for him - even up to this day, as can be seen in the above poem.

Mbutuma's role as imbongi in rural Transkei seems to have been diminished by the death of Chief Sabata Dalindyebo. It remains to be seen whether or not he will continue to perform in the future, acting as imbongi to the Thembu chiefs. This will again become clearer after the return of Buyelekhaya (Chief Sabata's rightful heir) from Lusaka in Zambia.

#### BONGANI SITHOLE: HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Sithole was born at Mqhekezweni location near Umtata on the 21 June 1937. This location was under the control of Chief Jongintaba Dalindyebo. Sithole's early schooling was also pursued in this area. He completed his standard six at Mqhekezweni. He later passed his Junior Secondary Certificate (standard eight) at Qokolweni which is also near Umtata. This was in 1958.

Thereafter, Sithole left for Springs where he worked on the mines from 1959 until 1964. He then worked in Johannesburg until 1972 in a factory. He also held a position as clerk. In 1973 he left for Port Elizabeth where he worked in a bakery until 1976. He then returned to Umtata where he has lived ever since.



### SITHOLE AS IMBONGI

According to Sithole, he began praising while he was still a student at Mqhekezweni in about 1954. His ability to praise is also recognisable from the fact that his name is Bongani, which is derived from the noun imbongi. Unlike Mothlabane who is a 'freelancer' and Mbutuma who is concerned mainly with chiefs, Sithole is presently attached to the African National Congress since the unbanning of the organisation and the release of Nelson Mandela.

He began praising here in Transkei, at Mqhekezweni. He praised Chief Jongintaba Dalindyebo of that region. He also, for example, praised Chief George Matanzima on certain occasions. He states that he was unaware of any corruption by the Matanzima regime at this stage. He would praise his support for the opening of new schools, etc.

Sithole states that his inspiration for producing oral poetry depends entirely on the occasion at which he finds himself together with the people who are present there. These factors will determine whether or not he feels inspired to produce. He states that 'Mhlawumbi ubone amapolisa namajoni kubekho ifeelings apha kuwe ungakwazi ukuzi controla' ('Perhaps you see police and soldiers and there are feelings within you that you cannot control'). He carries on to point out that this inspiration could also suddenly emerge at a funeral or at a church service. When in the mood, Sithole will burst forth, producing poetry of

which he is often unaware. In other words he is not always aware of the content of his poetry. Sithole's performance is often a spontaneous one of which there is no record, unless the poetry has been recorded.

Sithole's role as political commentator is also clearly supported by the content of his poetry. He also states that the imbongi today would align himself with a policy with which he agrees. He states that 'Kukho i-African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress, so I don't function with PAC, andikholwa yisystem yayo...' ('There is the ANC and the PAC, so I don't function with PAC, their system does not agree with me...') Although he may not be inspired to praise the PAC as such, he is still in a position to try and join the two together. 'Into endinokuyenza kukudibanisa i-PAC neANC, ndibonise indlela emakuhanjwe ngayo.' ('What I could do is join together the PAC and ANC, and show the road on which we should go.')

#### ANALYSIS OF POETRY

Only one of Sithole's poems will be analysed at this point as a number of his poems are discussed in the context of Mandela's visit to Transkei in the epilogue.

The following extract is taken from a poem which was produced at Bumbane Great Place near Umtata. This poem was produced by Sithole on 1 October 1989 at the second burial of Chief Sabata Dalindyebo, his remains having been exhumed. Chief Sabata died in exile during the Matanzima era in Transkei. He was now being buried with ANC approval at his rightful burial place. Also

present was the regional ANC representative for Transkei and councillor to the Dalindyebo family, A S Xobololo.

1. Amandla!!
2. Uza kuphakam'umzukulwana kaXobololo,
3. uXobololo uza kuxobul'ixolw'emthini kuvel'intlaka,
4. uXobololo uyaxoboloza,
5. uXobololo unesifo sombefu,
6. uxweb' impundu ngokuhlal'estoksini ngenxa kaDaliwonga,
7. unxweb'impundu wade wanesifo sombefu,
8. ngenxa kaKaiser Matanzima,
9. Yimpimpi uMatanzima.
10. Yimpimpi uMatanzima.
11. Namhlanje uMatanzima uphindel' eNyandeni,
12. Akanakuza phakathi kwethu singabantu,
13. Singabeli lizwe,
14. Xoboloza Xobololo,
15. Nguwe oyaziyo into kaDalindyebo,
16. Nguwe owathwal'uSabata,
17. kude kube njenjenje.

1. Power!!
2. The grandchild of Xobololo is going to stand up,
3. Xobololo is going to peel the bark of a tree till the gum appears,
4. Xobololo is trying,
5. Xobololo is suffering from asthma,
6. The buttocks are chapped because of staying in jail because of Daliwonga,
7. His buttocks were chaffed till he suffered from asthma,
8. because of Kaiser Matanzima,
9. Matanzima is an informer.
10. Matanzima is an informer.
11. Today Matanzima has gone back to Nyandeni,
12. He will never be among us humans,
13. We are of this nation,
14. Try hard Xobololo,
15. It's you who knows Dalindyebo,
16. It's you who carried Sabata,
17. Till it is like this.

The imbongi introduces this poem by making use of the power salute Amandla! This is common in the performances of iimbongi within the Mass Democratic Movements. <sup>11</sup> Sithole is particularly scathing of Chief K D Matanzima. This is evident from the parallelism used in lines 9 and 10. Matanzima is portrayed as an

outcast who was responsible for much hardship within the ANC. Xobololo spent time in jail because of Matanzima. This is clear from lines 6, 7 and 8 where the imbongi uses ribald language in order to illustrate this. Xobololo is praised in the last two lines for his pro-Dalindyebo stance during difficult times.

#### SITHOLE AS PERFORMER: GENERAL REMARKS

##### 1. SPONTANEITY

Sithole's performances are all spontaneous. Unlike Mothlabane and Mbutuma, he has never written any poetry, either before or after the performance. Sithole sums this up as follows:

Xa usithi mandiphinde laa nto bendiyibonga, andiyazi.  
Ndikhumbula only two or three words, ilahlekile,  
awunakuphinda uthi mandiyiphinde ngelaa hlobo  
bendiyibonga ngayo.

When you ask me to repeat what I have just produced, I do not know it. I only remember two or three words, it is lost, you cannot say that I should repeat it in the same way as I produced it initially.

Sithole states that he absorbs the atmosphere in which he finds himself, including the person who may be the subject of his poetry. This is the only background he requires for his performance.

##### 2. MEDIATOR

Sithole sees his function and role as not that different from the traditional imbongi who mediated between the people and the chief for instance. He gives the present situation in South Africa and Transkei as an example. 'Kwezi zidube-dube zenzekayo,

mna ndiyakwazi ukwakha abantu, ndibadibanise abantu xa bexabana, bengavani.' ('During these troubled times, I can build people up, I can unite them when they are fighting and do not agree.')

Sithole also sees his role as that of a prophet. This allows him to comment on issues which have yet to take place. He can comment on what is still to happen. This allows him not only to act as mediator, but also as adviser. Sithole gives the example of his comments on Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, in his poetry about the ANC and Nelson Mandela. <sup>12</sup> He states that he sees the removal of Buthelezi from power as a future solution to the problem in Natal. He advises Mr Mandela that this should be done and that he should take heed of his advice as this is the only solution to the problem in Natal.

Sithole therefore not only sees his role as that of being a political adviser, but also as that of bringing people together. He aligns himself with what he feels is right and through his stance hopes to win over those people who disagree. This is indeed a powerful position to occupy.

### 3. POLITICAL PRESSURES

We have seen how iimbongi like Mbutuma, Qangule and Mothlabane have suffered harassment at the hands of the authorities. It would seem that most iimbongi have to some extent been affected or touched by similar experiences.

Sithole also acknowledges this. The iimbongi seems to get caught up in the broader political struggles which may be taking place



at the time. Sithole himself states that in 1989 when the son of the late Chief Sabata Dalindyebo, Buyelekhaya, was contesting Chief Zondwa Mtirara's position as Acting Paramount Chief of the Thembus, he was chased away from the Supreme Court in Umtata for 'making a noise'. According to Sithole, the Matanzima regime offered him little licence to praise with impunity. For this reason his gift to praise lay dormant for a long time. He states that he finds it difficult to produce praises in a situation where he feels he has to be careful about what he says. He feels inhibited and would rather avoid such situations. He states that he has no interest in attending gatherings which have no 'truth' in his eyes.

Sithole now sees a change in all of this. He is of the opinion that South Africa is on the brink of independence and becoming a democratic country. This will allow for freedom of speech and criticism - hence the imbongi's position as political commentator will be restored.

#### 4. UBEKIWE - BEING PLACED

Sithole regards himself as being wellknown within the ranks of the ANC (at least in Transkei). He aligns himself fully with ANC policy. What is important here is that he is recognised by the people and he is often invited to attend political gatherings. This is sufficient proof of his acceptance by the people and the ANC as an official imbongi. This also became clear during Mr Mandela's visit to this region where Sithole was often allowed onto the stage with Mr Mandela. His performances received

vociferous audience response and drew many broad smiles from Mr Mandela. Often he was the only imbongi allowed onto the stage. Again this supports my view that Sithole is in fact placed as an official ANC imbongi - perhaps one of the first of many to emerge in the new South Africa. He was also the official imbongi who accompanied the Thembu Chiefs who went to Johannesburg in March 1990 (under the auspices of the Sabata Dalindyebo Trust Fund - affiliated to the ANC) in order to meet with Mr Mandela to finalise arrangements for his visit to Transkei.

Although there were other iimbongi present during Mandela's visit, Sithole held the center stage. Sithole states that 'ndim umntu owaziwayo ngabantu'. ('I am the person who is known by the people.') He does not know why this is the case but it is clear that he has become known among the people and for that reason accepted. As can be seen from his poetry and the performances on video (see performances G, and H), he is particularly powerful and raises issues which the people regard as sensitive. His ability to deal with these in his poetry makes it understandable as to why he has been placed.

##### 5. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

It is clear that Sithole sees the unbanning of the ANC as a major factor influencing his performances. He also states that this must have some significant effect for iimbongi in the future. The return of true and accepted leaders to positions of leadership and power can only result in the increased production of oral poetry, as has been the case with him. He states that

I think I can only become more powerful. The more the world changes the more I will go up. Bekuthiwa i-ANC ngabagrogrisi, sasingayazi ukuba i-ANC yinto ephucuke kangaka, sasingayazi i-ANC yinto enoThixo, sasingayazi ukuba i-ANC yinto enediscipline, enempucuko: akutshaywa, akuselwa, akufunwa mntu onxilileyo.

I think I can only become more powerful. The more the world changes the more I will go up. It was said that the ANC were terrorists, we did not know that the ANC was such a good thing, we did not know that the ANC was something with God, we did not know that the ANC was something with discipline, that was good: there is no smoking, no drinking, a drunk person is not wanted.

Sithole states that he will continue to praise as long as the ANC represents these principles. He also states that the return of Buyelekhaya (Sabata's rightful heir) from Lusaka will add further impetus to his poetry. It would seem therefore that this latent great poet is about to re-emerge, or is in fact doing just that.

#### CONCLUSION

What is clear concerning the iimbongi who form part of the above case studies is that they are faced with many choices and problems within the South African context. Their position in society reflects the reality of the South African situation. Although they operate individually, in different contexts, they are commenting on the broader South African situation as it pertains to their lives and those around them. These case studies re-affirm the imbongi's position as a person who comments on events and happenings around him.

It is also clear that the iimbongi fall into different categories as far as the modes of production of their poetry is

concerned. Mothlabane produces both orally and in writing. Mbutuma only writes the poetry down after he has performed it but never before. Sithole never writes poetry but only produces on the spur of the moment when inspired to do so. It is also clear that the imbongi's verbal repertoire has been broadened. If we look at Mothlabane's poetry, there is no mention of chiefs. He is concerned with happenings which are taking place in Grahamstown. On the other hand, Mbutuma, living in rural Transkei, is largely associated with the chiefs in that region. Likewise, Sithole's poetry includes praising chiefs, but only those chiefs like Mandela who are viewed as credible leaders by the people. He has developed his role as a liberal imbongi within the contemporary South African context.

Even though many of the chiefs have lost their credibility as leaders, the imbongi also still acts as someone who has been placed by the community. His continued existence depends on this and for this reason, as long as iimbongi like Sithole are being placed within the ANC and other organisations they will continue to exist. Again these case studies seem to show that with the credibility of many chiefs being questioned by the people, and the fact that many chiefs have no real power to assist the people with their grievances, there has been a movement away from the chiefs by iimbongi. They have moved towards the new power bases which include organisations like the ANC and the trade unions.

## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. Cf. chapter 4.
2. Cf. Mafeje's definition of the imbongi on page 1 of this thesis.
3. This poem was produced immediately prior to one of the minister's farewell speeches.
4. This poem was produced immediately prior to the Regional Director of Education and Training's address.
5. See also Qabula in chapter 4 and the ANC/INKATHA dispute.
6. Cf. Xozwa's definition of ukuthwasa in chapter 3.
7. Cf. my comment on poetry in the schools in chapter 2.
8. Many iimbongi today attach themselves to progressive organisations like the ANC, for example Sithole who forms part of a case study (infra).
9. Cf. Gérard's Four African Literatures, pp. 36-41.
10. The translation of this line poses some difficulty. Iinyembezi zikaVitoliya ('Victoria's tears') is an expression used to refer to European alcohol. Presumably it is named after Queen Victoria. The imbongi is here referring to alcohol abuse of, for example, brandy and other spirits which were imported from the West.
11. Cf. the discussion in the epilogue concerning the use of such opening formulas. Cronin (1989) also verifies this.
12. This is explored in the epilogue.



## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

In view of the research conducted in this thesis it is now possible to observe some general and emerging trends concerning the production of oral poetry with particular reference to the Xhosa imbongi.

The highest form of Xhosa izibongo is that poetry performed about chiefs. In other words, the most important and highly regarded imbongi is that imbongi who lives near the chief or with the chief and acts as his official imbongi, accompanying him on important occasions, praising and criticising him through his poetry, and generally acting as a political adviser and social commentator.

It is evident that many chiefs have lost a lot of credibility in the eyes of the people due to their continued support of the Pretoria regime; for example, many chiefs were in favour of homelands becoming independent states. This was seen by many people as an entrenchment of the apartheid ideology. Many chiefs therefore are viewed as puppets of the Pretoria regime and of no consequence to the man in the street because they have no real power or control over 'bread and butter' issues like wages, creation of jobs, etc. In fact the homelands create a reservoir of labour from which industry can draw. These factors have had their effect on the production of izibongo. Today, many of the chiefs who are working within the broader South African political system, for example, as homeland leaders, do not take lightly to

criticism. We have seen how many imbongi have been harassed and even detained because of their critical approaches to certain chiefs. The imbongi has therefore been drawn away from the chiefs to other organisations which do represent the interests of the masses. These include political organisations like the African National Congress and trade unions which wield considerable power today. The thematic repertoire of the imbongi has been broadened with the result that there seems to have been a de-emphasis on the poetry produced about chiefs, and an emphasis on oral poetry within the contemporary context of trade unions and the Mass Democratic Movement. The styles and techniques used are however similar to those used by the traditional imbongi.

It has been pointed out in the preliminaries that language and society are inextricably linked, the one cannot be divorced from the other. A society's language forms part of its culture. Due to the fact that society is continually changing because of variable socio-economic and political influences, culture is also continually changing. Oral traditions, including that of the imbongi, form part of Xhosa culture - hence culture is continually adapting in order to accommodate these new pressures and changes in society.

The imbongi is fighting to come to terms with this changing environment and the role of the imbongi has been adapted to the contemporary context in order to ensure that the imbongi remains the 'voice of the people' in the modern context. Although this

tradition was restricted mainly to males, in the sense that most traditional iimbongi were men, this is also no longer the case. In the contemporary context there are many female iimbongi who perform, for example within unions.

The iimbongi is now also operating within a transition period, in the sense that Western education and literacy have created a 'secondary oral' society where there has been a de-emphasis on the oral. Nevertheless the oral forms of the iimbongi continue to survive today. Even in written Xhosa poetry we find the use of oral techniques. This is clear from chapter 2. At this point in time there is also a distinct interaction between the oral and the written word in Xhosa society. Iimbongi today often operate within both paradigms, producing orally and spontaneously on certain occasions whilst publishing their poetry on the other hand.

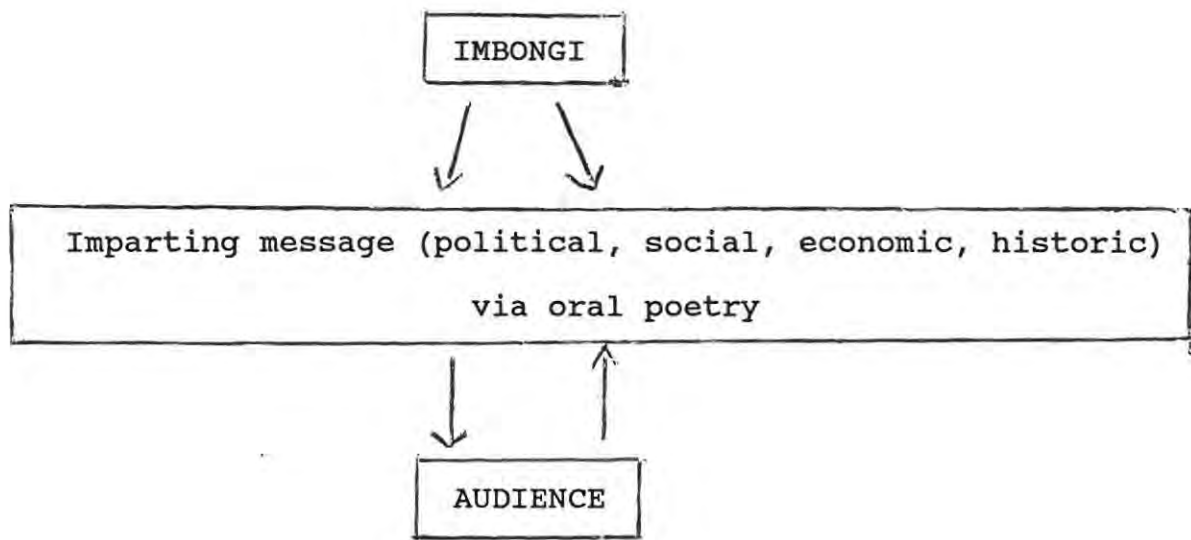
Central to the changing role of the Xhosa iimbongi is the broadening of the iimbongi's verbal repertoire due to outside influences. As social and political commentator the iimbongi's performances are moulded by the context in which they find themselves - hence the iimbongi operates within the religious sphere, for example. We have seen how preachers make use of the izibongo style in their sermons and how iimbongi operate here, praising God in the same way that a chief would have been praised.

The integral pillars of Xhosa society today include religion, work, politics and education, indeed these form the pillars of

any modern society. It is therefore not surprising that the modern imbongi, in order to remain relevant to the people's aspirations, has been influenced by these pillars and acts within these ever-changing paradigms. There is no society which is static, hence there is no culture which can be viewed as static. The iimbongi who operate in the urban areas, drawing on contemporary themes, are therefore ensuring their continued survival. It would seem though that a de-emphasis on the oral is inevitable due to the effects of writing and the influence of literacy on what was previously a 'primary oral' culture. It remains to be seen whether the oral will be completely replaced by the written word and whether spontaneous izibongo will be replaced by static texts. As yet this has not been the case.

The role of the imbongi within contemporary society remains that of political and social commentator, whether this be in the work place, the church or the school. The imbongi's performance is a communicative event whether this be a performance about a chief, a trade union, the opening of a school or Nelson Mandela. It involves the creation of poetry in performance. The imbongi's function is to raise people's awareness concerning a particular situation. This may be to awaken worker consciousness, for example, to educate people about the African National Congress or to indicate to the youth the value of education. There is an emotional link between the performer and the audience. The imbongi's spontaneous poetry is moulded by the context and the audience response which is received. The imbongi imparts a message via this powerful oral performance.

To illustrate:



The imbongi is today discussing people and events in the real world, expressing shared values and ideals and, in the process, ensuring the immediate survival of the oral poet.

The contemporary imbongi can therefore be classified as a person (man or woman) who is involved in the oral production of spontaneous poetry in any given context (but often writes poetry as well, using the traditional styles and techniques), who is in a position to act as mediator, educator, praiser and critic between an authority and those under that authority and who is accepted by the people and the authority in question.

Having established that the tradition is undergoing constant change, one must be careful not to be prescriptive concerning the classification of the modern imbongi. The above classification is therefore intended to be a general one which encapsulates all iimbongi operating in the contemporary context. There is



therefore no doubt that the tradition of the imbongi exists in present-day South Africa. The way in which the tradition has managed to adapt to the ever-changing South African environment is again a manifestation of the adaptability of culture which, in turn, will ensure the continued existence of this tradition, at least for the foreseeable future.

## EPILOGUE

### MANDELA COMES HOME: THE POETS' PERSPECTIVES

#### INTRODUCTION

At the outset it is necessary to point out that this epilogue should be viewed against the backdrop of the changing role of the imbongi which is outlined in this thesis. Mandela's visit to his place of birth (Transkei) also presented an opportunity to see the modern imbongi in action.

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, the Deputy President of the African National Congress, arrived in Umtata on 21 April 1990. This was his first visit to his birth place since his release from prison earlier this year.

Prior to his arrival the city of Umtata was the scene of frenetic activity: banners advertising Mandela's visit were being erected, the media together with foreign visitors were flocking into Umtata. A sense of excitement prevailed among the local inhabitants of Transkei, many of whom were already in Umtata. Marshalls were being recruited in anticipation for the highlight of Mandela's visit - a Mass Rally to be held on Sunday 22 April.

Approximately three thousand people gathered at the Umtata airport in order to welcome Mandela home. Excitement was at fever pitch as the Transkei Airways plane came into sight. Youths began toyi-toying and women ululating. Marshalls were everywhere. Mandela emerged dressed in a leopard skin, the mark of a chief, and carrying a spear. He gave a short impromptu

speech. He spoke of his youth in this region: how he stole mealies as a small boy and hunted for birds and wild animals. As his voice broke under the strain of emotion, three thousand fists were raised in the air to meet him. No doubt an emotional moment for Mandela. According to Major General Holomisa, leader of the Military Council in Transkei, this was a moment of unparalleled historical significance for Transkei.

During his stay in this region Mandela spoke on a number of occasions including the Mass Rally. He also delivered an address to the University community. The intention of this epilogue is to comment on these gatherings, especially on the oral poetry which was produced at these meetings, and the written poetry which appeared in local newspapers.

The arrival of Mr Mandela to some extent led to a resuscitation of the production of contemporary oral poetry in this region. Besides Mr Mandela's presence, the reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, there has been the removal of the previous regime in Transkei under which this type of poetry would have been prohibited; and secondly, the partial restoration of freedom of speech within the broader Southern African region.

Prior to analysing the poetry within the contexts within which it was produced, it may be helpful to comment on the element of protest in poetry produced in South Africa, with particular reference to the Xhosa imbongi. This is a summary of certain issues which have already been raised in chapters 1 and 5 of this thesis.

## THE VOICE OF PROTEST IN ORAL AND WRITTEN POETRY

Mafeje (1967:193), in an article entitled The Role of the Bard in a Contemporary South African Community, defines the imbongi as someone who lived in close proximity to the Chief's Great Place and who accompanied the Chief on important occasions. His (the imbongi was normally a man) performances would be directed at the chief, decrying what is unworthy, praising what is worthy and even forecasting what is going to happen. <sup>1</sup> Clearly, the imbongi's role was one which allowed for criticism - hence the voice of protest in Xhosa oral poetry. This voice of protest, according to Ewels (1981:12), '... is implicit in the role of the bard in traditional and contemporary society.' It is therefore only one aspect of the poetic tradition, but nevertheless forms an important and vital part of Xhosa oral poetry.

It is especially within the Mass Democratic Movement that this voice can be heard today. In line with the main topic of this epilogue, namely Mandela's visit, the voice of protest within contemporary poetry will be outlined.

The contemporary bard continues to act as a social and political commentator. The socio-economic and political environment has changed dramatically over the last couple of years in Southern Africa. It is therefore safe to assume that these changes have also had some effect on the role of the imbongi in contemporary society. Indeed, it is probably the first time that iimbongi are producing oral poetry about Mandela in his presence.

The imbongi has also, for example, been absorbed into trade unions which represent the interests of workers in our society. The awakening of black nationalism and political consciousness among Africans, and the greater need for recognition within the work place (including equal opportunities and remuneration) have resulted in poetry in the form of traditional izibongo being produced within the Congress of South African Trade Unions. It is not uncommon for an imbongi to produce poetry at a union meeting. <sup>2</sup>

The voice of protest is also entrenched in written poetry. This can be seen, for example, in the writing of Sepamla, Mphahlele, Themba and others. After the 1976 uprising there was a flood of protest poetry. It is interesting to note that much of this poetry was, and still is, produced in English, but makes use of traditional styles and techniques. This can probably be ascribed to the frustration of the writers in their attempts to reach their oppressors, namely the whites, the majority of whom are unable to understand an African language. English is also an international language, hence affording an author access to an international audience.

The voice of protest can therefore be heard in both written and oral poetry produced in a variety of African languages as well as English. It is also interesting to note that oral as opposed to written poetry is now also produced in English, but clearly draws on traditional roots. Perhaps the best example of such a performer is Mzwakhe Mbuli who is fast becoming known as 'The People's Poet'. The Mass Rally on the 22 April also saw oral



performances in English.

### ANALYSIS OF POETRY

The following poem was produced at the Sunday 22 April Rally which was held just outside Umtata. The Rally was attended by approximately one hundred thousand people. Prior to Mandela's speech and immediately thereafter there were many iimbongi who came forward and performed. Due to the number of poems which were produced, only selected extracts from various poems will be analysed. The poem which follows was performed in English by two poets. The style is heavily repetitive and formulaic. This poem also resembles that poetry produced by Mzwakhe Mbuli. The poets alternate, each producing one line. The poem is produced rhythmically and the last word in each line is lengthened.

1. How can you win?
2. How can I?
3. How can you want to negotiate?
4. Hunger is hunger.
5. Ugly is ugly.
6. How can I?
7. How can you want to negotiate?
8. I am hungry now,
9. Behind the bars.
10. I am hungry now,
11. Behind the bars.

Typically, repetition is used here. The poets are also sceptical about negotiations. This is clear from lines 3 and 7. Clearly the poem is inspired by Mbuli's poetry (1989:11). I quote a verse from Mbuli's poem 'Behind The Bars'.

I shivered, I prayed  
This cell or the next  
A man slipped to death

Another one used a pair of jeans to heaven  
Behind the bars.

Most of Mbuli's poetry is also produced in English.

The Rally poem continues as follows:

12. Margaret, do not suggest it for me,  
13. Margaret, do not suggest it for me,  
14. Margaret, Margaret, Margaret, Margaret, Margaret,  
15. Is a bitch,  
16. Is a busy bitch,  
17. Margaret, Margaret,  
18. Margaret do not suggest it for me.

19. George Bush,  
20. George Bush is a mafia,  
21. George Bush is a mafia,  
22. A mafia.  
23. George Bush,  
24. Mafia, mafia, mafia.

25. Moreover,

26. I shall return,  
27. Behind the bars.

28. Struggle inside,  
29. Solidarity outside,  
30. Margaret,  
31. Margaret.

Clearly here the poets are critically referring to the major Western leaders, namely Thatcher and Bush. The real issue here is their approach to sanctions. The language used to describe them is nothing less than derogatory with Thatcher being described as a 'busy bitch' and Bush as a member of the mafia. The poets appeal for solidarity outside whilst the struggle continues inside.

The poem continues:

32. Welcome home, our leaders,

33. Welcome home,
34. Welcome home,
35. Welcome home, bawo womhlaba,
36. Welcome home,
37. Welcome home.
  
38. Welcome home, Walter,
39. Welcome home, Walter Sisulu,
40. Welcome home,
41. The Secretary,
42. The General,
43. In general,
44. The Secretary,
45. In general, welcome home, baba Sisulu,
46. Welcome home,
47. Welcome home,
48. Welcome home, bawo Madiba, welcome home.
49. Welcome home, bawo Madiba, welcome home.

This extract is again an excellent example of the formulaic style which characterises this poetry. There is also an interesting play on the word 'general' in lines 42 to 45: 'The General, in general, the Secretary, in general, welcome home.'

The poem concludes as follows:

50. The chief commander of MK.
51. Yiza Mkhonto,
52. Yiza Mkhonto,
53. Amandla!
54. Ngawethu! (audience response)
  
55. There is no unity in a group,
56. Where laws are based on the words:
57. Triple oppression and triple exploitation.
58. Unworkable laws,
59. Unnegotiable laws,
60. Unworkable apartheid.
  
61. This is not a mystery,
62. We are making history.
63. This is not a mystery,
64. We are in the battle.
65. Mandela released,
66. Walter Sisulu in Lusaka,
67. Freedom in South Africa.
  
68. Amandla!
69. Ngawethu! (audience response)

In this poem the use of both Xhosa and English adds a new dimension. The poets make it clear in this extract that apartheid cannot be negotiated, in lines 58 to 60: 'unworkable laws, unnegotiable laws, unworkable apartheid.' The power salute amandla serves as both an opening and closing formula followed by audience response. It is common within this poetry for phrases like Mayibuye ('Let it return') to be uttered by the imbongi with the audience responding iAfrika. This also serves to involve the audience.

In another poem produced on the same occasion, Oliver Tambo, the leader of the ANC, is referred to as follows:

1. Ndiyamtyhafela u Oliver Reginald Tambo:
2. u O umele u organising,
3. u R umele u Resistance,
4. u T umele u Take-over.
5. Uza kubuya azokuthi Take-over.
6. Grayani, Magerilla negraye!

1. I feel weak on the part of Oliver Reginald Tambo:
2. O stands for organising,
3. R stands for resistance,
4. T stands for take-over.
5. He will return and he will say Take-over.
6. Grayani, Magerilla negraye!

Tambo is portrayed as the epitome of what the struggle means and entails: organising, resisting and taking over. The interesting closing formula makes a play on the word guerilla, referring to MK soldiers.

In a poem which is more localised in the sense that it praises a local Transkei leader the imbongi (Bongani Sithole) states the following:

1. Wena mpandla,
2. Mpandl'empenyelele Xobololo, uvunyiwe ngokumisa ibunzi ejele kube
3. utshutshiswa nguMatanzima,
4. Hayi, hayi.

1. You bald one,
2. You shining bald one of Xobololo, they recognize you by your
3. shining forehead in jail because of Matanzima's cruelty,
4. No, no.

Xobololo is the leader of the ANC in this region. The ANC was banned under the previous Matanzima regime and its members and leaders were often harassed and detained. This extract clearly laments this.

The poem continues:

5. Hamba ke mhlekazi,
6. Sibulela ukuba sikubonile sizukulwana sikaDalindyebo,
7. Hayi ubugorha bukaSabata.
8. Kumhla sayibona le nto iyiANC,
9. Hayi umntakaHolomisa liqhawe lamaqhawe madoda.
5. Go then, honourable one,
6. We are thankful to see you, the great-grandchild of Dalindyebo,
7. Oh! the bravery of Sabata.
8. It was the day we saw this thing called the ANC,
9. We agree the son of Holomisa is the most excellent one.

The imbongi, in line 6, refers to Mandela as being the great-grandchild of Dalindyebo. The imbongi also refers to the day of Chief Sabata Dalindyebo's second burial. It was also the day on which Holomisa raised some important issues, for example, Transkei's possible re-incorporation into South Africa. He is praised for this.



In another poem produced in English, another poet refers to previous ruling regimes and compares them to Mandela:

1. He (Mandela) would see South Africa for what it could be,
2. In justice and total equality, ...
3. Not power, money and personal interests.
4. The world has never seen many leaders of the National Party, more especially Verwoerd, P W Botha and Vorster,
5. Ever achieve such leadership,
6. Instead, they drag the black struggle into the deep sea of Robben Island for life.

The extracts which follow are taken from three of Sithole's poems which were produced at the University of Transkei Rally on Monday 23 April. <sup>3</sup> He wears the traditional dress of animal skins while performing. These are braided with the ANC colours.

1. Masicamagushele.
2. Kuba kushukum'amathamb'ookhokho bethu,
3. Azi izizalo zabafazi zicinga ziyaphunza,
4. Amadod'abhinq'umbhinqo nje ezinqeni inoba liyetyisa.

1. We must call upon the ancestors.
2. Because the bones of our ancestors are shaking,
3. Even the wombs of women thought they were miscarrying,
4. Men are tying pieces of cloth around their waists - they must be ruminating

In these opening lines Sithole outlines the seriousness of the present situation by asking people to pray to their ancestors whose bones are shaking because of what has happened recently in South Africa - the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners.

Sithole continues:

5. Liphupha lamathongo,
6. Liphupha lamaMpunge,
7. Isizalo sikhale sancama,
8. Mingaphin'imiphefuml'ephantsi komhlaba?
9. Zingaphin'izidumbu ngenxa kaMandela?

10. Mand-e-e-e-la Mand-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-la
11. Mand-e-e-e-la Mand-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-la

5. It's a dream of the dead,
6. It's a dream that people thought would never come true,
7. People have cried till they gave up,
8. How many souls are under the ground?
9. How many corpses because of Mandela?
10. Mande-e-e-ela Mand-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-la
11. Mand-e-e-e-la Mand-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-la

The imbongi here refers to those comrades who have already died in the struggle in order to get Mandela released. The poet also refers to those comrades who died, never thinking that freedom would be so near. In lines 10 and 11 the imbongi moves from one side of the stage to the other, shouting Mandela's name in a praising way.

The poem continues:

12. Bambiza bengamazi,
13. Bambiza bengazange bambone,
14. Yiyo loo nto kufuneka sithozame sithozamelane,
15. Kuba side sambona.
16. Umzekelo kaYesu erhuq' abantu abaninzi indimbane,
17. Weza nabo ngenyaniso nocoselelo,
18. Kuloko sinokungqina khona ke siv'amazw'akhe,
19. Kuloko amazw' akhe siwaqinisekisile ukuba ayinyaniso.

12. They call him even if they don't know him,
13. They call him even if they have never seen him before,
14. That is why we need to be humble and respect one another,
15. Because we have seen him at last.
16. An example of Jesus followed by many people,
17. He has come with then in truth and dignity,
18. That is where we can witness and hear his words,
19. That is where we have confirmed that his words are true.

The first two lines and the last two lines of this extract contain parallelisms (where an idea is repeated or furthered in a following line by the use of different words or the same or similar words or word roots). This technique is a common one in

the production of oral poetry. The imbongi plays a mediating role here by asking people to respect one another. An interesting metaphor is used where Mandela is compared to a Christ-like figure.

The imbongi continues:

20. Kuba uthi sele ephum'ejele uthi andijiki nakanye,
21. Ndisatsho nangoku,
22. Ndith'amadoda,
23. Mawangen'endlwini abafazi phandle.
24. Ufun'inkululeko lo mbhem babhem,
25. Ufun'inkululeko umntakaMandela kaGaba,
26. Ufun'inkululeko uMadiba kaNgconde kaNthandle kaNtlandlu,
27. Ufun'inkululeko yenkululeko yeBhulu nomnt'omnyama.
28. Kunini na madoda sixoxiswa sigejiswa?
29. Sikhuthuk'iinzwane-e,
30. Hayi le mfundo-o-o,
31. Hayi le mfund'ibingekho kuthi sodwa,
32. IbikumaBhulu kodwa sesiyifumene,
33. Asasinyevulela,
34. Asasonyanya,
35. Kodwa lilizwe lakoweth'eli,
36. Afikela kuthi.

20. Because even now that he is out of jail, he does not change,
21. He still maintains that,
22. I say, men
23. Must stay inside and women outside.
24. He wants independence,
25. He wants independence, this son of Mandela of Ghaba,
26. He wants independence, Madiba of Ngconde of Nthandle of Ntlandlu,
27. He wants the best independence for Afrikaners and blacks.
28. How long is it, men, that we have been made to fight?
29. Our toes were grazed,
30. No, this education,
31. No, this education was not found in us alone,
32. It was for the whites but we have also got it,
33. They are still making faces at us,
34. They are still hating us,
35. But this is our country,
36. They were welcomed by us.

In lines 20 and 21 the imbongi comments on Mandela's integrity. He states that what Mandela stood for before he went to jail is still what he stands for today. He has not changed. Lines 24 to

27, through parallelism, further the idea of Mandela's commitment to independence and the removal of oppression. The imbongi also refers to Mandela's genealogy, in lines 25 and 26. Sithole also acts as a unifying force by pointing out that the whites were in fact welcomed by the blacks in this country; nevertheless, the whites are still contributing to a climate of conflict.

Sithole continues:

37. Ziyac-e-e-e-engwa izinto,  
38. Ziyacengwa izinto xa ziza kulunga,  
39. Azenziwa ngobuxhiliphothi,  
40. Azenziwa ngokungxanyelwa,  
41. Lithe ch-u-u-u-u.  
42. UmntakaNgubengcuka kaNgangelizwe,  
43. Uthe ch-u-u-u-u-u.  
44. Uhamba nabafundi bakhe,  
45. NjengoYesu,  
46. Uhamba noSisulu noMbeki,  
47. Uhamba noMhlaba,  
48. Uhamba namadoda aphilileyo.

37. Things are approached with skill,  
38. Things are approached carefully if they are to succeed,  
39. They are not approached with vigour,  
40. They are not approached with speed,  
41. He is steady.  
42. The son of Ngubengcuka of Ngangelizwe,  
43. He is steady.  
44. He is accompanied by his disciples,  
45. Like Jesus,  
46. He is accompanied by Sisulu and Mbeki,  
47. He is accompanied by Mhlaba,  
48. He is accompanied by healthy men.

Lines 37 to 40 make use of parallelisms which serve to highlight Mandela's ability to keep a level head and to approach things rationally. Again this extract sees the furthering of the biblical metaphor with Sisulu and others being described as disciples, in line 44. The last three lines have initial

linking, emphasising the presence of the other leaders and expanding the biblical metaphor. Mandela is again compared to Jesus, in line 45, leading his people and accompanied by his disciples. There is also some reference to genealogy, namely 'the son of Ngubengcuka of Ngangelizwe', in line 42. This is common in traditional Xhosa izibongo.

The poem concludes as follows:

49. Hayi baphume bengwev'etrongweni,  
50. Kodwa iintliziyo nengqond'azikho ngwevu,  
51. Basathe ngcembe,  
52. Uzakushumayela loo nto,  
53. Hamba aye kwetyisa kumathambo oyise bakhe,  
54. Afe mhla kwafik'ukufa,  
55. Eyishiya kuni niqinisekile,  
56. Zeniyibambe ningayilahli.  
57. Sidiniwe ngoongcothoza,  
58. Hayi madoda nimhloniphe uDaliwonga,  
59. Sanukumgxeka nimane nisithi phantsi ngaye,  
60. Hayi masimbizele ngeneno,  
61. Azohlambulula, kodwa ndimvile,  
62. Uyibuyisel'iPAC ngapha kweli cala,  
63. Akancedanga nto,  
64. Ibhabhile loo nto.

65. Ndee gram!

49. They came out of jail grey-headed,  
50. But the heart and brain are not affected,  
51. They are still steady,  
52. He is going to preach that,  
53. And go and ruminate on his forefather's bones,  
54. He will die when death comes,  
55. He will leave it to you having confidence,  
56. You must please hold it and don't lose it.  
57. We are tired of the traitors,  
58. You people must honour Daliwonga,  
59. Don't blame him saying away with him,  
60. We must just call him aside,  
61. So that he can confess, but I have heard that  
62. He is building up the PAC that side,  
63. He hasn't helped a thing,  
64. That has lost its value.

65. Ndee gram!



In this final extract the imbongi refers to the grey-headed leaders who have been released from prison, namely, Mandela, Sisulu, Mbeki, etc. Although they are old, they are praised for their mental agility. In lines 55 and 56, Sithole advises the youth and appeals to them not to disappoint Mandela as he has confidence in them, the future leaders. This extract reaffirms the imbongi's restored right to freedom of speech in this region. Daliwonga, Chief K D Matanzima's isikhahlelo ('praise name'), is referred to as a traitor. The imbongi again plays a mediating role asking people to try and win him over rather than condemn him. Again, one of the essential aspects of an imbongi's role is that of mediating between the people, on the one hand, and the person or organisation he is praising, on the other. The imbongi also raises the issue of the PAC and Matanzima's relationship with that organisation.

In another poem the same imbongi comments on the relationship between Mandela and Sisulu, from the early days up to the present. He also portrays the Rivonia Trials and the law as follows: <sup>4</sup>

1. Yingxaki yingxubakaxaka,
2. Kub'uDalibhunga kaMandela ucholwa ngutat'uWalter Sisulu  
eGoli,
3. Uphum'eqhwesha kwaJongintaba eMqhekezweni ethat'ijoyini,
4. Engayigqibanga imfundo yakhe eFort Hare apho wayethunyelwe  
khona,
5. Waske wafika kwingwevu yaseNgcobo yamchola ngokwazana,
6. Ingxak'inye ke ngoku endiyibuzayo kanti ikwanguXhamela  
nguMgcina kaTyopo
7. Unoba nab'ubukhosi ingathi buyothandana ukhonazana  
nokhonazana,
8. Ngxak'aph'aphinde wayifumane khon'inkosi yam uDalibhunga,
9. Ushiya uOliver Tambo eseFort Hare,
10. Phind'udibane naye kwizitrato zaseGoli,
11. Amqhub'umntaka Walter Sisulu,

12. Wayiqgibezel'imfundo yakhe bayokudibana ngobugqwetha benyaniso,
13. Khumbula kaloku amagqwetha ukutheth'ityala lawo engagqwethanga kweliny'igqwetha.
14. Asuk'ema amagqweth'azigqwethela,
15. Kuba yayingagqweth'inyaniso.

1. It is a problem, a real problem,
2. Because Dalibhunga of Mandela was taken by Walter Sisulu in Johannesburg,
3. He absconded from Jongintaba in Mqhekezweni and went to work,
4. Having not finished his education at Fort Hare where he was sent to,
5. Now he came across a grey-head from Engcobo and they knew each other because they were Thembus,
6. There is only one problem I want to ask, is he also Xhamela, the keeper of Tyopo,
7. He also has the royal blood that is why they love one another,
8. The other problem he met, the King Dalibhunga,
9. He left Oliver Tambo there at Fort Hare,
10. And now he meets him in the streets of Johannesburg,
11. And Walter Sisulu asks him to go along with him,
12. He finished his education and they joined in the law of truth.
13. Imagine, lawyers representing themselves.
14. They just stood and defended themselves,
15. Because the truth could not be perverted.

In the first five lines the imbongi talks of the relationship between Mandela and Sisulu. Mandela's stay at Fort Hare is mentioned as well as his meeting with Walter Sisulu who came from Engcobo in the Transkei. They are both Thembus. Sithole then moves to Mandela's relationship with the present leader of the ANC, Oliver Tambo. He comments on their early involvement with the legal fraternity in Johannesburg before the banning of the ANC. Lines 12 to 15 make an interesting play on the word lawyer, gqwetha, bearing in mind that Mandela represented himself at the Rivonia trial. Again, he will be a representative for the ANC at the negotiating table. Mandela is presented as a lawyer of truth.

The poem continues:

16. Asinakujika ndawo,
17. iTshangaan, uMsuthu, iNyasa, umXhosa, iVend'umTswana,
18. Hayi madoda nomZulu ngokunjalo,
19. Singabantu abamnyama.
20. Nc-e-e-edani-i-i!
21. Nceda mntakaMandela,
22. Ncedani niyokuthatha uGatsha Buthelezi nimfak'estoksini,
23. Ingxak'ilapho.
24. Thathani uGatsha Buthelezi,
25. Nimfak'ejele.
26. Kuba nguy'odibene namagxagxa namaBhulu,
27. Kuze kuf'abantu bakuthi.
28. Mayenzeke loo nto.

16. We will never change,
17. Shangaans, Sothos, Malawians, Xhosas, Vendas, Tswanas,
18. And Zulus as well,
19. We are black people.
20. Please!
21. Please, son of Mandela,
22. Please go and fetch Gatsha Buthelezi and arrest him,
23. The problem is there.
24. Take Gatsha Buthelezi,
25. Put him in jail.
26. He is the one who is connected with the poor whites and  
Boers,
27. Which results in the deaths of our people.
28. That must be done.

In this extract Sithole appeals for the unity of the black people. He calls for the arrest of Gatsha Buthelezi, in line 21, in order to create a climate for unity in the struggle.

In a written poem (Imvo 2 March 1990), <sup>5</sup> the imbongi refers to Mandela as follows:

1. Leza lithwel'isidanga sokumel'inyaniso yoqobo,
  2. Wafik' uRolihlahla irhorho yohlanga,
  3. Azi loda lizole de lixole na izwe leAfrika?
- 
1. He came wearing a cloak of truth,
  2. He came unexpected, Rolihlahla the animal of the nation,
  3. I wonder if there will ever be peace and harmony in Africa?

Here the poet uses a metaphor - Mandela is compared to an animal

possessing certain fearful characteristics, irhorho. Mandela is feared by the apartheid regime. The imbongi also questions whether there will ever be complete peace in Africa.

In another poem which was written by Xozwa, now living at Qunu, <sup>6</sup> Mandela's birth place, (published in Umthunywa March 1990), he comments as follows:

1. Zivela zizitshintsha amabala zixel'umamlambo,
  2. ichanti lamadoda asemaXhoseni.
  3. Zavela zingoo UDF, MDM, COSATU, SAWU, SARHU njalo-njalo.
- 
1. They came showing their colours like a mermaid,
  2. a snake owned by Xhosa men,
  3. being UDF, MDM, COSATU, SAWU, SARHU and so on.

The imbongi suggests here that there are many organisations within the struggle. These are compared to Mamlambo, a creature possessing changeable characteristics. The organisations therefore may not be the same but they fall under the umbrella of the struggle.

4. Uyabulela umz'Ontsundu kumfana kaDe Klerk,
  5. onesibind'sengweny'ukud'avulele umthandi
  6. wesizwe aphume esikiti sikaVelevutha.
- 
4. The black nation is giving thanks to the son of De Klerk,
  5. Who is brave like a crocodile
  6. now that he has eventually let the lover of the nation out of the jail of Verwoerd.

De Klerk is praised and compared to a crocodile, in line 5, an animal that is brave and courageous. The apartheid jail was created by Verwoerd and opened by De Klerk.

7. Kuba kaloku ephumile nje uRolihlahla, uyabuy'uTambo emahlathini.
8. Vulani amazibuko, lunyathel'ubhel'olumanz'andonganga

lakuloSabata Dalindyebo.

9. Hambani nokubikel'iintsapho zethu emangcwabeni ukuba ude wabuya uNelson.
10. Xelelani uBiko noMxenge nithi okaMandela uphumile eluvalelweni.
11. Yitshoni kuNzo abuye eLusaka, izinja zikhululwe amazinyo.
12. Xelelani okaTutu ooNyawo-ntle bathandazele uNelson;
13. Kaloku nimcelele impilo nde ntle njengoMosisi, de sifike enkululekweni.

7. Because now that Rolihlahla is back, Tambo will also be back from the forests.
8. Pave the way so that the handsome one of Sabata Dalindyebo may walk in.
9. Go and inform your deceased in the graves that Nelson has eventually come.
10. Inform Biko and Mxenge that Mandela is out of prison.
11. Tell Nzo that he must come back from Lusaka, the dogs no longer have teeth.
12. Tell Tutu that he must inform the priests that they must pray for Mandela;
13. So that intercessions should be made for his health and long life like Moses till we get our freedom.

In this concluding paragraph the imbongi asks the people to inform their ancestors, to inform Biko and Mxenge who sacrificed their lives for the struggle, that Mandela is back. The Boers are referred to as dogs which no longer have teeth, in line 11. In line 13, Mandela is seen to be leading the people to a better future, in the same way that Moses led the Israelites away from Pharoah.

### CONCLUSION

Mr Mandela's visit to this region not only resulted in a flood of poetry being produced, but it reaffirmed the imbongi's position as a social and political commentator in African society. The vibrant audience response and the poetic themes, drawing on socio-economic and political issues, as reflected in this poetry, are clear evidence of this. The imbongi is fighting to come to



terms with a new environment which presents different challenges. This thesis attempts to prove that the imbongi is a relevant figure within the political and social structure of contemporary African life. Mandela's visit to Transkei indicates that the imbongi has been absorbed into contemporary South African life, the imbongi continues to play a vital role, and the element of protest within oral poetry is still firmly entrenched.

## FOOTNOTES TO EPILOGUE

1. See also the definitions given in Preliminary Remarks and chapter 1.
2. Cf. case studies in chapter 4.
3. Sithole is considered in chapter 5.
4. This poem, together with the translation, can be found in appendix 1E.
5. This poem, accompanied by the translation, can be found in appendix 1F.
6. Xozwa is discussed in chapter 3. An edited version of this poem, together with the translation, is available in appendix 1G.

APPENDIX 1A

A poem produced by Chief K D Matanzima's imbongi at Qamata Great Place near Cofimvaba (Transkei).

1. Hala Huyi,
2. Hala Huyi,
3. Khawubethe mntan'enkosi,
4. Khanitheth'isiXhosa uMhala madoda nithi A! Daliwonga,
5. Ulidalil'iwonga lomz'ontsundu lakufanela,
6. Lilwel'ibandla likaZanendlu kaMvuzo,
7. Nguye lo umntwan'entomb'aseMatshaweni,
8. Eyathi yakufika kwaHala yabang'ukwenda,
9. Hayi mntan'enkosi andithethi nto,
10. Ndiyibonil'ingwatyu nanxa igwatyuza,
11. Ayibamb'imiba axel'ingxangxosi,
12. Yiyo le nkosi igxothis'amagwala namahlwempu,
13. Hayi mntan'enkosi andithethi nto,
14. Watheth'uMalan phantsi kwentab'etafile,
15. Wayithath'imfakadolo,
16. Wayibhekisa kwintyuntya kumntakaMvuzo,
17. Wathi hayi,
18. Masithethe ngoMcinga,
19. Wazilahl'izikrweqe wazinik'uSeybom,
20. USEybom wazithatha umntan'ezolo wazithwalisa kukumkani  
yabaThembu,
21. Yathi Hayi,
22. Masihlale kwiround'thebhile,
23. Sithethe ngoMcinga mfondini,
24. Wazilahla wazinik'uFerfuthi,
25. Yawazuza le ngwatyula,
26. Yawazuz'amakhoboka,
27. Yawazisa kumz'ontsundu,
28. Kwakuthiwa mntan'enkosi unguMosisi wanini na wena?
29. Kuba yena wathunywa kwilizwe lakwaFaro,
30. Ayekukhulul'abantwana bakwaSirayeli,
31. Hayi mntan'enkosi andithethi nto,
32. NguDubul'ibhara-bhara nkunz'emnyama ngelithole,
33. Yintak'enamandla intebhabh'amathumb'elengalenga,
34. Hayi mna andithethi nto.
35. Ndee gram!

## TRANSLATION

1. Hala Huyi,
2. Hala Huyi,
3. Speak, son of chief,
4. Speak Xhosa, Mhala and say A! Daliwonga,
5. You have created the dignity of the black nation until it suited you,
6. These are the people of Zanendlu of Mvuzo,
7. Here he is, the child of the Matshaweni's girl,
8. The one who, when she came to Hala caused marriage,
9. No, son of King, I don't say a thing,
10. I have seen the loose part of your trousers shivering,
11. He deals with issues, like a secretary bird takes strides,
12. This is the King that chases away the cowards and the poor,
13. No, son of King I don't say a thing,
14. Malan spoke under table mountain,
15. He took the gun,
16. He quietly pointed it to the son of Mvuzo,
17. And he said no,
18. We must settle this issue,
19. He threw the weapons, gave them to Seybom,
20. Seybom, the child of yesterday took them, and gave them to the King of the Thembu,
21. He said no,
22. We must sit at a round table,
23. And talk about Mcinga, friend,
24. He threw them away and gave them to Verwoerd,
25. And this tall man (Matanzima) took them,
26. He got the slaves,
27. And brought them to the black nation,
28. It will be said, son of Chief: Moses of which times are you?
29. Because Moses was sent to the land of Pharoah,
30. To deliver the children of Israel,
31. No, son of a chief, I say nothing,
32. He is strong like a black bull,
33. He is a powerful bird, the thing that flies with its intestines hanging outside,
34. No, I say nothing.
35. Ndee gram!

APPENDIX 1B

A poem composed by G M Mjekula for the opening of Qhayiya School in Bathurst. This translation was provided by Mr T M Zita.

1. Halala! Qhayiya!
2. Sing songs of our ancestors,
3. 'Homna!'
4. You pupils of Qhayiya,
5. Homna! Homna!
6. Hiki Hiki Homna! Halala!
7. Sing songs of the (manure) kraals,
8. So that the ancestors are aroused,
9. Huntshu! Qhayiya!
10. The day has arrived,
11. Today your name is being written,
12. In the list,
13. Of schools of South Africa,
14. Therefore we say ,
15. Huntshu! (congratulations)
16. Qhayiya.
  
17. Remember from where we came,
18. Yes we were learning in those zinc shacks,
19. Known as Bathurst Black Primary School,
20. We crawled, we grew, we grew
21. Wings,
22. We flew (in sports),
23. We flew (in music),
24. Our teachers were only eight,
25. Teachers Qwabe, Ntando,
26. Mlomzale had not yet joined us,
27. Yes Walters and Fitzgerald had
28. Not yet joined us.
  
29. To you son of Zita we say,
30. Huntshu! (Congratulations)
31. For the part you played,
32. Today we have twenty classrooms,
33. Halala! Hiki! Hiki!
34. Forward boys! Those who die are those that are in the firing  
line,
35. Halala! Hiki! Hiki!
36. Today our school is officially opened by the Honourable.
  
37. Halala! Halala! Qhayiya!

NOTES

1. Halala! Hiki! are praise expressions meaning Hurray!
2. Huntshu! is an expression meaning congratulations.
3. Homna! is a sound of a tribal song.



## APPENDIX 1C

A praise poem to FOSATU, provided by A T Qabula.

1. Nguye wavela!
2. Basho bonke bathi wavela!
3. Wena hlathi elihambayo laseAfrika.
4. Ngifike amawele alilelana,
5. Kanti ngabasebenzi,
6. Abasebenza ezimbonini,
7. Bexoxelana ngezinkinga,
8. Ezibahlupha ezimbonini,
9. Abazisebenzela eAfrika.
  
10. Ngibone omunye eduduza abanye,
11. Ebesula izinyembezi emehlweni,
12. Ngibona umhlola,
13. Ngoba nakuye zisuke zagobhoz'izinyembezi emehlweni,
14. Basebenzi ngowani na lowo Maye!?
15. Nikhala nje ngubanina onihluphayo?
16. Balekani ningene kulelohlathi,
17. Hlath'limnyama elabonwa ngabaqashi balibalekela labonwa
18. Ngabasebenzi,
19. Bathi: 'ngelethu masingeneni sicashe
20. Ukuze siphephe kubazingeli bethu.'
  
21. Bangena kulelihlathi baphuma,
22. Sebelashwe uvalo nengebhe,
23. Yokwesaba izitha zabo,
24. Sikhukhukazi esinamaphikwa abanzi,
25. Okufukamel'amatshwele aso,
26. Sifukamele nathi,
27. Ngalawamaphiko akho angena ubandlululo,
28. Sikhukhumeze nathi,
29. Ukuze sihluzele ingqondo sihlakaniphe,
30. Anolak'amadodana akho,
31. Ingabe uwachela ngaluphi uhlobo lwentelezi,
32. Sichele nathi,
33. Ukuze siwafuze senze njengawe,
34. Uzele phela FOSATU,
35. Amadodana akhe,
36. Agcwele iAfrika yonkana,
37. Ngithe ndisahamba,
38. Ngicabanga ngezinkinga zabasebenzi,
39. Ngabona isibhakela,
40. Sidlula eduze komhlathi kaDunlop,
41. Uthe esaqhaqhazela,
42. Ingabe Bakers wabuza yini?
43. Ukuthi
44. 'Wenzen'umakhelwane
45. Ucishe umlimiza nje?'
46. Ngibone izibhakela,
47. Zingena isimbambamba,
48. Ezimbanjeni zikaBakers,
49. Kwaze kwahlabeka yena uDunlop,

50. Wawabiza amashop steward,
51. Wathi: 'Madoda anisitshela
52. Ngabe iMAWU iyosusa uthuthuva kwaBakers futhi?'
53. Apendula amashop steward,
54. Athi: 'Qha mnumzane,
55. Kwenzekani kwaBakers?'
56. YiSweet Food and Allied Workers Union.
57. Iqhamuka kuphi iSweet Food?
58. KuFOSATU?
59. Yona iMAWU iqhamuka kuphi?
60. Nayo kuFOSATU
61. Munye umthethasisekela?'
62. 'Yebo!'
63. 'Nengubo yinye?'
64. 'Yebo!'
65. 'Same policy same constitution.
66. Don't worry Jim its
67. Still another MAWU.'
68. Chakijana wogcololo,
69. Mpephethi wezinduku zabafo,
70. Vuka Uggoke amandl'akho okuhlakanipha,
71. Vala amasango akho FOSATU,
72. Ngoba izitha zabasebenzi ziyakuzungeza,
73. Zifuna intuba,
74. Yokungena phakathi kwakho zikulhakaze,
75. Siyokuba sifile thina basebenzi,
76. Uma Bephumelela,
77. Vala, vala.
78. Imvukuzane eyobonwa yizimpimpi zabaqashi,
79. Iza kancane,
80. Ngomgwaqo,
81. Iphikelele ngasemzinbonini,
82. Zagijima zatshela abaqashi,
83. Zathi: 'Basi, basi,
84. Thina bukile lomvukuzana,
85. Buya losayidi kalofekthri kathina'
86. 'Yah Yah,'
87. 'What is the Mvukuzane my boy,
88. Tell me what it is?
89. Is it one of the FOSATU unions?
90. Muhle muntu,
91. Mina azi akhela wena 6 room house lapha,
92. Lohomeland kawena.
93. Thatha lomachinegun,
94. Vala logates,
95. Losikhathi buka yena,
96. Bulala yena,
97. Losikhathi yena ngena lapha lofekthri kathina,
98. Zonke lomasheya yena zophela,
99. Lo-union yena zothatha zonke,'

100. Bathi basematasatasa,
101. Sakika isigijimi,
102. Sathi: Salani seniyeka,
103. Ngoba i-union nanso isivule umhlangano,
104. Nabasebenzi enkantini,
105. Ngisho khona le Sasol.
  
106. FOSATU sikukhethile,
107. Ukuba usihle kade sasibakhetha abaholi,
108. Sikhetha abantu esasibathemba,
109. Abantu esazalwa nabo,
110. Sakhula nabo,
111. Abantu abalwaziyo lonke usizi lwethu,
112. Nesasigqilazeke kanye nabo,
113. Sabakhetha ngoba sasikholwa,
114. Ukuthi balubhaga,
115. Olukhanyisa indlela yethu eya enkululekweni,
116. Kanti kuzothi sesibaphakamisele,
117. Sayokubabeka phezulu esiqongweni sentaba,
118. Basiphendukela,
119. Basithumelel izimpimpi zasihlupha,
120. Kwathi abanye abahlakaniphile bethu,
121. Babathela othulini ngawontuluntulu,
122. Abanye ngale kwezindinga ezimnyama,
123. Abanye bagoma ukulibalekela izwe lokuzalwa kwabo,
124. Ingabe nawe uyokusiphatha kahle yini?
  
125. Ngalezozandla zakho ezingenalubandlululo,
126. Sakhuleka,
127. Sacela kuMvelingqangi,
128. Saguqa,
129. Sacela nasedlozini sathi,
130. Sicela umholi sicela umholi,
131. UMvelingqangi nedlozi basiphendulile,
132. Basithumelela wena FOSATU,
133. Masingadunyazwa nguwe FOSATU,
134. Unganikeli ngathi ezitheni zethu,
135. Okwamanje,
136. Inkambiso yakho,
137. Namadodana akho,
138. Iyancomeka,
139. Asazike kusasa.
  
140. Ngiphuphe ngiyisangoma,
141. Ufike kimi uzohlola,
142. Ngwachitha amathambo,
143. Ngababiza abalozi,
144. Amathambi ami,
145. Nabalozu bangitshela ukuthi,
146. Yebo uzele,
147. Amadodana akho mahle,
148. Futhi ahlakaniphile,
149. Ekanti apilile kodwa,
150. Kukhona isifo esingukufa,
151. Phakathi kwabantwana bakho,

152. Enye yamadodana akho,
153. Iyagula mpela,
154. Ayiphathekile kahle,
155. Lesisifo esingukufa,
156. Singawathelela namanye,
157. Amadodana akho,
158. Nawe agcine onke esegula,
159. Ngempela eguliswa yisifo esibi kakhulu,
160. Isifo somdlavuza, yebo umdlavuza,
161. Wayithinta iMAWU kanti udakwe yini?
162. Mnumzana omuhle,
163. Ngikubhalela lencwadi, ngicela
164. Imvume yokusebenzisa,
165. Lenkudla yezemidlalo,
166. Sizobe sixoxa, sibikela amalunga ethu ngako,
167. Konke esesikwenzile,
168. Nanso i-agenda ukuze wazi,
169. Ngesizobe sixoxa ngakho,
170. Wagadla ndoda endala ngokungavumi,
171. Mbambeni,
172. Nimkhumule umjiva,
173. Mfakeni ebhokisini lokwahlulewa,
174. Woza mehluleli omkhulu,
175. Mahlulele ngokungavumi,
176. Kwakhe nalenkundla,
177. Kungani ungavumi nalenkundla?
178. Yabika imbiba,
179. Nebuzi indoda endala,
180. Yasala iphemile,
181. Ngoba umehluleli uvumile,
182. Ungadlali ngomlilo mfana uzosha,
  
183. Ingola yesimbi,
184. Ehamba phezu kwensimbi,
185. Nsimbi ayigobi,
186. Bayithumela,
187. Edayimani behluleka,
188. Bathumela eJalimani,
189. Nakhona behlulekile,
190. Ingudlamawa, iwele imifula, inqamula amathafa,
191. Igudla amagquma, ibhobhose izintaba
192. Yifuqe ngamandla intuthu yakho,
193. Igcwale i-Afrika yonkana,
194. Ngikubhekile konke!
195. Okwenzayo!
196. Ulibinda FOSATU!
197. Bayethe!
198. Amandla kubasebenzi.

## TRANSLATION

NOTE: This translation, provided by Qabula, is not always a direct line for line translation of the Zulu version. Nevertheless, the meaning of the Zulu poem is successfully conveyed in the translation.

1. It is he who has appeared!
2. They all said that he had appeared!
3. You moving forest of Africa.
4. When I arrived the twins were crying
5. These were the workers,
6. Industrial workers,
7. Discussing the problems
8. That affect them in the industries they work for in Africa.
  
9. I saw one of them consoling others,
10. Wiping their tears from their eyes,
11. I saw wonders, because even in his
12. Eyes the tears did flow,
13. 'Worker, about what is that cry Maye?'
14. Escape into the forest,
15. The black forest that employers saw, and
16. Ran away from for safety,
17. The workers saw it too,
18. 'It belongs to us', they said,
19. 'Let us take refuge in it to be safe from
20. Our hunters,'
21. Deep in the forest they hid themselves, and
22. When they came out they were free from fear.
  
23. You are the hen with wide wings,
24. That protects its chickens,
  
25. Protect us too, with those
26. Sacred wings of yours,
27. That knoweth no discrimination,
28. Protect us too so that we gain wisdom,
29. Militant are your sons and daughters,
30. One wonders what kind of muti they use,
31. Sprinkle it too on us so that we take
32. After them and act likewise.
33. FOSATU has given birth,
34. Its sons are spread all over Africa,
35. Even overseas you find its sons,
36. FOSATU you are the lion,
37. That roared at Pretoria North,
38. With union offices everywhere.



39. Whilst walking,
  40. Thinking about the worker's problems,
  41. I saw a fist flying across Dunlop's cheek,
  42. Whilst Dunlop was still shivering,
  43. Perhaps Bakers was asking,
  44. 'What did my neighbour do
  45. That he is being hurt like that?'
  46. I saw a combination of fists
  47. Bombarding Bakers in his ribs,
  48. Until Dunlop was concerned,
  49. He called the shop stewards and asked:
  50. 'Madoda, please tell us,
  51. Is MAWU now going to cause trouble at Bakers?
  52. No, Banumzane,
  53. Who is organising at Bakers?
  54. Of course Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union.
  55. But where does it come from?
  56. From FOSATU.
  57. This MAWU where does it spring from?
  58. Also from FOSATU
  59. Same constitution?'
  60. 'Yebo.'
  61. 'Same policy, same constitution,
  62. don't worry Jim,
  63. It's still another MAWU'.
  64. Chakijana! Wake up and wear your clothes,
  65. Of power and Wisdom.
- 
66. Keep your gates closed FOSATU,
  67. Because the workers enemies are ambushing you,
  68. They are looking for a hole to enter through,
  69. In order to disband you,
  70. Oh! We poor workers, dead we shall be,
  71. If they succeed in so doing,
  72. Close! Please close!
- 
73. You are the mole that was seen by the bosses'impimpis,
  74. Coming slowly but surely towards the factories,
  75. Fast ran the impimpis,
  76. And reported to the bosses and said:
  77. 'Baas, Baas, thina bukile lomvukuzane buya losayidi
  78. Kalofekthri kathina.'
  79. 'Yah, yah; What is the mvukuzane my boy, tell me,
  80. What is it?
  81. Is it one of FOSATU'S unions?
  82. You are a good muntu,
  83. Mina bhilda wena 6 room house
  84. Lapha lohomeland kawena.
  85. Thatha lo-machine gun, vala logates,
  86. Skathi wena buka lo-union,
  87. Bulala lo-union,
  88. Skathi lo-union yena ngena lapha fekthri kathina,
  89. Amashares phelile,
  90. lo-union thatha yonke.'
  91. Whilst still wondering what to do,

92. There came a messenger and said:  
93. 'Better leave everything as it is,  
94. 'Cause the union is already holding a meeting with  
95. The workers in the canteen,  
96. Not only here - there at Sasol as well.'

97. FOSATU we have chosen you to lead us,  
98. Time and again we have been electing leaders,  
99. Electing people with whom we were born, and  
100. With whom we grew up.  
101. People who knew all our sufferings,  
102. Together with whom we were enslaved,  
103. We have elected them because we believed they were,  
104. A lamp to brighten our way to freedom,

105. But to our dismay,  
106. After we had appointed them, we placed them on the  
107. Top of the mountain,  
108. And they turned against us  
109. They brought impimpis into our midst, to inflict  
110. Sufferings upon us,  
111. Some of us, those who were not clever, were shot down,  
112. To the dust and with bullets,  
113. Others were shut behind walls of darkness,  
114. Others opted for fleeing the land of their birth.

115. Is FOSATU also going to hug you with those warm Hands?  
116. His hands that know no racism?  
117. Prayed we did to our Mvelingqangi, and the  
118. Ancestors have answered us,  
119. And sent to us FOSATU!  
120. Don't disappoint us FOSATU,  
121. Don't sacrifice us to our adversaries,  
122. To date your policy and your sons are commendable,  
123. We don't know what's to happen tomorrow.

124. I dreamed I am a sangoma,  
125. You have come to me so that I tell all about you,  
126. I have thrown my bones and called on my abalozi,  
127. My bones and my abalozi are telling me this:

128. Yebo, handsome are your sons,  
129. Intelligent and healthy,  
130. But a deadly disease threatens them,  
131. One of your children is ailing,  
132. And this disease called death,  
133. May infect your other sons,  
134. Leaving them all sick,  
135. With this horrible disease,  
136. Cancer, yes cancer.

137. You have struck MAWU, are you drunk?  
138. Good Mnumzane, I am writing you a letter to ask,  
139. Permission to use this ground.  
140. We will be discussing and reporting to our members,

141. About all that we have achieved,  
142. Here is the agenda so that you may know about,  
143. What we are going to discuss,  
144. There you are big man, your refusal is a challenge,  
145. Get hold of him and pull him by the jacket,  
146. Put him into the judgment box,  
147. Come senior Judge,  
148. Judge against him for refusing us permission to use this  
stadium,  
149. The old man said this and that and he was left,  
150. Disappointed because the judge granted permission,  
151. Don't play with fire my friend, because  
152. You'll get burnt.

153. You are the metal locomotive that moves on top  
154. Of other metals,  
155. The metal that doesn't bend that was sent to the  
156. Engineers, but they couldn't bend it,  
157. If you pass away from this world,  
158. May your aroma that eases the brain,  
159. Never leave.  
160. That future generations of Africa,  
161. Can inhale that aroma of yours,  
162. You, wise veteran of our history.

163. Teach us FOSATU about the past organisations,  
164. Before we came,  
165. Tell us about their mistakes so that we may not,  
166. Fall foul of such mistakes.  
167. Our hopes lie with you, the Sambane that digs  
168. Holes and sleeps in them, whereas others dig  
169. Holes and leave them.  
170. I say this because you teach a worker to know,  
171. What his duties are in his organisation,  
172. And what he is in the community.  
173. Lead us FOSATU to where we are eager to go,  
174. Even in parliament you shall be our representative,  
175. Go and represent us because you are our Moses,  
176. through your leadership we shall reach our Canaan.  
177. They call you the disruptionist because you,  
178. Disrupted the employers at their own meeting.  
179. Because you, man of old asked a question:

180. 'Did you consider the workers?  
181. Have you really planned about FOSATU,  
182. The worker's representative?'  
183. 'No!'  
184. 'Well then we can't continue because FOSATU doesn't  
185. Laugh when they see something that makes workers  
186. Look laughable,'  
187. The meeting was disrupted,  
188. All that remained behind were beers, whiskeys, and  
189. Disappointment.  
190. The cakes and cooldrinks were also disappointed.  
191. Hero deal with them and throw them into the Red Sea.

192. Strangle them and don't let loose.
193. Until they tell the truth as to why they suck the
194. Worker's blood.
  
195. I am coming slowly and I am watching all that you are
196. Doing.
197. Your'e great FOSATU.
198. Bayethe!
199. Amandla Kubasebenzi!

## APPENDIX 1D

A written poem produced by Monde Mothlabane.

### UKUFA

1. Ziphi na iimbongi zesizwe?
2. Zize kubonga eli Tshawe,
3. Mna kakade bendingubani?
4. Ndilidela-nkundla nje.
  
5. Mfo mni na lo madoda?
6. Umandla odlula awendlovu,
7. Silo sini na esi zidweshu?
8. Siggiba isizwe nohlanga.
  
9. Ngumfo onobungangamsha,
10. Oqubul'amadoda anezigalo.
11. Othatha omncinci nomdala.
12. Kambe kufa akunanceba.
  
13. Obanjwe nguwe akanakuphuncuka,
14. Kwezo zandla zisinyith'ukuqina.
15. Noba kuthiwa siviwa ngondondolo,
16. Akukho ukunqwenelayo.
  
17. Kunamhla iinkokheli zohlanga ziphelile,
18. Kunamhla iinkcuba-buchopho uzigecile.
19. Kuba uqokelelela kuvimba wengcwaba.
20. Kufa unenkaani
  
21. Ndikufanise nendlovu yini na?
22. Kuba nayo uyiqubula iqubude kuwe,
23. Uyinyosi engabonwa mntu enengcwangu,
24. Esuzela ngolwamvila oluhlabayo.
  
25. Kwasentlandlolo phaya,
26. Wawusel'ukuquzela waboyis'ookhokho.
27. Ngathi uyingonyama , kodwa andigqibi.
28. Ingaba kukuba woyisa nayo.
  
29. Izizwe zisoloko zimi ngobhontsi,
30. Kuba wena akunazigqibo,
31. Ungumbane ukukhawuleza oku,
32. Ushiy'izililo apho udlula khona.
  
33. Woyisa amaciko neenzululwazi,
34. Ulixhwili elingahluthiyo,
35. Ungxowa ayizali ngokwenene,
36. Kambe akunalusini mfondini.
  
37. Hlalani nixhobile nifohlele,
38. Nilindele loo ngwelo yokugoduka,
39. Singafane sigxwal'emswaneni,
40. Ufikile wena aphel'emqaleni.
41. Ndee tshoni!



## TRANSLATION

### DEATH

1. Where are the poets of the nation?
2. To sing praises to this prince,
3. Who am I for that matter?
4. The despiser of the court.
  
5. What type of man is this, men?
6. With power exceeding that of an elephant?
7. What type of animal is this people?
8. Which ends the whole nation and tribe.
  
9. It is a man who has the great power,
10. Who struck the well-built men.
11. Who takes the young and old.
12. Of course, death you have no mercy.
  
13. The one who is caught by you cannot slip off,
14. From those hands which are very firm.
15. Even if it is said, it is tested by a long measuring stick,
16. There is no one having desire for you.
  
17. Today, the leaders of the nation have gone,
18. Today you have taken all brilliant men,
19. Because you are collecting for the grave.
20. Death, you are defiant.
  
21. Can I recognise you as an elephant?
22. Because you also struck it, to kneel before you.
23. You are a dangerous bee which is not seen by anyone.
24. Which wounds by its poisonous sting.
  
25. Even in olden days,
26. You were there, always very busy and you conquered our  
    grandparents,
27. You are like a lion, but I am still not sure,
28. Because the possibility is also that you defeat it.
  
29. The nations are always standing fearful,
30. Because you are not reliable,
31. You are the lightning in the way you quickly run,
32. You leave behind crying where you have passed.
  
33. You conquer the eloquents and intellectuals,
34. You are the wild dog that does not fill up,
35. The bag which does not really fill up,
36. No doubt, you don't have a smile, you guy.
  
37. You must stay equipped and armed,
38. Waiting for that wagon to drive home,
39. It's useless to cry,
40. Because when you arrive there is nothing that we can do.
41. I disappear!

## APPENDIX 1E

A poem produced by Bongani Sithole.

1. Yingxaki yingxubakaxaka,
2. Kub'uDalibhunga kaMandela ucholwa ngutat'uWalter Sisulu  
eGoli,
3. Uphum'eqhwesha kwaJongintaba eMqhekezweni ethath'ijoyini,
4. Engayigqibanga imfundo yakhe eFort Hare apho wayethunyelwe  
khona,
5. Waske wafika kwingwevu yaseNgcobo yamchola ngokwazana,
6. Ingxak'inye ke ngoku endiyibuzayo kanti ikwanguXhamela  
nguMgcina kaTyopo,
7. Unoba nab'ubukhosi ingathi buyothandana ukhonazana  
nokhonazana,
8. Ngxak'aph'aphinde wayifumane khon'inkosi yam uDalibhunga,
9. Ushiya uOliver Tambo eseFort Hare,
10. Phind'udibane naye kwizitrato zaseGoli,
11. Amqhub'umntaka Walter Sisulu,
12. Wayigqibezel'imfundo yakhe bayokudibana ngobugqwetha  
benyaniso,
13. Khumbula kaloku amagqwetha ukutheth'ityala lawo  
engagqwethanga kweliny'igqwetha.
14. Asuk'ema amagqweth'azigqwethela,
15. Kuba yayingagqweth'inyaniso.
16. Kubant' banengqond'okucinga,
17. Ixesha lokuma kule ndawo libe ngathi lide kakhulu,
18. Ndakufunda ndiqwalasele mna ngengqondo yam yobuyatha,
19. Abant'abaqigayo bayibhalil'incwadi yade yafundeka,
20. Kungoko nkoku ndiske ndanexhala,
21. Kuba amaBhulu ebesithi abacikide
22. Ngokubagcin'eRobben Island.
23. Suka zaphum'iinkosi zakwizwe lakowetheu amaQhawe namagorha.
24. Aphum'intloko zimhlope kodw'ubuchope busindile,
25. Aphum'enobuchopo bokuqiga.
26. Hayi le nyaniso ayiphind'ifuneke ndawo,
27. Nina babhali bencwadi yibhaleni niyishicilele,
28. Nina lusapho luzelweyo yiqondisiseni niyiqige,
29. Kuba ngomso madoda la mathambo aza kuhl'ezantsi emhlabeni,
30. Suka ngathi ngokuma bayayolela bayemka kweli lizwe,
31. Baza kusishiya necekwa lingakuthi na kanene nikhona nje,
32. Nas'isizukulwana sakho,
33. Nab'abantwan'abazelw'ungekho kweli lizwe,
34. Nab'abantwana bamankazana namadoda,
35. Nditheth'abantwana beAfrika eNtsundu,
36. Ndithetha ngeenkokheli zeAfrika eNtsundu,
37. Imidak'elwel'emny'imidaka kweli lizwe,
38. Engakhethanga ntlanga nalucalulo,
39. Isizwe esimnyama, simnyama nje simnyama,
40. Siya kufa simnyama sinje ke madoda,
41. Asinakujika ndawo,
42. iTshangaan, uMsuthu, iNyasa, umXhosa, iVend'umTswana,
43. Hayi madoda nomZulu ngokunjalo,
44. Singabantu abamnyama,

45. Nce-e-edani-i-i-i!
  46. Nceda mntakaMandela,
  47. Ncedani niyokuthatha uGatsha Buthelezi nimfak'estoksini,
  48. Ingxak'ilapho,
  49. Thathani uGatsha Buthelezi,
  50. Nimfak'ejele,
  51. Kuba nguy'odibene namagxagxa namaBhulu,
  52. Kuze kuf'abantu bakuthi,
  53. Mayenzeke loo nto,
  54. Magwala ndini,
  55. Zemk'iinkom'ekha-a-aya.
- 
56. Ncincilili!

## TRANSLATION

1. It is a problem, a real problem,
2. Because Dalibhunga of Mandela was taken by Walter Sisulu in Johannesburg,
3. He absconded from Jongintaba in Mqhekezweni and went to work,
4. Having not finished his education at Fort Hare where he was sent to,
5. Now he came across a grey-head from Engcobo and they knew each other because they were Thembus,
6. There is only one problem I want to ask, is he also Xhamela, the keeper of Tyopo,
7. He also has the royal blood that is why they love one another,
8. The other problem he met the King Dalibhunga,
9. He left Oliver Tambo there at Fort Hare,
10. And now he meets him in the streets of Johannesburg,
11. And Walter Sisulu asks him to go along with him,
12. He finished his education and they joined in the law of truth,
13. Imagine, lawyers representing themselves,
14. They just stood and defended themselves,
15. Because the truth could not be perverted,
16. To geniuses and brilliant people,
17. The time we have waited seems very long,
18. When I look at this and stare with my poor mind,
19. People who are brainy have written books that have been read,
20. That is why I have developed fear,
21. Because the whites thought they have strained them,
22. By keeping them on Robben Island,
23. All of a sudden the Kings of our nation are out, the brave, the warriors,
24. They came out grey-headed but the brain is not affected,
25. They came out with brains to reason,
26. No this truth won't be needed anymore,
27. Yes writers write it down and print it,
28. You youngsters that have been born take heed and think deep about it,
29. Because tomorrow these bones are going deep down underground,
30. It seems as if now they are saying their last words, they are leaving this world,
31. Will they leave the ball in our court, you are there,
32. Here are your grandchildren,
33. Here are the children that were born whilst you were not in this country,
34. Here are the children of men and women,
35. I mean children of the black Africa,
36. I mean the leaders of the black Africa,
37. Blacks that are fighting for other blacks in this country,
38. That do not have apartheid,
39. Black nation, black as we are,
40. We will never change,
41. We will die black as we are men,
42. Shangaans, Sothos, Malawians, Xhosas, Vendas, Tswanas,

43. And Zulus as well,
44. We are black people,
45. Please!
46. Please, son of Mandela,
47. Please go and fetch Gatsha Buthelezi and arrest him,
48. The problem is there,
49. Take Gatsha Buthelezi,
50. Put him in jail,
51. He is the one who is connected with the poor whites and  
Boers,
52. Which results in the deaths of our people,
53. That must be done,
54. You cowards,
55. Be aware of what is happening.

56. I disappear!



## APPENDIX 1F

A poem by Mzukisi Daweti which appeared in Imvo, 2 March 1990.

### **UBONGA UMANDELA**

1. Hanewu-u! Hoha-a! mabandlandin'akowethu,
2. Ndiveni nina bomzi kaPhalo nani bakwaMshweshwe,
3. Ndawonye nani nina bomzi kaSenzangakhona,
4. Ndisitsho nje ndibhekisa kuni nonke sizwendin'esiNtsundu,
5. Zikisan'ukucinga nikhumbul'imvelaphi yebandl'elimnyama,
6. Nihlalutye niphicoth'iinzima zeAfrika iphela,
7. Kuba kaloku libuyil'ithol'iduna lakwaMandela.
8. Libuyil'igorha lamagorha kumagorha ephela,
9. Leza lithwel'isidanga sokumel'inyaniso yoqobo,
10. Wafika gaxe! uRholihlahla irhorho yohlanga,
11. Azi loda lizole de lixole na izwe leAfrika?
12. Azi zoda ziphele imfazwe nogwintwano kwelaseAfrika?
13. Azi soda sibe sinye na isithebe samadoda elaseAfrika?

### **UMTHIKA**

14. Ndiboleken'umthika ndiventshuze nditshile ndisithi:
15. Rhorhondin'eyadel'irhuluw'erhaxayo nerhwexayo,
16. Ndukundini yomsimbithi yokuzimas'izizwe,
17. Izizwe zeAfrika kwanezo ziphesheya kolwandle,
18. Rhamnew'elibhagrumla kutsho kurhwagel'amaRhanuga,
19. Nkonyana yohlang'eyahlanganis'iintlanga,
20. Yalincam'iwayo ngenxa yokuthand'isizwe sakowayo.
21. Mzi wase-Afrika maze nimhloniph'umntakaMandela,
22. Ze nimhwese ngeso sidanga sakhe sobukhalipha,
23. Ze inganisithel'into yokuba lo ngumntwan'egazi,
24. Kub'obakh'ubukhosi wabuncama wazenz'idini lesizwe,
25. Simthanda de simthamsangelise ngobukroti bakhe,
26. Niyenze banzi ke le mbeko nakwisizukulwana sakhe.
27. Tarhuni nonke midak'emnyam'engeva sepha,
28. Qiqani niqonde ze nilungiselel'ukwenza,
29. Ningenz'into engayi kukholek'esizweni,
30. Kuba kalok'yosuk'ibe nomvuk'oyakudal'ubuzaza,
31. Ngxe ngokunivusel'amahasa kwanezilandu nto zakuthi,
32. Simkil'isithoko-thoko sobumnyam'e-Afrika mawab'akuthi,
33. Kusile gede ilanga linyuk'iintaba zokhahlamba.

### **ISIZWE**

34. Wabambeni ke la mazwi khon'ukuze isizwe sakheke,
35. Wabambeni kalok'ukuz'ungatsh'umlamb'igqili neTsitsa,
36. Wabamben'ukuz'angagxwal'amathamb'ooyihlo kwiNtaba kaNdoda,
37. Kwowu! inene kamb'izithuku-thuku zenja ziphelele'eboyeni,
38. Wabambeni kaloku lusaphondini oluNtsundu nozipho,
39. Niwahluze niwele kuba kaloku athethwa siqhuza,
40. Ndiyekeni ke ndikhweze lo mlamb'iNxuba ndigoduke,
41. Ayandibiz'amathamb'oobaw'omkhulu kulo ntab'eZono,
42. Kunga kungaCamagu kube Chosi kube Hele mabandl'aNtsundu,
43. Kuded'ubumnyama kuthi qwenge! qheke! kukhanye kuthi,
44. Ndee ngciph', ndee ncincilili-i-i!

## TRANSLATION

### HE IS PRAISING MANDELA

1. Ha-a-lt! Ha-a-lt! people of my home,
2. Hear me you of the house of Phalo and you of Moshoeshoe,
3. Together with you of the house of Senzangakhona,
4. As I say so, I am referring to all you African nations,
5. Think seriously and recall the origins of the black nation,
6. Analyse and peruse the difficulties of Africa as a whole,
7. Because the bullock of the Mandela family has come back.
8. The warrior of warriors, in all warriors that there be, has  
come back,
9. He has come having graduated in standing for the real truth,
10. He has arrived in his fullness! animal of the tribe,
11. Will there ever be harmony and peace in the African  
continent?
12. Will war and murdering of each other ever terminate in  
Africa?
13. Will there ever be a common table for the men of Africa?

### ROYAL CLOAK

14. Lend me a royal cloak so that I can promulgate thus:
15. An animal that out-witted the smell of gunpowder,
16. The strong tree that officiates the nations,
17. The nations of Africa as well as those overseas,
18. The wild beast that so roars that the foreigners frown,
19. The new-born calf of the tribe that joins the tribes,
20. It denied its home because of its love for the nation.
21. House of Africa you should respect Mandela's child,
22. You should crown him with the degree of his heroism,
23. It should not get out of your sight that this is a member of  
the royal family,
24. Because he denied his chieftainship and made himself a  
sacrifice for the nation,
25. Love him till we bless him with his heroism,
26. You should extend your respect even to his generation.
27. Hail!, you of the black nation,
28. Reason, understand and be ready for action,
29. Do not do something that will not be to the liking of the  
nation,
30. Because that will have an eruption that will precipitate  
chaos,
31. Pardon for arousing the old things of the past and grudges my  
fellow people,
32. Gloominess of the dark has vanished, my fellow illustrious  
people,
33. Dawn has come, the sun is rising over the Drakensberg  
mountains.

### THE NATION

34. Get hold of these words so that the nation may be built,
35. Get hold of them so that the rivers Orange and Tsitsa might

- not dry up,
36. Get hold of them so that the bones of your fathers in Mount Ndoda might not shout out,
  37. By the way, don't let them evade you,
  38. Get hold of them you family whose darkness extends even to the nail,
  39. You should refine and strain them because they are spoken by a clown,
  40. Get rid of me so that I can take the upward direction of the Nxuba river and go home,
  41. The bones of my forefathers are calling me in mount Zono (the mountain of sin),
  42. Wishing it to be peaceful, and may there be alleviation black nations,
  43. Darkness should give way, the break of day should shine light on us,
  44. Ndee ngciph', ndee ncincilili-i-i!

## APPENDIX 1G

An edited version of a poem by L W M Xozwa which appeared in  
Umthunywa, March 1990.

### **IZIBONGO ZIKAGQIRHA NELSON MANDELA INKUNZI YAKUTHI E-QUNU IPHUMILE EJELE**

1. Aa! Mthandi wesizwe! Aa! Mthandi wesizwe!
2. Uggomogqomo loggoloma woMthembu ongetshonelwalanga nanyanga.
3. Into yona edume phesheya naphonoshono kwezilwandle ngokuzenz'idini.
4. Umlilo wedobo lakuloZondwa ovutha ngesivuthevuthe,
5. Otshis'utshentula onk'amahlath'aseAfrika kwasinda elakowabo eQunu.
6. Kambe lona walishiya ukuze abalekele kulo akugrogriswa ngamabhulu.
7. Imvambilini kaNongaphi, intombi kaKhedama emaMpemvini.
8. Ethe yakuvalelwa eziseleni zetilongo lashukuma ilizwe liphela.
9. Kambe eli hlathi likaBhalizulu eMthatha ndilincamile oko lizel'uggoloma.
10. Uggolom'omkhulu ochithe umbuso kaVorster noVelevutha babhubha.
11. Into yona eyahlalis'uBotha kakubi wancama, wacela koxhongo, wayincama iTuinhuis.
12. Esoyiswa ngamantshontsho aloggoloma asuk'axel'iinkumbi.
13. Kuba kaloku awunalusini koohlohlesakhe nokuba babalanjanina.
14. Uphumile uMthandi wesizwe esikiti, ukuze kukhululeke isizwe esimnyama.
15. Ibuyile inkunzi kaBhalizulu empondo zimaxhakaxhaka.
16. Ulwimi labafazi baseGwatyu eQamata abathanda kakhulu intle bendwane, ababelwimiza besith'uRolihlahla ozam'ukurholihlahla lenkululeko, elikhupha kubobo, neentshinyela yehlathi lenkqubo yokucalucalulana ngebala.
17. Kambe mawethu, eli lizwe laseTranskei ndilincamile.
18. Ndilincame ngokufuya iimpundulo nazo zonk'iintaka de lafuya nentengu, into yon'eyalus'umhlambi wakowayo dee yaluse namasel' omhlambi.
19. Umthandi wesizwe owade waxolela ukujinga iliso ngenxa yesizwe sakowabo.
20. Kaloku itilongo yivenkile xa usilwela ilungelo lakho.
21. Izithuko nezenyeliso zizachola zokuhomba amafel'anyaniso.
22. Ndithe kuni le nkunz'akowethu ingatsib'iintango zeVictor Verster nje izakwenza iziqwenga, ayakwenyisa amathole mz'omhlophe lumkani.
23. Yaziwa kulo lonke ngokukhonya nokuhlaba, amahlath'eZambia ayandingqinela.
24. Aniwabon'amathambo eKumkani yabaThembu uJonguhlanga enyakaza nje?
25. Kuba kaloku le nduli yesithebe iyalazi eli thole lomsengi wakuloDalindyabo.
26. Liphuma nje namhlanje etilongweni licamagu kowethu ebaThenjini.

27. Kaloku igama likaNelisini thina siyalihlonipha bafazindini basedolophini.
28. Awukaweva na amadlagusha embiza ngomgrogrisi?
29. Zange ulive na igama awaliphiwa ngamagwala esithi nguye iKomanisi?
30. kaloku yena uyabatshica abancethezi nabakhawabanisi.
31. Uv'inkomo kaSisulu eNgcobo xa imbonga kuhlokom'ilizwe, 'Mandela yena, liKomanisi, Mandela yena liKomanisi, Viva'.
32. Ndithe kuwe buya uyekuvula ePalamente eKapa zingene iinto ezimnyama.
33. Buyel'ekhaya kaloku uze kuhlanjw'ishwangusha letilongo.
34. Uyabulela umz'ontsundu kumfana kaDe Klerk,
35. onesibindi sengweny'ukud'avulele uMthandi wesizwe aphume esikiti sikaVelevutha.
36. Iyabulela ilali kaBhalizulu ngokuvulela ithole lesilo lisisilo ngokwalo.
37. Maz'enethole kuwe mzukulwana wabandlebe zikhany'ilanga.
38. Ngokubuyisa iimbacu zakowethu, zizokufela ekhaya kunasemaggagaleni.
39. Kuba kaloku ephumile nje uRolihlahla uyabuya noTambo emahlathini.
40. Vulani amazibuko, lunyathel'ubhel'olumanz'andonga lakuloSabata Dalindyebo.
41. Hambani nokubikel'iintsapho zethu emangcwabeni ukuba ude wabuya uNelson.
42. Xelelani uBiko noMxenge nithi okaMandela uphumile eluvalelweni.
43. Yitsho kuNzo abuye eLusaka izinja zikhuluwe amazinyo.
44. Xelelani okaTutu abikele ooNyawo-ntle bathandazele uNelson;
45. Kaloku nimcelele impilo nde ntle nje ngoMosisi, de sifike enkululekweni.
46. Ndee pam, ndee nyam, ndee tshobololo ooo-ooo!!



## TRANSLATION

### THE PRAISES OF DR NELSON MANDELA OUR HERO FROM QUNU HAS BEEN RELEASED FROM JAIL

1. Hail! lover of the nation! Hail! lover of the nation!
2. The tallest one of the snake of Thembu to whom the sun does not set.
3. The one who is famous all over the country and abroad for allowing himself to be made a sacrifice.
4. The fire of the bush of Zondwe who burns furiously,
5. Who burns all the forests of Africa except the one at Qunu,
6. He left it out because he wanted to take refuge in it when terrorised by the Boers.
7. The son of Nongaphi, the daughter of Khedame of the Mphemvus,
8. The one who, when taken to the cells, made the whole earth shake.
9. The forest of Bhalizulu in Umtata has given birth to a hero.
10. The hero that totally disorganised the cabinet of Vorster and Verwoerd.
11. The one who upset Botha until he gave up, and left the Tuinhuis.
12. He was defeated by the young ones of this hero, they were like insects.
13. Because the hero does not compromise with the greedy irrespective of their way of counting.
14. The lover of the nation is out of jail so that the black nation can be liberated.
15. The bull of Bhalizulu with many horns is out.
16. The gossip of women from Gwatyu (Matanzima) who are very fond of gossip, are talking about the one who is bringing liberation, whilst they have been siding with the government.
17. I have given up concerning this country of Transkei.
18. Transkei has various leaders of different kinds.
19. The lover of the nation who dedicated himself to the nation.
20. The thing is, jail is a shop when fighting for your rights.
21. Insults and blasphemy are ornaments for decorating the warriors of truth.
22. I have said to you now that this bull has come out of Victor Verster, it is going to do things. Watch out you whites, the young calves (leaders) are going to fight back.
23. It is known throughout by its bellowing and fighting, the Zambian forests are seconding me.
24. Don't you see that the bones of the chief of the Thembus, Jonguhlanga, are disturbed.
25. Because this place of Sithebe knows and respects Mandela.
26. Now that today he is out of jail, there is jubilation among the Thembus.
27. You women, to us the name of Nelson is revered.
28. Have you heard the opposition calling him a terrorist?
29. Have you heard the name given to him, the cowards saying he is a communist?
30. Because he hates the traitors and evil doers.

31. You heard Sisulu from Engcobo praising Mandela till the echoes filled the world, 'Mandela is a communist, Mandela is a communist, Viva'
32. I said to you come back and open Cape Town Parliament so that the blacks can go in.
33. Come back so that you can be ritually cleansed of the misfortune of jail.
34. The black nation is giving thanks to the son of De Klerk,
35. Who has the bravery of the crocodile, now that he has eventually let the lover of the nation out of the jail created by Verwoerd.
36. The nation of Bhalizulu is thankful for the letting out the son of a King, he himself being a King.
37. Thank you very much grandchild, for letting Mandela out.
38. For bringing home our people from exile so that they can die at home rather than in foreign countries.
39. Because now that Rolihlahla is back, Tambo will be back from the forests.
40. Pave the way so that the handsome one of Sabata Dalindyebo may walk in.
41. Go and inform your deceased in the graves that Nelson has eventually come.
42. Inform Biko and Mxenge that Nelson is out of prison.
43. Tell Nzo that he must come back from Lusaka, the dogs (Boers) no longer have teeth.
44. Tell Tutu that he must inform the priests to pray for Nelson;
45. So that intercessions are made for his health and long life, like Moses, till we get liberation.
46. Ndeepam, ndeenyam, ndeetshobololo ooo-ooo!!

APPENDIX 2

DAILY DISPATCH (EAST LONDON) - 4 AUGUST 1988

**PRAISE SINGER ARRESTED?**

BISHO - Ciskei Police could not deny or confirm reports that a former praise singer to Ciskei's President Lennox Sebe, Mr Jongela Nojozi, had been arrested in Ciskei.

Mr Nojozi was also a praise singer to both the founder and former President of Transkei, Paramount Chief Kaiser Matanzima, and his brother, the former Transkei Prime Minister, Chief George Matanzima.

A Ciskei police spokesman referred inquiries to the head of the police public relations department, Colonel A Ngaki, who was not available for comment.

There were unconfirmed reports that Mr Nojozi had been arrested at a Bisho hotel on Tuesday night.

Mr Nojozi had fled Ciskei and lived in Transkei where he joined the Transkei Department of Foreign Affairs as a protocol officer.

Last year, there was an application before the Bisho Supreme Court to order Ciskei to release Mr Nojozi from detention on the grounds that he had been arrested in eZibeleni, Transkei, and not in Ciskei.

The respondents in that case - the Commissioner of Police, Minister of Justice, Police and Prisons and the Commissioner of Prisons - consented to the order without admission. - DDR

NOTE:

Although the exact events and reasons surrounding Nojozi's arrest and detention remain shrouded, Mr Nojozi felt that his association with Transkei's leaders had contributed to his arrest and harassment. This took place at a time when Ciskei's President Lennox Sebe was accusing Transkei of attempting to destabilise that region. The leaders of Ciskei and Transkei have since been ousted from power.

**METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES**

The methodological procedures which have been followed essentially involve a consideration of the available literature, as well as extensive field-work, which forms an integral part of this thesis. Prominent leaders and chiefs have been interviewed, as have iimbongi (both literate and illiterate, those within trade unions and religious organisations, as well as those found within the more rural areas such as Transkei). This allows one the opportunity to assess the views of the chiefs against the realities which the iimbongi are experiencing. Iimbongi operating within urban areas (including trade unions and the African National Congress) have also been interviewed and their poetry collected and analysed.

A tape recorder and video camera have been used in order to collect material.

Available literature serves as a point of departure against which field-work can be tested and analysed. A thorough search of the available literature on praise poetry in general, on socio-economic and political changes, and the use of political oratory, has been conducted.



FIELD-WORK - A CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE INCLUDING SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT OCCASIONS AND PLACES WHERE RESEARCH WAS CONDUCTED. PRIMARY RESEARCH SUBJECTS ARE ALSO LISTED.

1. 8-9 September 1987

Conducted an interview with the late Chief M Ndamase, Acting Paramount Chief of the Western Mpondo people in the Transkei, and brother to the present State President. The interview was conducted at Nyandeni Great Place near Libode. Also present were Mr Makubalo and Mr Sitshako.

2. 24 September 1987

Interviewed Chief K D Matanzima, former Prime Minister and State President of Transkei, and Paramount Chief of Emigrant Thembuland. The interview was conducted at Qamata Great Place near Cofimvaba. I was also able to tape the chief's imbongi who performed on that day.

3. 3 October 1987

Held a discussion with Melikhaya Mbutuma, a prominent Transkei imbongi who was the official imbongi to the late Chief Sabata Dalindyebo. The discussion took place at the 1820 Settler Monument in Grahamstown. I was able to record one of Mbutuma's latest poems.

4. 29 April 1988

Held a discussion with G Ngabeni, a student at Fort Hare

University and former imbongi to Charles Sebe in the Ciskei. The discussion was held at Fort Hare University in Alice.

5. 27 June 1988

Held a discussion with Mr Bingwa, headmaster of a school near Engcobo in the Transkei where some of the students produced oral poetry.

6. 6-9 July 1988

Attended a conference hosted by the Natal Oral Documentation Centre at which D L P Yali-Manisi (imbongi) was present. I was able to discuss certain matters with Mr Manisi during the course of this conference. He also produced izibongo.

7. 13 and 16 July 1988

Held discussions with Reverend Xozwa, an imbongi living at Tafalehashe near Coffee Bay on the Transkei Wild Coast. Xozwa produces poetry both orally and in writing and provided valuable information with regard to the co-existence of oral and written forms in Xhosa.

8. August 1988

Held a discussion with Mr N Bungane from Mdantsane in the Ciskei. Some information was obtained on the whereabouts of Mr M Qangule, an imbongi arrested in the Transkei during the crisis which was precipitated by the clash between Chief K D Matanzima and Chief S Dalindyebo concerning Transkeian independence.

9. A conversation was held with the Daily Dispatch reporter who researched and wrote the article entitled 'Praise Singer Arrested' (Daily Dispatch, 4 August 1988).

10. 1 September 1988

Travelled to Uitenhage to conduct an interview with D Songwigi, an imbongi operating within COSATU.

11. 8 September 1988

Interviewed three students at All Saints' Secondary School near Engcobo. One of the students was able to produce oral poetry spontaneously.

12. 23 September 1988

Visited five black schools in Grahamstown where interviews were conducted with a number of students and teachers in order to establish whether oral poetry was being produced in these contexts. An interview was also conducted with Monde Mothlabane, a well known imbongi living in Grahamstown.

13. 24 November 1988

Conducted an interview with Reverend Xozwa whilst he was on a visit to Grahamstown.

14. 8 December 1988

Recorded a church service at Tafalehashe in the Transkei. The service was conducted by Reverend Xozwa. An interview was also

conducted with him concerning the poetic devices used in his style of preaching.

15. 4 January 1989

Interviewed Major General Bantu Holomisa, the leader of the ruling Military Council in Transkei.

16. 24-29 April 1989

Attended celebrations for the opening of Nombulelo Secondary School in Grahamstown. Three imbongi produced poetry on this occasion.

17. 15 May 1989

Conducted an interview with J Nojozi, an imbongi from the Ciskei who has produced poetry both in the Ciskei and the Transkei.

18. 3 June 1989

Attended the opening of Tanty Lower Primary School in Grahamstown. Mothlabane produced izibongo on this occasion.

19. 3-7 July 1989

Travelled to Durban where time was spent with A T Qabula, a well known imbongi who performs within COSATU.

20. 3 September 1989

Attended a conference on contemporary oral traditions at the University of Transkei.

21. 7 October 1989

Travelled to King William's Town where a number of iimbongi performed at an imbongi competition. Interviews were conducted and the performances were video taped.

22. 16 October 1989

Spent time in discussion with Monde Mothlabane of Grahamstown. Poetry was produced.

23. 23 October 1989

Again time was spent with Monde Mothlabane.

24. 2, 9, 16, 23 November 1989

Met with Mothlabane at his home in Joza Township, Grahamstown.

25. 3-4, 7 December 1989

Observed and taped Mothlabane performing at church meetings.

26. 12 March 1990

Travelled to Grahamstown from Umtata in order to see Mothlabane concerning the analysis of certain poetry.

27. 19 March 1990

Met with Qabula and discussed the analysis of some of his poetry.



28. 21 March 1990

Attended a performance by Mzwakhe Mbuli in Umtata at the University of Transkei.

29. 22-29 April 1990

Mr Nelson Mandela arrived in Umtata. I accompanied him during his stay recording poetry wherever possible. It was during this time that I met Bongani Sithole, an imbongi living in Umtata.

30. 11-15 May 1990

Travelled to Grahamstown where I spent time with Monde Mothlabane. My analysis of his poetry was discussed.

31. 18-20 May 1990

Travelled to Egoso Store near Engcobo in order to see Melikhaya Mbutuma, an imbongi from that area.

32. May-July 1990

Conducted a series of interviews with Bongani Sithole at his home in Ngangelizwe in Umtata. I also observed him perform on a number of occasions in and around Umtata.

33. August-September 1990

Visited the United States. I was able to attend church services conducted by Afro-American preachers in order to observe the styles and techniques which were being used and to compare them with those being used by Xhosa preachers.

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