

PUBLICATIONS OF THE OPLAND COLLECTION OF XHOSA LITERATURE
VOLUME 2

D.L.P. Yali-Manisi
imbongi entsha

Iimbali zamanyange
historical poems

edited and translated by
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UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL PRESS

Published in 2015 by University of KwaZulu-Natal Press
Private Bag X01
Scottsville, 3209
Pietermaritzburg
South Africa
Email: books@ukzn.ac.za
Website: www.ukznpress.co.za

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ISBN: 978-1-86914-283-4

Managing editor: Sally Hines

Editor: Karen Press

Typesetter: Patricia Comrie

Cover design: MDesign

Cover photo: D.L.P. Yali-Manisi at the official opening of the International Library of African Music building, Rhodes University, 17 May 1979
(photo: Reg Griffiths/ILAM Archive/ILAM/Africa Media Online)



Printed and bound in South Africa by Interpak Books, Pietermaritzburg

Siyambulel' umnt' osenzel' imbadu
Siyawabulel' amanyang' elakokwethu
Ukusivisa ngeembali zamanyange
Kuba sasihlel' emnyameni singazi nto
Sibe kambe siluhlanga lakwaMthetho kaMthetho
KwaMtheth' onzima
Singabantu bezithethe namasiko abo

We thank someone who brings us news,
we thank the ancients of our land
for telling us tales of our ancestors,
for we “lived in darkness knowing nothing”,
when we're really the race of the Law of Laws,
of the Law that is Strict,
we're people with customs and ways of their own.

from an *izibongo* by D.L.P. Yali-Manisi recorded by
Jeff Opland outside Queenstown on 17 February 1971



David Yali-Manisi during the performance of his poem on the cattle-killing (item 5).
Khundulu Valley, December 1970 (photo: Jeff Opland).

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ballon *note* *enr destruction*

Ingxaki eyasenzakalisayo

Lee tshitshiba!

Lee tshi-tshi-ba. *calamity*

Yehla ingxaki nengxubaxaka,

Yaxakekis' umhlaba kaPhalo.

Awu!

Sisimbonono kwizizukulwana,

Kukufa kobukeleyo, *burial*

Yingxak' eyehlel' umhlaba kaPhalo.

Ligqudu, sithi yintoni, ngumkhonto?

Hay' ishwangusha!

Lehla ngengxaki yentombi kaMhlakaza,

Yingxak' eyehla kumhlaba kaGcaleka.

Mhl' amadod' axakeka,

Enza isikizi nenyala,

Ukubhentsuzel' umhlaba kaPhalo,

Awenza ixhoba lezihange,

Kwakunye nezibhadubhadu.

Ndayithand' inkazana,

Ndingayibonanga!

Kuba ndiyamthand' uSathana,

Ngokubuswa ngamagwangqa.

Kulo mhla ke lehl' inyala,

Kuba yem' intombi kaMhlakaza,

Iba ngakuvela phezu komlambo,

Ibuy' ingxak' iyiphethe ngomlomo,

Ibikel' amadoda,

Int' ezingazanga zeva ngedikazi.

lebla ← struck
accosted

The problem that wrought our destruction (1856–7)

Listen!
Listen to me!
Calamity struck,
casting confusion on Phalo's land.
Awu!
Limitless wailing,
death to the witness,
a problem that crippled the land of Phalo.
A kerie, perhaps a spear?
No, nothing short of catastrophe!
The problem accosted Mhlakaza's daughter,¹
took shape in the land of Gcaleka.
Men abandoned their senses completely,
admitting shame and disgrace,
causing turmoil in Phalo's land,
now a den of brigands and tramps.
I admire that girl I've never met;
I'm a loyal fan of Satan:
he's got the whites at his beck and call!

So calamity struck this land
when Mhlakaza's daughter returned from the pool,
came home to proclaim the problem,
laid her demented report before men,
who pay scant heed to women.

AC 10 it was a
plot by the bar.
+ Nungu was a
conspirator
↓
Satan controls
the whites

1. Actually, Mhlakaza's niece. On the cattle-killing, see Peires (1989).

Yayilishoba kwaloo nto,
 Ukuqalekiswa kwesizwe sikaXhosa,
 Kusuk' umntw' ebhinqile
 Ath' uthethile namanyange,
 Uthethe naw' ewabonile.
 Azi babeye phi n' abantu balo mhlaba?
 Zaziye phi n' izigwakumbesha?
 Zaziye phi n' izidwangube?
 Babephi n' oogxalaba libanzi,
 Ooxhentsa besombelelwa,
Bejonge kumaxhag' eenkomo zabo?

Xa kulapho ke, mabandl' akokwethu,
 Yiyole le ngxaki yeza noNongqawuse,
 Owawabikel' amaXhos' ehlel' ekonwabeni;
 Wath' uthethile kambe namanyange,
 Ath' amanyange makuxhelwe zonk' iinkomo,
 Kubhukuqw' izisele kube phandle,
 Kuba kuza kutheth' uNdikhoyo kaMenzi,
 Esith' ukumbiza nguQamata.
 Nguye lo Qamata wayebeke yena ngaphambili,
 Ngawo loo mhla kwehl' imbunguzulu,
 Int' engazang' ingene kumhlaba kaPhalo.
 Kuloo mhl' uNongqawuse wabek' uQamata,
 Wath' izisele zehla njengobulembu,
 Ziya kuhla zivela phezulu,
 Zinakaneziwe.
 Kulapho k' abantu bakwaPhalo
Baya kuphila khona.
 Hayi kambe le mana!
 Yimana eyavela kwaloo mini,
 Yazixel' ubuxelegu.
 Kuba sasinawo kamb' amatola,
 Angazang' abike ngxaki
 Eyavela noNongqawuse,
 Intombi kaMhlakaza.

The whole thing stank from the start,
a blight on this land of Xhosa
for a woman to claim that the shades had addressed her,
that she'd met and conversed with them face to face!

} gender
+
authenticity

Where were the thinkers in this land?
Where were the men of distinction?
Where were the nobles?
Where were the veterans?
Dancing to rhythmical clapping,
besotted on cattle they mimed.

So, my dear people,
Nongqawuse proclaimed a problem,
informing the Xhosa, relaxed, unsuspecting:
she claimed she'd talked to the shades in person,
and they'd called for the wholesale slaughter of cattle,
the total destruction of grain,
for the One Everlasting would speak to the nation,
the one we know by the name of Qamata,
the same Qamata who'd pressed her to prominence
the day the shapeless took form,
events unheard of in Phalo's land.

} implying can place
- they appear as
preg.

Nongqawuse spoke in the name of Qamata:
grain would grow free, wild as the moss,
grain would descend from the sky:
Phalo's people would gather their food.

- omnisciently

But oh, this manna,
rank with corruption:
our sages foresaw no problems
such as those Nongqawuse announced,
the daughter of Mhlakaza.

} implies that
Nongqawuse was not
a prophet of
the amaXhosa

Ithe ke kambe yakutheth' intokazi
 Athi kub' amaXhosa ngabantu bomthonyama,
 Ingabantu bezithethe namasiko.
 Basuka bakhongozela, basingatha
 Bangena kuzw' iinkomo zabo zingenatyala.
 Way' umhlaba kaPhal' uzel' uhlaza,
 Kuba yayingeyongca yayiyibhukazi.
 Zaf' iinkomo zingenatyala,
 Zadunduluzela kwiintili-ntili zingatyiswa mntu,
 Kuba yayingengomanqatha yayingamafehle.
 Zathathw' izisele zaphokozwa,
 Kwathathw' ukutya kwajik' iintsikizi.
 Zaqal' iintaka zadimala.
 Yazal' imilambo kwakufik' imvula,
 Ilayish' iinkozo zomhlaba kaPhalo.
 Yakhukulis' imilambo yakwelel' elwandle.

Yaqala yavela k' ingxaki:

Basal' abantu bezibhadubhadu.
 Yafika yon' imini yentombi kaMhlakaza;
 Laphum' ilang' empumalanga njengesiqhelo,
 Laya laduda, layiduda kamb' intungo yamazulu,
 Lathi lakufik' esazulwini sesibhakabhaka,
 Langa lingaphethuka ngokukhangela kwamanyange –
 Kulokw' amanyang' ayeseqhathan' ukukhangela ngeenkozo zamehlo,
 Kuba lo mhlaba wawusowuxakekile:
 Zingakhal' iintsana, zijweda –
 Lesuka lon' ilanga langcambaza,
 Lacubhuka laxel' ilovane
 Lijonge kuw' umthi wekhiwane.
 Lahamb' ilanga laya lee zozololo.
 Bath' abantu nokw' iphazamekile le mini,
 Masikhangel' ingoms' ukuba lozala ntoni na.
 Yesuka yon' imini yengomso
 Kwayona yanjengesiqhelo:
 Laya lavel' ilanga laya lakusithela.
 Wesuk' umntu waqala waxakcka,

At the time this girl presented her claim
 the Xhosa controlled their land,
 a nation sustained by custom.
 So they prepared to receive what was coming,
 commenced their slaughter of innocent cattle.

→ see Mphahlele's
 custom

Phalo's land was swathed in green,
 with grasslands lushly luxuriant.
 The innocent cattle sank to the spear,
 littered the valleys unconsumed:
 their carcasses were bloated.

} not true
 - it was a blue
 of the
 & now

Pits were scraped clean, grain tossed aside,
 attracting foul hornbills² who feasted till gorged.
 With rain the rivers were clogged,
 clogged with corn from Phalo's land,
 and they swept it all down on their course to the sea.

Then came the shock: people roamed dazed.
 On Mhlakaza's daughter's appointed day
 the sun rose in the east as it did every day,
 it danced on and on up the arch of the sky.
 As it reached the very heights of heaven
 the old people saw it stop dead in its tracks,
 but oh their eyes were only deluding them,
 and calamity racked the land:

} the Δ of the
 believable

babies' bawling yielded to shrieks!
 On the sun passed on its regular way,
 a fateful chameleon³ inching along,
 slowly edging on down to a fig tree,
 finally flopping below the horizon.
 Everyone cried, "The date must be wrong:
 why don't we see what tomorrow will bring?"
 But the following day was just like the first:
 the sun ranged the sky and again disappeared.
 Then the problem could not be avoided.

2. Birds of ill omen.
 3. The chameleon was believed to have introduced death to mortals.

Zath' iinkosi zazimbunyenge,
 Ath' amadod' azinyobololo.
 Bay' abafazi betsazis' imixhadi,
 Besith' iintsana zibaxakile:
 Babangafak' intlonz' azibambelesi,
 Kuba nakw' iintlonz' akusatsitsi negazi.
 Kwaf' indoda, kwaf' umfazi,
 Kwaf' usana, kwaf' ixhego,
 Kwaf' iinkosi, kwaf' iinduna,
 Waxakeka k' umhlaba kaPhalo.
 Yiyo leyo ke le ngxaki yaseenzakalisayo!
 Buzani kuMalashe kwaGcaleka,
 Uyayazi yena le mini,
 Kuba yayixake yen' esentundweni yomhlaba;
 Andisathethi ke ngoNtaba,
 UNtaba ndixel' uZanzolo,
 Kub' uNtaba ngokaZanzolo kwaKhawuta.
 Nguwona mhlaba ke wavel' imbunguzulu,
 Ukuze kuwel' uNgqika kuwel' umhlaba kaKhawuta.
 Nal' ishoba kuloo nzwakazi, *beautiful*
 Intomb' emabele made:
 Kuloko loo min' ayezizibhungu,
 Kub' intombi yayiqal' ukuz' ebuntombini.
 Yathi kanti noko kunjalo
 Ishoba lokubula' umzi kaPhal' ungenatyala *innocent*
 Liya kungena ngayo.
 Kambe nayw' asiyibeki tyala,
 Kuba intombi yayinyonyozelwe:
 Kwavel' igqwirha lingaziwa mntu.
 Kwaqal' ingqobhoko yangena,
 Sayamkel' ingqobhoko sathi samkel' uThixo,
 Kanti loo Thixo sithi siyamamkela,
 Le Bhayibhil' izel' inyumnyezi:
 Iphethwe yindod' ekhol' ijong' entshonalanga;
 Apha ngaphambili ngumqokumbelo,

Panic seized chiefs,
men sagged down stunned;
 with straining necks the women complained
 of the problems they had with nursing:
 their babies were spurning their nipples,
 their shrivelled breasts wouldn't even ooze blood.
 Death struck man! Death struck woman!
 Death struck young! Death struck old!
 Death struck chief! Death struck councillor!
 Phalo's land was utterly crushed:
 that is the problem that wrought our destruction!
 Ask old Malashe⁴ in Gcaleka's land:
 he still recalls the day's confusion,
 gazing baffled at rubble and ruin.
 Remember Ntaba, the son of Zanzolo⁵
 (Ntaba's Zanzolo's son, son of Khawuta),
 for his was the land that bore the full brunt.
 Shattered forever was Ngqika's power,
 the power of all the land of Khawuta.

breastfeeding

]

① The winsome woman must bear the blame,
 an adolescent with nubile breasts,
 pert and thrusting, unmarried breasts.
 Despite her beauty, she bears the blame
 for the downfall of Phalo's innocent people.
 And yet the blame doesn't rest on her,
 for she in turn was the gullible dupe
 of witchcraft unheard of in Phalo's land.
 All our troubles began with conversion:
 embracing God we accepted the bible
 rank as it was with evil incarnate,
 held by a man who looked to the West,
 clerical collar prim in front

① *emphasises her sexuality*

① *A from udphay*
 ↓
critic of all Christianity, not just H. forms.

4. Malashe was a son of the Gcaleka king Khawuta.
 5. Khawutha was the son of Gcaleka in the Great House. Khawutha was the father of Hintsu (Zanzolo), who was the father of Sarhili (Ntaba).

Ngasemva yel' intunj' yokuhlal' amabhabhathane.
 Kanti kulapho kugangxwe khon' inkanunu,
 Evela phantsi kwendleb' iphum' esilevini,
 Kant' iqhawul' iminqambulo kwabangaphambili.
 Uthe wakuxakeka k' umhlaba,
 Yangena yajojobala,
 Yangena yathomalalisa.
 Inj' enkul' into kaGreyi,
 Bayawath' ukuyibiza yingang' uJoji kaGreyi,
 Yath' iyawulungis' umhlaba,
 Kanti ngexesha lenyala lesikizi,
 Ibimele mgama yakh' umkhanyo,
 Ijong' isiphumo sokufa kwezidumbu,
 Abantu bequngquluza bengatyiwa nkanunu,
 Kuba babekwaz' ukurhubuluza ngezisu,
 Bepheph' inkanunu besiya kumbulali!
 Ncincilili!!
 Ncincilili.

secured at the back by a butterfly stud,
 behind his back a cannon concealed
 comes down from his ear and out through his mouth
 and smashes to smithereens all those before him.

ent of col.

As the country reeled in confusion
 the missionaries cut a clear line,
 urging on everyone peace and calm.

*Brownlee, Chalmers,
Kroff, Dikane*

That great dog of dogs, the child of Grey,
 Big George, the son of Grey,⁶
 claimed he was simply arranging the land,
 yet in this time of shame and disgrace
 he stood to one side, shading his eyes,
 counting the corpses in mounting piles.
 The Xhosa lay stark with not one shot fired,
 squirming forward on their bellies,
 ducking the cannon to get to their killers!

I end here!!

Here I end.

6. Sir George Grey (1812–98), governor of the Cape from 1854 to 1861.

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- 2 “*Idabi lamaLinde*”: The Battle of Amalinde
Oral performance recorded by Jeff Opland on the outskirts of Queenstown, 17 February 1971
Present: Yali-Manisi, Jeff Opland, Richard Moyer
- 3 “*IMfecane yamaNgwane*”: The Ngwane Mfecane
Yali-Manisi 1952: 127–30
- 4 “*Imfazwe kaMlanjeni*”: Mlanjeni’s War
Yali-Manisi 1983
Reprinted by kind permission of Via Afrika.
- 5 “*Ingxaki eyasenzakalisayo*”: The problem that wrought our destruction
Oral performance recorded by Jeff Opland outside Yali-Manisi’s home in the Khundulu valley, 20 December 1970
Present: Yali-Manisi, Jeff Opland, Jackson Ntibithethwa Magopeni
- 6 “*Idabi laseGwatyu*”: The Battle of Gwatyu
Yali-Manisi 1954: 1–3
- 7 “*Imfazwe yamaQwathi*”: The Qwathi War
Yali-Manisi 1954: 3–5
- 8 “*Amaqabazana ngabaThembu*”: Thembu spatterings
Oral performance recorded by Jeff Opland at Bolotwa, 15 July 1972

Present: Yali-Manisi, Jeff Opland, Morton Bloomfield, Jackson Ntibithethwa Magopeni

- 9 Ben Maclennan, "Unknown but he is leading Xhosa poet"
Eastern Province Herald (14 June 1979)
Reprinted by kind permission of the author.
- 10 D.L.P. Yali-Manisi, "Myself"
Opland 2005: 15–20
The original text is a five-page typescript, produced on request by the author in July 1983, now housed in The Opland Collection of Xhosa Literature.
- 11 Jeff Opland, "Unsung imbongi bows out"
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