

## **Christianity in Black and White**

### **The Establishment of Protestant Churches**

#### **In Southern Mozambique**

**T**he historical roots of the Protestant Churches in Southern Mozambique are to be found in neighbouring South Africa ; or, to be more precise, in the industrial revolution that shook the region in the last third of the nineteenth century. Protestant missionaries had worked in South Africa since the end of the previous century. The climate was good and governments run by coreligionists put few obstacles in their way. But the spread of the evangelical message was restricted by two important factors. Firstly, mission stations often served as places of refuge for people wishing to escape harsh employers or oppressive tribal rule. Secondly, missionaries believed their converts were surrounded by pagans practising customs inimicable to Christianity. Because of this a closed, « station system » developed in South Africa that gave political protection to converts and reduced the threat of backsliding<sup>1</sup>. But it equally prevented converts from spreading the gospel.

#### **Industry and Evangelism**

The nature of the evangelical mission was transformed when black migrant workers started to return home from centres of employment in South Africa with a knowledge of Christianity or an ability to read the Christian message. These men spread the gospel far beyond the small knots of worship huddled around the mission station. Their knowledge and practice of Christianity was often assembled in new and unexpected ways ; but it planted the seed of belief that would later be nurtured by evangelists in many corners of Southern Mozambique. In this paper I lay stress on African enterprise in the spread of Protestant denominations from South Africa to Southern Mozambique ; and I examine the ways in which Protestant missions expanded along linguistic corridors to open new mission fields. With their very particular ecclesiastical history in Europe,

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1. J. WHITESIDE, *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa*, London, Elliot Stock, 1906 : 275-276.

they provided a space for the emergence of a new, largely urban, intellectual élite.

The discovery of diamonds in 1867 brought a period of prosperity to the economy of Southern Africa. Within ten years, thousands of men were making their way from the area on the coast claimed by the Portuguese to the diamond fields at Kimberley. Evangelists quickly recognized the potential of this new mission field. For many migrant workers, uprooted from their homes, labouring under atrocious conditions and living in confined spaces, the gospel provided a message of consolation and hope. This often brief experience of Christianity, or the associated skill of reading, spread a knowledge of the gospel throughout Southern Africa. Numbers of men were also introduced to Christianity in Natal where, breaking their journey to Kimberley, they sought work on the sugar plantations or in the towns of the colony<sup>2</sup>. Others encountered it as they travelled further south to work in the coastal ports or on the railways and farms in the interior.

Missionaries of the Free Church of the canton de Vaud in Switzerland arrived in South Africa at the start of this industrial revolution. They were drawn by reports that large numbers of Pedi migrants had converted to Christianity while working in the Cape or when passing through Lesotho on their way home. This drew the Swiss to the Northern Transvaal where, after being rebuffed by the Pedi, they stumbled upon a cluster of immigrant refugee communities living without a missionary in the Spelonken foothills of the Zoutpansberg. It was in this area that the Swiss established the Valdezia mission station, near the headwaters of the Levubu and Small Letaba rivers, in 1875 and began work on the transcription of the local Gwamba language<sup>3</sup>.

The Swiss missionaries were not the first Christians to evangelize the region. Lutherans and Dutch Reformed Calvinists worked in isolated outposts to the north, west and south of the Spelonken. Migrant workers had also carried Christianity into the region. A Sotho-speaking Anglican known only as Daniel, who had spent fifteen years working in the Cape Colony, had started to instruct his compatriots in catechism and the skills of literacy. And several former migrant workers saw the arrival of the mission as an opportunity to formalize a conversion started earlier in Kimberley or Pretoria<sup>4</sup>. Three of the earliest converts of the Swiss Mission in the Transvaal were Hlakamela Tlakula, who had learned to read at Kimberley, and Yacob and Yosefa Mahlamhala, who had both worked on the diamond fields.

In July 1881 Hlakamela, Yosefa and two other converts left for the coast where Yosefa had succeeded in reestablishing contact with his family. Along the way they were warmly received by Magude, the ruler of the

2. Travellers in Southern Mozambique frequently came across men who had been taught, baptized and confirmed by « Bishop Colenso », see Archives of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (hereafter SPG, Oxford), *SPG Reports*, 1898B, John Bovill, 30 June 1898 ; E. SMYTH, *The Mission Field* (Boston), 2 May 1898 : 169.

3. For this and much of the background to the following paragraphs, see J. VAN BUTSELAAR, *Africains, missionnaires et colonialistes : les origines de l'Église presbytérienne du Mozambique, 1880-1896*, Leiden, Brill, 1984. The work of Nicolas Monnier, which draws on social constructivism, is an excellent complement to Van Butselaar's pioneering work on African initiative. See N. MONNIER, « Stratégie missionnaire et tactiques d'appropriation indigènes : la Mission romande au Mozambique 1888-1896 », *Le Fait missionnaire*, Lausanne [Université de Lausanne], 1995 .

4. « P. Berthoud to J. Favre, 21 July 1875 » in *Lettres missionnaires de M. & Mme Paul Berthoud*, Lausanne, Bridel, 1900 : 249-250 ; *Bulletin missionnaire* (Lausanne, Commission des Églises libres de la Suisse romande), 21, 30 Sept. 1876.

important Khosa chiefdom on the bend in the Nkomati river. On the coast Yosefa was reunited with his sister Lois Xintomane who, with her husband Eliachib Mandlakusasa, agreed to return to the Transvaal. This couple, together with their daughter Ruth Holene, were to play an important role in the spread of Christianity on the coast.

At Lourenço Marques the evangelists experienced a setback when the governor of the town refused to allow the establishment of a Protestant mission in Portuguese territory. This meant that the spread of the mission into the coastal plain had to be centred on the Khosa who lived beyond the effective control of the Portuguese. As the climate on the coast was unsuitable for white missionaries, Yosefa Mhahlamhala was hastily ordained in April 1882 to serve the new Church at Magude's. Amongst those accompanying him when he left later that month were his sister and her family. While Yosefa remained at Magude, Lois returned to her home and eventually settled at Rikatla, some 25 kilometers north of Lourenço Marques.

Meanwhile the Africanization of the Church in the Spelonken had continued apace with the ordination in 1882 of Yosefa's brother Yacob. Two years later the unity and purpose of an African-driven mission enterprise was stressed when members of the Spelonken Church raised £30 for Yosefa's Church and Yacob visited his brother at Magude<sup>5</sup>. The two brothers then continued to the coast where the work of Eliachib Mandlakusasa and Lois Xintomane was showing signs of success. Their daughter Ruth and her friends had spread the gospel in various directions and, before returning home, Yacob travelled south of Lourenço Marques to visit a new Christian community established in Tembeland. This community was directed by Jim Ximungana, an important local trader who, having learned to read and write in Natal, had been drawn to the Church by his reading of the *buku*, a collection of scriptures and hymns translated into Gwamba by missionaries in the Spelonken<sup>6</sup>. Up until this point the evangelical efforts of the native Church received the full support of the white missionaries in the Transvaal.

### A native Church and indigenous ideas

The political climate, and with it the fortunes of the mission at Magude, changed suddenly in 1884 when, following the death of the Gaza king, refugees started to return from their exile in Swaziland and enter into political intrigues with local chiefs. Unsure of his position, the new Gaza king, Gungunyana, prohibited contact between the Khosa chief and outside forces, including missionaries. A further setback for Yosefa's small Church occurred the following year when Magude died and the regent, Mavabaze, displayed a hostile attitude to the Church.

In an attempt to investigate the plight of the Christians in Khosaland and report on prospects for expansion in the coastal areas, an expedition left the Spelonken under two Swiss missionaries, Henri Berthoud and Eugène Thomas. After a voyage of three months they confirmed that « the real

5. Another £10 was promised by the mission. P. BERTHOUD, *Les Nègres Gouamba, ou les vingt premières années de la Mission romande*, Lausanne, Bridel, 1896 : 103.

6. On Jim Ximungana, see Swiss Mission Archive (SMA, Lausanne), 8.10.B, *Henri Berthoud to Grandjean*, 28 Oct. 1886 ; P. BERTHOUD, *La Mission romande à la baie de Delagoa*, Lausanne, SMA, 1888 : 19, 138.

homeland » of their Gwamba congregation in the Transvaal was indeed to be found along the coast<sup>7</sup>. Through the language transcribed in the Spelonken, they believed, the mission had been divinely ordained to take the gospel to an entire nation. Although Yosefa had achieved little formal success, his work was particularly important as it was situated in the Gwamba heartland, the *lieu d'origine* of the immigrant refugees in the Spelonken<sup>8</sup>. The native Church had achieved over thirty conversions and had established or nurtured five Christian communities stretching along the coast from Tembeland in the south to the Nkomati river. Henri Berthoud particularly stressed his confidence in the religious vigour and conviction with which his black colleagues had spread the Christian message.

Berthoud's report was soon followed by news that the political turbulence in Khosaland had calmed and that Yosefa's small community was experiencing a religious revival. The enthusiasm with which people suddenly embraced Christianity was especially felt along the coast at Rikatla and in Tembeland<sup>9</sup>. The Free Church missionaries viewed this revival with sanguine expectation for it seemed to conform to their notion of Christianity. This was an intensely individualistic practice of religion in which there was no State interference and little place for stale Church rituals, hierarchy and dogma. For the Free Churches of Switzerland, conversion was an intimate, emotional experience based on introspection, prayer and divine revelation. It was only through the personal recognition of sin, and the accompanying anguish of contrition, that individuals could be introduced to the possibility of salvation through God's grace.

The spiritual movement on the Mozambican coast lived up to many of these ideals<sup>10</sup>. Congregants were shaken by powerful visions and dreams that produced emotional, spontaneous conversions. Lay members of the Church gave long speeches in which they denounced sin and extolled the need for remorse. Spiritual rebirth was accompanied by the likelihood of moral renovation as Christians formed tight communities around places like Rikatla, their centre of pilgrimage. The disregard for ritual conformity and theological strictures initially provided evidence of the raw energy produced by the revival and of its potential to rejuvenate the entire Church. An active desire to redeem sinners and spread the word of God in its written form indicated that this self-governing, self-supporting native Church would even succeed in propagating the gospel into areas untouched by formal evangelical endeavour.

But the growing success of the spiritual movement on the coast, together with its very ecclesiastical and dogmatic independence, soon raised anguished and divisive debates over the role of the native Church and clergy. Paul Berthoud believed the leaders of the coastal Church had insufficient training in dogma and ecclesiastics to discipline and run a large organization. Jim Ximungana, for instance, was adding to his adherents in Tembeland a growing following in Lourenço Marques. Yet, although he had learned to read and write while working in Natal, he had received no formal

7. P. BERTHOUD, *Les Nègres Gouamba...*, *op. cit.* : 102, 107, 109.

8. *Ibid.* : 110.

9. Southern Africa had experienced revivals in 1860, a Great Revival in 1866 after the lung sickness epidemic, and in 1874, see J. WHITESIDE, *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church...*, *op. cit.* : 262-278 ; E. FAVRE, *François Coillard : missionnaire au Lessouto*, Paris, Société des missions évangéliques, 1912 : 146-148.

10. P. BERTHOUD, *La Mission romande...*, *op. cit.* : 13 ; P. BERTHOUD, *Les Nègres Gouamba...*, *op. cit.* : 107.

religious instruction or training. He was unbaptized, had three wives and several slaves. Equally seriously, when obliged by his commercial activities to absent himself from his congregation, Ximungane frequently placed his Church in the hands of an unbaptized slave girl or, perhaps more insidiously, in the charge of an agnostic beneficiary of a Catholic education<sup>11</sup>.

Berthoud was highly critical of the dominant role played by women within the Church. They not only constituted eight out of ten congregants and occupied almost all leadership posts ; women were also overly assertive and their emotional instincts pushed the Church in unwarranted directions. The « exaggerated imagination and sensibility » of female members of the Church contradicted the modesty and internal reflection required of converts<sup>12</sup>. Women exercised little control over who spoke and placed no restriction on the length of speeches. The general exuberance of Church services passed into intemperance as thunderous sermons, often filled with rabid denunciations of sin, provoked congregants to sob, cry and experience hysterical convulsions. Moreover, the depth of conversion was measured by these emotional outbursts ; and those unable to express themselves in this uproarious manner were denied membership of the Church. Visions and dreams were another, more personal, indicator of religious conviction. But these included disquietingly frequent reports of contact with God ; and one slave woman even attracted a small following when she declared herself to be the virgin Mary<sup>13</sup>.

Perhaps most seriously, Berthoud believed the native clergy to be ill-prepared or unwilling to direct and channel this spiritual movement. He was dismayed when Yosefa ascribed the disorderly nature of Church services to the work of the Holy Spirit and was appalled by the inability of the native minister to provide pastoral guidance in matters ranging from moral comportment to the interpretation of religious literature<sup>14</sup>.

Berthoud feared that, far from re-awakening belief in a Supreme Being, the « revival » would halt the development of Christianity as novices brought pagan customs into the Church. This was a serious allegation as he saw « superstition » and fear at the heart of a native religion whose « degeneration » had caused it to lose any belief in a Supreme Being. The native Church had « deviated from the correct path » and was filled with « erroneous tendencies » ; as an « emerging Church » it reflected « an inconceivable moral disorder, an extraordinary ignorance ». Without correct discipline and guidance, he believed, this degeneration would contaminate the entire Church on the coast<sup>15</sup>.

From our distance in time and space it is easy to see the « revival » as a bricolage of beliefs and rituals ; a way of making the world more comprehensible and controllable by reworking foreign and local sources of

11. *Lettres missionnaires de M & Mme...*, *op. cit.* : 169 ; P. BERTHOUD, *La Mission romande...*, *op. cit.* : 19.

12. P. BERTHOUD, *La Mission romande...*, *op. cit.* : 16-17.

13. *Ibid.* : 22 ; P. BERTHOUD, *Les Nègres Gouamba...*, *op. cit.* : 115, 138.

14. *Ibid.* : 133 ; P. BERTHOUD, *La Mission romande...*, *op. cit.* : 19.

15. P. BERTHOUD, *Les Nègres Gouamba...*, *op. cit.* : 47, 117, 132, 136. On the idea that religious belief had degenerated in Africa, see *ibid.* : 75-76 ; H. JUNOD, « Les BaRonga : étude ethnographique sur les indigènes de la baie de Delagoa », *Bulletin de la Société des Sciences naturelles de Neuchâtel*, X, 1898 : 403 ; H. JUNOD, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, London, Macmillan, 1927, II : 628.

power into a battery of Christian ideas and practices<sup>16</sup>. The « revival » was an indigenous version of the Pentacostalism that Sundkler would later classify as « Zionism » ; and in this sense it was one of the first independent Church movements in Southern Africa<sup>17</sup>. It would also be easy to see Berthoud's views on the need for white leadership as merely one more example of the rising racism within the wider mission community in the late nineteenth century<sup>18</sup>. This interpretation would be supported by his frequent comments on the childish perspective of Christianity held by black converts, and on the need for black Christians to experience a lengthy period of missionary tutelage in order to reach the Europeans' level of evolution<sup>19</sup>. But at the same time, it is important to see that Berthoud's opinion of the native Church represented a minority view within the mission. For when in 1886 he solicited the support of the governing Council in Lausanne, the missionaries in the Spelonken formally opposed his attempts to end the independence of the native Church.

This difference of opinion, it seems to me, was the product of unresolved tensions within the system of beliefs and practices brought to Africa by the Swiss missionaries. These differences went back to the political revolution that had shaken Switzerland in the middle of the nineteenth century. The Free Churches were the product of a rebellion against political radicals who had subordinated the national (or cantonal) Churches to the dictates of the State. Out of this conflict the Free Churches emerged as the inheritors of a long tradition associating local, cantonal identity with religion and Church membership. They were also strongly evangelical, and stressed a form of philanthropy that was at times telescopic rather than local in its concerns. Instead of receiving their salaries from the State, Free Church ministers were dependent on the financial contributions of laymen gathered in elected synods. This sudden, enforced direction taken by the Churches in mid-century created a certain ambivalence within the pastorate. While many saw this European version of the self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating Church as a source of renewed energy and strength, others saw the Church drifting at a time when industrialization was undermining the cohesion of the national community. For this enlightened élite, the guiding hand of the pastorate and its Church was needed more than ever as emigration, uprootedness, avarice, alcohol and immorality destroyed the social fabric created and maintained for three hundred years by the cantonal Churches in Switzerland.

Paul Berthoud and others saw Africa as a social laboratory in which the Church would reestablish its role as paternal guide. Unlike Europe, the continent had not been contaminated by wars of religion, materialism and

16. See James KIERNAN, « The African Independent Churches » in M. PROZESKY & J.W. de GRUCHY, eds, *Living Faiths in South Africa*, Cape Town, David Philip, 1995 : 82.

17. It was contemporaneous with Nehemiah Tile's Thembu National Church formed in the Eastern Cape in October 1884, the Native Independent Congregational Church in Taung, Bechuanaland (1885), and the Lutheran Bapedi Church (1889). H.-A. Junod later compared the revival to the Pentacostal movement and believed it exhibited an « evolution » towards monotheism ; see his *Ernest Creux et Paul Berthoud : Les fondateurs de la Mission suisse en Afrique du Sud*, Lausanne, Mission suisse dans l'Afrique du Sud, 1933 : 145 ; and « Le Mouvement de Morimi : un réveil au sein de l'animisme thonga », *Journal de Psychologie normale et pathologique*, déc. 1924 : 865-882.

18. As most famously done for Nigeria by J.F. ADE AJAYI, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891 : The Making of a New Elite*, Evanston (Illinois), Longmans, 1965 ; and E.A. AYANDELE, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914*, London, Longmans, 1966.

19. P. BERTHOUD, *La Mission romande...*, op. cit. : 25 ; P. BERTHOUD, *Les Nègres Gouamba...*, op. cit. : 135.

industrialization, and its primitive vitalism would rejuvenate the Church<sup>20</sup>. Hence the Swiss missionaries remained staunch opponents of the cultural assimilation practised by many British and American missions<sup>21</sup>. But they were equally convinced that, to build this New Jerusalem, the mission had to nurture and separate the positive elements in African beliefs and practices. In Africa the Church was able to reestablish the historic role it had recently been denied in Europe: that of national guardian and tutor. The decision of the Mission Council in Lausanne to send Paul Berthoud to take charge of the coastal Church should be understood in these terms. But it was a decision that would unleash a struggle within the Church as Swiss missionaries attempted to impose on their congregants a foreign morality based on temperance, frugality, providence, modesty, monogamy and paternal tutelage.

### Indigenous agency

This new way of thinking and acting restricted the numbers of people willing to convert and join the mission stations operated by the Swiss. Others preferred to join the Protestant communities established by migrants returned from South Africa. Andreas Hongwana, for instance, had built a small chapel-school near the mouth of the Tembe river, Isaac Mavilo was attempting to bring Christianity to the capital of the young Maputo king, and the unbaptized Simon Masinga had returned from Barberton to start his own school<sup>22</sup>. Many migrants almost inadvertently spread the gospel as they had acquired some knowledge of Christianity when learning to read, or had returned home with Christian wives<sup>23</sup>. For others, like Jim Ximungana, Christian beliefs lay dormant until they were activated by the circulation of Christian literature or visiting evangelists.

The most successful indigenous attempt to bring Christianity to the Delagoa Bay region was undertaken by Robert Ndevu Mashaba. Born at Nkasana in Tembeland in about 1861, Mashaba had first left home as young boy to seek work with his uncle in Natal. On a second tour in the British colony he had learned to read, a skill that gave him access to better-paid employment. In Port Elizabeth he converted, joined the Methodist Church and in 1879 entered Lovedale college in the Eastern Cape. After spending three years at this celebrated Presbyterian training ground for the African élite, he was employed in the Kimberley telegraph office where he continued to mix with educated black Christians.

In 1885 Mashaba returned to the Delagoa Bay area with the intention of spreading the gospel. His Christianity was closely tied to the civilizing mission. « Africa is a dark continent », he wrote to his old head-master at Lovedale, « the greater part of her children are brooding on darkness as if on white fresh eggs ». And to achieve a cultural renaissance he believed it

20. *Ibid.* : 20, 140.

21. *Ibid.* : 164 ; H. JUNOD, « Les BaRonga... », *op. cit.* : 485.

22. SPG, *Bishop MacKenzie's Journal for July, 1889* ; SPG, *Charles Johnson's « Amatongaland Trip », Part I, 1895* ; SPG, *Reports 1902*, 19 Febr. 1903 ; *The Net*, Nov. 1889. See also R. BERTHOUD-JUNOD, *Du Transvaal à Lourenço Marques*, Lausanne, Bridel, 1904 : 228-229.

23. SMA, 497/E, *P. Berthoud to conseil*, 11 Oct. 1888 ; SMA, 513/A, *Grandjean to Leresche*, 21 Aug. 1893 ; H. O'Neill, « Journeys in the District of Delagoa Bay, December 1886 - January 1887 », *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, IX, 1887 : 502-503 ; SPG, *Bishop MacKenzie*, letter of 31 July 1889.

his duty to « fight with darkness in the name of Christ [...] till darkness gives way to light »<sup>24</sup>. In persuasion of this mission he opened a school near Lourenço Marques and started to study Portuguese. But as a Protestant trained by British missionaries, he received little support from the Portuguese and was obliged to seek work at the Komati Drift. With his savings he established a day school in May 1888 and quickly attracted sixty-six children on a regular basis. Preaching in his own language, Mashaba was able to draw a large following. Within three years he had built a church at Nkasana and nine out-stations along the Tembe river, four of which included day schools. In this task he was assisted by four local preachers and five class leaders ; and some two hundred people were on trial for communion.

In 1890 Mashaba was officially recognized by the Methodists as a minister, his Church incorporated into their Transvaal District, and his converts baptized<sup>25</sup>. During this time he produced two reading primers and a collection of hymns in the local language form, to which he affixed the label « Ronga ». In 1893, the year he was finally ordained, he consolidated this language work when he helped the British consul at Lourenço Marques draw up a 31-page Ronga dictionary<sup>26</sup>. The familiarity of Mashaba's Ronga literature appealed to local sentiments and won converts in much the same way as had, only a few years earlier, the Swiss missionaries' *buku*. It almost certainly also accounts for much of the success with which Thomas Gebuza, another remarkable migrant worker turned Methodist evangelist, spread the gospel in the southern part of the Maputo kingdom<sup>27</sup>.

Written in the Gwamba dialect drawn up by the missionaries in the Spelonken, the language of the *buku* had more in common with the Thonga or Tsonga language form employed in the area between the Nkomati and Limpopo rivers. For this reason Mashaba's Ronga literature was more favourably received than the « foreign » Gwamba or Thonga reading material. The Swiss Presbyterians, with their experience of the ties between nation and Church, were opposed to this intrusion into the mission field occupied by the « tribe » they considered their evangelical preserve<sup>28</sup>. When their attempts to combine with Mashaba failed, and they realized they were placed at a competitive disadvantage by their inability to publish in the local language form, the Swiss brought out their own grammar, dictionary and later a New Testament in Ronga<sup>29</sup>. This intellectual activity led them to

24. University of Cape Town (UCT), *Stewart Papers*, BC 106, *Mashaba to Stewart*, 22 Oct. 1892.

25. UCT, BC 106, *Mashaba to Stewart*, 18 May 1902 ; J. WHITESIDE, *A History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church...*, *op. cit.* : 447-448.

26. E.W. SMITH-DELACOUR, *Shironga Vocabulary*, London, 1893. On Mashaba, see P. HARRIES, *Work, Culture and Identity : Migrant Labourers in Mozambique and South Africa*, Portsmouth, (NH), Heinemann, 1994 : 34, 105-106, 160.

27. By the turn of the century Gebuza was assisted by seven evangelists servicing sixteen churches and a community of 400 full and on-trial members ; see Gordon MEARS, « Thomas Gebuza of Tongaland », in his *Methodist Torchbearers*, Cape Town, Methodist Church, 1955 : 25-26. The southern half of the Maputo chiefdom had been allocated to the British under the MacMahon award of 1875. An Anglo-Portuguese treaty defined the border in 1891 ; four years later « British Amatongaland » was proclaimed a Protectorate and in 1897 it was incorporated into Zululand ; see P. HARRIES « History, Ethnicity and the Ingwavuma Land Deal : The Zulu Northern Frontier in the Nineteenth Century », *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, VI, 1983 : 14-26.

28. This claim was still being made by Paul Berthoud as late as 1912. See his *Considérations sur la constitution des Églises indigènes dans la Mission romande*, Neuchâtel, Attinger : 33.

29. I have examined this process in my « The Roots of Ethnicity : Discourse and the Politics of Language Construction in South-East Africa », *African Affairs*, 346, Jan. 1988. The essay has been reworked more recently as « Language, Classification and Power : The Early History



study the customs and habits of the population they later called the Thonga ; and to lay the foundations of anthropology as a discipline in the sub-continent<sup>30</sup>.

### External agents

In 1893 the Anglican Church joined the Swiss Presbyterians and Methodists at Lourenço Marques, the growing entrepot for the Witwatersrand. Their initial interest in the area had come from Natal, where the northern limits of the bishopric, created in 1853 to serve both settlers and Africans, had been as uncertain as those of the colony<sup>31</sup>. At this time the British in Natal communicated freely with the independent chiefs living behind Lourenço Marques and Inhambane and, until 1875, formally claimed the southern shore of Delagoa Bay<sup>32</sup>. Bishop Colenso's home outside Pietermaritzburg hosted several embassies from the Gaza, a people living north of the Limpopo who traced their historical roots back to his diocese and spoke a language close to that of the Zulu<sup>33</sup>. British interests in the area claimed by the Portuguese were reinforced when in 1870 a dispute in the Anglican community in Natal led Colenso's High Church opponents to create a separate bishopric for the independent territory of Zululand. This new diocese nominally included the vast stretch of country « towards the Zambezi river »<sup>34</sup>.

The formal establishment of a separate Anglican diocese in Southern Mozambique was first mooted in 1875, and again in 1879, the year the British gained partial control of Lourenço Marques<sup>35</sup>. But the will to create a new bishopric evaporated with Britain's desire for a South African confederation, and it was only with the development of Lourenço Marques as a strategic port for the Witwatersrand that the plan was resuscitated. In 1891 the whole of Mozambique south of the Zambezi river was incorporated into the Anglican mission field when the Sabie river was delineated as the border between the dioceses of Lebombo and Mashonaland. Two years later Edmund Smyth was consecrated bishop of Lebombo and stations were

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of the Tsonga Language », in R. Mesthrie, ed., *South African Sociolinguistics*, Cape Town, David Philip, 1995 : 25-52.

30. Most notably in the pioneering work of Henri-Alexandre Junod who arrived at Rikatla in 1889. See the preeminence given to Junod in W.D. HAMMOND-TOOKE, *Imperfect Interpreters : South Africa's Anthropologists, 1920-1990*, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1997.
31. J.J. GUY, *The Heretic*, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal, 1983 : 56, 86-89.
32. The southern border of Mozambique was based on an anti-slavery treaty of 1817 recognizing Portugal's suzerainty from Cape Delgado to Delagoa Bay. The border dispute flared up intermittently and was submitted in 1872 for adjudication to President MacMahon of France (see note 27 above).
33. Cf. Natal Archives (NA), SECRETARY FOR NATIVE AFFAIRS (SNA), 1/6/2 *Statement of Umkunhlana*, 5 Oct. 1859 ; SNA, 1/1/10, *Statement of Mabulawa*, 12 Jan. 1860 ; SNA, 1/1/96 n° 73, *Statement of Umzungulu and Dubule, messengers from Umzila*, 16 Aug. 1870 ; COLONIAL OFFICE 179/90 n° 101/12269, *Keate to Buckingham*, 24 Sept. 1868. The last of these embassies arrived in October 1883, some four months after Colenso's death, see Alf HELGESSON, *Church, State and People in Mozambique : An Historical Study with Special Emphasis on Methodist Developments in the Inhambane Region*, Uppsala, University of Uppsala, 1994 : 41.
34. W.C.H. MALTON, *The Story of the Diocese of Lebombo*, London, Lebombo Home Association, 1912 : 9.
35. The MacMahon award had given the southern shore of Delagoa Bay to Portugal in July 1875. The British then employed economic and diplomatic pressure to push through the Lourenço Marques treaty that gave them a direct involvement in the running of the town ; see P. HARRIES, *Work, Culture...*, *op. cit.* : 24, 84, 100.

established at Lourenço Marques and Inhambane and, a decade later, in Chopiland<sup>36</sup>.

Much of the Anglican drive into the interior had been undertaken by Mozambicans who had converted while working in the Cape Colony. As early as 1861 four interpreters drawn from the large community of Mozambican freed slaves in Cape Town had been included in Bishop Mackenzie's fateful expedition to the Shire Highlands<sup>37</sup>. Thirty years later Bernard Mizeki, a migrant worker from Inhambane who had joined the Anglican Church while employed in Cape Town, became a pivotal figure in the founding of the Mashonaland Mission and a pioneer Shona linguist<sup>38</sup>. Other Mozambicans returned to South Africa with a less formal evangelical enthusiasm. When Bishop Douglas MacKenzie surveyed the Lourenço Marques area in 1889, he feared that the many « natives who had known Christian influence or teaching in the mines » would lose their faith without the support of an active and organized diocese<sup>39</sup>.

When the Anglicans established their mission at Lourenço Marques they chose to proselytize a group of Chopi refugees living on the edge of the town. These men had fled south to escape the constant wars waged by the Gaza on their kinsmen living on the coast between the Limpopo and Inhambane. By turning to these « foreigners », the Anglicans avoided duplicating the work undertaken by Methodists and Swiss Presbyterians amongst the local Ronga-speakers. The refugees included fourteen Anglican communicants baptized while employed in various parts of South Africa<sup>40</sup>. But it was to Johannesburg that the Anglicans turned in their search for a lay worker capable of interpreting and undertaking linguistic work. The St. Cyprian native Church in Johannesburg was frequented by a Chopi community, one of whom, a churchwarden named John Matthews Nyoko, was persuaded to undertake this mission work. Funded by his St. Cyprian compatriots, Nyoko abandoned his job in a jeweller's shop and moved to the Hlamankulu location occupied by the refugees. He and Bishop Smyth soon produced the first grammar, vocabulary and reader in the Chopi language<sup>41</sup>.

Around Inhambane the Anglicans came across American missionaries who had been in the area for over a decade. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions had been active in Natal since 1835. But after forty years of evangelical effort the mission field in the British colony was becoming overcrowded and the Americans were ready to extend their pioneering form of Christianity into new areas. They were particularly anxious to employ their Zulu-speaking converts to open a new mission field and, in this way, realize the ideal of a self-propagating mission. The Gaza

36. W.C.H. MALTON, *The Diocese of Lebombo...*, op. cit. : 10-11 ; P. HINCHLIFF, *The Anglican Church in South Africa*, London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1963 : 174-175.

37. L. WHITE, *Magomero : Portrait of an African Village*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987 : 13 sq. ; F. AWDRY, *An Elder Sister : A Short History of Anne Mackenzie and her Brother, the Missionary Bishop*, London, 1878 : 128.

38. J. FARRANT, *Mashonaland Martyr : Bernard Mizeki and the Pioneer Church*, Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1966.

39. C. LEWIS & G.E. EDWARDS, *Historical Records of the Church of the Province of South Africa*, London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1934 : 742.

40. SPG. Reports, 1898 B, John Bovill, 30 June 1898 ; E. SMYTH, *The Mission Field*, 2 May 1898.

41. This was published in 1902 as *A Vocabulary with a Short Grammar of Xilenge : The Language of the People commonly Called Chopi, Spoken on the East Coast of Africa between the Limpopo River and Inhambane*, and *A Short Grammar of the Shilenge Language (Xilenge)*. In 1896 the Anglicans installed a printing press at Inhambane and published a Service Book in Tonga ; see W.C.H. MALTON, *The Diocese of Lebombo...*, op. cit. : 18-19, 25, 32 ; C. LEWIS & G.E. EDWARDS, *Historical Records...*, op. cit. : 744.

empire was a « natural » extension of their work in Natal, mainly for linguistic reasons but also because, like Colenso, the American missionaries had been visited by Gaza embassies<sup>42</sup>. Gazaland also offered the mission a new start as it had not been contaminated by European settlement and had never been evangelized. The Americans were also drawn to this sprawling African kingdom by the prospect of effecting the conversion of a powerful suzerain who would press his followers to accept the gospel. In 1880-1881, several American Board missionaries sailed from Durban to Inhambane from where they travelled overland to the Gaza capital<sup>43</sup>.

Although the Gaza king, Umzila, invited these American Congregationalists to settle at his capital, they chose rather to establish themselves in 1883 in the populous country around Inhambane. Here they were joined by Cetewayo Goba, another Lovedale graduate, and two other Zulu missionaries who soon took the lead in transcribing the Tonga language. Reinforcements allowed the mission to expand westwards into areas independent of the Portuguese, where work was started on Tswa, a language that would later be incorporated into the Tsonga cluster<sup>44</sup>. The room for optimism grew further when in 1886 a party of American Free Methodists established themselves on the border between the Tswa and Chopi-speaking peoples, about eighty kilometers south of Inhambane.

But the enthusiasm of the early missionaries soon wilted as their numbers were depleted by disease and by their inability to effect more than a handful of conversions. Evangelical work was also restricted by the continual disputes between these natural dissenters and by the inaccessibility of a colonial government suspicious of Protestant, anglo-phone missionaries. As the mission faltered the American Board, never fully convinced of its viability, decided in mid-1893 to abandon Inhambane. A healthier area had been located in the Mashonaland highlands on the British side of the newly-defined border with Mozambique, and it was to Mount Selinda in this area that the American Board relocated its evangelical energies. This left for the next twenty-five years the small communities of Congregationalists around Inhambane dependent on migrant kinsmen returning from the Witwatersrand for their knowledge of Christianity<sup>45</sup>. Another reason for the withdrawal of the American Board from Inhambane was the expulsion from the Church of its premier missionary, Erwin Richards. Unwilling to leave the mission field at Inhambane, Richards chose to serve the Methodist Episcopal Mission to which he succeeded in attracting several early Congregationalist converts. These included Tizora Navess, a qualified printer and charismatic preacher, and Muti Sikobebe, one of a growing number of graduates returning from American Board colleges in Natal. The efforts of Richards and those of the newly-arrived Anglicans

42. SMA, 6007 D, David P. Prideaux « E. Richards : a biography - and an account of his explorations in Gaza, his school, the Gungunyana attack at Inhambane [...] and other related stories ». On the surfeit of missions in Natal, see N. ETHERINGTON, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in Southeast Africa, 1835-1880 : African Christian Communities in Natal, Pondoland and Zululand*, London, Royal Historical Society, 1978 : 4.

43. Witwatersrand University Library, Johannesburg, A. 170, *American Zulu Mission. Our Lamented Pinkerton's Story. Diary of an Expedition from Durban up the East Coast (July-Nov. 1880)*.

44. The first literature in these languages started to emerge in 1885, see A. HELGESSON, *Church, State and People...*, *op. cit.* : 55.

45. The Congregationalists returned to Inhambane in 1917 when Rev. Zakeu Likumbe arrived to coordinate the running of these small communities, see *ibid.* : 115 n. 272.

were, however, counterbalanced by the departure for the Witwatersrand of Harry Agnew, the single remaining Free Methodist at Inhambane.

The situation was equally unpromising in the Delagoa Bay area where Swiss missionaries had taken charge of the major settlements associated with their Church. As the Swiss tightened their hold on dogma and ecclesiastics, the energy of the revival was dissipated by internal rivalries and dissension. Although the Swiss were able to initiate a medical mission under Dr Georges Liengme at the Gaza capital in 1892-93, the vibrant and coherent local culture practised in this and other independent chiefdoms impeded the spread of Christianity. It was only in Lourenço Marques, the white man's town (*Xilungwini*), that large numbers of people were sufficiently separated from the grip of kin and custom to adopt Christianity. While the membership of rural missions had stagnated since the late 1880s, that of Lourenço Marques had almost doubled. In 1894 fully 815 of the 938 members of Swiss Mission stations were to be found in *Xilungwini* and neighbouring Tembeland<sup>46</sup>. Another growing problem for the Protestants was the rise of Catholic interest in missionary work in the region.

### Church and State : a new era

For over half a century, anti-clerical sentiments in Portugal had prevented the country's religious orders from operating in Mozambique. But as Portuguese patriotism was affronted by British encroachments on the sovereignty of Mozambique, a realignment of political forces came to see Catholicism as a potential arm of the State. For the dynamic imperialist António Ennes, as well as for the newly-appointed bishop of Mozambique, António Barroso, the Catholic Church had become an important means of accomplishing the « effective occupation » of the colony<sup>47</sup>.

The policies of several of the Protestant missions stood in direct opposition to this proposed collusion between Church and State. Many missionaries were religious dissenters whose beliefs rested on a firm prohibition of State interference in Church matters. All saw literacy as a fundamental means of spreading the gospel in a personal way that was not filtered by an authoritarian priesthood. As foreigners, they were oblivious to the civilizing effects of the Portuguese language. In their experience, the most efficient means of reading was in the local languages defined, transcribed and closely associated with the missions. Zulu was also a popular language medium as it was taught on the mines and widely employed throughout Southern Mozambique as a *lingua franca*. In a way almost aimed to displease the Portuguese, many missionaries valued English as the language of a more virile imperial race and as the language of commerce. Another source of dissatisfaction for the Portuguese was the manner in which the Protestants encouraged their congregants to acquire organizational skills in the fields of administration and fund-raising and to take leadership roles in the Church. The assertiveness of Protestant converts and clergy had threatened the unity of the Swiss Church during the revival of the mid-1880s and would emerge again in the form of religious

46. A. GRANDJEAN, *Labours, semailles et moissons dans le champ de la Mission romande*, Lausanne, 1898.

47. A. ENNES, *Moçambique : Relatório apresentado ao Governo*, Lisbon, Agência geral do ultramar, 1893 : chap. 21 ; A. BRASIO, *António Barroso, missionário, cientista, missiologo* Lisbon, 1961.

separatism ; but for the Portuguese this assertiveness would take the form of a political challenge.

Although the Portuguese were suspicious of all Churchmen working outside the control of the Catholic Church, the presence of the Protestant missions in Mozambique was protected by international treaties aimed at opening Africa to the « civilizing influence » of Christianity<sup>48</sup>. But in 1894 the Portuguese in the Lourenço Marques district seized upon a rebellion, that quickly grew into a war with the Gaza State, to curb the influence of the Protestants. Despite protestations of innocence, Robert Mashaba was implicated in fomenting the rebellion ; and his Methodist congregation was left to fend for itself for the next decade when he was sentenced to life imprisonment on Fogo island in the Cape Verdes. Georges Liengme, the Swiss missionary doctor, was also accused of aiding the Gaza monarch. He had indeed undergone a remarkable political transformation during his stay at Mandlakazi, the Gaza capital. On his arrival Liengme had been horrified by the savagery of his hosts. But gradually disdain had turned into respect as the nobility of the martial Gaza outshone the coarse avarice of the gun-runners, concession seekers and morphine addicts representing European civilization at Mandlakazi. When the Portuguese seized Mandlakazi, Liengme, who had refused to abandon the Gaza king, was expelled from the colony. The head of the Swiss mission, Henri-Alexandre Junod, was also accused of fomenting the war and found it wise to take a long furlough in Switzerland and a new posting in the Eastern Transvaal<sup>49</sup>. But the political interventions of Junod and Liengme had almost destroyed the work of the mission. This had highlighted the delicate balance to be achieved in a colonial situation between the spiritual and material aspects of mission work ; and had underlined the missionaries' limited ability to transform society without the approval of the colonial State.

Ironically, the departure of Mashaba and the two Swiss missionaries was accompanied by a rolling wave of conversion as people sought to harness the power of the vaguely defined Supreme Being in their religion. The importance of this force, expressed by the word Heaven (*tilo*), had long been spoken of by the socially and economically important veterans returning from the mines<sup>50</sup>. But until the conquest of Southern Mozambique by the Portuguese, this power had been worshipped by people living on the margins of society, often in socially enclosed mission communities. The inability of the ancestors to protect their descendents from the Portuguese, or from the terrible drought, famine and cattle epidemic that followed in their wake, encouraged people to look elsewhere for assistance. A growing number of diviners attempted to harness the ritual power of Christianity when they proclaimed Sunday observance a means of eradicating current misfortunes<sup>51</sup>. For others the power of the Supreme Being was magnified by the impuissance of the ancestors.

48. Particularly the Berlin Congress of 1884 and the Brussels Anti-slavery Conference of 1889.

49. It was during this enforced sabbatical that Junod wrote up his notes on the Ronga. His stay in the Transvaal allowed him to expand this work to include the Thonga in that region.

50. On « La notion du Ciel », see H.-A. Junod, « Les BaRonga... », *op. cit.* : 408 sq. ; H.-A. Junod, *Life of a South African Tribe...*, *op. cit.*, II : 428 sq.

51. SMA, 542/B, P. Berthoud to Grandjean, 27 Nov. 1897. Much of the impetus behind this Sabbatarian movement came from missionaries who threatened misfortune if people continued to work on Sundays. From this perspective, Sunday observance was an act of contrition aimed at ending the famine ; see SMA, 1760, *Grandjean diary*, 11 Sept. 1892 ; SMA, 872, *Grandjean to Leresche*, 9 Sept. and 31 Oct. 1892.

For those who had been oppressed by the Gaza, such as the Chopi refugees living on the edge of Lourenço Marques, Christianity was possibly associated with the liberation brought by the Portuguese. These people returned home when peace came to Southern Mozambique and quickly turned southern Chopiland into fertile soil for the gospel. Many arrived home with the knowledge and practices of Christianity nurtured and directed by the Anglicans ; and they welcomed the arrival in their midst in 1903 of John Matthews Nyoko. This indefatigable evangelist had just been ordained after three years at college in Pietermaritzburg and, in the space of eight years, succeeded in establishing eighteen mission stations and teachers in the area<sup>52</sup>. In Lourenço Marques, where the population was less constrained by traditional beliefs and the power structures holding them in place, membership of the Swiss Churches increased by 50 per cent to 1,200 during the four years to 1898. Conversion had occurred at such a pace that congregants in the town represented well over half of all the members of the Swiss Mission in Southern Africa<sup>53</sup>.

The popularity of Christianity rose further when in 1899 over sixty thousand migrants returned from the Witwatersrand, that other major site of conversion for Mozambicans, on the eve of the South African War. This wave of Christian immigration transformed Southern Mozambique into a glittering prize for the evangelical movement. Some migrants had been schooled by Methodists, Anglicans, and others on the mines, and willingly engaged in established mission work in Mozambique<sup>54</sup>. But many carried home what Bishop Smyth called « an imperfect knowledge of the truth » and a large part of the evangelical energy in the region was to be invested in the correction and disciplining of this knowledge<sup>55</sup>.

As I have attempted to show, much of the attraction of Southern Mozambique for different denominations was founded on their desire to « follow up » the large number of members converted on the mines. Miners on the Witwatersrand were equally anxious for their collections to support the evangelization by their denominations of their home areas. This led to a severe overlap of interests and competition between the Swiss Presbyterians, Methodists and, once the Chopi refugees had returned home, Anglicans south of the Limpopo. Evangelical overcrowding also pushed the mission field northwards as Methodists and Dutch Reformed Calvinists working on the Witwatersrand later sought to follow their converts into areas in the north unoccupied by missionaries.

It was not easy to bring a conformity to what Erwin Richards referred to as « all symptoms of Church wisdom » repatriated from South Africa<sup>56</sup>. The attempt to make workers' values and customs conform to those of European missionaries often provoked the emergence of forms of Christianity more adapted to local values and practices. The growing number of Ethiopian and

52. C. LEWIS & G.E. EDWARDS, *Historical Records...*, *op. cit.* : 744, 754.

53. A. GRANDJEAN, *Labours, semailles...*, *op. cit.* : 25.

54. P. HARRIES, *Work, Culture...*, *op. cit.* : 177, 213-219.

55. C. LEWIS & G.E. EDWARDS, *Historical Records...*, *op. cit.* : 751 ; P. HARRIES, *Work, Culture...*, *op. cit.* : 119-120.

56. *Erwin Richard's Report before the Methodist Episcopal Church, East Central African Mission Conference, 5th session, Inhambane, Methodist Episcopal Church, 1907* : 20 ; P. HARRIES, *Work, Culture...*, *op. cit.* : 160-163, 219-220.

Zionist Churches on the Witwatersrand attracted Mozambicans to their Sunday schools, literacy classes and ubiquitous *timitis* (tea meetings). In 1907 Mozambicans on the mines created a provident society « to provide a purse for East Coast natives working on the Rand, out of which sick boys will be helped, boys dying friendless will be decently buried and boys preaching and teaching in Gazaland will be supported »<sup>57</sup>. Some migrants started their own Churches. Probably the most famous case is that of James Ngonyama who had been converted by A.W. Baker's South African Compounds Mission in 1896. Instead of working for Baker's mission in Mozambique, he later chose to join the Zulu Congregational Church. In 1908 Ngonyama left this movement to form the African Gaza Church which claimed links with its eponym in the Holy Land. With the financial support of Mozambican wage-earners on the Witwatersrand, this Church soon established numerous branches in the Portuguese colony<sup>58</sup>. Other men spread Christian ideas almost inadvertently through the reading charts, literature and writing materials they distributed on arriving home ; while yet others returned to their villages with the express intention of starting independent schools<sup>59</sup>.

Swiss missionaries like Henri Guye marvelled at « the almost continual procession » of migrants, many of whom, he wrote in 1904, « have converted to Christianity and wish to practise it here »<sup>60</sup>. His colleague Pierre Loze was more circumspect about the uncontrolled, independent teachings of these men which, he feared, would « fill the country »<sup>61</sup>. This was a concern shared by the Portuguese administration, the religious orders readmitted to the colony at the turn of the century and, to a certain extent, the African élite emerging in Lourenço Marques. In an attempt to restrict the uncontrolled proliferation of independent schools, the Portuguese in 1907 restricted instruction through the medium of indigenous languages to the first three years of school. Teachers were required by law to be proficient in Portuguese and were obliged to use only officially approved books. By effectively outlawing Zulu and English in the schools, the Portuguese aimed to halt the « denationalization » of Mozambique. But Protestant missionaries like Junod, especially those who came from national Churches, viewed the imposition of the Portuguese language as the cause of « denationalization. ». Like the French of the Swiss Romand, the language of the Ronga/Tsonga was central to the sense of character, self-worth and achievement of the

57. *Africa's Golden Harvest* (Johannesburg, South African Compounds' Mission), Oct. 1907 : 2.

58. *Africa's Golden Harvest*, Dec. 1913 : 44, and Oct. 1916 : 22 ; A.J. POTGIETER, *Die Swartes aan die Witwatersrand 1900-1933*, Johannesburg, Rand Afrikaans University, Ph.D., 1978 : 272 mimeo. On early independent Churches, see David HEDGES, ed., *História de Moçambique : Moçambique no áuge do colonialismo, 1930-1961*, Maputo, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Departamento de história, 1993 : 18-20.

59. Cf. the case of Levi Magwebu in A. GRANDJEAN, *La Mission romande*, Lausanne, Bridel, 1917 : 187 ; SMA, 547/A, H. Guye to conseil, 25 July 1904. See also A. W. BAKER, *Grace Triumphant : The Life Story of a Carpenter, Lawyer and Missionary in South Africa from 1856 to 1939*, London, A.W. Baker, 1939 : 124 ; *Africa's Golden Harvest*, May 1912 : 3. The same process was visible in the northern areas of the *Sul do Save*, see J.K. RENNIE, *Christianity, Colonialism, and the Origins of Nationalism amongst the Ndau of Southern Rhodesia*, Chicago, Northwestern University, Ph.D. mimeo, 1973 : chap. 8.

60. SMA, 547/A, H. Guye to conseil, 25 July 1904. For a small cross-section of the many reports on these schools, see SMA, 543/E, P. Loze to Grandjean, 27 Oct. 1900 ; SMA, 544/B, Loze to Grandjean, 12 Febr. 1901 ; Smyth in *Lebombo Leaves*, 1900 : 10 ; SPG Reports 1905, Gillet, *Chopiland*, Dec. 1905.

61. SMA, 543/E, Loze to conseil, 27 Oct. 1900 ; 544/B, Loze to conseil, 12 Febr. 1901. See also SPG, *Lebombo, Report of Bishop Smyth*, Sept. 1900.

nation or « tribe ». For the mission to ensure the controlled evolution of the people under its tutelage, it had to fuse the best in African and European cultures ; but this social engineering could only be based on the local language transcribed and dominated by the missionaries<sup>62</sup>. In neighbouring South Africa the cultural protection propagated by Junod and others would be appropriated by liberal segregationists ; but in Mozambique, where the same policy contradicted the assimilation advocated by the Portuguese, the missions would provide a political space for opponents of the colonial regime.

The combination of congregational democracy with an ecclesiastical history of dissent generated a climate of independent thought and action. Sometimes this assertion of independence would divide the Church, as in 1918 when Muti Sikobele, who had become an important itinerant minister in the Inhambane region, left the Methodist Episcopal Mission. His popular Luso-African Church Association would, in its turn, spawn a number of other Independent Churches<sup>63</sup>. Sikobele's colleague Tizora Navess took a more political direction when he founded a branch in Inhambane of *The Congresso nacional africano*, the political movement modelled on the African National Congress of South Africa<sup>64</sup>. For many of this emerging African élite, Robert Mashaba became a symbol of resistance. On his release from captivity in 1902, the Methodist pioneer had been prohibited from returning to Mozambique and had worked for the Church on the Witwatersrand, and later in Swaziland and at Heidelberg in the Eastern Transvaal. During this time Mashaba's portrait hung in the offices of the *Grémio africano*, a largely *mestizo* organization calling for political reform. Members of this movement and their urban, intellectual friends celebrated when Mashaba returned to his birthplace on his retirement in 1934, and remembered his achievements long after his death five years later<sup>65</sup>.

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By their nature and organization, the Protestant missions formed a separate sphere in colonial society. Several were the product of dissenting Churches with an uneasy history of relations with both the State and the established Church. As foreign missions they were not beholden to the Portuguese language and culture of the colonizer. Indeed, it might be argued that the strength of the Protestant Churches, in Africa as in Europe, came from their familiarity with the local written vernacular. They viewed literacy as an evangelical tool and schooling as a controlled means of transforming society. For the indigenous population, Protestant missions

62. Cf. H.-A. JUNOD, « Les BaRonga... », *op. cit.* : 485-486.

63. Financial aid came from the Mozambican Episcopal Independent Church on the Witwatersrand, and several members were sent to Natal for pastoral training with the Bantu Congregational Church. In 1931 the Luso-African Church Association became the Luso-African Episcopal Church. In 1937 a schism within the Church left Sikobele in charge of a new movement, the Church of the African Light ; see A. HELGESSON, *Church, State and People...*, *op. cit.* : 201-207, 244-247, 290-292.

64. *Ibid.* : 207-208.

65. « Robert Mashaba » in *Encyclopedia of World Methodism*, Nashville, 1974, vol. II : 1530-1531 ; Eduardo MOREIRA, *Portuguese East Africa : A Study of its Religious Needs*, New York, 1936 : 24 ; Raúl HONWANA, *The Life History of Raúl Honwana*, ed. by Allen ISAACMAN, Boulder and London, Rienner, 1988 : 103-104.



offered an area of upward mobility and self-governance, and a bridge to South Africa. But many forms of Christianity that were beyond the control of the Protestant missions entered Mozambique across this bridge. So, too, did the independent Churches that, in 1917, the director of the Swiss mission was still to qualify as « premature »<sup>66</sup>.

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**Patrick HARRIES**

History Department, University of Cape Town

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66. A. GRANDJEAN, *La Mission romande...*, *op. cit.* : 124.

