

Saul Msane: Friend or Foe of the People? The Life of the late Nineteenth to early Twentieth Centuries South African Politician and Journalist

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## **Declaration**

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Signature.....

September 2022

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## Abstract

Saul Msane was a prominent founding member of the ANC and an active journalist and editor of the ANC newspaper *Abantu-Batho*. His career generated controversy. Towards the end of his life, he had a feud with his colleagues in the African National Congress (henceforth Congress) that led to him being labelled *isitha sabantu*, “the enemy of the people” for his refusal to support the Shilling strike of 1918, an accusation which was retracted a year after his death in 1919. The label of *isitha sabantu* levelled against Msane, had the effect of ending his political prominence in the Transvaal, forcing him to relocate to kwaNongoma where he died shortly thereafter. Msane’s years in the Congress amounted to about seven years, between 1912, the founding of the Congress, and the demise of his career in 1919. Msane’s seven years in Congress were characterised by controversies, clashes, and conflicts owing to his perceived elitism. In Congress historiography Msane is an obscure and elusive figure, he lives here and there in a footnote, as a supporting statement or a mentioned in mere passing. His marginalisation reveals some of the gaps within the history of Congress and invites us to write about those who did not emerge from the history of Congress necessarily as heroes. This thesis sets out to write a biography of Msane and document his political career beyond that one moment in which he came to be “*isitha sabantu*”. While Msane’s Congress career was comparably short and filled with tensions, an archive of his life exists. This study is an exploration of that archive to reconstruct the biography of a once prominent leader who dies in political exile from the Congress movement. This thesis sets out to do two key things in relation to reconstructing Msane’s life: Firstly, it reconstructs the longer biography of Msane’s political life by drawing on the existing archives, and thus filling in the South African historical record in that regard. Secondly, at the broader conceptual and historiographical level, it argues that the controversies surrounding Msane’s persona and character illustrate that conceptions of elitism and the nature of being ‘elite’ were key to the politics of Congress at the time.

## Isifingqo

U-Saul Msane wayengomunye wabasunguli beqembu lika-African National Congress (uKhongolose) futhi eyIntatheli nomhleli wephephandaba i-Abantu-Batho. Umsebenzi ayewenza waba nezingqinamba eziningi ngokwezepolitiki. Ngasekugcineni kwempilo yakhe waba nokungazwani nabaholi ayesebenza nabo kuKhongolose okwadala ukuba abizwe ngesitha sabantu ngenxa yokuba engavumelananga nesiteleka sango-1918 lapho abasebenzi babelwela ukukhushulelwa amaholo. Leligama lokubizwa ngesitha sabantu lahoxiswa ngo 1919 sekudlule unyaka engasekho emhlabeni. Lokubizwa ngesitha sabantu kwalilimaza igama lakhe kwezepolitiki e-Transvaal waze wathutha wayohlala kwaNongoma nokuyilapho ashonela khona. Iminyaka uMsane ayisebenzele uKhongolose yaba isikhombisa, kusukela ekusungulweni kwayo ngo 1912 kuze kufike ekulimaleni komsebenzi wakhe wezepolitiki ngo 1919. Kuleminyaka eyisikhombisa umsebenzi wakhe kuKhongolose wawubhekene nokugxekwa okukhulu nokubukeka njengomuntu onokuzenza ngcono kunabanye abantu. Emlandweni kaKhongolose uMsane akavezwa ngendlela emfanele, kukhulunywa ngaye kudlulwa nje. Lokunganakwa kukaMsane emlandweni kaKhongolose kusiphoka ukuba sibhale ngabaholi abangaqakanjiswa. Lolucwaningo luveza umlando kaMsane ngokujulile ngaphezu kwangalesikhathi abizwa khona ngesitha sabantu. Noma umsebenzi kaMsane kuKhongolose wabamfushane kunabanye futhi ugwele izinto kodwa noko ingobo yawo ikhona. Lolucwaningo lucubungula lengobo ukuhlaziya nokubhala kabusha umlando wengqalabutho eyagcina ishonela ngaphandle kombutho kaKhongolose. Loluphando lifisa ukwenza izinto ezimbili: Okokuqala, ibhala kabusha umlando omude wezepolitiki kaMsane kusetshenziswa ulwazi olukhona. Loku kuzosiza ukunothisa umlando wezepolitiki wezwe laseNingizimu Afrika. Okwesibili, ezingeni lobunzululwazi, lolucwaningo luveza ukuthi izinkinga uMsane ahlangebazana nazo zazisukele endleleni okwakubukwa ngayo indaba yokucwasana ngazinga empilo abantu, kwakuyinto ejulile kuKhongolose ukubukeka kwabanye sengathi bazenza ngcono.

## Kgutsufatso

Saul Msane e ne e le setho se hlahelletseng ka mahetla sa batho ba ANC, moqolotsi wa ditaba ya mafolofolo le mohlophisi wa koranta ya ANC ya *Abantu-Batho*. Mosebetsi wa hae o ile wa baka qhwebeshano. Ho eella qetellong ya bophelo ba hae o ile a eba le kgohlano le basebetsi mmoho le yena ho African National Congress (ho tloha ha jwale Congress) e ileng ya baka hore a bitswe *isitha sa bantu*, “sera sa batho” ka lebaka la ho hana ho tshhetsa seteraeke sa Shilling ka 1918, qoso e ileng ya hlakolwa selemo ka mora lefu la hae ka 1919. Lebitso lena la *isitha sa bantu* le neng le tobisitswe ho Msane, le ile la fedisa setumo sa hae dipolotiking Transvaal, mme la mo qobella ho fallela kwaNongoma moo a ileng a hlokaalla teng nakwana ka mora moo. Msane e bile setho sa Congress nako ya dilemo tse ka bang supa, dipakeng tsa 1912, ha hone ho thehwa Congress, le nakong ya ho putlama ha mosebetsi wa hae ka 1919. Dilemo tsena tse supileng tseo Msane a di qetileng ka hara Congress di ile tsa tshabisahala ka diqhwebeshano, dikgohlano, le diqabang ka lebaka la tumelo ya hore o ne a iphahamiseditse hodimo. Ho tsa dithuto le bongodi ba nalane ya Congress, Msane ke motho ya sa tsebahaleng, ya sa hopoleheng, o dula mona le mane mongolong o botlaaseng ba leqephe, e le polelo e tshhetsang kapa e qotsitsweng feela tjena. Ho qhelelwa ka thoka ha hae ho senola tse ding tsa dikgeo nalaneng ya Congress mme hona ho re memela hore re ngole ka ba sakang ba hlahella e le bahale nalaneng ya Congress. *Thesis* ena e ikemiseditse ho ngola pale ya bophelo ba Msane, le ho rekota dintlha tsa mosebetsi wa hae wa dipolotiki ho feta ho motsotso oo o le mong moo a ileng a fetoha “*isitha sabantu*”. Leha mosebetsi wa Msane wa Congress o le mokgutshwane ha o bapiswa le e meng, mme o tletse dikgohlano, polokelo ya direkoto tsa nalane ya bophelo ba hae e teng. Patlisiso ena ke tekolo ya polokelo eo ya direkoto boitekong ba ho tsosolosa pale ya nalane ya bophelo ba moetapele enwa ya kileng a hlahella ka mahetla, ya ileng a hlokaalla telekong ya dipolotiki ya mokgatlong wa Congress. *Thesis* ena e rera ho phethahatsa dintlha tse pedi tsa bohlokwa mabapi le ho tsosolosa bophelo ba Msane: Ntlha ya pele, e tsosolosa pale ya nalane ya bophelo ba Msane ba di dipolotiki e be telele ka ho sebedisa dipolokelo tsa direkoto tsa nalane ya bophelo tse teng, mme kahoo e tlatselisa direkoto tsa nalane ya Afrika Borwa ntlheng eo. Ntlha ya bobedi, boemong ba mehopolo e phatlaletseng le dithutong tsa nalane le ho ngolwa ha yona, e pheha kang ka hore diqhwebeshano tse neng di le mabapi le botho ba hae bo tsebahalang le semelo sa nnete sa Msane di bontsha hore mehopolo ya “ho phahamisetsa batho hodimo” le tlhaho ya ho ya ‘ho iphahamisetsa hodimo’ di ne di le ka sehloohong dipolotiking tsa Congress ka nako eo.

## **List of Abbreviations**

ABCFM - American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

AC – African Choir

AME - African Methodist Episcopal

ANC- African National Congress

ASAPS - Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society

BEV - Black English Vernacular

CCWCTU - Cape Colony Women Christian Temperance Union

CNC - Cape Native Congress

ETNLC – Eastern Transvaal Natives Land Committee

ICU - Industrial Commercial workers' Union

IOTT - Independent Order of True Templars

ISL – International Socialist League

IWA - Industrial Workers of Africa

LLB – Liquor Licensing Board

LMS – London Missionary Society

NAD – Native Affairs Department

NEA - Native Educational Association

NFASA - Native Farmers Association of South Africa Limited

NLA - Native Landowners Association

NLC – Native Lands Commission

NNC – Natal Native Congress

NRC - Native Recruiting Corporation

NRLTUC - Native Races and Liquor Traffic United Committee

OFS - Orange Free State

ORCNVA - Orange River Colony Native Vigilance Association

ORNVA - Orange River Native Vigilance Association

PC - Plantation Creole

SADET - South African Democracy Education Trust

SANA - South African Native Association

SANAC - South African Native Affairs Commission

SANC - South African Native Congress

SANNC - South African Native National Congress

SANNC – South African Native National Congress

SBCP-SA - Synod of Bishops of the Church of the Province of South Africa

TNC – Transvaal Native Congress

TNVA - Transvaal Native Vigilance Association

UNACIL - United National Association of Commerce and Industry Limited

WAPE - West African Pidgin English

WLVA - Witwatersrand Licenced Victuallers' Association

WMC - Wesleyan Methodist Church

ZAR - Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek

ZC – Zulu Choir

ZCC – Zulu Christian Choir



## Chapter 1

### **Saul Msane: Friend or Foe of the People? The Life of the late Nineteenth to early Twentieth Century South African Politician and Journalist**

#### **Context of the study**

Saul Msane was a prominent founding member of the ANC and an active journalist and editor of the ANC newspaper *Abantu-Batho*. His career generated controversy. Towards the end of his life, he had a feud with his colleagues in the African National Congress (henceforth the Congress) that led to him being labelled *isitha sabantu*, “the enemy of the people” for his refusal to support the Shilling strike of 1918, an accusation which was retracted a year after his death in 1919. The label of *isitha sabantu* levelled against Msane, had the effect of ending his political prominence in the Transvaal, forcing him to relocate to KwaNongoma where he died shortly thereafter. Msane’s time in the Congress amounted to about seven years, between 1912, the founding of the Congress, and the demise of his career in 1919.

Msane’s seven years in Congress were characterised by controversies, clashes, and conflicts owing to his perceived elitism. In the Congress historiography, Msane is an obscure and elusive figure, who lives here and there in a footnote, as a supporting statement or mentioned in mere passing. His marginalisation reveals some of the gaps within the history of the Congress and invites us to write about those who did not emerge from the history of the Congress necessarily as heroes. This thesis sets out to write a biography of Msane and document his political career beyond that one moment in which he came to be *isitha sabantu*. While Msane’s Congress career was comparably short and filled with tensions, an archive of his life exists. This study is an exploration of that archive to reconstruct the biography of a once prominent leader who died in political exile from the Congress movement. This thesis sets out to do two key things in relation to reconstructing Msane’s life:

- Firstly, it reconstructs the longer biography of Msane’s political life by drawing on the existing archives, and thus filling in the South African historical record in that regard.
- Secondly, at the broader conceptual and historiographical level, it argues that the controversies surrounding Msane’s persona and character illustrate those conceptions of elitism and the nature of being “elite” which were key to the politics of Congress at the time.

The concept of elitism emerges prominently and constantly in Congress historiography. The elite nature of the Congress is the subject of debate throughout its own history and in writing about it. The contradictions of the Congress being founded by dispossessed black subjects who were educated at mission schools, yet also kept within the lower rungs of the colonial economy, creates a complex set of debates around just how to characterise the “elite” status of the Congress and its founders.

The accusations against Msane and the way he was cut off from the Congress movement, demonstrate the preoccupation within the Congress itself on the concept of an “elite”, an “elitist” and the way in which “elitism” was seen to affect the movement politically. The nature of Msane’s elitism, as demonstrated in his tendency to use English terms such as “My my” and “whatchamacallit”, set him up against workers and the Congress members themselves. Msane’s detractors such as John Dube, Daniel Letanka and Thomas Mvabaza saw this kind of manner as lording it over workers, having a negative impact on Congress work and this eventually led to his ousting. More so, the faction of Letanka, Mvabaza and Sefako Makgatho saw Msane as anti-worker. This shows that within the Congress at this time, there was a concern around the mass and worker appeal of the movement, and what ought to be done about it. Msane’s perceived stance against *batho*, the “people”, illustrated that elitism was not a simply accepted element of the Congress’ nature in this period.

### **On the South African Historiography and underlying tendencies**

Had blacks had the same opportunities to write about the South African past as whites, the body of historical literature we possess would almost certainly have been very different.<sup>1</sup>

Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu, also wrote in 1920 to encourage emerging black scholars to carry the task of writing South African history from their own perspective because for too long our historiography has been dominated by white scholars:

However sympathetic and good a European may be, he cannot undertake such a task with the minute knowledge and enthusiasm that can belong only to the native African, who must himself be the victim of the untoward circumstances and difficulties under discussion.<sup>2</sup>

These two statements add to the debates on marginalisation regarding the writing of South African history which left the likes of Saul Msane on the periphery. In his paper, Mzala

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past-Major Historians of Race and Class*. (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu, *The Black Problem*. (Alice: Lovedale Press, 1920), ix.

Nxumalo writes about the South African historiographical tendencies: colonialist, liberal, and nationalist and Africanist. These tendencies do not converge into one broader South African historiography. As irreconcilable as they are, Mzala has shown us how each tendency displaced black historical figures and almost attempted to write them out of what could be a broader South African historiography if historians attempted to reconcile all tendencies into one. Mzala was one of the militant voices of the Congress in exile in the 1980s. His writings were at the forefront of the development of the evolving historiography and its impact on writing that included Saul Msane. His outlook was heavily informed by the dynamics of the struggle against apartheid.<sup>3</sup>

It is virtually impossible for the colonialist historiography to centre Saul Msane because he was a black historical figure whom white historians could not have written about. The liberal tendency of the South African historiography mentioned Saul Msane in passing and left him in the periphery. Ironically, the nationalist tendency also marginalised Msane and perpetuated the damage the colonialist tendency has caused. The Africanist tendency also did not treat Msane well because of being too elitist and for not being radical. This thesis is framed around the nationalist tendency as its point of departure and is concerned with why Saul Msane was marginalised in the first place when he was not that different from his contemporaries who were also elitist like him. This further narrowed nationalist historical perspective as non-existent up until the middle of the 1940s.<sup>4</sup> Inasmuch as white academics have written almost everything about the early Congress period, black academics could enrich the same scholarship by writing about white historical figures and their connection with black historical figures. That gap has not yet been closed.

Mzala states South African historians have used a narrativist approach in their writing of history and regarded this approach as objective to make their content appear non-partisan. However, that is not true considering this approach offered a colonialist perspective of the South African past. It was perpetuated by George McCall Theal, who was regarded as the father of South African historiography after he published, in 1915, five volume *History of South Africa, 1795-1884*. Theal was criticised by historians such as Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, who in 1969, published *The Oxford History of South Africa*. The book criticised

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<sup>3</sup> Mzala Nxumalo, "The National Question in the Writing of South African History: A Critical Survey of Some Major Tendencies". Development Policy and Practice Research Group Working Paper No.22. Faculty of Technology, The Open University, March 1992, 1 and 6.

<sup>4</sup> Nxumalo, 'The Nationalist Question', 43.

misleading assumptions regarding the South African past in the historiography. They criticised Theal for claiming that his writing of the South African history was objective and represented all its people regardless of their race whereas he wrote from the colonialist tendency.<sup>5</sup>

This tendency dismisses the likes of Saul Msane as a non-historic historical figure that has no place in South African history unless he was seen as “barbaric” and “savage”. In response to this notion, Msane would be forced to prove that he was nothing like such colonial stereotypical descriptions used against black people. In essence, it could be said that with his anglicised or elitist character, Saul Msane could have only become visible in the liberal tendency of the South African historiography, yet at the same time he was written out by the colonialist tendency.<sup>6</sup>

In her review of Wilson and Thompson’s *Oxford History of South Africa. Volume I. South Africa to 1870* and *500 Years: A History of South Africa* edited by CFJ Muller, Marks argues that *Oxford History* embodies a new perspective in the rethinking of South African history. Inasmuch as the South African historiography in the 1930s and 1940s was at the forefront of continental historiography, in terms of closing the divide between precolonial and colonial past, it was still written from a white man’s perspective. In the same spirit, Muller’s *500 Years*, written by twelve Afrikaner historians and published in 1980, was also written from an Afrikaner perspective.<sup>7</sup>

Mzala argues that there are few African historians who challenged the colonialist tendency of the South Africa historiography by writing history from a nationalist tendency. Their works were ignored by publishers. The white establishment that owned the publishing enterprises always had the power to decide what was published and what was not. This is coupled with its relationship with the state and its power and institutional control. African historians were not allowed to question conventional historical myths about their origins because their works would be considered treasonable.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 2; Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, (ed.) *The Oxford History of South Africa. I. South Africa to 1870*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); George McCall Theal, *History of South Africa, Volume 1*. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1915).

<sup>6</sup> John Hoffman and Mzala Nxumalo, ““Non-Historic Nations” and the National Question: A South African Perspective”. *Science & Society*, Winter, 1990/1991, 54, 4 (Winter, 1990/1991), 408-409; Shula Marks, “African and Afrikaner”. *Journal of African History*, xi, 3 (1970), 435.

<sup>7</sup> Marks, “African and Afrikaner”, 435.

<sup>8</sup> Nxumalo, “The National Question”, 8.

According to Mzala, one of the Congress founders Walter Rubusana's 1906 complete manuscript *History of South Africa From The Native Stand-Point* was untraceable. In fact, McKinley Memorial University in the United States awarded him an honorary doctorate because of this work and it was widely celebrated by Trevor Dan Mweli Skota in his book *The African Yearly Register*, published in Johannesburg.<sup>9</sup> Mzala adds that Allan Kirkland Soga's 500-page book on the history of South Africa also suffered the same fate. It was never published. He wrote it while he was the editor of *Izwi laBantu* newspaper. Before then, another digest that has been lost was SEK Mqhayi's biography of Elijah Makiwane.<sup>10</sup> Heather Hughes maintains that in 1974 RRR Dhlomo, a journalist, writer, and editor of *Ilanga laseNatal*, worked on the biography of John Dube but Dhlomo could not finish it because the apartheid government deprived him resources to embark on a serious scholarship.<sup>11</sup>

Mzala highlights that there were other historical works Africans wrote in their own languages but were submitted to missionary-owned presses and never published because they were considered inaccessible to white readership and inaccurate for their South African history version. One example would be Allan Kirkland Soga's brother, John Henderson Soga (1859-1941). Soga's work might not have been original work because it referenced Theal's published work, but it contained a substantial number of oral testimonies. Soga's publication was unique in the sense that it was the only one within the liberal tendency that employed oral tradition. Out of white historians, only AT Bryant, wrote black people's history from their perspective and later had his work uncited in the official history textbooks. These bodies of work could have substantially preserved Saul Msane's memory as early as the late 1890s and possibly wrote him a chapter or two both as a subject and object of his role as an historical figure.<sup>12</sup>

### **The nature of political biographies in the post-1994 South African popular memory**

As Msane's life story is neglected in the existing literature, it is important to understand why there is no biography written about his life. The traditional focus on the "heroes" in liberation struggle history created a divide that needs to be bridged by historians to represent those who were not regarded as loyalists of the struggle. Mouton claims that in South Africa, biography

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*; Heather Hughes, "Doubly Elite: Exploring the Life of John Langalibalele Dube". *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 27, 3, 2001, 445; Ntongela Masilela, "African Intellectual and Literary Responses to Colonial Modernity in South Africa" In: Limb, Peter, Etherington, Norman and Midgley, Peter. (eds.), *Grappling with the Beast: Indigenous Southern African Responses to Colonialism, 1840-1930*. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 249.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 8-9.

“remains a neglected genre among professional historians” because it lacks objectivity.<sup>13</sup> However, biography is regarded as a method through which the liberation struggle history has been expanded. As a result, several auto/biographies of liberation struggle heroes and some hagiographic biographies were written to re-tell stories of the struggle. For example, as Nombila points out, the South African Democracy Education Trust’s (SADET) selective memorialisation of liberation struggle heroes created a gap in South African history since 1994 because certain individuals were written back to life, to inform national consciousness, while stories of others were repressed.<sup>14</sup>

Dubow argued in 2000 that “no reliable, unpartisan and well researched general history of the ANC from its foundation to the present exists”<sup>15</sup> however this is no longer the case to date. In the 1970s Karis and Carter contributed a crucial rediscovery of history by compiling brief biographies of 333 African intellectuals whose role in South African history should not be forgotten. Their brief synopsis of these individuals focuses on their political or public spheres of life, neglecting the private spheres, including that of Msane.<sup>16</sup>

In *Treading the Waters of History: Perspectives on the ANC*, a book written to mark the centenary of the Congress, the authors argue that since 1994 a leading national narrative began with the emphasis on the main role of the Congress’ armed struggle, this disregarded other catalysts that shaped the democratic transition in South Africa. The outcome of this shift is represented through several biographies, memoirs, and monographs. Yet the liberation struggle politicians of recent years are over-represented in the public memory, to the exclusion of early Congress politicians.<sup>17</sup>

The editors argue that the reasons for these historical gaps within South African history and the Congress history is the methodology used to promote the Congress during the liberation struggle years under the apartheid regime. The writing of the Congress history since 1994

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<sup>13</sup> Alex Mouton, “‘The Good, the Bad and the Ugly’: Professional Historians and Political Biography of South African Parliamentary Politicians, 1910-1990”, *Journal*, 2011, 36, 1, 64.

<sup>14</sup> Ayanda Nombila, ‘Christianity, Education and African Nationalism: An Intellectual Biography of Z.K. Matthews (1901-1968)’, MA Thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2013, 8-9.

<sup>15</sup> Saul Dubow, *The African National Congress* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2000), xi; Chris Saunders, “The ANC’s 100 Years: Some Recent Work on its History in Historiographical Context”, *Historia*, 57, 2, 2012, 433.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Karis and Gwendolyn Carter (ed.), *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964, Volume 4 (Political Profiles)* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Publication, 1977), xvii and 104.

<sup>17</sup> Christian Williams, “Book Review: Treading the Waters of History: Perspectives on the ANC”, *African Institute of South Africa*, 44, 3, 2014, 200; Renier Schoeman and Daryl Swanepoel (ed.), *Unity in Diversity: 100 Years of the ANC Leadership, (1912-2012)*. (Johannesburg: BM Books, 2012).

continued to be as it was during apartheid: propagandist, partisan and polemical, all in the name of glorifying the Congress.<sup>18</sup> Political biographers followed the same pattern of heroic writing of an individual instead of writing comprehensively about an individual subject.<sup>19</sup> In the endeavour to repackage the history of the Congress in the form of political biography, Mandela is the most celebrated figure with over twelve biographies written about him. Over twenty of his close colleagues have written their own memoirs.<sup>20</sup>

Mackenzie maintains that the essence of biographical writing as a historical genre is a vital consideration. Traditional political biography is predominantly about the character and circumstances of a person's life. It is also about context and the insider's view of what the author deems as important events in history. In most cases, it is about hero-worshipping. That alone, comes with the temptation to represent the author's subject as a larger-than-life individual who shaped certain events in history instead of his being shaped by history. As a genre in literature and history, political biography generally aims to make historical corrections especially where the biographer feels his or her subject was misrepresented. Mackenzie warns that political biography limits history by distorting other important facts of the very individual the biographer is protecting.<sup>21</sup> Msane's life story will comprise other realms of his life story not only the political realm because other liberation struggle biographers tend to focus solely on the political and ignore other aspects. However, not much is known about Msane's childhood life. Consequently, this study aims to include that important feature of his life to understand his political character.

Rotberg points out that, to write solely political biographies of influential people limits the scope, with a narrow focus on one aspect of a person's life while the rest is left out. It does not make sense to exclude the private life of an individual and focus exclusively on the public life. In real life, the private and the public spheres of an individual are inextricably linked.<sup>22</sup>

Biographies are about representation of historical events central to the individual subject's life and how such events shaped their thinking. They further map the individual life dialectically

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<sup>18</sup> Saunders, "The ANC", 431; Arianna Lissoni, Jon Soske, Natasha Erlank, Noor Nieftagodien and Omar Badsha (ed.), *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Histories Today*. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012), 162.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*; Lissoni, Soske, Erlank, Nieftagodien and Badsha (ed.), *One Hundred Years of the ANC*, 162.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>21</sup> David Mackenzie, "Where Character Meets Circumstance: Political Biography in Modern Canada", *Acadiensis: Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region*, 42, 1, 2013, 182-183.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Rotberg, "Biography and Historiography: Mutual Evidentiary and Interdisciplinary Considerations", *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 40, 3, 2010, 305.

with the multiple cultural, social, and political worlds the individual dwelt in and made sense of. Feminist scholars argue that a biography becomes an intellectual history when the private and the public elements of an individual are combined to give the political life of an individual a new meaning.<sup>23</sup> This study is going to trace the life story of Msane from birth to death to offer a comprehensive life study, not a political biography. Political biographies are prone to manipulation and distortion of certain historical events and this study is sensitive to the effects political biographies have on the life events of an individual subject like Msane.

In their review of the politics of biography in the post-1994 South Africa, Nancy Jacobs and Andrew Bank identify four different themes of biography: political biographies of the individual-as-leader; social history biographies of the individual-as-exemplar; literary biographies of the individual as-vessel-of-self; and critical studies biographies of the individual-as-fragmented-subject. From this list, Saul Msane's biography is, therefore, an example of a critical studies biography of the individual-as-fragmented-subject because, as indicated before, he was treated as a fragmented subject in the Congress history and with no biography under his name.<sup>24</sup>

Under individual-as-leader in political biography Jacobs and Bank argue that out of 225 political biographies, conceived as politics of the past, published in South Africa since 1990 the majority were on white men. This approach looks at the achievements of a prominent historical figure.<sup>25</sup> However, in case of Saul Msane, and for a new generation of historians, it is important to understand why Msane was left out by so many historians who overlooked him. It is our duty to look for ways to fill the gaps the old generation of historians left behind. Also, inasmuch as all other political biographies to date reflect the context of their times, where the most heroic and the most prominent got attention first, it is now time to move beyond that as this thesis demonstrates.

Another theme in biography writing is social history biography, which places an individual as an exemplar through broader sociological categories. This theme focuses on the challenges and daily lives of ordinary people. In social history, ordinary individuals are placed at the centre as representing non-elite experiences. This form of biography only emerged in South Africa in the 1980s and was driven by the Wits History Workshop. As it stands there are less

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<sup>23</sup> Rotberg, "Biography and Historiography", 308.

<sup>24</sup> Nancy Jacobs and Andrew Bank, "Biography in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Call for Awkwardness". *African Studies*, 78, 2, 2019, 166 and 177.

<sup>25</sup> Jacobs and Bank, "Biography in Post-Apartheid South Africa", 166 and 177.

than 30 social history biographies in the post-1994 South Africa. One example is *Kas Maine, The Seed is Mine* (1996) by Charles Van Onselen. Van Onselen illuminated the behaviour of Kas Maine with a class context but as an antithesis of the elites. He also describes Maine as a symbol of black experience.<sup>26</sup>

Lastly, in literary biography an individual is seen as vessel-of-self. This theme captures the imaginative, emotional, and inner life. This type of biography is often written by artists or musicians, and it excludes social and political multiplicities and focuses solely on interiority. The subjects are usually humanists, and their biographers are generally empathetic towards them. The subjects and biographers are almost peers, unlike in social history biography where there is an imbalanced power dynamic between the biographer and subject.<sup>27</sup> In addition, literary biographies of individual as-a-vessel-of- self are not possible in Msane's case because of the dearth of first-hand information. As indicated, this thesis is not a political biography, but it is a life story that tries to explain the politics of the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries South Africa.

### **The characteristics of elites**

Shula Marks' theory on ambiguities of dependence underpins the characteristics of the black elite. Marks argues that the elites, as the colonised, had two-faced behaviour. One they wore like a mask in the eyes of the coloniser to survive the colonial status quo and the other face amongst themselves to constantly complain about their powerlessness. This imbalance rendered the elites powerless and fearful of the coloniser. This ambiguity compromised the power struggle as the elites negotiated with the colonial state.<sup>28</sup> These contradictions and contestations characterises Saul Msane as an elite.

The study of African institutional politics in South Africa before 1940 is about black elites, their elitist behaviour and why they were described as "petty bourgeoisie", "a lower middle class" and "an upper working class".<sup>29</sup> These confusing terms encapsulate the contradictory and superficial identity of the mission-educated black elites in the colonial state. In Natal, they were acclaimed as *izemteti* or the exempted and referred to as *AmaRespectables* or vilified as

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 172-174.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 174-175.

<sup>28</sup> Shula Marks, *The Ambiguities of Dependence in South Africa: Class, Nationalism, and the State in Twentieth-century Natal* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986), 2.

<sup>29</sup> Paul La Hausse, *Restless Identities: Signatures of Nationalism, Zulu Ethnicity, and History in the Lives of Petros Lamola (c.1881-1948) and Lymon Maling (1889-c.1936)*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000), 259.

*amabuka* or traitors. These elitist individuals formed and joined the Congress, Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU), regional organisations such as Inkatha, the Natal Native Congress (NNC) and Natal ICU. As elites they shaped their own collective sense of identity through social clubs, debate unions, cooperative societies, football clubs, teachers' associations, business leagues, farmers associations, mission groups, musical troupes, and independent churches.<sup>30</sup>

Social and geographical mobility as well as education and property ownership set these small groups of people apart from the rest and positioned them as Zulu nationalist intellectuals. However, they had to negotiate their elitist identity with the racist society that marginalised them and their culture, degraded their skills, and rejected their mission education. It also dispossessed them of their land and right to new forms of landownership.<sup>31</sup>

Due to their social status, the elites acted as intermediaries within the colonial state. In other words, they saw themselves as spokespersons for the people because they believed they represented the interests of their people. The elites mediated conflicts between striking black mineworkers and white employers as well as the state. Similarly, they mediated between a repressive state and black people, treated by the same state as non-citizens. Even with regards to labour relations between mineworkers, farmworkers, and other types of low wage earners in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, the elite, as intermediaries brought mine-workers to the cities through headmen. Meanwhile black clergymen mediated disputes and gave testimonies to commissions detailing challenges black people faced. All these endeavours by the elites demonstrate that they represented certain class interests within the colonial state either in terms of their own individual agency or their brokering roles.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast, Etherington states that *amakholwa's* classification as middle-class elites did not stop them from being rejected by their black counterparts who were not Christian converts. They were not trusted as the right people to lead black people into a better economic and political life. Simultaneously, *amakholwa* were not respected by whites outside mission stations who used derogatory terms such as "the raw kaffir" and demonstrated open contempt

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<sup>30</sup> La Hausse, *Restless Identities*, 259.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Peter Limb, "Intermediaries of Class, Nation, and Gender in the African Response to Colonialism in South Africa, 1890s-1920s". In: Peter Limb, Norman Etherington and Peter Midgley, (eds.), *Grappling with the Beast: Indigenous Southern African Responses to Colonialism, 1840-1930*. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 49-50.

towards Christian converts. On the other hand, the Secretary for Native Affairs worked hard to constrain *amakholwa* within Native Law.<sup>33</sup>

However, Etherington states that none of the hatred stopped *amakholwa* from seeing themselves as elites and acting as such. Leadership training in church helped them know how to communicate with white people. Elites saw themselves as intellectuals playing a leading role in shaping the history of Africans and speaking on behalf of other Africans through being politically and economically active in the colonial state. They realised that treading between indigenous and modern worlds came with having a better understanding of the change colonialism brought in southern Africa and positioned themselves accordingly, even to their demise. They also bore the brunt of seeing their petitions and rights being ignored by the state. Their reactions to these complexities, contestations and contradictions helps us understand the elites and their behaviour in this study.<sup>34</sup>

### **On writing about *amakholwa* intellectuals and biography as a methodology**

According to Mokoena there are various approaches in studying *amakholwa* intellectuals and this study took biographical sketches as a methodology. Biographical method illuminates and describes what made *kholwa* intellectuals far better than Marxist-materialist inquiry. This approach suggests that *kholwa* writing must be evaluated in terms of whether it conforms or diverges from either the indigenous oral testimonies or modern provisions of historical narration.<sup>35</sup>

For instance, mission station politics shaped the kind of elite and writer Saul Msane became. When Msane was 7, in 1863, Job Kambule, and other first generation Christian converts, possibly including Saul Msane's father, Matthew Msane, were already landowners who embraced a hybrid culture of orality and epistolary modes of communication in the form of letter-writing and petitions. Khumalo asserts that the 1863 *Amakholwa* Petition as well as the 1864 African franchise Bill, which led to the Exemption Law, saw them clashing with the Secretary for Native Affairs, Theophilus Shepstone, for writing a petition as a collective voicing their dissatisfactions.<sup>36</sup> *Amakholwa* no longer needed to be addressed in the traditional

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<sup>33</sup> Norman Etherington, *Preachers Peasants, and Politics in Southeast Africa, 1835-1880: African Christian Communities in Natal, Pondoland and Zululand*. (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978), 174-175.

<sup>34</sup> Etherington, *Preachers Peasants*, 175.

<sup>35</sup> Mokoena, 'The Making of Kholwa Intellectual', 46.

<sup>36</sup> Cyrius Vukile, Khumalo, 'Epistolary Networks and The Politics of Cultural Production in KwaZulu-Natal, 1860 to 1910'. PhD Thesis, University of Michigan, 2004, 204 and 207.

Native Affairs manner of orality. Instead, they demanded that all their correspondence with the government be written down. Written records helped them conduct business transactions as landowners and the English law complimented that kind of decorum in comparison to the Native Law because the former was an expression of their elitism. Shepstone saw petitions as a form of activism planned against the government and warned that they might lead to a revolution.<sup>37</sup> However, land-owning mission residents saw it necessary to form a political dialogue with the colonial government to protect their properties and create a political vocabulary to appeal to the government within the right context. This culture of petition formed a significant part of Saul Msane's political life as he saw it as a form of response or protest to state power, as a *kholwa* or an elite, to the colonial government.<sup>38</sup>

The third approach centred on *kholwa* intellectuals is about materialism or class. It locates the *kholwa* within the political economy of the colony and sees them in two ways: either as a dominant and nationalist elite or a marginalised subaltern class created by the imperialistic and colonial system. In this case, Saul Msane was caught between these two contrasts and eventually became unpopular within the Transvaal Congress' political arena. Towards the end of his life, he was called *Isitha sabantu* or the enemy of the people. Class or elitism made it difficult for him to relate to the masses from the bottom-up approach. This was also the case with the Congress itself especially during John Dube's regime as its president. The last approach is nationalist discourses or anti-colonial nationalisms. This thesis broadly positions Msane within the nationalist discourse rather than anti-colonial nationalism because he saw himself as a nationalist emerging within the colonial context.<sup>39</sup>

### **Sources and methodological approach**

This thesis stands as the first doctoral study of Saul Msane. With that being said, there is no Saul Msane collection comprising documents, articles, letters, etc. to enable this study to be more nuanced than it is. Msane's life writing was developed along his elite upbringing, political, choral, labour, and journalistic facets. Therefore, primary, and secondary sources were incorporated to contextualise important events of Saul Msane's life in reference to these facets.

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<sup>37</sup> Khumalo, 'Epistolary Networks', 204 and p.207.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Mokoena, 'The Making', 46-47.

In addition, the writing about the life history of Saul Msane is episodic, meaning that it builds an account of his life around key episodes such as schooling; the choral tour; experiences as compound manager; protest the Land Act; relations with *Abantu-Batho*; and being called *Isitha sabantu* in the wake of the 1918 Shilling Strike. The context plays a very prominent role, far more than “personal experience”. Even when we do “hear” Msane’s voice, for example his evidence to the 1903-1905 South African Native Affairs Commission; and his anti-strike pamphlet, his voice gets incorporated into the general flow of the narrative. This study also mixes chronology with themes to express Msane’s life history.<sup>40</sup>

To discover more insight into Msane’s life, newspapers such as *Umsizi waBantu* (1892), and *Ilanga laseNatal* (1912-1914) based at the Bessie Head library in Pietermaritzburg added value into the construction of this study. The Wits Historical and Literary Papers contain some of the remaining copies of *Abantu-Batho* (1912-1930) newspaper while the National Libraries of South Africa, in Pretoria and Cape Town hold *Inkanyiso yaseNatal* (1889-1899), *Natal Mercury* (1892) and *Izwi laKiti* (1892). The newspapers were translated from isiZulu to English to construct this study.

Secondary sources important for this study are biographies of his contemporaries such as Josiah Gumede, RV Selope Thema, Sol Plaatje, John Dube and Robert Grendon. Works of Peter Limb, Les Switzer, Andre Odendaal, Brian Willan, and George M. Frederickson are based on the histories of the black press and the Congress and its organ, *Abantu-Batho*. These sources were vital in uncovering traces of Saul Msane’s elitist life through his contemporaries in the early Congress history. In addition, their work helped to explain why certain narratives have gained hegemony within the Congress ranks and in the public sphere whereas others, such as those relating to Saul Msane have been marginalised.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Hlonipha, Mokoena, ‘The *Making* of a Kholwa Intellectual: A Discursive Biography of Magema Magwaza Fuze’. PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2005, 45.

<sup>41</sup> George M. Frederickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); George M. Frederickson, *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Brian Willan, *Sol Plaatje: A Life of Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, 1876-1932* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2017); Peter Limb, *The ANC’s Early Years: Nation, Class and Place in South Africa before 1940* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2010); Peter Limb, *The People’s Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012); Andre Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu!: The Beginnings of Black Protest Politics in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1984); Andre Odendaal, *The Founders: The Origins of the ANC and the Struggle for Democracy in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2013); Les Switzer, *South Africa’s Resistance Press: Alternative Voices of Protest and Resistance, 1880-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

## Archival absence

Historical research is predominantly about creating a comprehensive record of what happened in the past following a systematic evaluation, analysis and synthesis of evidence relating to human achievement. However, historical research in Southern Africa is in a crisis due to several reasons when it comes to accessing primary sources from the repositories in the archives.<sup>42</sup> In the case of doing research on the life history of Saul Msane, it was difficult to find original accounts of the defining events that made up his public and private life. In interpreting the life history of Saul Msane, this thesis depended on the available evidence, which was mainly scanty, across the country, including Eswatini, and somewhat contributed to not having a fully balanced historical account of his life. The little that was uncovered allowed the author an opportunity to validate the accuracy of any discourse involving Msane.

Amongst what is generally stored in South African archives, be it at provincial and national level, are what archivists call public and non-public records. Public records are records of current national, provincial, and local governments under democracy and previously before and under apartheid. Non-public records are all records that are not generated by the state. They include records of non-governmental organisations, liberation movements, political parties and prominent individuals. They also include records preserved by missions, churches, practitioners, and other institutions.<sup>43</sup>

Saul Msane's historical information falls under both public and non-public records. This is because he was a person of interest for the state as a prominent Congress figure and a Christian convert. He is also traced in African newspapers such as *Umsizi waBantu* (1892), *Inkanyiso yaseNatal* (1889), *Imvo Zabantsundu* (1889), *Ilanga laseNatal* (1902), *Abantu-Batho* (1912) and *Umteteli waBantu* (1920). However, there is no Saul Msane archival collection in any of the archival repositories in South Africa compared to his contemporaries like John Dube and Sol Plaatje. This would include his photographs, letters, diaries, journals, notes, petitions, school reports, pamphlets, letters he wrote to the editors in newspapers and books he read. In essence, the entire body of work that Saul Msane himself left behind is missing. To this day, one of Msane's Congress colleagues Thomas Levi Mvabaza's family still holds Mvabaza's letters, diaries, Congress songs, etc. in a "big brown leather bag" but the same cannot be said

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<sup>42</sup> Patrick Ngulube, "Future of the Past: Access to Public Archives in Southern Africa and Challenges to Historical Research". *Historia*, 47, 2, 2002, 562, 572 and 582.

<sup>43</sup> The Archival Platform, *An Analysis of South Africa's National Archival System, 2014*. (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 2015).

about Saul Msane. Sol Plaatje's letters and correspondence were well preserved as part of his own collection. As a result, his biographers, Brian Willan and Sabata-Mpho Mokae, published volumes of letters Plaatje wrote in his lifetime. There is a book Willan published in 1996 with Ohio University Press that includes Plaatje's selected writings.<sup>44</sup>

Ngulube argues that the absence of some of the marginalised figures such as Saul Msane could be attributed to several factors, namely archival appraisal, migrated archives, legislation, backlog of unprocessed records, lack of funding aids, and lack of strategies of managing information in terms of the use of digitisation of records. Archival appraisal gave the archivist full control on deciding what to destroy and keep.<sup>45</sup> Could it be that the Saul Msane collection is missing in the archives because his body of work was not submitted as a non-public record in the first place? Is there a connection between his marginalisation in the Congress and liberation struggle historiographies and the archives? Did other historians and archivists collaborate to destroy his body of work as a result of his falling from grace in the Transvaal political arena? Regardless of the outcome, the absence of archives made it difficult to curate his life stories. The gaps in the archival practices made it difficult for the historian to put together a full-length biography of Saul Msane. There may well be many other marginalised figures.

Conradie adds that traditionally preservation of archives in South Africa, was not necessarily a priority to early archivists. Their main preoccupation was keeping existing government records rather than conserving and restoring them. Due to receiving a small output of records, they had to negotiate between how long the original source or office should keep its records before transferring them to the archives for preservation as opposed to what to keep and for how long and what to destroy. In most cases, this was determined by the politically appointed Archives Commissions. This approach set the tone of archiving and it still poses many challenges for historians in the post-1994 public archives.<sup>46</sup> For instance, the South African Native Affairs Commission, SANAC, is only coded as a government record but not as a government record that mentions Msane.

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<sup>44</sup> Frank Mvabaza, telephone conversation, great-grandson of Thomas Mvabaza. July 22, 2015; See Brian Willan. *Sol Plaatje: Selected Writings*. (Ohio: University of Ohio Press, 1996); Cyrius Vukile Khumalo, 'Epistolary Networks and The Politics of Cultural Production in KwaZulu-Natal, 1860-1910'. PhD Thesis, University of Michigan, 2004, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Ngulube. "Future of the Past", 564; Barbara Conradie. "Taking Stock: South African Society of Archivists from the 1960s to Beyond the Millennium". *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists*, 45, 2012, 85-86.

<sup>46</sup> Conradie. "Taking Stock", 85-86.

Mpho Ngoepe claims that public archives in South Africa have not been able to transform themselves into national documenters of significant social histories. They failed to fulfil their role in terms of collecting non-public records that form part of the nation's collective memory neglected by the pre-1994 archives repositories. This places the archive in a position where it must play an active role in inclusive knowledge production. Another challenge the archives are faced with is that the documentation of marginalised historical figures, does not exist and where it exists it has many inaccuracies primarily because it was recorded from the perspective of the coloniser and in a problematic manner.<sup>47</sup>

Luise White acknowledges that the task of writing history remains difficult because of the absence and sloppiness of the archives and missing information due to poor record-keeping systems. However, White urges historians to look at these difficulties in researching postcolonial history as an opportunity, and not a challenge. Reading against the grain could be a research methodology on its own, used to uncover new information that would lead to making an original contribution in the existing literature.<sup>48</sup> And this is how this thesis was constructed.

Parallel to that, historians should treat the archival chaos as a starting point that tells a story on its own because the gaps or absences in the archival record reveal the official thinking and policies behind why information about other prominent individuals is sketchy or missing and/or available. This further explains why prominent figures like Saul Msane and others have been marginalised in the archives.<sup>49</sup>

However, Huang argues that archiving is also about forgetting or erasing certain memories or individuals as opposed to remembering and preserving their memories. In other words, it is possible that heroes of the liberation struggle are remembered through the archive while the villains are systematically forgotten.<sup>50</sup>

Huang adds that:

...the infinite act of archiving, gathering the signs of one memory at the expense of another, unconsciously employs radical destruction as a tool through which certain memories are maintained and others are buried and erased. Here, the violence of the archive becomes

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<sup>47</sup> Mpho Ngoepe. "Archives without Archives: A Window of Opportunity to Build Inclusive Archive in South Africa". *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists*, 52, 2019, 151.

<sup>48</sup> Luise White, "Hodgepodge Historiography: Documents, Itineraries, and the Absence of Archives", *History in Africa*, 42, 2015, 309 and 313.

<sup>49</sup> White, "Hodgepodge Historiography", 313-314.

<sup>50</sup> Carolin Huang, "Dwelling on the "Anarchival": Archives as Indexes of Loss and Absence". *Archival Science*, 20, 2020, 266.

especially apparent, as the archive operates in its search for the unique, originary experience, but not without repression and suppression.<sup>51</sup>

To corroborate Huang's quote, Khumalo makes an example on the archiving of the Colenso family collection. This example could also explain the absence of Saul Msane's archives. After the surviving members of the Colenso family donated Ekukhanyeni epistolary documents in government archives in Pietermaritzburg after 1933, the documents underwent a process of archival appraisal which transformed the Ekukhanyeni documents into the Colenso collection.<sup>52</sup>

This process of transformation happened through Act 36 of 2001. It entailed transforming any archival material that was personal property into a public one. This meant that family members of the Ekukhanyeni mission letter-writers lost full access to those letters. It is possible that there are more traces of Saul Msane archival material withheld from public view considering how the same Colenso Collection was coded using numbers to conceal them from public use. It is also possible that manuscript curators indexed, itemised, and described Saul Msane material in an obscure manner, making it difficult for historians to search for any of his items from the state archives' database. Therefore, the inventory, a document that contains what is in the document, could be misleading researchers from finding Saul Msane, if he has been hidden somewhere in the various archives. Re-boxing or reclassifying materials also leads to similar hindrances especially when some information is not dated, or the archivist does not know Saul Msane's *nom de plume* and so on.<sup>53</sup>

However, from what the author uncovered when undergoing Saul Msane's archival research, not much evidence survived like the Colenso Collection and other collections of his generation. Msane's archive has been lost and we may never know how much was written by him and about him.<sup>54</sup>

Equally, it is also important to acknowledge that what the historian found in the archives was kept long enough, considering issues on the absence of the archives as discussed above, to enable the historian to produce a path breaking thesis that goes beyond the inherent practices to offer something new and different. The archives have allowed the historian to study the life of Saul Msane, a man with mixed reputation, and in so doing, it uncovered that people in the

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<sup>51</sup> Huang, "Dwelling on the 'Anarchival'", 266.

<sup>52</sup> Cyrius Vukile Khumalo, 'Epistolary Networks and The Politics of Cultural Production in KwaZulu-Natal, 1860-1910'. PhD Thesis, University of Michigan, 2004, 19.

<sup>53</sup> Khumalo, 'Epistolary Networks', 20.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

margins, like Saul Msane, have a lot to teach us about the centre. This may be an up-and-coming trend, yet it builds on all the past histories and takes things further. Therefore, this work should teach all South African archivists why they should look out for people who were marginalised like Saul Msane.

### **Structure of the thesis and missing links in the biography of Saul Msane**

**Chapter two** *UMayiMayi...umfo kaMatiyose waseEdendale: The Making of Saul Msane's Kholwa Character* captures a period before Saul Msane was born and how his father, Matthew Msane, became one of the first landowners and residents of Edendale. It also contextualises Saul Msane's early life with special focus on his forefathers, father, education in mission institutions, exemption and landownership and Christian conversion. These are all crucial to an understanding of his later life and his elite character. From the archives, what is missing is his life or a chapter as a teacher which spanned a decade between 1882 and 1892. But a context around that decade is provided. In addition, details of his life as a lay preacher in the Methodist church in the same period are also missing.

**Chapter three** *"From the Wilds to Westminster": Saul Msane and the Zulu Choir in London, 1892* focuses on the time he resigned as a teacher to join a newly formed Zulu Choir. The Zulu Choir toured London in 1892, making that his first trip overseas. This chapter highlights the musical career of Saul Msane and the events that transpired before his trip and during the stay in London. The trip exposed Saul Msane to English racism and challenged his elite character. It further locates the Zulu Choir within minstrelsy as it was influenced by the arrival of Orpheus McAdoo of the Jubilee Singers in 1890. The Zulu Choir in 1892 became the second choir to tour London. The African Choir of Paul Xiniwe and Charlotte Maxeke first toured London and performed before Queen Victoria in 1891. What is missing in the archives is details of Msane as part of *Unzondelelo* (Natives' Home Missionary Society between 1893 and 1895). More insight into this theme would expose us to Msane's crucial moments as a lay preacher of the Wesleyan church.

**Chapter four** *"And they... quote 'Mai Mai' as their place of residence": Saul Msane as Compound Manager at Salisbury and Jubilee Mine Compound, 1895-1914* considers Saul Msane's role as the first and only Compound Manager at Salisbury and Jubilee Mine Compound in Johannesburg. He joined the compound at the height of the liquor trade in Paul Kruger's era as the president of the Transvaal. In 1899, he led a rally of 800 people speaking against inebriation and for the total prohibition of alcohol and its trade amongst black

mineworkers. Again, in 1904 during the South African Native Affairs Commission, he advocated for the total prohibition of alcohol. Throughout his career as a compound manager, he fought for the welfare of Africans in the mining compounds.

**Chapter five** “[I] would like to see all individuals that can buy [land] to buy [land]”: Saul Msane’s philosophy on land tenure and African landownership and the underpinning laws connected to the land question, 1895-1912 compares and examines Saul Msane’s philosophy on African landownership in Natal and the Transvaal. It will also weigh his justification of individual land tenure and critique of communal land tenure systems in the ever-changing policies and regimes (of Paul Kruger and Louis Botha) which applied different laws governing landownership in South Africa. It further shows that as land continued to be taken away from black people, Msane questioned his belief in the system of British justice. This was primarily because soon after the wars he was no longer allowed to own land in both Natal and the Transvaal. What is missing in the archives is Saul Msane’s role as a secretary general of the Native Land-owners Association (NLA) founded and led by Pixley kaIsaka Seme.

**Chapter six** “Fighting to a Finish”: The role of Saul Msane in the fight against the 1913 Natives’ Land Act, 1914 is about his political life as one of the founders of the SANNC in 1912. It marked his second trip to London as part of the 1914 ANC delegation elected to persuade London to veto the 1913 Natives’ Land Act in London. This chapter explains Saul Msane’s understanding of legalities surrounding the 1913 Natives’ Land Act while it was a Bill. This is revealed through his testimonies and writings against the Act at the time. Furthermore, we learn about how issues of land were inextricably linked to his identity as a *kholwa* and influenced him to fight for fair play and justice for the black middle class who were Christians under British control.

**Chapter seven** “...A one-time editor of *Abantu-Batho*...”: The controversial editorship of Saul Msane, 1915 highlights Saul Msane’s journalistic life, particularly his short stint as editor of the ANC organ, *Abantu-Batho* in 1915. This chapter shows us that Saul Msane remained a moderate and elitist when *Abantu-Batho* radicalised to accommodate the workers and resorted to strike action plans. After leaving *Abantu-Batho*, Msane, because of his relationship with the Chamber of Mines, persuaded it to fund an alternative newspaper that challenged *Abantu-Batho*. The gap in the archives is Msane’s body of work as a journalist and his founding of *Umlomo WaBantu* in 1910 with Thomas Mvabaza and his role as an agent of John Tengo Jabavu’s *Imvo Zabantsundu*.

**Chapter eight** “UMsane Akafuneki”: The attack on Saul Msane and being labelled “The Enemy of the People” around the 1918 Shilling Strike investigates events that surrounded and challenged the elitist character and social position of Saul Msane amid the dynamic political contexts in the Transvaal, which forced the South African Native National Congress to radicalise under the presidency of Sefako Makgatho between 1917 and 1924. As a result, Saul Msane was called “*isitha sabantu*” for refusing to support strike action plans that the radical SANNC set in motion. The gap in the archives offers no insight into Msane’s tenure as the second secretary-general of the SANNC under Makgatho’s presidency.

## Chapter 2

### **“UMayiMayi...umfo kaMatiyose waseEdendale...” The Making of Saul Msane’s *kholwa* character<sup>55</sup>**

Saul Msane was born a second-generation *kholwa* or Christian convert on 13 May 1856 at Edendale, Pietermaritzburg. His *kholwa* parents were Matthew Mzondwa Msane, son of Hlombe and Legina Zipatele MaDlamini Msane, a granddaughter of King Ngwane III, the first Dlamini to rule Eswatini around the 1750s. However, his ancestral genealogy goes as far back as the 1720s during the times of King Nxaba kaMbhekane who was the son of King Sontuli Msane from Ogobeni royal house in Hlulhuwe behind the Mthekwini Mountain. Sontuli Msane was the leader of the Msane clan and the bloodline of Mgobhozi Msane whose son was Nongqwewu. Nongqwewu was known as a powerful warrior of the Msane clan and King Shaka’s military associate.<sup>56</sup> This chapter discusses factors that contributed to Saul Msane’s elitist orientation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Some of it was shaped by missionary teachings and some by legislation. But ultimately, it was Msane himself who put it all together into making him who he was. His personality formation is essential in understanding how some people came to view him as the “enemy of the people” late in his life.

#### **Matthew Mzondwa Msane’s background and Sir George Grey’s civilising policy**

Matthew Mzondwa Msane was born in circa 1816, around the times of the Zulu King Shaka’s ascendance to power and the consolidation of the Zulu kingdom. His father Hlombe was a subject of King Zwide under the Ndwandwe clan. Hlombe was killed during one of the civil wars with Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa clan at the Mhlathuze River. Following the collapse of Zwide’s Ndwandwe state, Nxaba Msane, one of the members of the Msane clan, Soshangane, Zwangendaba of the Jere and Ngwane Maseko fled from Shaka’s might and reunited in 1821 in Maputo. This left Matthew to grow up without his father in 1818. It is possible that Nxaba and Hlombe were brothers. Matthew Msane’s mother and sisters were held captives by the victorious party after Shaka’s ascendancy to the Zulu throne.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> UMayiMayi, son of Matthew [Msane from Edendale. That was how Saul Msane was affectionately known; *Amakholwa* means Christian converts. Saul Msane’s parents became the first-generation Christian converts at Edendale who mission educated and owned land.

<sup>56</sup> Msane Tribe Heritage Trust, “Life and Times of Saul Msane”. Accessed on 10 December 2021. Available at: <http://msanetribehistory.blogspot.com/2015/07/times-and-life-of-saul-msane.html?m=1>.

<sup>57</sup> Solomon Xaba, ‘The Late Matthew Msane, A Sketch: Chapter 1’, *Ilanga lase Natal*, 26 February 1904, 4 (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

Nxaba Msane fled with some of the members of the Msane clan and left Hlombe's direct descendants behind. The original homeland of the Msane clan members was situated to the west of Lake St. Lucia, present-day Mtubatuba. Its township is now called KwaMsane, in reference to Nxaba Msane. The royal house of Nxaba was in eGobeni near Mthekwini Mountains.<sup>58</sup> The area known as Ndwandwe consisted of the part of Zululand to the north and east of the Mfolozi River, excluding the area south of Lake St. Lucia but extending slightly northwards across the Makhatini Flat east of the Ubombo Mountains. It also included Tongoland of the Mabaso and Tembe. The Mabaso clan of Zwide Nxumalo held political power in the area.<sup>59</sup>

Another member of the Msane clan which formed part of Saul Msane's family tree and his totem was Mgobhozi Msane. Mgobhozi Msane was regarded as a hero by the iLembe for his contribution in the war. Mgobhozi Msane grew up with Nqoboka kaLanga Sokhulu in the Mthethwa area. Both were instructed to join the Zwide soldiers as part of the regiments who fought wars of resistance against Shaka after he defeated the first regiment. Nqoboka kaLanga Sokhulu was the nephew of King Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa state. The father of Mgobhozi was Nongqewu Msane, who was like Nxaba Msane under Zwide of the Ndwandwe state. Nongqewu showed allegiance to the Mthethwas regardless of their battle with the Ndwandwes, this explains why his son, Mgobhozi grew up under the Mthethwa state with Dingiswayo's nephew. Mgobhozi Msane was well recognised in the battle at the Gqokoli Hill, in April 1818, where he was stabbed several times in a way that other soldiers left him in the field where he was lying with the Ndwandwe's dead bodies of soldiers. They took him to the royal house in KwaBulawayo where they washed his wounds and afterwards stitched him and brought him back to life. He survived the Gqokoli Hill battle but died in another battle.<sup>60</sup>

When Matthew Msane was 21, he left Zululand with the Boers who negotiated a settlement in Natal with Dingane, in 1837, under the stewardship of Piet Retief, serving the Boers as a herd-boy. In return they offered him employment and protection. Trouble followed him when, as a herd-boy, a KhoeKhoe who guarded him abused him until he found a way to avenge himself.

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<sup>58</sup> G. Nurse, "Ndwandwe and the Ngoni", *The Society of Malawi Journal*, 26, 1, 1973, p.7. In combined migration between Maseko Nguni and the Msane clan led by Nxaba from the west of Lake St. Lucia, stretching through Ndwandwe in the north-west direction, took with them on the way Mngomezulu, Zulu, Ngwenya, Magagula, Mashabana, Mgabi, Magwagwa, Xulu, Mbonambi, Mthombeni, Malinga and Msimango (half-Sothos) who migrated to Eswatini.

<sup>59</sup> Nurse, "Ndwandwe and the Ngoni", 7.

<sup>60</sup> Bongokhulu Khumalo, "Umlando ngezibongo: Msane", *Indabuko Yakho*, 29 December 2019. Available at [www.indabukoyakho.com](http://www.indabukoyakho.com). Accessed 01 May 2020.

When he and his guard were busy making butter, Msane threw his abuser in a tub of curdled milk standing nearby. Out of fear of facing the consequences from his master he fled to Verulam where the Cele family warmly welcomed him.<sup>61</sup>

He met Cornelius Matiwane, a veteran of Verulam who later during Saul's youthful days became one of the founders of the Natal Native Congress in 1900, and John Nxaba of Groutville. Msane attained employment from the British troops when they arrived in Durban in 1842. With his earnings he purchased cattle and subsequently owned substantial herds. Msane was married twice. His first marriage failed, and he divorced to later marry Legina Zipatele Dlamini or MaDlamini, great-granddaughter of King Ngwane III of Eswatini.<sup>62</sup>

While Msane was working for the troops, Reverend James Allison (1780-1875), a Methodist missionary, was converting his black followers to Christianity at Indaleni. Allison converted Msane into being a Christian, making him one of the first Zulu converts. Through that Christian journey he met the likes of Johannes Khumalo (who was Chief of Driefontein in 1904), Job Kambule as well as Timothy Gule (who was Chief of Inyanyadu) and Jonathan Xaba, who were some of the Christian converts of his generation. In his collaboration with them he was instrumental in the purchasing of the Edendale farm. The village there became his home, a place where he enjoyed his last days on earth through agricultural and pastoral pursuits.<sup>63</sup>

Job Kambule earned a salary of £15 while teaching at Mpharane. At a later stage of his life, he moved to Edendale where he became the first induna. Daniel Mavuso Msimang and Jonathan Xaba who were of Hlubi origin and became prominent elders of Edendale, were originally from the Klip River District in Natal. They were scattered by Shaka and sought refuge from Sekonyela of the Batlokwa. Johannes Hlabathe Kumalo was born around 1809; before becoming an induna at Driefontein, outside Edendale, he was a member of Dingane's Dlhambedlhu regiment. When Shaka died, he was a mat-bearer. These men were the first-generation Christian converts under Allison, including Abraham Twala, Barnabus Mthembu, Adam Molefe and Jacob Tshabalala. However, not all founding members of Edendale converted to Christianity even if they were part of the mission. A Hlubi royal like John Zulu Mthimkhulu was one of the young people taught by Allison. His classmates included Daniel Mavuso Msimang and a member of the Bataung under Chief Moletsane and Barnabus Mohoko Mtembu who fled from Boer slavery to join Allison at Mpharane. Ruben Inhlela Caluza,

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<sup>61</sup> Xaba, 'The Late Matthew Msane', 4.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

Manchubi and Sinathingi, who were polygamous, joined the Edendale nucleus soon after it was established.<sup>64</sup>

After being converted to Christianity Matthew Msane became devoted to the cause and became a humble servant to the government. He evangelised for Christianity throughout Natal to an extent that Somtsewu, as Sir Theophilus Shepstone was known, estimated that he was ranked higher than any other African man in the country. Somtsewu later sent him as a missionary, with Vinnie Erskine, son of Major Erskine, to King Umzila of Gazaland to act as a communication link between the government of Natal and Gazaland. Matthew Msane was sent to Mzila because of his familiarity with Mzila's father. Mzila took the reins from his father, Soshangane who left the Ndwandwe territory with Ngwane Maseko, Zwangendaba Jere and his ancestor Nxaba Msane after Shaka's defeat of Zwide of the Ndwandwe state.<sup>65</sup>

After his missionary work Matthew Msane and numerous members of the Edendale community sided with the British army to prove their loyalty through forming part of the Edendale Horse Regiments during the 1879 Anglo-Zulu War. As Christian converts, they already owned title deeds to their lands. In his humility as a servant of the British government he sent his second-born son, Paul, to participate in the war. It is not clear why Gideon and Saul did not similarly participate. Ten years later, in 1889, during the Anglo-Boer War, Matthew and Chief Stephen Mini, also participated as British loyalists through the Natal Native Scouts.<sup>66</sup>

In Edendale, following a secession from the Wesleyan Church in 1850, Allison and his largest group of followers, about 500 of them, began a new life. Of these people 407 were Christian and Zulu speaking, and the rest were from other groups. In contrast, 134 had full church membership, 150 were non-Christians who were eligible to buy property on the basis that they abandon their "heathen" habits. Women were also involved in the buying of the farm on a basis of shares. Edendale was subdivided into farming allotments to form a village, shared amongst one hundred shareholders. They received individual title deeds after they paid off the initial purchase price of £1300, including 6% interest. Each share cost £16, which earned a holder a village allotment, remote arable fields and commonage for grazing stock and collecting wood.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Sheila Meintjies, 'Edendale 1850-1906: A Case Study of Rural Transformation and Class Formation in an African Mission in Natal', PhD Thesis, School of Oriental and Africa Studies, University of London, 1988, 68-70.

<sup>65</sup> Xaba, 'The Late Matthew Msane', 4.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Meintjies, 'Edendale 1850-1906', 68-70.

Towards the end of the 1850s Allison's followers paid off the farm. However, Allison still held the legal view that he was the guardian of the estate, on the grounds that besides their individual plots and fields, over which the shareholders enjoyed full control, the unsold portions and commonage belonged to him. In other words, Allison held the rights of demesne as well as rights of exclusion over Edendale, meaning that he retained a share from the land he sold to the converts. As a patriarch and guardian, he had a say on who entered and left the farm. Beyond that, as a pastor of the community, he had control over the moral and material existence of his followers. Beer brewing and drinking as well as polygamy were strictly forbidden as per Christian moral principles. These practices, or Allison's teachings, shaped Saul Msane's stance on intoxication and polygamy throughout his life. He married one woman and was a teetotaler, as explained in Chapter 5.<sup>68</sup>

The new Christian converts paid off the farm through the help of Sir George Grey. They named the town area Georgetown, in his honour. Grey visited Edendale in 1855 and supported the Edendale mission from its beginning phase.<sup>69</sup> While they were paying off the farm to become shareholders, Allison recorded the amount of money each member paid for their plots. By 1855 about 31%, or £412, of the £1300 was outstanding. It amounted to about £5 per head. The outstanding amount was due in July 1855, however, towards the end of 1854 the farm faced lung sickness which killed off many cattle, and thus they could not pay the difference. Grey disbursed an interest-free loan of £200 to save Allison's followers. He also contributed £70 towards the school.<sup>70</sup>

Amidst all these events Saul Msane was born into a time when land dispossession wars and laws were fought to marginalise black people in the colonies and republics. In addition, industrial education was introduced, by Sir George Grey, before Msane was born, as part of preparing African learners with labour skills needed in the colonial economy. After Saul came Paul and Gideon Msane and four daughters Abishag, Alice, Asiana and Annejaneira Msane, all of whom were born at Edendale.<sup>71</sup>

Two months after Saul Msane was born, on 15 July, Natal Colony was formally disjointed from the Cape Colony through the Charter of Natal. The Natal colony enjoyed limited self-

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<sup>68</sup> Sheila Meintjes, "Property Relations Amongst the Edendale Kholwa, 1850-1900", *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 7, 1, 1984, 13-14.

<sup>69</sup> Joy Roberts, "The Edendale Welfare Society", *Natalia*, 43, 2013, 41.

<sup>70</sup> Meintjes, 'Edendale 1850-1906', 130.

<sup>71</sup> Xaba, 'The Late Matthew Msane', 4; Graham Duncan, "Lesseyton: A Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Experiment in African Industrial and Theological Education", *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 44, 3, 2018, 8.

government through a partially elected Legislative Council. In the same year, the first legislation regarding education for black people was passed by the Legislative Council and approved by the Secretary of Colonies to establish and maintain schools for the education of black children. It is important to note that most voters in the Legislative Council were white colonists. The position of African voters in this regard will be dealt with extensively later.<sup>72</sup>

By 1857, when Saul Msane was two, there were 62 houses in the village, which villagers built for themselves, at the value of £60 to £100, each with its own garden plots. In contrast, there were numerous huts constructed “in a superior style with a comfortable appearance”, showing different classes of the community. As the largest town in Natal, Pietermaritzburg, in 1852, had a population of 2400. Two years later, in 1854, it had 26 shops supported by small manufacturing establishments, a brewery, mills, brickfields, a Chandler, a smithy and a wagon maker’s shops, enabling Edendale to link up with the modern town as a modern and elitist establishment where Saul Msane grew up.<sup>73</sup>

### **Education at Edendale**

Industrial education was initiated out of the belief that black people were inherently lazy especially when Grey noticed that ex-slaves refused to work in the plantations of their former slave masters. Therefore, in 1847, Grey inaugurated a committee of the Council of Education to devise the best strategy to introduce industrial education into British colonies as part of his “peaceful subjugation” of the African people. The colonial government found it cheaper to financially support Grey’s Plan compared to military voyages.<sup>74</sup>

Industrial education was designed for the colonial project with regards to physically building the infrastructure, i.e., the missions, roads, railways and eventually provide a labour force to service the colonial economy. Furthermore, it was a specialised form of education whereby it included all instructions aimed for industrial workers within the colonial political economy. It was also introduced to Africans to teach them how to read the bible so that missionaries could continue their evangelistic work of converting more and more Africans to Christianity through what Sir George Grey called the “civilising policy”.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Charles Templeman Loram, *The Education of the South African Native* (Longmans, Green and Co., New York, 1917), 55; South African History Online, Natal is Formally Separated from the Cape Colony. Accessed 14 May 2020. Available at [www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za).

<sup>73</sup> Meintjes, ‘Edendale 1850-1906’, 123-124.

<sup>74</sup> Ingrid Patricia Babb-Bracey, ‘The Development of Educational Policy for Black Africans in South Africa: 1652-1948’, PhD Thesis, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1984, 220-221.

<sup>75</sup> L.D. Weyand, “What is Industrial Education?”, *The American Journal of Sociology*, 30, 6, May 1925, 653.

The “civilising policy” existed because Grey believed that African people were not categorised as intellectuals compared to the rest of humanity and should therefore be civilised. Grey argued that this policy could be implemented through imposing education, British laws as well as conversion to wage labour via colonial settlement amongst African people. Strategically, education and law instilled civilised values and wage labour stimulated the urge amongst Africans to improve themselves materially and thus become elites. Africans of the calibre of Saul Msane, who were emerging as elites, emulated white colonial settlers in terms of civilised character. This became psychologically self-perpetuating amongst the converts and non-converts and formed Saul Msane’s elitist character.<sup>76</sup>

Amongst first generation Christian converts, education was another tool, along with property ownership, to being a black elite in the British colony of Natal. Matthew Msane wanted his children to be educated and to be important members of “civil” society. As one of the followers of Allison, he took Saul Msane and all his children through mission education. Allison’s first prerogative towards African children was to “civilise” them in the same manner Grey intended when he came later. To do so, Allison absorbed them into the missionary’s household.<sup>77</sup>

Later, schooling took place in a room attached to the mission house. Pupils, including Saul Msane, were instructed in the three Rs (reading, reckoning and religion), geography and scripture. In addition, industrial training was incorporated into the school programme, including teaching skills and values essential to running the nuclear family structure and the division of labour emulating pre-industrial England. Boys were trained in wagon-making, shoemaking, building, carpentering, blacksmithing and European modes of agriculture while girls learned how to cook and sew. This shows that missionaries socialised Saul Msane and other children of the first-generation Christian converts based on patriarchal notions that treated girls differently from boys based on their gender. The education of young men at Edendale mission was about preparing them for absorption into the labour market as traders and artisans while young women were trained to be housewives.<sup>78</sup>

When Grey left in 1861 running industrial schools became too expensive for missions considering operational costs of supporting boarding pupils and their families. This was because the financial backing they received from Grey petered out and all pupils were left with was their labour skills. It was only decades later, on 14 April 1892, that the Wesleyan

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<sup>76</sup> Ndletyana, *African Intellectuals*, 3.

<sup>77</sup> Meintjes, ‘Edendale 1850-1906’, 132-135.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

Methodist Church, held a conference in Cradock to discuss, the way forward in terms of training pupils through incorporating academic education with industrial education. When Saul Msane was a compound manager, from 1895, he saw the importance of industrial education, especially toward unskilled young mine workers who needed vocational training in the Witwatersrand's mines. Considering industrial education lost its place in mission societies in the 1890s Msane saw the gap it left amongst skilled black labourers and urged the government to build schools that offered industrial education to bridge that divide.<sup>79</sup>

Funding dropped from £6,387 in 1890 to £1,338 in 1910. At that time funding started dropping most missions including Zonnebloem, Healdtown, Edendale and others had enjoyed over 30 years of existence. The colonial government did not support these institutions on the ground that mission education was not a worthy expenditure it needed to fund because the building of each mission was complete.<sup>80</sup>

Before the Edendale Institution was built the Wesleyan Missionary Society at Edendale reconciled with and revived Allison's legacy by building schools for the children of first-generation Christian converts. This refers to Saul Msane's childhood years, 1850s to the 1870s. There had been three schools in the village, an infant school comprising 140 pupils, a day school of forty learners and an industrial school with less than ten students. The infant school was taught by the niece of Allison until the Wesleyan Mission Society took over. In the day-to-day running of the school there were two sessions each day for each school and school hours depended on the need for children's field and domestic chores. There were separate lessons for each age group, and these were split into two parts, one with two hours of class in the morning from eight to ten and the other with two hours in the afternoon from one to three for younger pupils.<sup>81</sup>

Children who were academic enrolled in the morning from ten until twelve and from three to five in the afternoon. They were taught content that predominantly included the three Rs and religious instruction as per the Methodist dogma, together with catechism and Wesleyan doctrinal writings. In essence, this was the kind of schooling Msane received when he was a pupil, and it is possible that he was part of the cohort of pupils who were taught by Allison's

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<sup>79</sup> Graham Duncan, "Lesseyton: A Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Experiment in African Industrial and Theological Education", *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 44, 3, 2018, 8.

<sup>80</sup> Duncan, "Lesseyton: A Wesleyan Methodist", 9 and 15.

<sup>81</sup> Meintjes, 'Edendale 1850-1906', 153-154.

niece. He proved to be a bright pupil through being a chess boffin and a lay preacher of the Methodist church.<sup>82</sup>

However, in the late 1850s, there was always a clash between parents of children and missionary authority because of what parents regarded as poor education offered by the Wesleyan Missionary Society. It is not clear whether Matthew Msane was involved in any of these clashes but concerned parents wanted the Missionary Society to focus more on education rather than religion because as first-generation Christian converts, they believed that education was inextricably linked with being civilised. In insisting that certain standards be raised they measured the school's values with other mission stations while the missionaries claimed that poor level of teachers was attributed to parents not paying their children's school fees.<sup>83</sup>

The introduction of a new teacher in the middle of 1865, Elizabeth Rowbotham, from England, did not make any difference in stopping the conflict between parents and the Missionary Society. They got into another clash over who could attend classes. Girls were only allowed to go to school if they continued to do their domestic duties. At some point Rowbotham clashed with the parents after sending home a young girl who went to class carrying an infant on her back instead of staying home and taking care of it. But the dispute between Rowbotham and parents was resolved by the General Superintendent, James Cameron. It is not clear how he resolved it.<sup>84</sup>

Regardless of these challenges, children continued to do well in arithmetic, geography, reading and writing, and in terms of singing they were very skilled. To maintain that learning culture and avoid future conflicts, James Cameron, in 1866, formed a committee of four parents tasked to monitor children's progress. One of their success stories was that school attendance increased by 30 per cent that year and the committee decided to hire a younger teacher from the American missionaries because they were not satisfied with the performance of their children owing to under-performing teachers. They also refused to accept teachers from England without first screening them. Without the approval of Cameron, the committee chose a black teacher named Samuel Kumalo and asked for a government grant for Kumalo's salary. However, missionaries objected to this. At this time, Msane was ten years old, the normal age

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 155.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 157.

when pupils started attending mission schools. Therefore, it is possible that his parents were instrumental in ensuring that he received good education.<sup>85</sup>

The results of that confrontation led to the parents committee boycotting schooling and instructed Charles Roberts, a Wesleyan missionary, that he “must not now take in [his] people without [their] permission [because] the [c]ommittee says so”.<sup>86</sup> The committee referred to the white teachers from England. Without children attending day school the missionary was forced to hire Samuel Kumalo with a government grant until 1868 when the new missionary, Henry Barton, came. He absorbed the independent school into mission day school and persuaded parents to pay school fees, but nothing came out of that arrangement. Meanwhile, parents still refused to accept any mediocre teacher from England including Elizabeth Rowbotham and her successor because they wanted the best education for their children, and they deemed the former and the latter not the best candidates to instruct their children.<sup>87</sup>

The Edendale Institution, also called the Nuttall Training Institution was situated upon the Umsunduzi riverbanks, west of Pietermaritzburg. The main building was double-storeyed. Its lower storey consisted of three classrooms, staffroom, kitchen and refectory while the upper storey consisted of three big dormitories with quarters for approximately sixty boys, while the missionary’s residence was not part of the main building. It was named after its founder and first Governor, Ezra Nuttall who was a Wesleyan missionary appointed Resident Missionary at Edendale in 1882 at the time Saul Msane started his teaching stint. Building work started the following year, in 1883, and in August 1884 the first intake of students began.<sup>88</sup>

In the same year, in 1884, the Council of Education in Natal was given powers and responsibilities to create a syllabus with instruction comprising the following: reading and writing in the English and Zulu languages, arithmetic, including and up to the “rule of three”; the elements of industrial training; sewing and plain needlework for girls; and instructions in the principles of morality “in a manner adapted to their capabilities”.<sup>89</sup> Pupils had to be between six and fifteen to enrol. The English syllabus in different standards was designed specifically in this manner: In Standard I teachers expected learners to read books in Zulu and English and

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 157-159.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 159-161.

<sup>88</sup> Grant Christison, ‘African Jerusalem: The Vision of Robert Grendon’, PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu Natal, 2007, 485-486; Solomon Xaba, ‘The Late Matthew Msane, A Sketch: Chapter 2’, *Ilanga lase Natal*, 4 March 1904, 4 (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

<sup>89</sup> Christison, ‘African Jerusalem’, 485-486; Xaba, ‘The Late Matthew Msane’, 4.

translate words and know their meaning. In Standard IV pupils were expected to learn about the History of England, give details to words and allusions, analyse simple sentences, explain the use of parts of speech; and learn in detailed physical and political geography. As a new teacher, this was what Saul Msane was also tasked to teach under his mentor Reverend Ezra Nuttall.<sup>90</sup>

At first the mission schools trained young black students as primary school teachers, preachers and pastors. By the early 1900s, after Saul Msane had left schooling, it focused more on preparing scholars for black teachers' examination. Apart from that students at Edendale were obliged to teach in mission schools for at least three years before graduating with Class I, II and III certificates. In terms of government grants Class I schools received bigger grants because they were industrial schools at which teaching was delivered in industries and trades. Class II focused on manual labour mostly performed by learners. Lastly, Class III offered no tuition in manual or industrial work. In 1900, there were forty-one pupils enrolled, together with nineteen trainee teachers. All of them were over the age of twelve. Two years later, in 1902, the number increased to forty-eight pupils, four of them were under the age of twelve.<sup>91</sup>

Edendale held a reputation of being one of the few mission schools in Natal where black pupils obtained secondary education. However, Cape mission schools such as Healdtown, Zonnebloem and Lovedale held a reputation of being top schools in the British colonies. But within Natal, Edendale was a leading school as it produced an elitist crop of artisans, clerks, teachers and clergymen who were employable throughout Natal and outside its borders. These Edendale men, beginning from the end of the nineteenth century, played a huge role in the history of Eswatini, and its modernisation, because of the kind of teaching and ethos instilled in them by the Edendale Institution.<sup>92</sup>

However, the school ethos, especially under J.S. Morris around 1904, was that boys were only allowed to speak their mother tongues on Sundays and were not allowed to question authority in any way. One example was when Selby Msimang, who was a student in Edendale during Morris' tenure, was reprimanded for calling Shepstone a traitor during South African history class. Black pupils were offered a different syllabus to ensure that they receive poor education compared to white pupils. The school taught good character and they also learned algebra and

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<sup>90</sup> Charles T. Loram, *The Education of the South African Native* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1917), 56, 57 and 59.

<sup>91</sup> Loram, *The Education*, pp.59-60; Christison, 'African Jerusalem', 486.

<sup>92</sup> Christison, *African Jerusalem*, 486.

Latin, History and others as academic subjects. Carpentry, printing and gardening were taught as industrial subjects because it was compulsory to teach industrial subjects or offer industrial training for the school to be granted government subsidies and towards supplying the labour market with labourers with industrial training background.<sup>93</sup>

### **Education at Healdtown**

Due to limited learning programmes that were offered by schools at Edendale Saul Msane was sent to Healdtown to further his studies. The Edendale Institute was only built after he completed his studies at Healdtown. However, it is not exactly clear when Saul Msane started attending Healdtown but it is possible that it was in his early teens in the 1870s.<sup>94</sup>

Healdtown, named after Mr. James Heald who was one of the Treasurers of the Wesleyan Missionary Committee in London, boasted a congregation of 250 to 400 devotees in 1853 and was regarded as a mission station big enough to be a school.<sup>95</sup>

Silas Molema, student at that time, described Healdtown as:

Beautifully, and even poetically situated on a high plateau ringed by mountains, and ending on the west side in a sharp rocky precipice, the bottom of which receives on each side a cascade from a descending stream, and is continued for five miles in a narrow undulating corridor formed by olive-aloe-and euphorbia-covered mountains on either side, running parallel, densely wooded, and traversed by a peaceful stream formed of the united mountain streamlets, which meanders along and winds in and out eleven times in a distance of six miles perched high on their pedestal, and shining white across the skyline like a lighthouse.<sup>96</sup>

It is no wonder Grey was drawn to Healdtown and its scenic beauty. As a result, he picked a spot near the mission where the industrial school was built and personally sketched the main building's plan and allocated £3000 for its construction. Grants from government, the Missionary Committee in London as well as the District Meeting supplemented the total amount. When completed, the main building was "of the Elizabethan order of architecture, with a frontage of 212 feet long, two halls 54 ft. by 27 ft. each, and two dormitories 40 ft. by 20 ft., and 15 other apartments".<sup>97</sup> The whole building of burnt brick rested on a high stone foundation, with 14 ft. high walls; roof of high-quality timber covered with slate from Wales.

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 516.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 199 and 205; Silas Molema, *Healdtown, 1855-1955: A Scrape of History* (Mafikeng, 1955), 5.

<sup>95</sup> Silas Molema, *Healdtown, 1855-1955: A Scrap of History* (Mafeking, 1955), 5.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 3-4.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

Grey continued to build other Industrial Schools in Lesseyton, Peddie, Salem and Lovedale, and gave them grants.<sup>98</sup>

This was all in the name of “civilising” African people living in the colony, especially those who were Christian converts. The imperial government allocated £40 000 per annum for three years, between 1855 and 1857, for his “civilising policy”. Within that three-year period Grey saw to it that Healdtown was complete: it had a church, a hall, a mission, workshops and accommodation for a hundred boarders and an operating flour mill.<sup>99</sup>

During Saul Msane’s schooling days at Healdtown Reverend William Impey (1818-1896) was the second Governor of Healdtown after succeeding its first Governor Reverend John Ayliff in 1867. Impey, a Methodist minister was first stationed at Fort Beaufort since 1847, frequented the place. Under his stewardship Healdtown commenced as a training institution for teachers and theology students. Before then Healdtown had discontinued operating as the institute for industrial training. During the last year of Ayliff’s tenure, in 1866, the Institute had empty buildings until it was decided that it must be turned into a place where teachers and theologians were trained. However, there were no funds for this plan, until Impey appealed to the Missionary Committee in London, who could not fund the initiative. However, James Heald and his sister, personally donated £1000.<sup>100</sup>

Saul Msane benefitted from the improvement of the quality of education during Impey’s tenure. The Committee assigned to oversee this improvement sat on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1867 and laid out entrance qualification for each of the three groups of candidates for the ministry, evangelists and teachers. To gain entrance at Healdtown the following was required particularly for the candidates for the ministry: They should have passed the Wesleyan District Meeting examinations and be recommended to the Conference before they could be received as students; they should preferably be married; be able, at least, to read and write their language fluently, and to have some knowledge of the English language; to have a good general knowledge of the Scriptures and the Methodist catechisms numbers 1 and 2, and an acquaintance with the simple rules of Arithmetic; their character, piety and ministerial qualifications were to be guaranteed by the Quarterly Meeting and the District Meeting.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Gqubule, ‘Examination of the Theological Education’, 103.

Life at Healdtown was well-ordered as per Christian dogmas yet socially fun for young black Christian converts. In this section we get some insight into how life was in Healdtown for young Africans in terms of transitions from teenage into young adulthood and how they were integrated into the social life and ethos of the school in the same way Saul Msane might have experienced.

One of the things Healdtown was known for was discipline because of John Ayliff who throughout his tenure, between 1857 and 1859 when Saul Msane was still a toddler, instilled an ethos the school carried throughout different generations of its pupils to the time Msane started his schooling there. This was a tenet that contributed to Msane's personality as a disciplined elite. A day in Healdtown started at 05h30 when the first bell rang for religious devotions, then after that students went to the river to wash. From 06h00 to 07h30 was for reading and gardening, followed by breakfast in the dining room where students stood until grace was said. From 08h00 to 08h30 it was family worship time then from 08h30 to 09h00 pupils started getting ready for school from 09h00 until 13h00. At 14h30 it was work time for boys to work in the brickfields and gardens while girls performed household chores until supper which was at 19h00. After supper all pupils spent time together in religious instruction or bible translations. At 21h00 all left the hall to sleep in their dormitories. Before bed Ayliff supported all boys with their prayers and Mrs. Ayliff helped all girls. The Ayliffs were helped by two black assistants each, one pair slept in the quarters with the boys and the other with the girls.<sup>102</sup>

By 1855 each pupil received three pence per day and Ayliff forbade provision for recreation as he emphasised that all pupils must be useful six out of seven days per week and should have purpose. He saw the idea of relaxing and resting as unnecessary and wrong while keeping busy with meaningful work was important in keeping youth in order. This puritanical approach changed much later, especially within Healdtown in the sense that extra-mural activities were seen as beneficial to the youth.<sup>103</sup>

In 1906 an alumnus of the school, EB Magaba, who completed his matric in 1876, around the same time Saul Msane was also a pupil, gave a similar account to the daily life of Healdtown when he said that in summer, they woke up at 05h00, had private study and prayer at 07h30 followed by breakfast at 08h00. School started at 09h00 until 14h30 and manual work at 16h30 until 18h00. Tea was at 18h00 followed by prayer at 19h00 and private study at 19h30 until

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<sup>102</sup> Trevor Webster, *Healdtown: Under the Eagle's Wings: The Legacy of an African Mission School* (Salt River: Methodist Publishing House, 2013), 57.

<sup>103</sup> Webster, *Healdtown*, 57.

20h30. Bedtime was at 21h00 and lights out was 21h30. An early morning bath in the river was compulsory in summer and winter and the food was in abundance. This shows that the schedule remained almost the same over the years.<sup>104</sup>

Healdtown held a reputation, in 1877 until the early 1900s, of being one of the biggest institutions that offered further tuition as most schooling for Africans ended with Standard 4, with most teachers coming from Britain. It offered the best teaching diploma amongst the top three missionary institutions in the Cape. A teacher diploma, as the common programme in Healdtown, was completed before matriculation. Therefore, Healdtown suited Saul Msane's intellectuality because of its reputation as an institution for academic and practical studies.<sup>105</sup>

It also provided Christian and liberal arts education comprising English grammar and literature which significantly shaped generations of students of Saul Msane's calibre. It had a high school for black students that was fundamentally academic. Similarly, it had a lower primary school which Msane did not have to start from because he had already completed his primary education in one of the schools at Edendale. Apart from teacher training it offered specialist physical education training as well as domestic science. After Saul Msane obtained his Elementary Teacher's Certificate of Competency (Class II) in October 1881 and Teacher's Certificate (Class I) in December 1882 he did not further his studies to Junior Certificate and matriculation. Instead, he began his decade long teaching career at the Edendale Institution and eventually Amanzimtoti Institution, later Adams College, until he resigned in 1892 to join the Zulu Choir trip to London where he met Josiah Gumede, later ANC president from 1927 to 1930. By 1882, Msane was already twenty-six and it is possible that he pursued a teaching career over furthering his studies because of family responsibilities which included getting married to Rosaline Mini in 1885.<sup>106</sup>

In the 1880s and 1890s, towards the end of Saul Msane's study days at Healdtown together with Isaiah Bud-M'belle, and later in the 1890s when Sebopiwa Molema and Richard Msimang attended, Healdtown did not have good accommodation for boy borders because of limited government funding. For racist reasons, school buildings for white children compared to black

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, 57-58.

<sup>105</sup> Starfield, 'Dr S. Modiri Molema', pp.172-175; Benjamin Pogrand *Robert Sobukwe: How Can Man Die Better* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1990), 9, 10 and 13; Secretary for Native Affairs (SNA 995/93) Pietermaritzburg Archives, Pietermaritzburg.

<sup>106</sup> Starfield, 'Dr S. Modiri Molema', 172-175; Pogrand *Robert Sobukwe*, 9, 10 and 13; Secretary for Native Affairs (SNA 995/93) Pietermaritzburg Archives, Pietermaritzburg.

children met requirements of science, public health, comfort and art unlike the tin church building, with seats used on weekdays as part of the schoolroom with no desks.<sup>107</sup>

### **Saul Msane's Decade as a Teacher in Natal between 1882 and 1892**

Details on the teaching career of Saul Msane are very sketchy. However, a thorough look at the context of his teaching career informs us about a decade he spent as a teacher at the Edendale Institution and Amanzimtoti Institution. A section in this chapter on what he was taught and what teachers of his generation instructed, helps us understand conditions he faced as a teacher in that decade.

When Britain occupied the Cape from the hands of the Dutch in 1806 Earl of Caledon, who started a new post as a governor indicated that enslaved people needed to be educated. As a result, in 1809 a school commission report recommended that a school for the needy must be built and financed by the colonial government in the Cape. However, in Natal it was first introduced when Captain Allan Gardiner began his mission work in 1835. Both the Cape and Natal were the colonies of Britain and the idea of later introducing education was part of Britain's expansion plan. Four years later, in 1839, Newton Adams was granted land to find a mission school, on behalf of the American Board of Missions, by the Raad der Representaten (first Voortrekker Council). One of the conditions of the Raad der Representaten in granting the American Board permission to build a mission was that Africans must remain subjugated under the laws and authorities of Natal. The same condition applied in other territories that the Voortrekkers occupied, i.e., the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.<sup>108</sup>

By 1850, the American Board enjoyed considerable success for establishing twelve schools and mission stations, and for teaching several Zulus to read. The government of Natal, now under British control, through Ordinance Number 2 of 1856 introduced industrial education. It stated that schools must teach trades courses and that religion must be taught through English as a medium of instruction. To complement the Ordinance, Legislative Council appointed a committee concerned with ensuring Africans were taught in English.<sup>109</sup>

Two years after Msane became a teacher, in 1884, the school curriculum was revised to create separate curricula between Zulus and whites. English was replaced by Zulu in reading and

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<sup>107</sup> Jane Starfield, 'Dr S. Modiri Molema (1891-1965): The Making of an Historian', PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2008, 172-174.

<sup>108</sup> Andrew Leonie, 'The Development of Bantu Education in South Africa, 1652-1954', PhD Thesis, Montana State University, 1965, 65 and 72.

<sup>109</sup> Leonie, 'The Development', 74.

writing methods as well as principles of life or life orientation was taught in Zulu with respect to the Zulu culture. Two years later, in 1886, a select committee developed and published the first departmental curriculum and syllabus for black schools. However, a year later, an old curriculum previously used for white pupils was reinstated. This revision stood until C.T. Loram became chief inspector of native education in Natal. Loram, within the native education introduced Tribal History and Geography as courses. Loram and his predecessor, who was appointed in 1885 until 1894 when office of the Superintendent of Education took over, was tasked to improve the standard of African education in Natal in comparison to African education in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. It is possible that those were some of the courses Saul Msane taught either at the Edendale or Amanzimtoti Institution.<sup>110</sup>

However, the academic education Saul Msane taught did not change the attitude missionaries had towards Africans. Missionaries believed that Africans were suited to be part of industrial education that taught courses in building, ironmaking, gardening, carpentry and craft, instead of an intense training that developed the mind to think. On the contrary, missions took all proceeds generated from the produce, especially from students who specialised in gardening. In contrast, gardening, which was part of helping Africans to be subsistence farmers, was also intended to enable white farmers to source skilled Africans to work on their lands for free. This meant that Msane taught academic education offered by the government over the missionaries' industrial education but in 1895 he recommended industrial education as a solution to labour issues in the Witwatersrand.<sup>111</sup>

### ***Amakholwa* exemption and landownership**

Saul Msane belonged to a small group of exempted *amakholwa* who lived at Edendale. In the 1870s, when Msane was in his teens, they were granted their separate status distinguishing them from non-Christian converts under Law 26 of 1865. However, they were still treated as second class citizens. In contrast, they were only exempted from customary law on condition that they individually applied to the Governor who was regarded as the supreme chief. By 1880 only 27 men, 23 women and 67 children were exempted. Being a *kholwa* was not only a religious identity, it was also a social and political identity. What characterised them as *amakholwa* were being mission-educated, subscribing to individual rights, progressive standards of private property ownership and protestant work ethic. Their understanding of

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Dumisani Deliwe, 'Response to Western Education among the Conservative People of Transkei', MA thesis, Rhodes University, 1992, 58-59.

being a convert meant that they were also British subjects who enjoyed certain rights and liberties that were regulated through exemption letters. Exemption letters served as legal documents protecting those rights and to distinguish converts from non-converts. The 1881-1882 Native Affairs Commission revealed that *amakholwa* not only demanded exemption for all Christians but also direct representation in the Legislative Assembly.<sup>112</sup>

In distinguishing themselves from others they adopted a Christian lifestyle and European dress and homes coupled with their mission education. It was inevitable for them to abandon their old ways of life as they were assimilated into a western culture. However, that did not change the fact that they were also legally subjects of customary law irrespective of their new identity. Even when they were no longer part of their clans, they were denied benefits of communal life because of being Christians. Msane was occasionally seen wearing a three-piece suit and a top hat or generally what was considered western clothing symbolic of his new identity.<sup>113</sup>

At the centre of *amakholwa*'s identity was landownership. In 1861 a group of *kholwa* men from Indaleni, under a Methodist station, bought land on the upper Mzimkhulu river valley through the help of their District Chairperson who was responsible for facilitating the land-buying process on behalf of Africans. On the other hand, the process of purchasing land transformed into *amakholwa* bidding for Crown land without involving the missionaries and bought land all over the country without any white official's assistance because of their exemption status. In the 1870s, land purchasing was at its peak and that allowed *amakholwa* to buy land across Edendale, Ladysmith and the upper Mzimkhulu. Others who could not find accommodation on free mission land at Inanda and Verulam, bought small farms on the outskirts and those who could not afford to purchase, rather leased farms. In essence, *amakholwa* bid, through auctions, to buy Crown land at the same time as white people and that explains why whites were lobbying government to prevent *amakholwa* from purchasing Crown land.<sup>114</sup>

Matthew Msane faced challenges regarding land issues. He became bankrupt as one of the first inhabitants and landowners at Edendale. It is not clear what led to his bankruptcy, but it is possible that he was not earning anything to maintain his *kholwa* lifestyle. He lost his properties

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<sup>112</sup> Hlonipha Mokoena, 'The Making of a *Kholwa Intellectual*: A Discursive Biography of Magema Magwaza Fuze', PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2005, 5; Sheila Meintjes, "The Early African Press in Natal: *Inkanyiso yaseNatal* April 1889-June 1896", *Natalia*, 16, 1986, 6.

<sup>113</sup> Meintjes, "The Early African Press", 6.

<sup>114</sup> Norman Etherington, "African Economic Experiments in Colonial Natal, 1845-1880", *African Economic History*, 5, 1978, 4.

and the deed to Theophilus Shepstone Junior, who in turn, used the money he accrued from selling Matthew Msane's two-thirds of the properties to cover his debts. As a result, Matthew Msane became a tenant of the portion of the property he previously owned. In 1888, Saul Msane managed to buy back two-thirds of the properties his father previously owned while Matthew Msane later repurchased a third of what he used to own. Five years later, in 1893, he climbed back onto the social ladder of being one of the most prominent property owners. Posthumously, Saul Msane left immovable properties in Roodepoort, Edendale, Klippoort (Dundee) and Watermeet (Ladysmith) to the value of £768. This made him one of the prominent rich *kholwas* of his time.<sup>115</sup>

In purchasing land, *amakholwa* were caught between two systems, communal and individual land tenure. Individual land tenure provided security because their families inherited land and passed it down inter-generationally while communal land tenure afforded individuals space to graze or plant. The ideal system, for non-elite people, was communal land tenure because individuals who put their monies together and bought large portions of land used it amongst themselves and their families. Other conditions in this collective way of land purchase, as it was in line with Christianity principles, was that anyone who was polygamous was forced to sell their portion. Saul Msane only supported the individual land tenure system because it allowed individuals to privately own land.<sup>116</sup>

By the 1870s *amakholwa* learned that cheap freehold land was not in abundance as before and that the introduction of racist agreements in title deeds to co-operative farms proved that white people had an unfair advantage over them in competing for land. Simultaneously, prices of Crown lands were dropping, so the only way to stay in the market was through joint purchasing of land. In short, the success of black land-buying syndicates forced the land-hungry white population to restrict them from buying more land while campaigning for them to lose what they already owned.<sup>117</sup>

In 1887 when sections of Zululand were annexed, and allocated for sale, black people were prohibited from making purchases unlike in the early 1860s when they enjoyed commercial success in terms of land purchasing. Crown lands occupied by Africans since the establishment

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<sup>115</sup> Sheila Meintjes, 'Edendale 1850-1906: A Case Study of Rural Transformation and Class Formation in an African Mission in Natal, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, PhD Thesis, 1988, 310.

<sup>116</sup> Etherington, "African Economic", p.5; National Archives of South Africa, NASA, Pretoria. Estate of the Late Saul Msane, 42409.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

of British Natal were not open for potential black ownership and the Natal Land and Colonisation Company, the biggest landlord in Natal, evicted black tenants in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>118</sup> On the other hand, customary Law worsened the *amakholwa*'s situation because it was a legal instrument used to hinder them from competing with white people on equal terms instead of protecting them. Therefore, they petitioned against it in the name of being exempted from an uncodified legal system or customary Law. Being under Customary Law meant that *amakholwa* lost their rights to be exempted.<sup>119</sup>

In response to the *kholwa* petition, Shepstone acted according to Law 11 of 1864 which allowed black people to be exempted from customary Law. *Amakholwa*, like Saul Msane, did not want to be classified under customary Law because it did not distinguish them from the non-converts. However, only a select few were exempted in 1879 when John Shepstone declared the law useless by ruling that exempted black people were not immune to colonial regulations intended to control their movement. It is possible that the Msanes might have won exemption out of the selected few considering their participation in the Anglo-Zulu war. However, under the same law of 1864, Africans had limited voting powers and those who could not own property lived in mission reserves and were allowed to farm for free. Through their exemption status, they were immune from paying hut taxes.<sup>120</sup>

Eventually customary Law applied to every black person, exempted or non-exempted. When its customary codification was accomplished in 1891, as the Code of Native Law under Law 19 of 1891, the situation of non-exempted black people worsened and those who were exempted, were not compensated after losing benefits of being exempted. The Code of 1891 set clear directives on black people's good manners and respect for authorities. In addition, it laid down rules regarding chieftainship, inheritance and sexual relations. In essence, the Code of 1891 was written to control every single aspect of black people's lives.<sup>121</sup> It was because of the system of exemption that Customary Law did not apply to educated black people and they were also free from being under the control of chiefs. This meant that, through his exemption

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*; Norman Etherington, "Religion and Resistance in Natal, 1900-1910", in Arianna Lissoni, Jon Soske, Natasha Erlank, Noor Nieftagodien and Omar Badsha (ed.), *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Histories Today* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012), 1.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

status, Saul Msane was under a magistrate and not a chief regarding any judicious matter concerning land.<sup>122</sup>

After 1893 exempted people's "privileges" were revoked as a result of white lobbyists. The government, in September 1901, under the permanent Undersecretary for Native Affairs, S.O. Samuelson, argued that exemption letters gave *amakholwa* the impression that they had the same rights as white people and as a result they started being restricted following the revoking law of 1865.<sup>123</sup>

As an exempted black person, Msane had no rights but had a special privilege which was granted after an individual was screened as per Section 219 following an enquiry. Upon receiving his letter of exemption, he was still required to distinguish himself from a non-exempted person. As a *kholwa* he claimed his place as part of the citizenry of the British authorities, but he still did not enjoy the same rights as his white counterparts. As an exempted black he was expected to continue to be well-behaved and show respect to authority even when he was unfairly treated based on the colour of his skin.<sup>124</sup>

The exempted *kholwas* were assimilated to a degree and assumed a mixed identity of being Africans living a British lifestyle. This meant that an individual forfeited benefits from the lobola system. As a teetotaler Msane, was immune from being arrested for consuming liquor. In fact, being exempted did not imply that *amakholwa* were granted the freedom they demanded but it meant that Msane and others had to consistently show moral character to earn that freedom. However, as alluded to before, they petitioned to be granted full rights as their white counterparts.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Uma Shashikant Dhupelia, 'Frederick Robert Moor and Native Affairs in the Colony of Natal, 1893 to 1903', MA Thesis, University of Durban-Westville, 1980, 36.

<sup>123</sup> Etherington, "Religion and Resistance", 2.

<sup>124</sup> Meintjes, "The Early African Press", 8.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, 8-9.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrated that African landownership and Christian conversion were only significant to the colonial economy because they assimilated Africans into obedient colonial subjects that were divided into different classes. The class struggle that formed a major part of Saul Msane's life was landownership because it was linked to his social status and elitist character. Also, owning land for Msane was important because it had metaphysical and physical values to African people. At the heart of the making of his hybrid identity or elite character was education. Upon obtaining his exemption letter Msane used his education to demonstrate to the colonial authorities that he was different from other black people who were subjected to child-like treatment, and he continued to prove that he was deserving of being treated as a "civilised" black person even after he met all requirements needed to be recognised as a person with elitist character in the colonial economy. These important themes (Christian conversion, exemption, education and landownership) that made his elite character were important in understanding most of the decisions he made throughout his entire life including advocacy for individual landownership and education were connected to his elite character. Therefore, this explains why Msane was called "the enemy of the people".

### **Chapter 3**

#### **“From the Wilds to Westminster”: Saul Msane and the Zulu Choir in London, 1892**

This chapter covers the events surrounding the trip to London in 1892 that were mainly revealing about Saul Msane’s character and values. This chapter draws from other scholars’ conception of minstrelsy in the United States by pointing out that South Africa has not been thoroughly dealt with when it comes to minstrelsy with regards to the Zulu Choir’s performances led by Saul Msane in 1892 in London. Prominent minstrelsy scholars such as Eric Lott, Alexander Saxton, David R. Roediger, William J. Mahaw, Dale Cockrell, and Robert C. Toll have written extensively on minstrelsy but have ignored the influence Jubilee Singers of Orpheus McAdoo had in South Africa in 1890 and how that influence has transformed the complexion of what is originally known as blackface minstrelsy. Cockrell attempted to cover minstrelsy in South Africa as well as Veit Erlmann, however, the former said little about the Zulu Choir while the latter wrote significantly on the Zulu Choir, but his point of departure was not on minstrelsy, which is the main point of this chapter. It builds from minstrelsy and draws the Zulu Choir under the theory of minstrelsy and its underlying themes of sartorialism, race and prejudice to understand how minstrelsy influenced Saul Msane’s singing world. It does so through comparing the 1891 London trip of Charlotte Maxeke and Katie Makanya of the Jubilee Singers and asserts that both Choirs faced racism and prejudice as minstrels in the 1890s.

#### **The Jubilee Singers of Orpheus McAdoo and their influence on South African performers in 1890**

The Jubilee Singers and Orpheus McAdoo changed the image and identity of minstrelsy in South Africa when they performed in most parts of the country during their world tour in 1890. Their interaction with aspirant African petty bourgeoisie deepened conversations that awakened similar intellectual and psychological sustenance between oppressed black people in South Africa and African Americans. English colonists first introduced minstrel shows in South Africa at the beginning of the 1850s. They were first performed by white performers for white audiences who were influenced by slave songs and dances they composed and performed. Slave culture was reflected in the texts and structures of their songs. The bedrock of early white minstrel performers was Afro-American culture while jubilee songs were attached in the culture of the oppressed black population. In South Africa, white minstrel performers “acting the nigger” was not only a racist mockery, but it was also a clear ideological

rationale of the minstrel show. Over four decades it became a norm for white South Africans to distort images of African Americans through blackface minstrelsy, an act that suppressed Afro-American folk culture and music.<sup>126</sup>

In their almost decade stay in South Africa, between 1890 and 1898, the Jubilee Singers' performances brought a new interest in Afro-American folk music and Negro spirituals. The sketches together with songs and dances performed mostly to white audiences, reflected a positive image of their Afro-American culture which differed from white performers.<sup>127</sup>

The ten-voice choir was established due to a movement in the United States concerning professional spiritual-singing ensembles. Its predecessor was the Fisk Jubilee Singers of Frederick Loudin. McAdoo was a member until he formed his own Virginia Jubilee Singers in 1889. They performed harmonic, four-part singing grounded on a repertoire of spirituals and songs conveying themes of upliftment. It further confined elements of call-response and rhythmic patterns that could easily be homologated onto traditional African tunes.<sup>128</sup>

The popular consciousness that the Jubilee Singers brought when they toured South Africa gave birth to *Isicathamiya* music at the beginning of their tour in South Africa. Furthermore, the Jubilee Singers introduced the best theatrical form of entertainment for the emerging black urban population. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, minstrelsy had penetrated rural areas making it easier to connect with traditional performance. Minstrel choirs were formed by graduates of mission schools in both small towns and city centres.<sup>129</sup>

The Jubilee Singers made a substantial musical impression and influence as a year after their visit an "African Native Choir" was formed in Lovedale following their visit there. This seminal moment changed the course of musical history in South Africa. After its formation in 1891, the choir toured Britain where it was disbanded two years later.

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<sup>126</sup> Veit Erlmann, 'A Feeling of Prejudice: Orpheus McAdoo and the Virginia Jubilee Singers in South Africa, 1890-1898', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14, 3, April 1988, 332 and 335.

<sup>127</sup> Veit Erlmann, 'A Feeling of Prejudice', 332.

<sup>128</sup> Bennetta Jules-Rosette and David B. Coplan, "'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika": From Independent Spirit to Political Mobilization', ('Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika: De l'esprit indépendant à la mobilisation politique), *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, 44 Cahiers 173/174, Réparations, restitutions, réconciliations: Entre Afriques, Europe et Amériques 2004, 347.

<sup>129</sup> Veit Erlman, 'Migration and Performance: Zulu Migrant Workers' Isicathamiya Performance in South Africa, 1890-1950', *Ethnomusicology*, 34, 2, Spring/Summer 1990, 203. *Isicathamiya*, a style of indigenous Zulu a cappella male choral music and step dancing influenced by Christian hymnody and tracing its roots back to the early twentieth century in Natal. Its direct translation a stalking approach or a surprise attack as originated by Zulu migrant workers in Johannesburg mines. See David Coplan's *In Township Tonight! South Africa's Black City Music Theatre*.

In March 1892 the Zulu Choir arrived in Durban. According to Dale Cockrell, *The Natal Mercury* newspaper said that the Zulu Choir had a good repertory of which they “learned within two months” and stated further that:

A most agreeable surprise was the experience of the audience which assembled in the Town Hall, last night, to hear the above newly formed choir, which is on its way to England... There is no denying that the choir is one of the great and exceptional power and with further training will develop rare ability. No one would give a company of fifteen natives credit for so much ability. True, there is a room for smartening, but that will come in time [...].<sup>130</sup>

Therefore, the Jubilee Singers and the Zulu Choir could be compared in so many ways except when it comes to their unique repertory. Unlike the Zulu Choir, the Jubilee Singers were not confined to any principle that had a direct impact on their music. They enjoyed an expression of black perspective in their music as they were an independent choir. In contrast, the Zulu Choir was not formed by Saul Msane and his choir members as much as he was musically compared to Orpheus McAdoo who was the founder of the Jubilee Singers. To the founders of the Zulu Choir, image was very important. They oriented the members of the Zulu Choir to sing the kind of songs they considered “civilised”. Near-pagan spirituals which the Jubilee Singers enjoyed were not restricted for the Zulu Choir.<sup>131</sup>

The Jubilee Singers cemented their place in the hearts of the audiences of black urban and rural working class in Natal in so many ways. One article published in *Inkanyiso yaseNatal* towards the end of 1895 showed how much of an impact the Singers had in their lives. The descendants of former slaves in the Jubilee Singers and *amakholwa* audience in the Zulus viewed themselves as a united black nation who shared similar struggles and challenges. They were coined “The Pride of the Nation”, or *Amagugu akiti* in Zulu, for their contribution in the black life of the Zulus.<sup>132</sup>

McAdoo and his choir performed for seven days in Pietermaritzburg. The paper described their performance as beautiful, saying that those who missed their performance missed a lot. The content of their songs was usually short although they had good voices. Some members of the

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<sup>130</sup> Dale Cockrell, ‘Of Gospel Hymns, Minstrel Shows, and Jubilee Singers: Towards Some Black South African Musics’, *American Music*, 5, 4, winter 1987, 428.

<sup>131</sup> Cockrell, ‘Of Gospel Hymns’ 428. By near pagan spirituals I am referring to pre-Christian western paganism song not traditional tribal ancestor worship rituals and customs as practiced by the Zulu people as these were classified pagan by missionaries in South Africa.

<sup>132</sup> Anne-Marie Gray, ‘The Liberation Songs: An Important Voice of Black South Africans from 1912 to 1994’, *Journal of Education*, 33, 2004, 89.

audience tended to be surprised by how short their songs were and the audience's facial expression reflected that emotion. The lower bass voice of McAdoo sounded as if thunder was going to strike and his wife, sang with a tenor, or a second soprano, as if it were a man singing. Mrs. O.M. McAdoo, Mrs. B.P. Givens, Laura A. Carr, Marshall Webb, Mamie R. Edwards, Mesers. O.M. McAdoo, Richard H. Collins, Will P. Thompson who was the drum beater, Professor C.A. White, who was a black person formed part of the choir. They also performed in Nanda, Amanzimtoti, Paiyndani and Metsheni in Ladysmith.<sup>133</sup>

The Jubilee Singers was also interested in uplifting black people in Natal through education. They felt enlightened and intended to lend a helping hand in establishing a college in Natal. In conversation with two gentlemen of their choir, Professor C.A. White and Mr. Will P. Thompson, and the editor of the *Inkanyiso yaseNatal* newspaper, White and Thompson requested to meet local men in charge, who would implement their plan to educate black people in Natal. They wanted to educate youth to receive education in America. The editor of the paper maintained that the quality of education of black people in Natal was deteriorating. As a result, the paper was used as a platform to spread the news on the intentions of the Jubilee Singers and to invite all interested parties to participate in the initiative. Edendale, the birthplace of Saul Msane, Groutville, iTheku, Amanzimtoti, Driefontein, UmDhloti, Enkunzi and Mnambiti schools were urged to choose representatives from their schools to be present at the planned meeting. The author posit that the Jubilee Choir of Orpheus McAdoo transformed the face of minstrelsy and its ideological rationale by adapting it as an instrument for self-determination considering they were children of slaves. They further used minstrelsy to change the narrative of its association with slavery and as a result they broke away from self-mockery that was used to entertain white audience. This explains why they had a positive influence on the Zulu Choir and Jubilee Singers of Charlotte Maxeke.<sup>134</sup>

### **The Jubilee Singers of Charlotte Maxeke and its London trip in 1891**

The Jubilee Singers criss-crossed South Africa during their stay and did not only inspire Msane and his people from Natal. Before their arrival in Natal, the Jubilee Singers serenaded Kimberley in 1890. Out of that interaction a group of sixteen choristers comprising a Port

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<sup>133</sup> Unknown author, "Amajubilee Singers! Amajubilee Singers Amagugu Akwithi! (Jubilee Singers the Pride of the Nation!)", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 22 November 1895, no page number (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

<sup>134</sup> Unknown author, "Imfundo ya Bantwana (Children's Education)", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 5 November 1895, no page number, (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

Elizabeth choir director Paul Xiniwe, his wife Eleanor (née Ndwanya), nephews, Albert Jonas and John Xiniwe, Josiah Semouse, Johanna Jonker, Anna Gentle, George McClellan, Samuel Konongo, Frances Gqoba, John Mbongwe, Mbikazi Nobengula, Sannie Koopman, Wellington Majiza, Katie Manye (later Makanya) and Charlotte Manye (later Maxeke) was formed. They called themselves the Jubilee Choir, paying homage to McAdoo.<sup>135</sup>

In 1891 the Jubilee Choir of Charlotte Maxeke became the first African choir to sing for 72-year-old Queen Victoria in England. To their surprise, one of the hosts, Mr. Howell, insisted that their name must be changed from Jubilee Choir to Kaffir Choir because “the English know of Kaffirs and would be curious to hear [them] sing”.<sup>136</sup> Charlotte and other members of the group challenged the proposal but with no luck. Her sister, Katie, and others expressed discontent as the new name was equated with the Xhosa word *kafula*, meaning to “spit on”. Unlike the Zulu Choir, the Jubilee Choir agreed to wear traditional attire, but were discontent with their name being changed to Kaffir Choir while the Zulu Choir came with an already “acceptable” name from Natal. The Zulu Choir sang both Zulu and English songs while the Jubilee Choir of Charlotte Maxeke performed as the Kaffir Choir because its impresarios introduced them as Kaffir Choir to the British audience because of where they came from.<sup>137</sup>

The Jubilee Choir performed in front of 28 000 visitors and singers at the hall in Crystal Palace. Their performance was greatly enjoyed by the audience who called for repeat performances. The Queen also invited them to perform for her exclusively in her palace in Osborne on the Isle of Wight. Their show was divided into two segments which ranged from the choir in traditional attire singing songs related to social celebrations and hunting then in western clothes demonstrating their conversion to Christianity. For the first part, the choir appeared wearing traditional dress, with beaded robes covering their breasts, carved wooden combs in their hair and anklets seedpods around their feet. The Queen listened attentively with her head tilted a little to one side to understand the lyrics of the hymns *Lizalis' Idinga Lakho* and *Vuka Deborah* of Tiyo Soga. When the two young nephews of Paul Xiniwe stepped forward and danced to a traditional IsiXhosa song *Singamawele*, Victoria laughed enthusiastically. For the second part, men were dressed in dark suits while women were dressed in white dresses with long gloves.

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<sup>135</sup> Zubeida Jaffer, *Beauty of the Heart: The Life and Times of Charlotte Maxeke*, (Bloemfontein: Sun Media Press, 2016), 39.

<sup>136</sup> Jaffer, *Beauty of the Heart*, 44.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

They performed *The Merry Peasant*, *The Dawn of Day*, and *On the Mountain* and concluded their singing for the Queen with *The Lord's Prayer*.<sup>138</sup>

In contrast, Margaret McCord records that the Jubilee Choir of Charlotte Maxeke grabbed the attention of the Queen, and the audience laughed and shouted for an encore, primarily because of the song *Does Anyone Here Know the Big Baboon* at a time white people viewed black people as monkeys or baboons. Meaning that the impresarios prepared the Choir to appeal to the audiences' emotions, including the Queen's. However, Charlotte Maxeke, like Saul Msane, was conscious of being called "savage" or behaving as such but she did not conform to the perceived behaviour of Africans who were seen as "native specimens" by the English audience.<sup>139</sup>

McCord's account of Katie Makanya, the author identified a number of scenarios where she constantly points out that she was a Christian and did not do things that were associated with being a heathen. For instance, she mentioned that she does not believe in magic charms or in exposing her body and that in her mannerisms as a Christian she had to be calm and dignified like a good Christian. Her experiences while surrounded by their white impresarios showed how Saul Msane behaved was not uncharacteristic of a Christian elite as he also constantly reminded his white counterparts that he was not a heathen, and he did not behave or think like one as much as he was othered. Being othered came with being a Christian convert who was expected to constantly prove themselves and remind their white counterparts of their new hybrid identity.<sup>140</sup>

Furthermore, while in England Charlotte and her sister Katie Makanya continued to raise race questions as they noticed how they were treated differently for being black. In one instance, Katie Makanya asked Mr Pringle, one of the impresarios, about why they were treated differently especially when they were all Christian. Pringle replied:

Because you come from the seed of Ham. When Noah lay drunk and naked in his vineyard, Ham laughed out loud and passed him by. The Lord God was angry and cursed him and decreed that he and his children would be hewers of wood and drawers of water for generation after generation. So, it is written in the bible.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, 44-45.

<sup>139</sup> Margaret McCord, *The Calling of Katie Makanya* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1995), 33 and 50. That assumption came from Social Darwinism.

<sup>140</sup> McCord, *The Calling*, 39.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, 51.

This showed how missionaries justified racial superiority between white and black people especially amongst Christian converts, but Katie and Charlotte did not believe that they were destined to be hewers of wood and drawers of water (or labourers) or that they were cursed as black people, instead they continued to question their presence in a white world. After their first concert in Dublin, Ireland, Katie met a black woman who told Katie what she already knew. She was a university medical student from West Africa and her name was Miss Steele. She lived in a tiny room directly above a greengrocer's store which was closer to the university.<sup>142</sup>

She invited Katie and her fellow choir members for tea on Sunday afternoon in her one corner room that only had a table in the middle, two straight chairs, and a skeleton suspended from the ceiling. Katie asked her why "God made some of us black and some white"<sup>143</sup> because she did not want to believe that she came from the seed of Ham. Miss Steele replied:

In my medical school we have learned about pigmentation, the blackness in our skins which God has given us to protect us from the sun. Where I come from, it is even hotter than in the south where you live. White people cannot stay too long in my country or else they shrivel up and die.<sup>144</sup>

Inasmuch as they were facing racism Katie realised, through Miss Steele, that there is nothing wrong with her being black, but she did not understand why she was not accepted for who she was and why being black for her was an issue in the 1890s. For Saul Msane the same logic applied but the only difference was that Msane wanted to pass for white or fit in while the Maxeke sisters questioned their place in the same world they were expected to fit in.

The biblical expression, hewers of wood and drawers of water, was later used by the founder of the Congress Pixley kaIsaka Seme during its inaugural meeting in 1912 in Bloemfontein to describe how the Union of South Africa was built on racism with legalised land dispossession being the basis for it. Saul Msane and Charlotte Maxeke faced racism abroad and at home in the 1890s and to them, this was a clue on how the future of black people would look like at the turn of the twentieth century.

Charlotte Maxeke was always vocal about how missionaries treated black Christian converts and how they have used the bible to gain mental advantage over their thought process. Later in the 1910s in one Congress address she was quoted saying that "[t]he missionaries, who came

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, 52.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid*, 53.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*.

to set us free, are the ones who make us feel like exiles”.<sup>145</sup> Trying to fit in came with assuming a foreign identity at the expense of your own and she carried this level of consciousness as early as the 1890s when she was in London. Saul Msane also found himself resisting anything that he was not in agreement with when it came to his interaction with the missionaries.<sup>146</sup>

### **The origins of minstrelsy and its underlying themes of racism and prejudice as experienced by the Zulu Choir in 1892**

Blackface minstrelsy created and normalised racial categorisation through putting a blackface on a white face in the minstrel show to assert whiteness while mocking blackness. This racial otherness was fuelled by the abolition of slavery and resulted in a stereotypical range of stage characters. In other words, by painting their faces black they were reinforcing who they were not thereby furthering suppressive relationships based on differences but primarily on appropriation. Hence the ending of slavery meant that white people had no other means to distinguish themselves from black people in America and as a result minstrelsy, and its demeaning attributes, became a response to that historical situation tinged with racial apprehension.<sup>147</sup>

Blackface minstrelsy, as a form of entertainment, started in the early 1830s in the United States and became popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its founding fathers (Thomas Dartmouth Rice, Dan Emmett and E.P. Christy) were privileged white middle class theatre practitioners who only made a name for themselves after they had expropriated slave culture which was regarded as pre-industrial and agrarian. The trio appropriated dances and music of slaves in the Mississippi valley to form blackface minstrelsy and did not acknowledge its Africanness but utilised objectified black identities to pursue stage careers. As a theatrical practice, it operated through cultural appropriation of slaves whereby white performers caricatured black people. Over time, its form and content were revised to an extent that performances on stage then began with five white men arranged in a semicircle. They had burnt cork or grease paint applied as “blackface” and were dressed in oversized and ragged “Negro” costumes to mock slaves. In fact, the burnt-

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<sup>145</sup> Peter Limb, “‘They Must Go to the Bantu Batho’: Economics and Education, Religion and Gender, Love and Leisure in the People’s Paper”, in Peter Limb (ed.), *The People’s Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012), 90.

<sup>146</sup> Limb, “‘They Must Go to the Bantu Batho’”, 90.

<sup>147</sup> Richard Osborne, “Blackface’ Minstrelsy from Melville to Moby”, *Critical Quarterly*, 48, 1, s.a., 16; Tracey Owens Patton, “Jim Crow on Fraternity Row”, *Visual Communication Quarterly*, 15, 3, 2008, 151; See Eric Lott, “Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy”, *Representations*, 39, 1992, 23-50; and Sharon D. McCoy, “The Trouble Begins at Eight’: Mark Twain, the San Francisco Minstrels, and the Unsettling Legacy of Blackface Minstrelsy”, *American Literary Realism*, 41, 3, Special Issue on Mark Twain, 2009, 232-248.

cork mask denoted the racial other and has always been seen as a signifier representing a homogeneous group despite the origins, geography and cultural diversity of people labelled and classified as black. At the centre of the semicircle was an interlocutor who used a black dialect and dressed more formally than his fellow performers. On one side of the interlocutor were musicians, playing banjo and violins. On the other side of the semicircle were a tambourine player and castanet player. In essence, it was about mockery, misrepresentation and distortion of black people in America at that time.<sup>148</sup>

Despite oversized ragged clothes and hyperbolic costumes, blackface actors spoke in a unique dialect that distinguished them from any other stage and mimicked black speech. During the first forty years of blackface entertainment, the stage dialect of impersonators of black speech was derived from one of the three major varieties of Black English such as Black English Vernacular (BEV), West African Pidgin English (WAPE) and Plantation Creole (PC). However, borrowings in the mixing of skits, songs and speeches decreased from the 1820s and 1830s to the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>149</sup>

Minstrel shows were fixated with the black male body that was viewed as an epitome of both a hyper-masculine savageness as well as sentimental, effeminate childishness. In other words, the minstrel shows equated manhood with whiteness whereas anti-slavery rhetoric suggested that slavery destroyed true gender relations based in the domestic family unit. As a result, the image of black men was portrayed as deficient and left a lasting impression that black men were not as real compared to white men. This was one of the stereotypes minstrel shows perpetuated. Regarded as the father of black minstrelsy, T.D. Rice or Daddy Rice's "Jumped Jim Crow" first appeared in the old northwest, between 1829 and 1831 and later the New York stage in 1832.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Timothy J. Lensmire and Nathan Snaza, "What Teacher Education Can Learn From Blackface Minstrelsy", *Educational Researcher*, 39, 5, 2010, 414; Gabrilla Varró, "Blackface Minstrelsy: An Alternative Discourse on Dominance", *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, 2, 1, 1996, 60; Alexander Saxton, "Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology", *American Quarterly*, 27, 1, 1975, 5.

<sup>149</sup> William J. Mahar, "Black English in Early Blackface Minstrelsy: A New Interpretation of the Sources of Minstrel Show Dialect", *American Quarterly*, 37, 2, 1988, 261-262.

<sup>150</sup> John G. Blair, "Blackface Minstrels in Cross-Cultural Perspective", *American Studies International*, 28, 2, Special Issue on the Impact of US Culture Abroad, 1990, 54; This may have something to do with white manhood and protecting white females from being attracted to black men and their bodies. Certainly, in white culture there is an idea that black men are very well endowed sexually. This speaks to some of the fears and insecurities of white men at this moment in time. In contrast, families sold into slavery were often separated during the slave auction process where mothers, fathers and children were sold into different slave owners and moved to different geographic regions. The trauma of being separated and sold into perpetual servitude under harsh conditions resulted in slaves running away in search of their lost relatives and friends and their freedom.

Towards the end of the 1830s, the demand for black male bodies increased considerably in the chattel slave market. Therefore, the same demand was transferred on the minstrel stage to re-tell stories of black life in the chattel slavery in the South. The character of Jim Crow, a plantation slave, was at the forefront of this narrative. The original Jim Crow was dressed in a raggle-taggle costume suggesting a plantation slave in torn pants and oversized shoes with holes and a wide mouth.<sup>151</sup>

Part of minstrelsy's performative evolution meant Europeanising how the music and songs sounded to appeal to mainly accommodate white working-class audiences.<sup>152</sup> However, Rice transformed minstrelsy by borrowing song-and-dance routines, from folklore, to successfully characterise Jim Crow. Parallel to Rice's performance of Jim Crow, the emancipation movement broke into the political scene including William Lloyd Garrison of *The Liberator* in 1831; David Walker's *Appeal* in 1829 and Nat Turner's revolt in 1831.<sup>153</sup>

In contrast, white performers had been painting their faces black prior to the American Revolution although minstrelsy started gaining momentum in the 1840s. In 1843, a group named The Virginia Minstrels, comprising four white men: Bill Whitlock, Dick Pelman, Frank Brower led by Dan Emmett, darkened their faces, assumed hyperbolic dialects to mock black speech, and performed a combination of songs and comedy. Considering it was a particular form of entertainment to belittle blackness, other imitators across America adapted it and that is how it became popular. Abolitionist Frederick Douglass decried blackface performers as "the filth scum of white society, who have stolen from us a complexion denied to them by nature, in which to make money, and pander to the corrupt taste of their white fellow citizens".<sup>154</sup> As the pioneering form of popular entertainment created for the working-class in

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<sup>151</sup> Blair, "Blackface Minstrels", 54; in chattel slavery, people were considered property instead of workers or servants. They could only be free when they purchased themselves, when they were 'legally' emancipated according to the colonial regime or when their master(s) allowed them to be free especially if it was stipulated in the will.

<sup>152</sup> Paul Gilmore, "De Genewine Artekil: Willam Wells Brown, Blackface Minstrelsy, and Abolitionism", *American Literature*, 69, 4, December 1997, 745-746. To compare Australian Larrikins and Blackface Minstrelsy see Leary Kin, "Australian Larrikins and the Blackface Minstrel Dandy", *Journal of Social History*, 42, 3, 2009, 677-695; Alexander Saxton, "Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology", *American Quarterly*, 27, 1, 1975, 3-28.

<sup>153</sup> Blair, "Blackface Minstrels", 54.

<sup>154</sup> Noah Arceneaux, "Blackface Broadcasting in the Early Days of Radio", *Journal of Radio Studies*, 12, 1, 2005, 61-62; Also see Michael A. Chaney, "Coloring Whiteness and Blackvoice Minstrelsy: Representations of Race and Place in *Static Shock*, *King of the Hill*, and *South Park*", *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 31, 4, 2004, 167-184; To see how origins of jazz in New Orleans compare to minstrelsy, see Berndt Ostendorf, "Minstrelsy and Early Jazz", *The Massachusetts Review*, 20, 3, 1979, 574-602. Also, to understand ragtime dance and how it fits into minstrelsy see Danielle Robinson, "Performing American: Ragtime Dancing as Participatory Minstrelsy", *Dance Chronicle*, 32, 1, 2009, 89-126; Marc Aronson, "The Complicated Mix of Racism and Envy

America, it has influenced other forms of entertainment such as country music, blues, jazz, ragtime and vaudeville.<sup>155</sup>

In the Cape, *Die Versammelaar* (The Collector) newspaper popularised several minstrel songs including *Jim Crow* of Thomas Rice which was composed in 1828. In 1848, a Cape choir called Joe Brown's Band of Brothers emulated other minstrel groups in America through performing traditional Negro singing. Around the same year, white South Africans also emulated the American company named the Ethiopian Serenaders. Again in 1862, Harvey-Leslie Christy Minstrels, comprising of white performers, toured South Africa in the same style as other blackface minstrel groups in America. Throughout their national performances they incorporated lively dancing, plain humour and concert pieces.<sup>156</sup>

By the time the Fisk University adopted minstrelsy, it was a travelling show, as its meaning denotes, and The Fisk University Jubilee Singers was born thereafter. Therefore, the African Americans minstrels, the Fisk Jubilee Singers, had a direct influence on black South Africans, as from the 1870s the genre evolved from the traditional white performer painting their face black to performing spirituals in a westernised classical style. Their successor, the Virginia Jubilee Singers underwent the same evolution when they first encountered the Zulu Choir of Saul Msane. The Fisk Jubilee Singers formed part of the black minstrel shows that sang southern United States religious music. This indicates that the development of minstrelsy in America happened at the same time as the development of minstrelsy in the Cape Colony.<sup>157</sup>

Twenty years later, in the 1890s, this gross caricature of black people was transformed by the Virginia's Jubilee Singers of Orpheus McAdoo who used minstrelsy for the social upliftment of black people in Africa during their world tour, when they showcased black minstrelsy in Cape Town for the first time.<sup>158</sup> It also became a fund-raising exercise allowing them to travel the world, not to perpetuate the stereotype of mocking blackness. This was the same reason Saul Msane and the Zulu Choir toured London. This demonstrates how minstrelsy became an instrument for social change in the lives of the members of the Zulu Choir and Jubilee Singers or African Choir including Saul Msane and Charlotte Maxeke as black elites consuming white

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behind Blackface", *The Washington Post*, 22 July 2018. Accessed 29 November 2020. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2018/07/22/the-complicated-mix-of-racism-and-envy-behind-blackface/?outputType=amp>.

<sup>155</sup> Arceneaux, "Blackface Broadcasting in the Early Days of Radio", *Journal of Radio Studies*, 12, 1, 2005, 61-62.

<sup>156</sup> David B. Coplan, *In Township Tonight! South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 38.

<sup>157</sup> Coplan, *In Township*, 38.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*, 39.

culture. The generation of Saul Msane formed part of minstrelsy when it transformed into a different style of performance that excluded original features of traditional blackface minstrelsy. What facilitated change in style of performance was because Orpheus McAdoo and the Virginia Jubilee Singers assumed a new identity of self-emancipation as a generation of children whose parents were enslaved.

The Fisk Jubilee Singers' influence infiltrated black working South Africans migrating east and north in the wake of white settlers in the 1800s and the wars of dispossession. Furthermore, amongst the Cape Coloured working class had existing vibrant musical traditions largely due to the cultural mix resulting from slavery and the development of unique musical genres. Their minstrelsy performances were carried to other parts of the Cape colony where missions in the Cape such as Zonnebloem, Healdtown and Lovedale were also exposed to minstrelsy. It was where African students formed their own coons or minstrel groups incorporating costumes worn by quartets as well as string bands. Their repertoire comprised English and African American songs and African choral composition that was arranged in traditional African melodies.<sup>159</sup> Msane formed part of that tradition of entertainment for the upper echelon of educated Africans whose use of white Christian songs and hymns indicated his full assimilation.

Blackface minstrelsy was associated with 19<sup>th</sup> century America, Great Britain and Ireland which were the first countries where the practice of blackening faces in different arrays of entertainment became popular. For instance, Thomas Crofton Croker's *Researches in the South of Ireland* (1824) describes the celebrations of the Irish wake and mentions young white men blackening their faces. Rogin claims that the first white European to blacken their face, to play a moor on stage, was Queen Anne who was the wife of James I in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently, in the 1890s when Msane and the Zulu Choir sailed to England, minstrelsy was already popular to English audiences, and it expressed the racial identity the audience enjoyed. The promoters of the concert also booked the Zulu Choir to showcase the "backwardness" of Africa, but Msane rebelled against and contested that narrative through the adoption of western dress codes.<sup>160</sup>

Contrary to Saul Msane and the Zulu Choir being caught between embracing their *kholwa* identity over their Zulu identity in England, Zulu performers and students in the United States,

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<sup>159</sup> Coplan, *In Township Tonight!* 39.

<sup>160</sup> Susan B. Egenolf, "Maria Edgeworth in Blackface: Castle Rackrent and the Irish Rebellion of 1798", *ELH*, 72, 4, 2005, 848.

between 1880 and 1945, rebuilt their Zulu cultural imagery amidst being misrepresented globally as “savages”, which was something Msane overlooked. Saul Msane experienced minstrelsy with the likes of Orpheus McAdoo in a promising light unlike disenfranchised African Americans who appropriated Zulu culture by impersonating Zulus for monetary advances in America. They also advanced the stereotypical images of the Zulus as alien to them by creating a cultural boundary between themselves and Africans.<sup>161</sup>

In addition, in show business where booking a considerable number of Zulus for stage performances boosted ticket sales, impresarios booked white performers painted in blackface and African Americans as faux Zulus. For example, a sixteen-year-old William Huggard was commissioned to pose as a Zulu by the “Jay Circus” at Proctor’s Pleasure Palace. He played a clear-cut role of dressing as a Zulu, sitting in a cage and eating uncooked meat. Thomas Morris was humiliated in America and Europe alike when he appeared on stage in an iron cage. His role was to shock audiences as a representation of a “wild Zulu”.<sup>162</sup> This was the context through which Saul Msane overlooked his Zulu identity despite the global platform to salvage it.

With that being said, Zulu students in American universities championed a different Zulu imagery. They came from *kholwa* families, like Saul Msane, but under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions or ABCFM and were trained in Hampton and Tuskegee. In 1907, fifteen years later after Saul Msane and the Zulu Choir’s London tour, John Dube sent his nephew, Madikane Cele, to North Carolina’s Slater Industrial School, and later to Hampton where he specialised in wheelwrighting and blacksmithing. Dube became the first president of the Congress in 1912 when Cele graduated. Cele was impressive in his theatre performances where he performed in Zulu attire, relating inquisitive stories of Zulu life and singing songs. His hyperbolic portrayals of African life, such as hunting for tigers, enabled him to rub shoulders with Booker T. Washington and Robert Russa Moton, successor of Washington as Tuskegee President.<sup>163</sup> As a *kholwa* Cele embraced his Zulu identity in front of American audiences who showed racism towards Zulus while Saul Msane faced the same dilemma fifteen years earlier but succumbed to the pressure of portraying himself as a *Kholwa* in England.

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<sup>161</sup> Robert Trent Vinson and Robert Edgar, “Zulus Abroad: Cultural Representations and Educational Experiences of Zulus in America, 1880-1945”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 33, 1, 2007, 43.

<sup>162</sup> Vinson and Edgar, “Zulus Abroad”, 48.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*, 58.

## Composition of the Zulu Choir

Msane's life cannot be understood apart from his context. Hence it is necessary to locate him within the background of the Zulu Choir in which he played a pivotal role. This subsection covers the Zulu Choirs' origins, performances, personnel and their sketchy background.

The Zulu Choir was founded in 1892 by a Ladysmith-based white trio J. Moby, E.R. Holloway (Principal of Edendale Mission) and a German-trained Lutheran missionary Reverend William August Illing who named it Holloway, Illing and Co. They ran an entertainment enterprise aimed at travelling overseas to perform. The choir consisted of Africans from Edendale, Indaleni and Driefontein who were children of Edendale's *oNonhlevu* or first Christian converts or old believers. It consisted of six sopranos, two mezzo-sopranos, three tenors, and four basses and within two months of their formation, the choir learned their entire repertoire from Henry Ganney. They learned songs composed by Seigried, Loder, Stillman and others. The choir consisted of fifteen members, seven men and eight women. Eight founding women singers in the choir were Rosaline Msane (nee Dhlamini), the wife to Saul Msane, and his sister Asiana, children of Matthew Msane. Hettie Kumalo, who was the daughter of Samuel Kumalo and a relative to Joseph Kumalo who were choir members. The daughter of Jabez and Sannah Molefe, Martha and her cousin Bessie, whose parents were James and Lydia Molefe formed part of the Zulu Choir. Stephen Mini's sisters, Lydia and Julia with their cousin Edith who was the daughter of Petrus Mini also joined the choir. Male choristers comprised Saul Msane, Zephania Dhlamini, Wake Sopela Ndlovu, Joseph Khumalo, Solomon Khumalo, Josiah Tshangana Gumede, and Joseph D. Mzamo.<sup>164</sup>

One article published by *Inkanyiso yase Natal* on 3 March 1892 describes Asiana Msane as the lead singer of the choir with "...the most beautiful voice". Together with her sister-in-law, Rosaline, her brother Saul and one tenor singer, Joseph Mzamo were four outstanding members out of seventeen choir singers whose names were called during one of their performances in Mngungundlovu. The reporter went on to compare Msane with Orpheus McAdoo as both sang in lower basses by saying that "I still believe that the one singing in lower bass can also do

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<sup>164</sup> Unknown author, "Ezase Mnambithi (Ladysmith News)", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 3 March 1892, 4, 9(iv) (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria); Unknown author, "The Native Choir", *Natal Mercury*, 8 March 1892, p.3 (National Library of South Africa, Cape Town); Unknown author, "Ku Mhleli we Nkanyiso (To the Editor of Inkanyiso)", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 5 May 1892, 5, 17(v) (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria); Sheila Meintjies, 'Edendale 1850-1906: A Case Study of Rural Transformation and Class Formation in an African Mission in Natal', PhD Thesis, School of Oriental and Africa Studies, University of London, 1988, 329; Raymond van Diemel, *In Search of 'Freedom, Fair Play and Justice': Josiah Tshangana Gumede (1867-1947), a Biography* (South Africa: Belhaz, 2001), 9.

what McAdoo is doing". In fact, Msane was often called McAdoo while the Zulu Choir was called the Jubilee Singers. This shows how the Natal community missed the Jubilee Singers' performances yet equally celebrated the Zulu Choir who were as good as the Jubilee Singers.<sup>165</sup>

Over a decade later, Msane sang with one of his children, Elda, at the Compound house when he was still a compound manager at Salisbury and Jubilee mine in Johannesburg (see chapter five). *Ilanga lase Natal* writers recalled when they were greeted by a very warm welcome bestowed by Msane, his wife, Rosaline, and daughter Elda. She played *Home Sweet Home* and *The Ship I Love* on both a piano and her vocals. Another instance was when she performed with her father in a short concert, which was rather described as poor because it lasted for only 30 minutes, from 10h00 to 10h30 in the morning, and that people were used to an all-night concert. The concert was held on 15 July 1905 in the Westend Hall of Mrs. Msane. Saul Msane opened the concert by singing *The Drinking Song*. He was followed by Mr. Hlabangane who sang *Over the Sea* and *Ise Ginto Back to Dixie*. While Elda Msane who was dubbed "The Edendale Star" for her best performance with a piano sang *Them Golden Slippers*. It is not clear who, between Matthew and Legina Msane, Saul and Asiana got their musical talent from. However, with Elda it is safe to say she inherited her music talent from both her parents, Saul and Rosaline, including her aunt, Asiana.<sup>166</sup>

Asiana Msane was the third daughter of Matthew and Legina Msane. Out of their seven children she was the sixth child, making Saul Msane the first born who was fourteen years her senior. She joined the Zulu Choir in her early twenties while Saul was in his later thirties. In particular order Matthew and Legina had Saul, Paul, Gideon and four daughters Abishag, Alice, Asiana and Annejaneira. Asiana was born in Edendale in September 1870 and studied in Lovedale, after qualifying as a teacher she returned to Natal where she taught at Edendale, Hlatikulu, Maphumulo and Pietermaritzburg. As a dressmaker she opened a successful dressmaking shop in Pietermaritzburg that *amakholwa* and some prominent whites duly supported.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Unknown author, "Ezase Mnambiti (Ladysmith News)", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 3 March 1892, 4, 9(iv) (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria); Unknown author, "The Native Choir", *Natal Mercury*, 8 March 1892, 3 (National Library of South Africa, Cape Town); Unknown author, "Ku Mhleli we Nkanyiso (To the Editor of Inkanyiso)", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 5 May 1892, 5, 17(v) (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

<sup>166</sup> Unknown author, "Ezase Goli (Gauteng News)", *Ilanga lase Natal* 5 June 1903, 2 (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria); Unknown author, "Ezase Johannesburg", *Ilanga lase Natal*, 21 July 1905, no page number (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

<sup>167</sup> Unknown author, "Obituary", *Ilanga lase Natal*, 7 May 1909.

However, during the second Anglo-Boer War she gave up the business to marry Dyer D. Macebo, an interpreter to Swazi white administration, and opened a school in Newcastle, Natal. As someone who had an astute business mind like her eldest brother, Saul, she resurfaced in the business sphere when they moved to Mbabane where Macebo ran an eating house (restaurant), laundry, bakery and butchery. As a *kholwa* Asiana converted a few people to Christianity through Wesleyan Methodist Church in her capacity as a class leader. She passed away at quarter to eleven on Saturday evening of the 25 April 1909, five years after her father, Matthew, and she was survived by her husband and a two- and half-year daughter. She died of fever and pregnancy complications at their residence in East End Cottage.<sup>168</sup>

Other members of the Zulu Choir were Joseph Kumalo, who later became a chief, his grandfather was a headman in Driefontein. Solomon Kumalo (John Kumalo's son and Saul Msane's friend) who hailed from St Alban joined the founding women members together with Zephaniah Dhlamini, Joseph Mzamo, Wake Sopela Ndlovu and Josiah Tshangana Gumede. Ndlovu was born in Edendale in 1871 and underwent training for four years at the Edendale Training Institution. At the time that the choir was formed, Gumede was a teacher at Amanzimtoti Institute, later renamed Adams College after its founder Dr. Newton Adams. Subsequently Gumede left this post to travel with the choir to London.<sup>169</sup>

Gumede was born on 9 October 1867 in Healdtown. Josiah Tshangana's background can be traced back to the Mfecane era. His father was involved in that historical period the same way as Saul Msane's father, Matthew was part of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. John Tshangana, as he was known, was also involved in the battle of Mbholompho where Matiwane was defeated on 28 August 1828 by the Tembu and Mpondo forces who joined hands with Lieutenant Colonel Somerset to claim victory. After accepting a defeat, Matiwane returned to Zululand to seek refuge following the assassination of Shaka in 1829. However, Dingane slayed him at kwaMatiwane.<sup>170</sup>

In the wake of the death of Matiwane, further splits of different clans and groups transpired. For instance, the Secretary of Native Affairs in Natal, Theophilus Shepstone settled a destitute Ngwane and Zikhali near Bergville, Klip River Division, in Natal. Ntsimango and Khondlo,

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<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> Meintjies, 'Edendale 1850-1906', p.329; Andre Odendaal, *The Founders: The Origins of the ANC and the Struggle for Democracy in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2012), 247.

<sup>170</sup> Raymond van Diemel, *In Search of 'Freedom, Fair Play and Justice': Josiah Tshangana Gumede (1867-1947), a Biography*. (South Africa: Belhaz, 2001), 1.

who were under Ngwane, remained in Tembuland. They eventually found a new home in Siquqaba, Nqukhwebe or Healdtown near Fort Beaufort. Other members of the Ngwane clan traced their ancestry to Transkei where they mixed with Mfengus. Gumede's ancestry can be traced back to Chief Khondlo. His son Phakathwayo succeeded him. Followed by Vezi, Makhunga and eventually John Tshangana who was Josiah's father. However, John Tshangana was under Matiwane and was also a member of Matiwane's inSimbi battalion, but he did not move to Zululand with Matiwane after the Mbolompho battle.<sup>171</sup>

Gumede started teaching in Somerset East where he stayed with his sister, Lydia and her husband, Boyce Skota who was the father to Trevor Dan Mweli Skota. Mweli Skota, a nephew to Gumede and Msane became Congress founders, and each served in upper echelons of the Congress leadership in different eras in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>172</sup> Gumede later became Congress president in 1927 until 1930 and he was famous for his Communist leanings and his visit to Moscow. Upon his return to Bergville/Klip River Division, one of the Ngwane's royalty, Chief Ncwadi welcomed Gumede who taught at Adams College in the late 1880s, a few years before he left the post to travel with the Zulu Choir.<sup>173</sup>

Most performances by the Zulu Choir were done out of charity and to raise funds. At one of their performances, they donated money to the library and Town Hall Organ Funds.<sup>174</sup> The Zulu Choir went to travelled to London to raise funds to clear the debt of Msane's alma mater, Edendale Mission with Reverend S.E. Rowe providing supporting evidence linked to the purpose of the visit of the Zulu Choir abroad. The second reason was to expose London to the wealth of South African culture in terms of how missionaries had converted heathens into second class citizens through Christianity.<sup>175</sup>

Racial tensions followed the Zulu Choir on home soil and abroad, but they continued to serenade multi-racial audiences regardless of facing racial incidences. They performed in local churches until they went on tour in Natal and the Cape Colony in 1892 despite Pass Laws, curfews and regulations. The choir was warmly received in Natal's Ladysmith, Durban and Pietermaritzburg as well as Eastern Cape's Port Elizabeth, Queenstown, East London and

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<sup>171</sup> Van Diemel, *In Search of 'Freedom'*, 1.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>174</sup> Unknown author, "Ezase Mnambiti (Ladysmith News)", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 3 March 1892, 4, 9(iv) (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

<sup>175</sup> Unknown author, "Zulu Christian Choir", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 25 August 1893, no page number (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).; Unknown author, "The Native Choir", *Natal Mercury*, 8 March 1892, 3 (National Library of South Africa, Cape Town); van Diemel, *In Search of 'Freedom'*, 9.

Grahamstown. However, in Port Elizabeth they could not secure hotel accommodation because of racial discrimination.<sup>176</sup> Ironically, through their experience of minstrelsy or travelling shows compared to the Jubilee Singers of Orpheus McAdoo and the African Choir of Charlotte Maxeke, they too, faced racism in South Africa and in England.

On 5 March 1892, before their departure for London, the Zulu Choir had a concert organised at Theatre Royal in Pietermaritzburg. That Saturday evening the choir performed solo, in quartets and then as a choir interchangeably throughout the show. In the first opening items the choir sang two songs *The Praise of Song* and *Star of Bethlehem* composed by Seigried and Stillman respectively. Saul Msane followed on bass singing solo, *The Diver* composed by Loder. The choir performed *Awake, Æolian Lyre* by Danby followed by *Coming Thro' the Rye*. Moments later Solomon Khumalo and Wake Sopela Ndlovu sang *Larboard Watch* by Williams. Thereafter the choir sang *Swift as a Flash*. Lydia Mini with her solo performance, sang *Golden Love of Weilings* followed by the choir again singing two songs *The Soldier's Farewell* as well as *The Caravelle*.<sup>177</sup>

After a ten-minute break, they continued serenading the audience with the *Song of the Gypsies*. Rosaline Msane, the wife to Saul, sang *The Better Land*. The choir then took over the stage to sing *Hush thee, my Baby*. A tenor soloist by the name Henry Ganney, who was not part of the Zulu Choir, sang *Death of Nelson*. When he got off stage, the choir carried the Saturday evening on their shoulders with the beautiful music they performed. They performed *Cherry Ripe* to make way for a quartet in Rosaline Msane, Asiana Msane, sister to Saul, Saul Msane himself as well as Joseph Mzamo, as a foursome performed *Come Where My Love Lies Dreaming*. The rest of the choir members joined the quartet to sing *Anne Lawrie*. After the choir's act, they all got off stage except Saul Msane and Joseph Mzamo, the duo performed *All's Well*. Soon afterwards, the choir went back on stage to join the duo and to sing two songs *When Evening's Twilight* and *The Law of Richmond Hill*. They closed the concert with *God Save The Queen*.<sup>178</sup>

Learning and performing all these western songs showed how the Zulu Choir adapted a hybrid expression of western civilisation such as four-part choral hymnody over Zulu prosody which

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<sup>176</sup> Van Diemel, *In Search of 'Freedom'*, 9.

<sup>177</sup> Meintjies, 'Edendale 1850-1906', 15.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

was an indigenous form of musical expression of the Zulu culture.<sup>179</sup> Primarily, because they were seen as uncivilised recipients of missionaries' teaching, learning, performing and adapting to western songs was a sign of progress.

With the success of the national tour, Holloway, Illing and Co. decided that the Zulu Choir was ready for the British tour, and they would use the proceeds from the national tour to cover the expenses of the trip. As a result, they sailed to Southampton in the URMS Tartar and eighteen days later they arrived in London on Sunday 1 May 1892 at 11h00 in the evening.<sup>180</sup>

### **Contrasting views in the Zulu Choir**

Closer to the time to sail to London, Saul Msane sought an advance from the impresarios following a personal debt he had to cover before leaving Natal. In one of the agreements he entered with Holloway, Illing and Co., was that he would pay off the advance from the £20 each member got as performance fees. It is not clear how much Msane owed his creditors or who he owed but his wife and sister also pledged to help him pay off what was due. However, when the choir owners decided to withhold choir members' performance fees, Msane claimed that Holloway, Illing and Co. breached their agreement. Other contractual matters surfaced immediately after money issues, and they included the choir refusing to sing in music halls although they were obligated by the contract, they signed in Natal to perform in traditional garb. In their defence, *Inkanyiso yaseNatal* blamed the organisers of the trip for not clarifying all the terms and conditions of the contract and the challenges of travelling abroad.<sup>181</sup>

Before Illing and Moby could fulfil their contractual agreement, the choir demanded Msane to pay them £20 each for breaking their agreement and they also questioned the shortage of funds from Illing and Moby. The question of the shortage of funds might be related to Illing and Moby's motivation in which they promised the choir members funds during their stay in England which was not forthcoming. Instead, they, in return, decided to take Msane to court as soon as they arrived in Natal.<sup>182</sup>

Part member of Holloway, Illing and Co., Moby stated that all the members of the Zulu Choir were to receive performance fees and allowances. In turn, they were paid an undisclosed yet

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<sup>179</sup> Anne-Marie Gray, "The Liberation Songs: An Important Voice of Black South Africans from 1912 to 1994", *Journal of Education*, 33, 2004, 90.

<sup>180</sup> Van Diemel, *In Search of 'Freedom'*, 9.

<sup>181</sup> Veit Erlmann, *Music, Modernity, and the Global Imagination: South Africa and the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 136-137.

<sup>182</sup> Unknown author, "Ukubuya kwe Zulu Kwaya (The Return of Zulu Choir)", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 17 March 1893, 4, 152(v) (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

considerable amount of money for bringing Msane and others to perform but the choir was not handsomely rewarded. As a result, the members of the Zulu Choir accused Moby of not adhering to their contractual agreement.<sup>183</sup>

Amidst contractual issues surrounding Saul Msane and the Zulu Choir, one of the members of the choir, Khumalo commended Illing and Moby for making the trip a pleasant experience. Illing and Moby guaranteed in writing to arrange accommodation of the choir for the duration of their trip as well as buying them food and clothes. The choir stayed in a small place that was rather user friendly. However, Khumalo was delighted by the success of the journey, and he harped on about how visiting England brought them enough enlightenment as Africans from Natal. The choir members were not pleased with what they saw during their trip to England but were impressed by how the English conducted themselves. The missionary education they received was also of great help in navigating their place in this new environment. They had heard about the good life London had to offer and were happy to see how their attire made an impression on the English people. Khumalo, who was also a fluent English speaker like Msane, preached in one of the churches and spoke in one of the meetings.<sup>184</sup>

### **Performances of the Zulu Choir in London**

The Zulu Choir started performing at the Westminster Aquarium in London. Msane as a Zulu man outdid himself with a stellar performance of a war demonstration performance, *Inyanga* and *Infelezi* in which fighting and defeating an enemy was also one of the key elements of the play. Msane acted in fluent English, this left the audience surprised to see the English performance of the choir he led. Horace Seymour who was a musical director and a performer for the English Choir was as good as Msane. Amongst other voices were two basses and a contralto solo. The contralto solo performed *The Better Land with Quartette*, *Come where My Love Lies Dreaming* and *The Praise of Song* and others. All songs were sung beautifully and that were accompanied by good enunciation of words.<sup>185</sup> Msane did not only perform in English as there were songs that were composed for the choir in isiZulu. They are namely *I Piti*

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<sup>183</sup> Oyitumele, "Zulu Christian Choir", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 25 August 1893, no page number (Pretoria: National Library of South Africa); Unknown author, "Ukubuya kwe Zulu Kwaya (The Return of the Zulu Choir)", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 17 March 1893, 4, 152(v) (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

<sup>184</sup> Oyitumele, "Zulu Christian Choir", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 25 August 1893, no page number (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria); Unknown author, "Ukubuya kwe Zulu Kwaya (The Return of the Zulu Choir)", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 17 March 1893, 4, 152(v) (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

<sup>185</sup> Unknown author, "Eze Zulu Choir (Zulu Choir News)", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 7 July 1892, 3, 26(v) (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

*Washona Ngapi, Zukude kwadeda ngendihlale, Nganyunda majara, and Liyagungquza asemaZinzini, Gunqu!*<sup>186</sup>

*The Times of Natal* newspaper reported on the Zulu Choir in a negative manner, by describing Wake Sopela Ndlovu as an unknown member of the Zulu Choir, as a “specimen” in an article titled: “Mission Kaffirs-Specimens”. It was reported that the Zulu Choir members were living a life that was immoral. A reporter narrating the event said he entered the Waterloo Music Hall at half-past nine and found the stage possessed by a Kaffir in a suit that does not fit him while singing *The Man Who Broke the Bank of Monte Carlo*. The report continues to describe the swagger, pronunciation as well as the by-play of Leybourne or a Chevalier were imitated while Sopela was strutting, walking slowly and dancing on the stage. Soldiers, civilians and mostly black audience members loudly applauded the song. Black people had the appearance of “Christian Kaffirs”. After singing the main song, *Monte Carlo* Sopela sang ditties that grabbed the audience’s attention until they sang along in wavering choruses. Sopela and others sat on what was considered the table of the chairman. They consumed their liquor and smoked their pipes or cigars with the “blasé air of regular *habitués*”. At the end of the Zulu Choir’s performance two white women contortionists performed. Their contortion was watched with great interest by the black audiences.<sup>187</sup>

The paper continued to question whose idea it was to take the Zulu Choir to England to embarrass itself in front of white people who sneered at them. This racial undertone is linked with the mission ‘kaffir’ specimen idea that it used as a context to understand the Zulus. The making of an African Englishman was an experiment, turning a person labelled barbaric into a classy man. For white audience, seeing a Zulu person indulging in alcohol was immoral given how a principled Christian should behave.<sup>188</sup>

There were other voices that described the performance of the Zulu Choir in a positive light. *The Natal Mercury* wrote that “when the Zulu Choir performed on stage their intonation was excellent. The sopranos had a powerful voice, which are sweetest when not used to their full power. The tenors sing with a markedly veiled tone, that is by no means unpleasing, and the

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<sup>186</sup>Unknown author, “Zulu Christian Choir”, *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 25 August 1893, no page number (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

<sup>187</sup> Unknown author, “A Few Questions”, *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 14 April 1892, 6, 155(v) (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

bass's level in voices that are both flexible, powerful, and of good quality. The enunciation, saving a light but not unpleasing 'foreign' accent, was decidedly good".<sup>189</sup>

The overall performance of the Zulu Choir was received with mixed emotions. However, reviews in London were full of racial prejudices directed towards them even though Msane and his entourage *passed for white*. The phrase *passing for white*, as noted by minstrelsy scholar Robert Nowatzki, was described as "a non-white person successfully pretending to be white".<sup>190</sup> This means that whiteness is not exclusively determined by a facial feature, ancestry, texture, skin tone or hair colour but it is determined by performing what others consider to be "white", which was evident in the performativity of the Zulu Choir when they sang popular white songs written by European composers and abandoned their traditional African style of music.<sup>191</sup>

On the other hand, Homi Bhabha's notion of colonial mimicry further describes how being an elite under Britain assimilated Saul Msane and the Zulu Choir as colonial subjects who embraced coloniality through the music they sang, the clothes they wore and mostly through mannerisms. Bhabha explains colonial mimicry as the "desire for a reformed and recognisable other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite".<sup>192</sup> In other words, the colonised imitate the coloniser, although not verbatim or literally, because mimicry and mockery are two sides of the same coin. While in London Saul Msane maintained his erasure from the traditional Zulu lifestyle and projected an identity that was associated with being educated and progressive in order to fit into western society.

### ***"People are complaining about you": The split in the Zulu Choir***

On their way to London the members of the Zulu Choir accused Msane of sowing divisions within the choir. Msane was unhappy with some of the issues regarding how they should conduct themselves as part of their contractual agreement. When they arrived in Cape Town, before their departure for London, he had a misunderstanding with Illing and Moby.

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<sup>189</sup> Unknown author, "The Native Choir", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 8 March 1892, 3 (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

<sup>190</sup> Robert Nowatzki, "Blackin' up is us Doin' White Folks Doin' Us: Blackface Minstrelsy and Racial Performance in Contemporary American Fiction and Film", *Literature Interpretation Theory*, 18, 2, 2007, 116.

<sup>191</sup> Nowatzki, "Blackin' up is us Doin'", 116.

<sup>192</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse: The Location of Culture" (New York: Routledge, 1994), 85-92 in Jason Richards, "Imitation Nation: Blackface Minstrelsy and the Making of African American Selfhood in "Uncle Tom's Cabin"", *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 39, 2, Postcolonial Disjunctions, 2006, 205; Jennifer De Vere Brody, "Memory's Movements: Minstrelsy, Miscegenation, and American Race Studies", *American Literary History*, 11, 4, 1999, 736-745.

Consequently, he walked out of the meeting before it was adjourned. The purpose of the meeting was to brief the Choir on their conduct when they arrive in London especially during their performances. The choir owners threatened to send him back home to Natal with his wife. He refused to go back home. He resorted to finding a lawyer who helped him fight his legal battle. The lawyer advised him to accept Illing and Moby's orders that he be sent home, but he refused the advice. They continued to travel to England with his wife and sister although members of the choir were not pleased with his actions.<sup>193</sup>

Before their debut appearance at the Imperial Theatre, the Zulu Choir faced racism from local newspapers including a London weekly *South Africa*, as they were called savages from Africa who cannot sing. The choir owners retaliated to these comments expressed by one of the readers of the publication by informing the editor that G.M. Rudolph, the resident magistrate of Klip River and Christopher Bird, acting Colonial Secretary for Natal, signed off the choir's credentials before they sailed to London. Therefore, the choir managers stated that it was inappropriate and racist to call them savage because the choir was within its colonial jurisdiction to travel to London.<sup>194</sup>

While singing in London, the choir was faced with the same controversies and challenges they came across in South Africa. A few disagreements led to the choir being divided into two. The one for those who were complicit and decided to remain as the Zulu Choir and the other as the Zulu Christian Choir. *Inkanyiso yase Natal* reported that members acted badly with unacceptable behaviour. However, matters against Christianity versus performing in traditional attire, which was supported by most of the Choir members, led to its division.<sup>195</sup> For instance, a rather morally degrading show for the Zulu Choir at the Aquarium Exhibition titled 'From the Wilds to Westminster' left Reverend E. Nuttall through *The Mercury* newspaper saying that the performance was humiliating to the Christian Natives, belligerent to the civilised compatriots, offensive to himself and the Zulus.<sup>196</sup>

Reverend Ezra Nuttall played a crucial role in the lives of *amakholwa* and Saul Msane when he first arrived in Natal in 1875. Mdlhoti was one of the places his missionary work was praised

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<sup>193</sup> Unknown author, 'Ukubuya kwe Zulu Kwaya (The Return of Zulu Choir)', *Inkanyiso yase Natal* 17 March 1893, 4, 152(v) (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

<sup>194</sup> Van Diemel, *In Search of 'Freedom'*, 9-10.

<sup>195</sup> Unknown author, "Zulu Choir", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 31 August 1894, no page number (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria); Unknown author, "Zulu Christian Choir", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 25 August 1893, no page number (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

<sup>196</sup> Unknown author, "Zulu Warriors", *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 28 July 1892, 6, 29(iv) (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

by a few new Christian converts until he moved back to Edendale where he led a school with Saul Msane before he took over Indaleni. At the time, Saul Msane under his tutelage, he left his teaching post in Driefontein to join the newly formed Zulu Choir in 1892, Nuttall continued to be part of his growth and supported him when he formed the Zulu Christian Choir.<sup>197</sup> It is possible that he named one of his children, Herbert Vuma Nuttall Msane, in his honour.

Msane and choir managers clashed when he challenged continuing performances in African garbs portraying Zulu warriors in the music halls. Josiah Gumede seconded Msane on the ground that such performance misrepresented the ambitions of *amakholwa* and they wanted to distinguish themselves from other Africans who were considered heathens to the white audience who usually generalised them.<sup>198</sup>

Saul Msane's refusal to wear traditional garb could also be attributed to the idea of "nakedness" associated with primitive societies and colonising the naked African body was attributed to what missionaries referred to as the "social skin of civility". Colonial missioning also meant conforming to the associated rituals and respectful observances associated with conversion to a Christian God which required covering the body and indicated their disapproval of traditional clothing. In a place like England, Msane did not desire to be viewed as a "raw natives" he dressed to conform to accepted sartorial dress codes. White people regarded African or traditional garb as "unremittingly rude and rudimentary, undifferentiated and undistinguishable", as Comaroff and Comaroff put it, which was why he refused to perform wearing it.<sup>199</sup>

There were Zulu songs the choir performed that complimented traditional garb, yet Saul Msane was caught in the web of a sartorial experience in the "new" social order which distinguished "raw natives" from black Christians. He needed to be always distinguished and by wearing western formal attire he could navigate between different identities as a colonised, yet a resistant African subject.<sup>200</sup> The author's argument with that kind of strategy is that it buried the significant meaning of African clothing as interpreted by Africans as much as it was

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<sup>197</sup> Veit Erlmann, *Music, Modernity, and the Global Imagination: South Africa and the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 135; Unknown Author, "Umfundisi Nuttall", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 10 December 1915 (Pietermaritzburg Archives Depot, Pietermaritzburg).

<sup>198</sup> Van Diemel, *In Search of 'Freedom'*, 9-10.

<sup>199</sup> Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 2: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991), 229. Sartorial dress code has a specific meaning and refers to Western men's or gentlemen's clothing craft of tailoring and bespoke-customised items including ties, shoes, belts and even hat, gloves and so on. To appear well dressed or conforming to the dress codes of high society.

<sup>200</sup> Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 229.

downplayed by white people, and it kept them ignorant of what African clothing symbolised. One would expect someone of his calibre to correct the narrative or defend traditional Zulu society by representing it with pride on the global arena instead of the need to be distinguishable from the “raw natives” or non-conformists in Natal.

For instance, missionaries criticised indigenous clothing worn, especially in Tswana culture, as lacking a sense of fashion separating gender and age amongst indigenous people. Saul Msane, as an envoy from Natal, and his negative attitude towards Zulu traditional dress, denied, in this context, denied his audience an opportunity to learn that every Zulu and Tswana wore *dikobo* (skin cloaks). In contrast, in Setswana culture, those who wore long cloaks were called *bakobo ditelele* to signify that they were people of value compared to *bakobo dikhutshwane* or those with lesser means. The value of the former and the latter was due to the process of making of *dikobo* during which a lot of skill, craft and time were invested in the garments. The skins had to be made as soft as cloth by soaking in water, treated with animals’ brains boiled in milk, compressed, and dyed with the roots of a fern-like plant. Royal families had unique *dikobo* adorned with the furs of wild beasts, but leopard skin, was mostly reserved for chiefs. *Dikobo* were donned during initiation rites, indicating sexual maturity; and during periods of bereavement.<sup>201</sup> In other words, they were worn on special occasions. For that reason, indigenous clothes were symbols of wealth and status, even across all ethnic groups in all parts of Africa, not symbols of backwardness. Saul Msane’s stance that they reminded them of slavery is irreconcilable with why Africans wore their indigenous clothing, and that the history of Africans does not begin with slavery.

However, Saul Msane was already an anglicised Zulu and Comaroff and Comaroff posit that his behavioural patterns were attributed to the fact that:

The social order was animated and shaped such that ethos of enterprise was induced in right-minded people; persons of energy and discipline were rewarded; the well-off were separated from the poor, and the various classes and estates found their proper level in the world.<sup>202</sup>

Therefore, part of the “social order” dictated that every black Christian elite like Saul Msane be inducted into a new world of commodities and commerce that made them desire a Christian-elitist lifestyle and become materialistic. Sartorialism, or the idea of western clothing and fashion for both white people and Africans, including Saul Msane, was the most idiosyncratic

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<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid*, 219.

visual marker of his association with the missionaries, not indigenous people, especially evident during the Zulu Choir performances in London. As a demonstrator of discipline and obedience, his reward were pieces of tailored fabric that he “earned” and would not let anyone deny him thus he assumed that he had every right to be part of the evolving world because of being a *kholwa*.<sup>203</sup>

Despite the sartorial issues Saul Msane had to deal with in the Zulu Choir during their performances in London, he was still treated as a “raw native” wearing western clothing. Nevertheless, Msane had all the makings of a black Englishman and his life writing attest to that discrimination. It appeared to be a lifelong challenge that binds his entire life together and was one of the main issues that he was faced with constantly; proving that he was the man worth his salt in the eyes of the coloniser even in sartorial terms.<sup>204</sup>

While in London, both Msane and Gumede called for the return of King Dinizulu who was exiled to St. Helena. Their anti-settler outlook came as no surprise as they had someone of the calibre of Harriette Colenso, the daughter of Bishop John Colenso, on their side. She, too, was an advocate of Zulu independence from Britain. She was in London at the time of their visit. They met when they were not performing and called for justice and fair play for African people without any fear considering British occupation of Zululand after the 1879 Anglo-Zulu War.<sup>205</sup>

Jeff Guy, in his book, *The View of Across the River: Harriette Colenso and the Zulu Struggle against Imperialism* did not mention Msane and Gumede’s meeting with Harriette who spent three years in England advocating the Zulu independence from when she arrived in 1890. Instead, Guy stated that Harriette put together a pamphlet that she circulated during a parliamentary session. The pamphlet sketched the dire conditions in Zululand and it further indicated that preparations were being made to release Chief Zibhebhu to Ndwandwe. After the Zulu Kingdom was defeated by the British, Zibhebhu nearly created his own independent kingdom and in 1883 until 1884 he defeated Cetshwayo several times. He was one of the thirteen chiefs who was allocated land after the Anglo-Zulu War. However, she could not convince British government on her pleas to defend exiled Zulu royals and Zululand. This

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<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> See R.U. Sayce, “Natives in Natal”, *The Geographical Teacher*, 13, 2, 1925, 105.

<sup>205</sup> Erlmann, *Music, Modernity*, 139-140.

showed that Saul Msane was in defence of the Zulu kingdom and against the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 despite being a *kholwa*.<sup>206</sup>

Her last attempt to convince the colonial office, in 1893, on the Zulu question she wrote another thirty-two pages long pamphlet titled *The Present Position among the Zulus (1893) and Some Suggestions for the Future*. In the pamphlet she protested the then administration of Zululand. It challenged the fragmentation of Zululand into many petty chiefs and the application of Natal customary law. She also argued that the Zulus were more than a mere tribe and that Dinizulu was more than just a mere chief. Colenso also maintained that Dinizulu should be released to Zululand as a chief and a head induna appointed on behalf of the Queen, and he must receive a salary of four hundred pounds a year. In return, he would assist the government of Zululand by carrying out orders and instructions of the Governor of Zululand, but her attempts were unsuccessful hence she returned to South African in August 1893.<sup>207</sup>

What Msane and the rest of the choir members knew before departing for London was the fact that they would be stranded and racially attacked. They were encouraged by the choir managers to act savage-like, something they would not agree to do if they were at home. Their performance in London was not Christ-like and this led to misunderstanding and conflict within the choir. This example shows how *amakholwa* like Msane and colleagues grappled with their clashing identities – Zulu and Christian. Saul Msane his wife Rosaline and sister Asiana as well as Josiah Gumede and Zephania Dhlamini refused to do what they considered “the evil act”. They changed their Zulu attire shortly before they appeared on stage. Consequently, they left the Zulu Choir for the newly formed Zulu Christian Choir and elected Msane as the chairperson. He steered the choir in a positive manner, to a point where it earned a good reputation through holding its revival meetings in different places in Natal.<sup>208</sup>

A solicitor H.S. Holland who wrote the letter that was published in *Inkanyiso yase Natal* dated 19<sup>th</sup> January commented on the news of the newly formed Zulu Christian Choir. Holland maintains that the choir was legally bound by their contracts to appear in Native costume and

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<sup>206</sup> Jeff Guy, *The View of Across the River: Harriette Colenso and the Zulu Struggle against Imperialism* (Virginia: Virginia University Press, 2002), 340.

<sup>207</sup> Guy, *The View of Across*, 347-348.

<sup>208</sup> Unknown author, “Ikwaya lamaKristu akwa Zulu (Zulu Christian Choir)”, *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 3 March 1893, 4, 150(v) (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria); Unknown author, “Zulu Christian Choir”, *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 6 October 1893, no page number (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria); Unknown author, “Zulu Christian Choir”, *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 25 August 1893, no page number (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria). Also see Veit Erlmann, *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), 116; and Andre Odendaal, *The Founders: The Origins of the ANC and the Struggle for Democracy in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2012), 248.

do all performances in the same “savage-like” fashion. Holland further states that the dance was not barbaric. It was made clear that they were Christians and that the dance represented the “slavery they left behind”. In wearing traditional attire, the Zulu Choir was showing the English audiences about the unique dress codes and Zulu cultural practices in Natal. However, the magistrate of Pietermaritzburg did not authorise them to dance traditionally in the letter approving their departure for London. They started to question, resist and discuss the issue when they were boarding a ship in Cape Town, and this explains Msane’s discontent. Although the 25 August 1893 edition of *Inkanyiso yase Natal* noted that “Msane agreed with the agreement of the magistrate that they will dress culturally”. Yet, Holloway, the principal, was significantly blamed by the newspaper for forcing the choir to act against Christian principles.<sup>209</sup>

Matyeni Zonderend wrote on 14 April 1892 that when the paper’s correspondent looked at *Inkanyiso yase Natal* of 10 March 1892, the words written in English about the Zulu Choir stated that Reverend Rowie gave the Zulu Choir permission to wear traditional attire. However, the paper stated that Reverend Rowe was not aware of the contestations and difficulties that arose over wearing traditional attire, otherwise he would have advised the choir not to wear traditional Zulu attire. When the news of the dispute over attire reached the Reverends Holland and Nuttall, they were not pleased with the choir’s division. Reverend Cannon Scott Holland of St. Paul Cathedral said that the Zulu Choir was only exhibiting their cultural heritage. Reverend E. Nuttall shared the same sentiments by saying that the traditional attire and dances showed the unity of the Zulu nation and this declaration by Nuttall caused divisions in the sense that to *amakholwa* like Saul Msane, it was a contradiction to be seen in a Zulu attire as a *kholwa*. Horace Laws did not see eye to eye with Msane to a point where he said if Msane was not leaving the choir then he would. Illing and Holloway informed Msane that “people are complaining about you. [We] better take you home”.<sup>210</sup> Msane refused to go home yet again.

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<sup>209</sup> Unknown author, “The Zulu Choir”, *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 24 February 1893, no page number, 149(v) (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria); Unknown author, “The Zulu Choir”, *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 4 November 1892, no page number, (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria); Unknown author, “Ungqainyanga (Shooting Star)”, *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 25 August 1893, no page number (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria); Unknown author, “Zulu Christian Choir”, *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 25 August 1893, no page number (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria).

<sup>210</sup> Unknown author, “Ku Mhleli we Nkanyiso (To the Editor of Inkanyiso)”, *Inkanyiso yase Natal*, 5 May 1892, p5, 17(v) (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria). It is not clear who was Horace Laws.

Consequently, Holloway, Illing and Co. attempted to punish the choir's dissenting members by holding them to their contract but failed to do so but the main cause of the split was a misunderstanding and friction between Saul Msane and impresarios. Msane refused to continue giving performances as "Zulu warriors in traditional garb" at music halls. Gumede seconded Msane by arguing that these performances did not compliment black Christians' aspirations and they also "showed the English public how savage heathen they can become".<sup>211</sup> However, in essence, leaving them behind and sailing conforming members on the ship to Cape Town seemed to be enough punishment. The eventual split in the choir came on 6 October 1892 leaving Saul Msane's family (wife Rosaline and sister Asiana) and Josiah Gumede without any financial support to return to Natal. While they were seeking relief in England the former members of the Zulu Choir returned home in March 1893 and those were Hettie Kumalo, Joseph Kumalo, Solomon Kumalo, Martha Molefe, Bessie Molefe, Lydia Mini, Julia Mini, Edith Mini, Zephania Dhlamini, Wake Sopela Ndlovu and Joseph D. Mzamo.<sup>212</sup>

On 5 August 1893 Josiah Gumede returned to South Africa boarding the USS Goth from Southampton on its first trip while the Msanes stayed for over a year in England. Katie Makanya and her sister Charlotte Maxeke also stayed longer in England for two years and three months, from 1891 until 1893. The choir's performance in England made them pioneers in the performance landscape of black South Africans but the choir never reunited, and the Zulu Christian Choir members became the Msanes, other unknown members and perhaps Josiah Gumede and Solomon Kumalo as they were close friends of Saul Msane.<sup>213</sup> There is no evidence on whether Saul Msane and his family met Charlotte and Katie in 1893.

As mentioned earlier, the split in the Zulu Choir led to the breakaway choir named the Zulu Christian Choir led by Saul Msane. Immediately after that all members of the Zulu Christian Choir were left behind while the Zulu Choir members sailed off to Cape Town with the impresarios. Only the Zulu Christian Choir functioned after their return from England but there is no detailed evidence on its activities. In the same year, 1893 or 1894, after his return to Natal Saul Msane became part of Unzondelelo or Natives' Home Missionary Society. It was an Edendale, and Driefontein Christian movement concerned with bringing the Gospel to non-converts in the neighbourhood but also focused on social needs of African people. This

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<sup>211</sup> Raymond van Diemel, *In Search of 'Freedom, Fair Play and Justice': Josiah Tshangana Gumede (1867-1947), a Biography* (South Africa: Belhaz, 2001), 10.

<sup>212</sup> Van Diemel, *In Search of 'Freedom, Fair Play and Justice'*, 10.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid*, 10; Margaret McCord, *The Calling of Katie Makanya* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1995), 53.

reflected Saul Msane's continued involvement in mission work in Edendale as a lay preacher of the Methodist church in Edendale. Unzondelelo was solely a movement for laymen in the Methodist church, therefore, this provides a sketchy insight into what Saul Msane did in his laity life under Methodist church. Unzondelelo was also instrumental in the Zulu Choir's trip to England in the first place.<sup>214</sup>

The concept Unzondelelo was first selected in 1876 in a Verulam meeting of African Methodists. African Christians interpreted the concept as a call for *amakholwa* or Christian converts to save souls of those who were not yet Christians as per the gospel of St. Paul. However, as a movement, it began in 1844 when Swaziland King Mswati sent Mjumba and his deputation to Reverend James Allison to the Methodist Mission in Mpharane (Ficksburg). In turn, Allison heeded the call of the Swati King and a meeting, presided by William Shaw, and was held in Grahamstown to discuss the way forward. Those who accompanied Allison to Mahamba in Swaziland later became the first-generation Christian converts and residents of Edendale, Indaleni and Verulam.<sup>215</sup>

Gumede returned to Rookdale under financial pressure, but he soon learned to find his feet and established himself again. In the same spirit, he married a Bergville born woman, Margareth Rachel Sitole. Like Gumede, she was a teacher and a staunch Wesleyan. The couple were married by Reverend Aron Illing at St. John Mission Station in Ladysmith on 30 June 1894. They got married in Ladysmith because Rookdale, which was ten kilometres away, had no church building. However, with her strong character and dedication Margareth helped Reverend Illing with his pastoral work and was instrumental in building a church in Rookdale. In 1895 Gumede was employed as an *induna* under Chief Ncwadi. At that time Ncwadi's territory was under attack by the magistrate, David Giles. In his intervention in this matter, Gumede observed that Giles was in violation of Shepstonian principles of African Administration. Giles did not take Gumede's intervention lightly.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Grant Christison, 'African Jerusalem: The Vision of Robert Grendon', PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu Natal, 2007, 781; Daryl Meirick Balia, 'A Study of the Factors that Influenced the Rise and Development of Ethiopianism within the Methodist Church in Southern Africa (1874-1910)', MA Thesis, University of Durban-Westville, 1985, 69.

<sup>215</sup> Balia, 'A Study of the Factors', pp.48-49. The list included Johannes Kumalo, Job Kambule, Daniel Msimang, Jacob Tshabalala, Jonathan Xaba, Samson Mtembu, Abraham Twala, Abraham Malgas, Barnabas Mtembu, Thomas Molefe, Reuben Caluza and Adam Molefe.

<sup>216</sup> Van Diemel, 'In Search of Freedom', 11.

## Conclusion

This chapter attempted to establish minstrelsy in South Africa particularly the Zulu Choir's performance led by Saul Msane in 1892 in London which has been overlooked. Minstrelsy scholars have written extensively on minstrelsy, but my argument is that they have ignored the influence of the Jubilee Singers of Orpheus McAdoo in South Africa. Furthermore, how that influence led to the formation of the Zulu Choir under the British colony including Saul Msane and Charlotte Maxeke as black elites consuming white culture. I traced the origins and development of blackface minstrelsy and its associated prejudices and how those were transferred onto minstrel choirs such as the Fisk Jubilee Singers and the Zulu Choir. It noted how minstrel choirs transformed into a different form of performance that excluded the original features of traditional blackface minstrelsy but continued to be marked by it.

The focus was to provide insight into the life of Saul Msane as a product of mission education through his musical career and his contribution to music from that era. Being part of the Zulu Choir was one of the attributes of being an educated Christian under the British colony. The Zulu Choir was significant as it was established around the time Orpheus McAdoo and the Jubilee Singers had a decade long tour in South Africa. That was the turning point in the music scene in South Africa as they brought a new approach to minstrelsy that allowed Africans to adopt cultural expressions such as the Zulu prosody at a time when colonials used minstrelsy to mock black lives and identity. Their musical and social influence gave birth to a music genre called *isicathamiya* which continued to be a locally and globally well-received genre. An example of *isicathamiya* is internationally acclaimed group Ladysmith Black Mambazo.<sup>217</sup>

Saul Msane's trip to London was more than just a strategy to raise funds for the Edendale institution. It was in the personal interests of the three white men who saw a business opportunity to financially and culturally exploit the Zulu Choir through performance aimed primarily at white audiences who were fascinated by seeing black performers on stage. Msane used this experience as an opportunity to showcase more than their talent but to prove to the white man that they were the "perfect" example of white civilisation from Natal. At the same

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<sup>217</sup> See the official page for Ladysmith Black Mambazo on [www.mambazo.com](http://www.mambazo.com) and Ladysmith Black Mambazo – Homeless (official music video) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xH6iowG0JNo>.

time, he justified this example through the lens of Christianity. As an enlightened Zulu man Msane refused to perform in traditional garb because he felt that it went against his Christian values, which had encouraged his generation and his father's generation to abandon traditional ways, which were associated with darkness, for western ways. Therefore, he was caught between adhering to stipulations of the contract he signed with Moby, Illing and Holloway or adhere to his adopted Christian values and associated identity.

What being part of the Zulu Choir has taught us about Saul Msane is that as much as he was trying to honour his civic duties tied to British imperialism, he was not always complicit or in agreement with how colonial subjects were "made to perform". That is why he immediately left the Zulu Choir to form the Zulu Christian Choir because he felt that he was not going to act in a "savage" manner because he was enlightened. He endeavoured to prove his loyalty to Christianity and government just like his father, Matthew, as an exempted *kholwa* who was consistently committed to Christian values.

Later in his life, he came to realise that he was in the third space, as Homi Bhabha puts it. He had a hybrid identity of a Zulu Christian who had to toil hard to demonstrate what an educated Christian looks like. He left a huge divide between himself as a *kholwa* and non-Christian converts at Edendale.

The same applies to Solomon Kumalo who said he has learned a lot from being in London and he even preached in one of the meetings. This duality was evident in several aspects of their lives. Most of the songs they performed were composed by white composers while there were still traditional Zulu songs which they also performed on stage in London. Their western attire as well as their lifestyle have always been under the scrutiny of colonial whites who "othered" him because they were the ongoing standard of what whiteness was and were prejudice towards what a black Englishman should be. That is why Moby, Illing and Holloway decided to exploit their exceptional musical and choral talents, proving Msane right. In turn, Msane defended his hard-earned reputation and influenced the choir to not perform in traditional attire in order to contest the colonial stereotypes of the Zulus as savages or uncivilised black people.

It was these symbols of western civilisation such as Christianity, music, clothing and education that gave Msane a hybrid identity that was more western than African. As a colonised subject he navigated between different cultural and geographic spaces. In South Africa as a Zulu man, a *kholwa* and talented singer and performer, he forged his own agency and in London he contested and questioned the colonial manipulation and systems that produced his hybrid

identity. He would constantly contest it throughout his life, and this was evident in the Congress leadership.

## Chapter 4

### **“And they... quote ‘Mai Mai’ as their place of residence”: Saul Msane as Compound Manager at Salisbury and Jubilee Mine Compound, 1895-1914**

Saul Msane was a famous teetotaller who was vocal about liquor problems in the Transvaal from 1895 at the height of the liquor trade and on the evolution of liquor laws in the Witwatersrand. His involvement touched on the liquor background in the Transvaal compared to liquor laws in Natal; living conditions in the compounds; “Kaffir” Beer in the compound; the involvement of the mine management and the police in fighting and promoting beer; the significance of alcohol to Africans and how it was demonised by missionaries. All these factors shaped Msane’s views on alcohol and thus this chapter endeavours to look at the liquor question from all sides/factors and argue that his reservations on intoxication were justifiable considering that the control of alcohol was becoming a principal issue as seen in the events just beyond Msane’s lifetime especially when Salisbury and Jubilee Mining Compound was taken over by the Johannesburg municipality and housed unemployed itinerants.

In 1895, three years after his first London trip, Saul Msane began his 19 year-long career as a compound manager and a labour recruiter at Salisbury and Jubilee Mine Compound in Johannesburg. Therefore, he became the first and only black compound manager until 1914 when the mine closed at the beginning of the First World War. This chapter links both his duties as a compound manager and a labour recruiter in understanding different aspects of his character and his managerial style. It also reveals Saul Msane’s character as a teetotaller and how he used his position, as a compound manager, to promote sobriety and hard work, amongst black mineworkers while they were using alcohol to escape the poor living and working conditions they were subjected to. Being a teetotaller and promoting the principle was one of the attributes that made Msane a Christian elite.

#### **The significance of alcohol to Africans**

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, missionaries and prominent members of the public held negative views on alcohol. They saw alcohol as a substance that was unhealthy and physically weakening. From this observation came the temperance movement contesting what it argued as the harmful social and moral effects of alcohol. However, these concerns

came from claims that Africans were especially vulnerable to alcohol compared to Europeans, backed by scientific research done on alcohol.<sup>218</sup>

Contrary to that negative view, in an African context alcohol was seen as playing an important part in both ritual and dietary norms. Due to abundance of food supplies, women were trusted to produce alcohol for chiefs, headmen or a head of household who offered it for his guests to show prestige. Therefore, alcohol inebriation in pre-colonial Africa was a norm that occasionally led to alcohol disorder. Alcohol intoxication usually took place in religious rituals to expedite spirit possession as a traditional practice. In other instances, the *izibongi* or praise poets became intoxicated before their performance whereby they used metaphorical poems to express common grievances. Accordingly, intoxication in rural African societies was not viewed as evil in the society, however, it was seen as a ritualistic platform for freedom of expression as opposed to the European's understanding of intemperance as an uncontrolled, mentally, and physically debilitating state. Msane through his missionary influence saw alcohol intoxication in a negative way and ignored the ritualistic significance of inebriation. Like missionaries, he concluded that it had negative effects on Africans, and it did not represent his Christian values as a *kholwa*.<sup>219</sup>

Women, and their autonomy in brewing alcohol for men, as an old African tradition, were resented by the Europeans and their allies in the colony. Men who consumed traditional beer were seen as "lazy" and incapacitated to play a meaningful role in the colonial economy. As early as the 1870s white people pressured government to introduce strict legislation to limit Africans' right to consume and brew traditional beer. Traditional beer was then replaced with the tot system as a payment method to exploit labourers and to lure Africans into being addicted to distilled spirits and European beer. The tot system refers to the practice of regularly serving wine to male farm workers as a payment method which was a norm in the Cape by the 1890s. The growth of this dependence then led to an increasing demand for these intoxicating beverages supported by the expansion of liquor syndicates on the Rand as well as a government monopoly. An old widespread African tradition of alcohol brewing was replaced by the European one in the interest of exploiting Africans.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Alan Gregor Cobby, "Liquor and Leadership: Temperance, Drunkenness and the African Petty Bourgeoisie in South Africa", *South African Historical Journal*, 31, 1, 1994, 129-130.

<sup>219</sup> Cobby, "Liquor and Leadership", 129-130.

<sup>220</sup> David Anthony, "South African People's History", in Joshua Brown, Patrick Manning, Karin Shapiro, Jon Wiener, Belinda Bozzoli and Peter Delius (ed.), *History from South Africa: Alternative Visions and Practices*

A response to that exploitation fuelled the temperance movements. For instance, Sol Plaatje became a household name in temperance through creating its society, while Saul Msane spoke for the complete prohibition of alcohol. By 1908, after Msane testified to the South African Native Affairs Commission of 1903-1905, he publicly condemned the consumption of alcohol by Africans working in the mines in Johannesburg. However, in Durban, in the same year, female producers of *utshwala* or sorghum beer were challenged by the emergence of beer halls. Before then *isitshimiyane* or shimming, an onomatopoeia to describe an inebriated man, which was highly intoxicating also surfaced. As a result, Durban Town Council excluded Africans from the liquor trade. Soon after its formation in 1919, the Industrial Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) took a standby boycotting alcohol consumption among the African working class already living in poverty. Also, Msane died at the time when alcohol was becoming more of a serious issue in the Transvaal and Natal.<sup>221</sup>

After the passing of Act 23 of 1908, about £283, 627 was raised in Durban in twenty years to build eating houses for workers, brewery, barracks, schools, and a hospital. In 1923, this system initiated in Durban was adopted throughout the country, via the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923 which replaced the Native Beer Act. This Act was the new method of raising income while controlling heavy drinking as opposed to leaving beer brewing in the hands of African brewers or women. As a result, municipalities across the country were encouraged to champion the monopoly of African beer. While that was the case, African women, through the 1923 Act, were prohibited from entering beer halls because they enjoyed the autonomy of brewing beer for African men from their own spaces. It took fifteen years for African women to be banned through the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923 considering the introduction of beer halls in Durban in 1908 began with challenging beer brewing monopoly they enjoyed.<sup>222</sup>

The Durban system was spread by the Liquor Act of 1928 in municipalities and smaller towns. African women found an alternative way of brewing beer. They resorted to brewing beer for consumption at home as they were not allowed to sell beer in beer halls. They further trafficked beer into towns and sold it to consumers on the outskirts of municipal borders. Under the same Act, Africans needed permission from white landowners and local magistrates to be able to

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(Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), p. 284; Gavin Williams, "Slaves, Workers, and Wine: The 'Dop System' in the History of the Cape Wine Industry, 1658-1894", 42, 5, 2016, 893.

<sup>221</sup> David Anthony, "South African People's History", 284-285.

<sup>222</sup> Shula Marks, *The Ambiguities of Dependence in South Africa: Class, Nationalism, and the State in Twentieth Century Natal*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986), 78.

brew beer in the reserves. Simultaneously, it became illegal for Africans to be in possession of *utshwala*.<sup>223</sup>

African beer and its dietary significance in African cultures across the continent was a custom that outlived Msane. By the time he was born, alcohol consumption in the pre-colonial African context was a norm which Europeans condemned. However, it is important to note that brewing of alcohol in African societies was a technical skill Africans possessed. Ingredients of such brewing came from malted grains, honey, fruits, sugar cane and the sap of palm trees. The fact that it was a common skill and that ingredients were easily available made it a non-commercial beverage. Its technology and labour process allowed everyone to brew alcohol on a small-scale and in some instances where it was commercial this meant that it was locally produced.<sup>224</sup>

From this pre-colonial tradition, an exception was in West-central and West Africa as well as the Cape Colony where imported spirits from Europe became commercial beverages for the colonial economies. In fact, in sub-Saharan Africa, distillates were only introduced towards the end of the nineteenth century. In essence, alcohol brews were not made for selling or buying but it was mostly drunk and poured in ritual performances and rites of passage in an individual's life and in intercession rituals where individuals communicated with the ancestors. In the seasonal time of domestic and agricultural work beer was provided when neighbours and relatives came together to build or harvest a crop. These were the good uses of alcohol from the perspective of pre-colonial African context. As a product of mission education, Msane abandoned good uses of alcohol as a social drink that connected people, living and dead, together, an attribute inherent among African people. The philosophy of missionaries and colonisers was to divide Africans and use their social drink to build the colonial economy.<sup>225</sup>

Beer was an elitist beverage for the king who commanded his subjects and young warriors to drink it. In some instances, older and wealthier men drank first and consumed the most beer over everyone else. The use of beer for rituals and other activities required young girls to be taught how to brew beer. Beer consumption to Africans was an exercise of hierarchy as well as power that was dismantled when Africans encountered European colonisers. Key ingredients that made beer across the continent gave each beverage a unique taste and name.

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<sup>223</sup> Shula Marks, *The Ambiguities of Dependence*, 78.

<sup>224</sup> Justin Willis, "Drinking Crisis? Change and Continuity in Cultures of Drinking in Sub-Saharan Africa", *African Journal of Drug & Alcohol Studies*, 2006, 5, 1, 4.

<sup>225</sup> Willis, "Drinking Crisis?" 4-5.

In South Africa there is a type of beer, amongst others, called *umqombothi* whereas in Kenya and Ghana it was called *busaa*, *amgba* in Cameroon, *pombe* in Tanzania and Kenya, *walwa* in Angola, *dolo* in Togo, Ivory Coast, Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Therefore, the consumption of beer in special occasions shows that it was consumed in moderation and occasionally through an order from powers that be.<sup>226</sup>

However, the period between 1850 and 1930 changed the culture of drinking by the high numbers of imported beer from Europe for a minority of Europeans living in Africa. As a result, this change commercialised home-brewed beer and it was no longer for important social events and rituals. Migration of labourers and changes in urbanisation further contributed to the commercialisation of home-brewed beer. The proprietors of beer in the market became women. Out of this trend came drinking spots or shebeens run by women. Shebeens were small bars in a shanty made from corrugated sheets and wood and that was where home-brewed beer was served. Customers of the shebeen queens, as women owning them were known, comprised individuals who lived in nearby areas. Beers sold in that kind of arrangement were not taxed because of being outside of the jurisdiction of the municipalities or government control.<sup>227</sup>

The discoveries of diamond in Kimberley in 1867 and later of gold in 1886 in the Witwatersrand had a direct impact on the nature of alcohol consumption within African societies. The consumption of beer was connected to power, however, the framing of alcohol consumption by the missionaries took away that power. The social landscape in the mines changed and access to alcohol became controlled.<sup>228</sup>

Due to the growing demand for home-brewed beer, well-known breweries bottled indigenous beer to brew large quantities. One example is ‘Chibuku beer’ produced in Zimbabwe, Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania, and Botswana. Young adults and women enjoyed fair returns from their beer sales while other young adults and women started consuming home-brewed beer. The home-brewed beer itself began to be consumed away from home in different outlets. This culture of commercialisation of home-brewed beer eroded social protocols that governed consumptions of beer. It no longer became an essential part of the social fabric of Africans and

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<sup>226</sup> Richard B. Nyuur and Pauline Sobtesuo, “The History and Development of Brewing and the Beer Industry in Africa”, in Ignazio Cabras, David Higgins and David Preece (ed.), *Brewing, Beer and Pubs: Global Perspective* (New York: Springer, 2016), 147.

<sup>227</sup> Nyuur and Sobtesuo, “The History and Development”, 148-149; Paul Nugent, “Modernity, Tradition, and Intoxication: Comparative Lessons from South Africa and West Africa”, *Past and Present*, 2014, 131.

<sup>228</sup> Nugent, “Modernity, Tradition”, 131.

a key aspect of their diet. This explains why Saul Msane advocated for the total prohibition of alcohol.<sup>229</sup>

### **The growth of temperance movements in South Africa**

Temperance movements supported by missionaries and the British colonial government clashed in ideologies over the consumption of alcohol by Africans. Msane, as an advocate of the prohibition of liquor was still a teacher in the 1880s when the Native Races and Liquor Traffic United Committee (NRLTUC) was formed to champion the prohibition of liquor in all the colonies Britain occupied, including South Africa. It is possible that his stance on liquor began at that time. Missionaries condemned the consumption of alcohol while the colonial government used the revenue of alcohol to finance itself. This clash in ideology also applied in colonial Ghana. During the last days of Msane's life, in 1919, an international convention on liquor was held under the name St. Germaine. The aim of the convention was to moderate liquor traffic in African colonies occupied by Britain. Its temperance movement, operating through churches as it was in South Africa, attacked the colonial government on using liquor to advance itself at the expense of less fortunate people.<sup>230</sup>

In the Eastern Cape, women who were not involved in the brewing of African beer were largely Christian converts oriented by missionaries with Victorian purity codes. Through missionaries, women adopted western customs and style of dress and formed prayer groups, which later shaped their solidarity before they were absorbed by the Cape Colony Women Christian Temperance Union (CCWCTU) whose basic principles were Christian godliness, temperance and purity. Unlike African women who controlled beer brewing enterprise, African Christian women adapted the advocacy role for the total abolition of alcohol in the colony. It is possible that Rosaline Msane, Saul Msane's wife was on the side of African Christian women who advocated temperance.<sup>231</sup>

Another significant temperance movement that arose in the Eastern Cape especially in Transkei was the Independent Order of True Templars (IOTT) as well as Eastern Grand Temple, which was formed in 1882 as an outlet of the "Endeavour" Temple of 1876 which started in Lovedale. In fact, temperance movements in the Cape Colony were formed with the aim to create a

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<sup>229</sup> *Ibid*, 149.

<sup>230</sup> Emmanuel Akyeampong, "The State and Alcohol Revenues: Promoting 'Economic Development' in Gold Coast/Ghana, 1919 to the Present", *Histoire Sociale/Social History, s.a.*, 398.

<sup>231</sup> June McKinnon, 'Women's Christian Temperance Union: Aspects of Early Feminism in the Cape, 1889-1930', MA Thesis, University of South Africa, 1995, 38.

purified society. Msane might not have been part of any temperance movements, but he believed in the basic tenets of temperance movements in the British colony. He believed in moral order, and he believed that moral order was one of the basic personality traits Africans who were Christian converts should possess to curb abusive behaviour especially towards women and children.<sup>232</sup>

Since the 1913 Native Land Act made it difficult for Africans to make ends meet only through farming, many resorted to being labourers in mines to pay taxes and *lobola* for their brides when they were ready to get married. Working in gold mines, where the migrant labourers faced danger, became a new platform for social mobility as opposed to education. Attitudes, gaits, and ways of speaking of migrants distinguished them from countrymen who were not itinerant.<sup>233</sup>

From this context we can derive drinking attitudes of migrant workers living in the compounds and how women continued to dominate the beer market regardless of being marginalised and legislated from brewing and selling beer by the government in favour of spirits. However, as access to compounds became more and more restricted, conventional ways of brewing beer lessened. Mining managers battled with allowing access to alcohol, which sometimes led to fighting and absenteeism. As a form of control, which resulted in keeping the migrant labourers within the confines of the compound and cutting the supply of beer by African women, they served traditional beer because they feared that their absenteeism impacted on production.<sup>234</sup>

Due to lack of access to traditional beer migrant labourers resorted to concocting beer like *skokiaan*. It had more kick than traditional beer, had no nutritional value like traditional beer and it was as dangerous as “Kaffir Beer” and “Dutch Gin for Kaffirs”. Migrant workers felt that it was their right to continue consuming stronger variations of alcohol on the grounds it was outside official working hours. Meanwhile police and mine managers were not impressed with absenteeism and excessive drinking which usually happened on weekends and outside the confines of the compound. The message of temperance did not take hold since African miners considered drinking amongst compatriots as part of their socialisation as men.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> June McKinnon, ‘Women’s Christian Temperance’, 39.

<sup>233</sup> Paul Nugent, “Modernity, Tradition and Intoxication”, 132.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid*, 132.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid*, 133.

### **The background of liquor trade in the Transvaal in comparison to liquor laws in Natal**

In the 1870s, under the presidency of Paul Kruger, in *Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek* (ZAR) or the Transvaal the Afrikaner *burghers* were farmers who lived close to African chiefdoms. Their survival as the upper class compared to the African people depended on Kruger's concession policy of increasing the wealth of the Boers at the expense of the Africans. In one of the concessions in 1881, Kruger's government gave A.H. Nelimapius sole rights to manufacture spirits from Boer agricultural produce such as potatoes and grain. His distillery company was called Eerste Fabrieken Hatherley Distillery Ltd. However, Kruger called it 'Volkshoop' or People's Hope because it benefited many Transvaal *burghers*, from its base in Pretoria, in the sense that they sold excess of grain to Nelimapius' distillery to produce alcohol.<sup>236</sup>

By 1875, the Witwatersrand had about 88 000 Africans because the discovery of gold in 1886 coerced many black and white migrant labourers in Johannesburg. At the same time many Africans worked on the mines as unskilled labourers around Johannesburg. These changes increased the profit margins of Hatherley Distillery, and monopolised the Witwatersrand liquor trade, as many new workers bought bottles of Hatherley's alcohol, making them the biggest clientele of the company. By 1897 when Msane was two years into the compound manager post, Hatherley Distillery produced 1000 gallons of spirit per day.<sup>237</sup>

Initially mine owners assumed that alcohol could be used as bait to lure workers but many of the workers they attracted were already addicted to alcohol. Most of them were mineworkers from the Portuguese colony of Mozambique who were accustomed to cheap Portuguese spirits and wine. They spent a large amount of their wages on liquor. Liquor was further used to prolong the stay of migrant labourers who were forced to work long hours to make enough money to travel home. Once they were addicted to drinking alcohol their chances of going home were slim. Their physical labour was exploited and somewhat "rewarded" with a *dop* modelled in the same manner as the *dop* system in the Cape. It was also used to make workers forget about their depressing working conditions in the miserable compounds in the Witwatersrand. In fact, in the mining compounds drinking was regulated to certain times every day after work. It might have been within Msane's jurisdiction to combat drinking at Salisbury

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<sup>236</sup> Paul la Hausse, *Brewers, Beerhalls and Boycotts: A History of Liquor in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1988), 14.

<sup>237</sup> La Hausse, *Brewers, Beerhalls*, 15.

and Jubilee, but it was beyond his control as the supply of liquor was in abundance for the workers who were targeted as the main consumers of liquor.<sup>238</sup>

In Natal, around the time Msane was twenty-one, in 1877, the consumption of alcohol and drunkenness amongst Africans were the order of the day and it affected the social life and labour supplies. As a result, Law No. 18 of 1863 prohibited Africans from buying liquor. However, spirits were sold to licensed sellers and canteens as was the case in the Transvaal. The biggest concerns were on *isitshimiyane*, and colonial rum made from cane spirits. Another report that was published in 1876 showed that drinking amongst *amakholwa* was also a concern. They consumed spirits because they were no longer content with drinking *utshwala* which came with a change of lifestyle due to climbing the social ladder as exempted people.<sup>239</sup>

Laws passed to control the consumption of alcohol did not initially materialise because of an independent population of Africans in the rural parts of Natal who were mostly non-Christian converts and enjoyed the autonomy of production of traditional beer. Thus, the laws passed by the colonial government did not infiltrate the grassroots level. In consequence, the government policy focusing on black people was considered to accommodate the interests of white commercial farmers over the supply of labour. This policy did not stop mass consumption of liquor even in the 1890s, at the time Msane was already at the Salisbury and Jubilee Mining Compound, grappling with the very question of liquor amongst migrant labourers residing in the compound he oversaw.<sup>240</sup>

The African population in Natal and Zululand was not easily coerced into the colonial fold inasmuch as Africans were prohibited from buying intoxicating liquors and spirits, as per Law No. 22 of 1878 as amended by Law No. 10 of 1890. However, they were also allowed to buy *utshwala* from licensed sellers under Law No. 18 of 1888. This meant that Law 18 recognised that Africans were the main producers of traditional beer in Natal while Law 22 restricted them from producing and selling spirits. However, Law 18 by 1891, was responsible for the increase in consumption of *utshwala*.<sup>241</sup>

Msane was part of Christian Africans who were against drinking and brewing. Msane believed that sobriety was the way of life if Africans sought individual self-upliftment as well as freedom

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<sup>238</sup> *Ibid*, 15-16.

<sup>239</sup> Paul la Hausse, 'The Struggle for the City: Alcohol, The Ematsheni and Popular Culture in Durban, 1902-1936', MA Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984, 15-16.

<sup>240</sup> La Hausse, 'The Struggle for the City', 17.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

gained through working hard. Msane carried those values and perceptions about alcohol with him throughout his life as an elite who was also a teetotaler and showed workers harmful effects of alcohol on their bodies as part of his campaign against inebriation. Inebriation led to death due to harmful spirits such as “Kaffir Brandy”, “Kaffir Whiskey” and “Dutch Gin for Kaffirs” which contained chemicals such as turpentine, glycerine, and sulphuric acid.<sup>242</sup>

Other hazardous chemicals were found in the standard recipe of the spirits. For instance, the formula for “Kaffir Brandy”, which was priced at 16/6d dozen bottles in 1899, consisted of 15 gallons of Delagoa proof spirit, 15 gallons of water, one gallon of cayenne pepper tincture, half of mashed prunes, one and a half ounce of sulphuric acid and one-ounce nitric acid and burned sugar for colouring. “Kaffir Whiskey” had extra ingredients such as acetic acid, creosote which was used as a preservative of wood. Nitric acid and sulphuric acids were used in dyes and inks and drain cleaning respectively.<sup>243</sup>

By 1888 there were 393 licensed canteens in Transvaal while not more than 147 were situated in the Rand. By then canteen keepers sold spirits to Africans but this law was only implemented for the first time in 1889 by the Liquor Licensing Board (LLB). The regulations stated that a canteen keeper could sell liquor to an African who showed a permit that was authorised by a white master.<sup>244</sup>

As alluded to before, throughout his term as a compound manager, Msane showed concern for the welfare of African labourers. On 16 May 1899, Sebastian Msimang and Msane addressed a group of about 800 workers who were gathered in the Wesleyan Native Church in Albert Street. He called for total prohibition and passing of the Liquor Law. Ironically, the resolution was passed without a single black labourer opposing it. One of the notable achievements of his activism on total prohibition of alcohol was when the resolutions passed at the meeting, he chaired on 17 May 1899 formed part of the liquor policy headed by the Chamber of Mines. The Chamber of Mines’ policy, amongst other things, focused on the trade of liquor in the compounds. In the 17 May meeting, educated black elites were the main audience. Reverend Tsewu of the Independent Presbyterian Church (IPC) also proposed similar resolutions.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Paul la Hausse, *Brewers, Beerhalls and Boycotts: A History of Liquor in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1988), 20.

<sup>243</sup> Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982), 57.

<sup>244</sup> Van Onselen, *Studies in the Social*, 58.

<sup>245</sup> Van Onselen, 83.

In a short period, by 1892, the number of liquor canteens in the Rand rose from 147 to 552. They were run by the white business community, where workers consumed alcohol which Hatherley Distillery supplied. These canteens sold harmful spirits like “Dutch Gin for Kaffirs”, “Kaffir Brandy” and “Kaffir Whiskey” which were widely available in all canteens in the ZAR. These drinks were not regulated for the consumption of African workers. These spirits contained dangerous chemicals which gave them a distinct taste, a different colouring, and a strong kick. Workers suffered the effects of these concoctions, and some lost their lives while others did not return to work. These chemicals burned their insides, and as a result there was no recovery from a drinking stint hence Msane worked tirelessly in warning workers against liquor.<sup>246</sup>

Above all, there were no analytical chemists to regulate the content or ingredients that were contained in “Kaffir Brandy”, “Kaffir Whisky” and “Dutch Gin for Kaffirs”. These dangerous spirits were distilled specifically for consumption by African mineworkers. Kruger’s government turned a blind eye on this exploitative practice because wholesalers in the Witwatersrand and influential capitalists in Portugal and Germany were benefitting. Meanwhile, the likes of Witwatersrand Licenced Victuallers’ Association (WLVA), which comprised of canteen keepers from different mining districts, lobbied Kruger’s government to relax liquor laws to increase the market size and monopolise the market by limiting competition. They also protected their members from losing their licences.<sup>247</sup>

Msane, who shared the same sentiments with other Templars such as Modiri Molema and Sol Plaatje, supported total prohibition of alcohol because he was concerned about the liquor trade happening around the compounds. In the testimony he gave in the South African Native Affairs Commission (SANAC), between 1903 and 1905, he strictly said that he did not “like liquor at all”.<sup>248</sup> He was outvoted by ten men, including Paul Moletji and Solomon Kumalo, when the Commission asked those who supported liquor to stand up. Jonas B. Mana and John Makue did not desire the prohibition of liquor “because liquor is needed”.<sup>249</sup> Chiefs also pleaded with the government to end liquor trafficking. Eventually, the Commission decided that the supply and sale of spirituous liquors was prohibited in the Transvaal. On the other hand, the sale of

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<sup>246</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid*, 57.

<sup>248</sup> La Hausse, *Brewers, Beerhalls*, 22; University of Cape Town Library, Government Publications, South African Native Affairs Commission, ‘Minutes of Evidence, 1903-1905’, v, 860.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid*.

“Kaffir beer” was prohibited but it was allowed to be brewed on the condition that it was consumed at home.<sup>250</sup>

His colleague, Solomon Kumalo, who was then an assistant compound manager under him, argued that black people who were exempted should be allowed to buy liquor if they consume it in moderation. Both Msane and Kumalo were exempted from the operation of Native Law in Natal, meaning that they were not prohibited from buying liquor there as per regulation of that Law. The Liquor Act of Natal did not affect them, and Msane advocated for the opposite to apply in the Transvaal. However, Kumalo successfully petitioned to be exempted from the Natal Liquor Act in the Transvaal. In the same breath, some mine owners were not pleased with the liquor trade because it affected productivity. The mine-owners demanded that Kruger’s government implement harsh laws to deal with the liquor problem. While Msane, through a large gathering, called for the banning of the liquor trade because alcohol made black mine-workers miserable, and it was harmful to their health.<sup>251</sup>

Msane suggested ways to deal with the Liquor Law and labour question. He challenged the state to open industrial schools, regardless of whether they were state funded or not, to educate black labourers industrially, while working in the mining areas, by offering rudiments of ordinary education to educate them to work and make themselves useful. He thought that “it is very good that the state should undertake that”.<sup>252</sup> He urged that schools be built around mining areas to ensure black people progress the same way as white people. He made an example of establishing schools in the mines to teach Africans to be useful and teach them skills that would enable them to fit in the labour market. The labour problem included unskilled labourers. Already there were miners who travelled from Salisbury and Jubilee compound to the city and suburban areas to attend night school. To accommodate their work schedule, they attended night classes. Others who worked at night attended day classes. Therefore, Msane saw the need to bring education close to the people and produce curricula and syllabi that addressed their immediate needs, such as literacy or was related to their mining work. Msane argued that in receiving industrial education black people were guaranteed the same privileges he enjoyed in Natal as a civilised elite.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> *Ibid*, 857, 858 and 859; Setumo, 79.

<sup>251</sup> La Hausse, *Brewers, Beerhalls*, p.22; University of Cape Town Library, Government Publications, South African Native Affairs Commission, ‘Minutes of Evidence, 1903-1905’, v, 860.

<sup>252</sup> Government Publications, ‘Minutes of Evidence’, 859 and 857.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid*.

Modiri Molema and Sol Plaatje were linked to the temperance movements much later than Saul Msane. Molema, in his book *Bantu: Past and Present (1920)*, warned about the bad effects of alcohol in terms of leading fellow men to crime and unemployment. Plaatje joined the Independent Order of the True Templars in the 1930s to promote sobriety. But as this chapter has already established, drinking was a way to escape living conditions migrant labourers found themselves in. It proved to be impossible for Msane, Molema and Plaatje to encourage mine workers to become teetotallers.<sup>254</sup>

### **Living and working conditions in the mine compounds**

Compounds were “key social institutions which secured the exploitation and control” of migrant labour in southern Africa.<sup>255</sup> Historically, compounds began on the Kimberley diamond fields by the De Beers Consolidated Mines, to control and prevent the illicit sale of diamonds by black miners, resulting in dictatorial control over the labour force. In Johannesburg illicit gold ore sale or theft was not problematic but in 1901 mine wages were reduced because of the Anglo-Boer War on labour conditions.<sup>256</sup>

As the labour crisis ensued in 1903, to a point where migrant workers refused to return to the Witwatersrand mines, mine-owners applied the same model of compounds on the Witwatersrand to control the labour force, specifically for the Chinese indentured labour between 1903 and 1907, instead of persuading migrant workers to report to work. Rand mines became the first mining house to standardise and construct large compounds as it was the largest mining house and others followed suit including the Salisbury and Jubilee Mining Company.<sup>257</sup>

Beyond that, mine compounds in the Witwatersrand were essentially developed as a system of control over cheap labour for the extraction of commodities such as diamonds and gold. Externally, the state and its mechanisms were involved in creating relevant laws and regulations such as the Masters and Servants Act, the pass laws and labour recruiting while internally each mine had its own in-house processes of enacting coercion, discipline, and control. Msane was involved in both spheres as a labour recruiter and a compound manager.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> La Hausse, *Brewers, Beerhalls*, 20.

<sup>255</sup> JP Leger and WA Martinson, “The Newtown Compound: Reconstruction or Restoration?” Presented at the University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop, 16-18 July 1992, .1-2.

<sup>256</sup> Leger and Martinson, “The Newton Compound”, 1-2.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>258</sup> Sean Moroney, “The Development of the Compound as a Mechanism of Worker Control, 1900-1912”. Presented at the University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop, 3-7 February 1978, 1.

The pass laws were part of the management strategy adopted by mine-owners while the Masters and Servants Act prevented black workers from devising strike action plans. This Act and what it stood for explains why Saul Msane was called “the enemy of the people” four years after he had resigned from the Salisbury and Jubilee compound in 1914.<sup>259</sup> Msane was against any form of exploitation black workers faced and he performed his duties within the confines of the Act, as was expected of a compound manager by his superiors. However, parallel to that, workers lived and worked in poor conditions. Msane did not support any form of strike action plans and that gave the workers the impression that, as a compound manager, he was ignorant to the mistreatment of black workers. The 1918 Shilling strike sowed that the workers distrusted Msane by claiming that he was at the forefront of their exploitation because he reported to a white manager (see Chapter Eight).<sup>260</sup>

At the beginning of the twentieth century, compounds comprised a rectangular gathering of barracks or huts occupied by workers. This also included Salisbury and Jubilee Mining Compound. The compound manager’s office, washing facilities and kitchen were at the centre of the courtyard surrounded by a collection of barracks. Corrugated iron as well as wood were extended onto the original brick structures thus enclosing the courtyard. Each room in the compound accommodated about twenty to fifty workers who slept on double decked bunks built against the wall. They were turned into individual cabins by the workers who nailed wood strips above the openings to prevent themselves from falling off and to protect their personal belongings. In case of overcrowding, which was a norm, workers slept on muddy floors caused by leaking roofs and poor drainage during rainy days. For heat, workers used their own *imbawula* or fire buckets which had no chimneys because there were no air conditioning systems in the compounds to protect workers against cold winter nights. Soggy conditions, poor ventilation as well as fumes from the *imbawula* created a high number of respiratory sicknesses, such as tuberculosis, in the compounds. After their underground shifts, workers were usually left stranded as they had to stand in the heat, cold or wet with no chance to dry their clothes while waiting for their meal tickets. Their diet was poor because of mine management’s cost-cutting measures.<sup>261</sup>

Mine-owners did not change workers’ diets by providing vegetables and mealie-meal as part of the staple diet in the compounds. Instead, a compound diet was oven-dried imported grain

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<sup>259</sup> Moroney, *The Development*, 1.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*

that was not nutritious. Medical officers and the Department of Native Affairs recommended, in a report presented to mine-owners, an improved diet and accommodation as a matter of urgency but workers' situations did not improve. From 1903, medical officers changed the diet of the workers by introducing "Kaffir beer" as part of their nutritious diet. This serious scarcity of food in the compounds was exploited by the management to coerce workers by starving those who were "loafers" who skipped their shifts, without considering that it was virtually impossible for workers to go underground on empty stomachs as their job was physically demanding.<sup>262</sup>

The physical conditions described above made many workers desert the compound for better opportunities but those who stayed behind resorted to consuming illegal liquor to drown their sorrows. On Sundays when they were not on duty, they continued to drink any sort of intoxicating concoction they brewed or bought illegally and bought meat to braai. Socialising after procurement of alcohol and meat turned into gatherings which were usually about connecting with male workers from other ethnic groups and compounds.<sup>263</sup>

In the Salisbury and Jubilee Mining Company hierarchy Saul Msane, as a compound manager, reported to a white manager who had maximum power and control over workers daily. Higher management used Msane to enforce discipline and put pressure on workers regarding their shifts in the name of maintaining law and order. However, it must be noted that Msane was a skilled negotiator and the kind of compound manager who forged peace between workers and higher management as it will be shown in Chapter Eight. He used his principles as a *kholwa* to encourage higher management to treat workers better and improve their lives through providing somewhat decent accommodation, food and protecting the workers against violent white workers.<sup>264</sup>

Richard Victor Selope Thema described Msane as a level-headed man who was not radical. He said that Msane was the kind of compound manager who was interested in the welfare of African people in the Transvaal. Msane further told Thema that he was "disgusted with the manner in which Africans were treated at the Pass Offices, Post Offices, Police stations, railway stations and in the streets of the towns".<sup>265</sup> As a staunch Methodist Church member he felt that

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<sup>262</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>265</sup> Wits Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa AD 1787 Manuscript RVS Thema; Unknown author, "Ezase Goli/Johannesburg News", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 5 June 1903, 2 (Bessie Head Library); Moroney, "The Development", 1.

“people who professed the Christian religion had no right to treat other human beings as though they were beasts of burden”.<sup>266</sup> In 1910, Thema spent two weeks with the Msane family, in a beautiful house at Salisbury and Jubilee Compound. Within the first decade in his post, Msane took less than three months leave days. His starting salary was a meagre £8 which grew to a staggering £26 10s per month.<sup>267</sup>

As part of performing his duties well, Msane ensured that he did not leave labour control in charge of cruel compound policemen. He also improved compound conditions and condemned violence because he did not want his mine to gain a bad reputation. However, Msane, as an educated Christian was familiar with the difficulties experienced by the workers who lived far from home and tried to be fair and not abuse his powers. Compound managers were given maximum powers and choices on how they used their powers if they maintained control over labourers. Some mediated on behalf of workers who lost their pay while others continued to control workers using compound police to curtail their movement in the mines through the pass system. It was within their jurisdiction to issue special passes for workers exiting the compound during their off days.<sup>268</sup>

The chief *induna* headed the compound police who reported to the compound manager. The *induna* was responsible for supervising the compound police and acted as a spy for the compound manager. The police wore uniforms, carried sjamboks and handcuffs. As they patrolled, they used sjamboks to threaten workers to report to duty underground. Many Zulus, who were arguably recruited by Msane, were appointed as compound police but other headmen and sons of chiefs from other ethnic groups were also appointed as compound police.<sup>269</sup>

The Native Affairs Department (NAD) tried to monitor and reduce mine-owners’ mistreatment of workers. As a compound manager, Saul Msane was expected to report any matter affecting the workers on a regular basis, to the Native Affairs Department. His testimonies as he was called to testify in the 1903-1905 South African Native Affairs Commission were informed by this engagement. The NAD had inspectors who worked together with the mines and compounds where black workers lived. They usually listened to all grievances Msane brought on behalf of the workers, including workers who complained about being forced to work when

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<sup>266</sup> Wits Library, AD 1787 Manuscript RVS Thema; Unknown author, “Ezase Goli”, p.2 (Bessie Head Library); Moroney, “The Development”, 1.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid*; Moroney, The Development, 1.

<sup>268</sup> Moroney, 4.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid*.

they were ill. In most cases, offenders, whether a black compound policeman or a white man, were punished for assaulting the workers. Another common complaint workers had was being misrepresented by recruiting agents and low wages.<sup>270</sup>

### **Conditions black mineworkers faced in the Witwatersrand mines**

Seven years before Msane applied for the post as a compound manager at the Salisbury and Jubilee Mines, in 1888, conditions for black mineworkers were dire. These conditions defined their lives, how they were treated, their food, and the quarters in which they lived. At that time there were no organisations recruiting or protecting black men in the working environment. They only came to work in the mines and that meant they accepted whatever offer was put on the table. A year later, there were about 14000 black mineworkers. That number increased as more black mineworkers came to the Witwatersrand for work. As a result, the resources to improve their living conditions were limited.<sup>271</sup>

However, the Chamber of Mines, CoM, in 1904, fifteen years after the Anglo-Boer war, reported that a year earlier it issued a circular to its members. It called for attention to precautionary measures such as the housing of black mineworkers, provision of stoves, improvement in diet and hospitals. It also allocated a medical doctor to each mine in the Witwatersrand to take necessary care of black mineworkers. In case of any physical injury or any ill treatment inspectors were hired to attend to miners' grievances. The CoM was cautious about mistreating black mineworkers because they were their manpower and made mine-owners and shareholders high profits. Keeping them in relatively good condition was of benefit to them although workers were replaced, if necessary, with younger and stronger men. The CoM claimed that the recommendations made to improve the lives of black mineworkers were ordered by the Department of Native Affairs under the Commissioner for Native Affairs.<sup>272</sup>

Black miners working in the Witwatersrand were paid a certain rate depending on whether they were working underground or above ground. White mineworkers were paid a fixed rate while black mineworkers were paid a lower rate depending on whether they were skilled and fit enough for the job. A record was kept, and a ticket was marked based on the above-mentioned

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<sup>270</sup> LG Irvine and D Macaulay, "The Life-History of the Native Mine Labourer in Transvaal", *The Journal of Hygiene*, 6, 2, 1906, 161.

<sup>271</sup> Government Publications, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, "South African Native Affairs Commission, Minutes of Evidence, 1903-1905", (v), 777.

<sup>272</sup> Government Publications, "Minutes of Evidence", 778 and 779.

factors. In the case of arriving late for work, a labourer automatically lost a quarter of his pay for the day. Compared to a white mineworker, a black mineworker was not as fortunate in the sense that if he did not come to work or was not marked by a timekeeper, he instantly lost his job. As the labour of black mineworkers were in high demand, a black labourer had more job security than his white counterpart. Other ways of protecting owners' interests in the mines was through keeping black mine-workers productive at work and in unison in the compound. If one of them lost his job it meant he became idle in the compound because they had no work to do. Even without work either underground or above ground, workers still enjoyed the benefit of having food and a roof over their heads.<sup>273</sup>

In addition, a ticket system regulated how black mineworkers were paid. It was stipulated that they had to work over 313 days before they were given a year's contract. However, only a few workers survived this system while the majority of about 200 did not surpass 313 days. Some managers claimed that ill-health and "laziness" contributed to mine-workers who under-worked. However, laziness reflected a common colonial judgment towards African people.<sup>274</sup>

Any other minor contraventions of the law perpetrated by mineworkers were handled by compound managers, who were, amongst other duties, in charge of fining mineworkers and reporting such matters to the Police Court. Compound Managers and Pass Inspectors had the power to report any matter to the local magistrate. The Witwatersrand labour district had over 100 mines with main districts in Springs, Germiston, Krugersdorp, Randfontein, and Boksburg. There were magistrates in Johannesburg, Krugersdorp, and Boksburg. But any minor offences were handled without involving magistrates or Government Inspectors who had limited jurisdiction.<sup>275</sup>

On the 27 January 1907, Msane was examined by the Resident Magistrate from Zeerust during the confidential enquiry into alleged prevalence of homosexuality amongst black mineworkers on the Witwatersrand mines. This testimony was taken in the Chief Magistrate's office in Johannesburg and formed part of his duties. However, on the said testimony Msane did not have enough evidence to provide to the Commission. He recommended Zephania Dhlamini, one of the guards he referred to as night watchman who police reserves reported to, to follow

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<sup>273</sup> Government Publications, "Minutes of Evidence", 780.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid*, 780.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid*, 781.

up on the matter discussed during the hearing. Dlamini was part of the 1892 Zulu Choir trip (see Chapter Three).<sup>276</sup>

### **Msane's relationship with King Solomon kaDinizulu**

On 28 August 1905, ten years after Saul Msane was employed as a compound manager, the government of Natal introduced the Poll Tax Act. Section two of the Act forced every non-exempted Zulu male from eighteen years upwards to pay an annual poll tax of £1. Unless, according to section fourteen, any one of them proved that they were unable to pay tax because of poverty they were excused in the interim but faced prosecution when they failed to pay tax once they could afford to. Able-bodied Zulu men from Zululand complied with the regulations of the Act and that meant they either had to sell their livestock or seek employment to afford to pay tax.<sup>277</sup>

At that time the two main places where employment was guaranteed for the uneducated male Zulu population were either in white-owned farms or mines in the Transvaal. It is possible that the Act was put in place, by mining companies who lobbied government, to stimulate a large flow of black unskilled labourers into the Transvaal mines. When the Poll Tax was deliberated, the Native Affairs minister clearly stated that it was warranted, considering in the last twenty years the inhabitants of the Colony had lobbied and requested for increased hut tax for the purpose of having a huge supply of black labour. Also, the Poll Tax was the instrument the imperial government used to exert its power over Zululand and Natal. This forced Zulus to be loyal and comply with government institutions, after its defeat in the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879. This explains why every kraal had to have its wage earners and labourer who worked in the mines.<sup>278</sup>

In consequence, Msane grew his networking channels as a labour recruiter who sourced labourers from Natal, through King Solomon kaDinizulu, while being based in Johannesburg. Solomon kaDinizulu, who earned £600 per annum from the government, amongst other things, met the terms set out to him by the government by allowing Msane to recruit Zulu men to

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<sup>276</sup> Chief Magistrate's Office, Confidential Enquiry into Alleged Prevalence of Unnatural Vice Amongst Natives Employed in Mines on the Witwatersrand, Minutes of Evidence, Wednesday, 23 January 1907. "Unnatural Vice in Compounds". Transvaal Archives (Pretoria) GNLB 229, 583/15/D145. Also see Iain Edwards and Marc Epprecht, *Rediscovering Working-Class Homosexuality in South Africa: Voices from the Archive* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2020).

<sup>277</sup> Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, *The Land Is Ours: South Africa's First Black Lawyers and the Birth of Constitutionalism* (Cape Town: Penguin Random House, 2018), 85.

<sup>278</sup> Ngcukaitobi, *The Land Is Ours*, 85; Rebecca Hourwich Reyher, *Zulu Woman* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 114.

Johannesburg. This showed that Msane and Solomon kaDinizulu had a good relationship. Around May 1919, five months before Msane passed on, Solomon visited mining compounds in Johannesburg to interact with several Zulu men whom Msane had recruited from Zululand. It is possible that while in Johannesburg Solomon kaDinizulu and his wives, one of them being Christina Sibiya, met with Saul Msane at the Salisbury and Jubilee Compound's house where Msane resided. They stayed at Pixley kaIsaka Seme's house in Sophiatown. Shortly after their sojourn in Johannesburg they travelled to Zululand without the Zulu king at the time when Msane was already in Kroonstad, attending one of the Congress meetings. Msane took care of their hospitality on behalf of the Zulu king and ensured that they journeyed safely to Nongoma. Before the plans to relocate to Zululand with his family materialised Msane approached Solomon kaDinizulu and negotiated a piece of land to build an Agriculture college. That never materialised because of his sudden death at Dr. Titlestad's house on 6 October 1919.<sup>279</sup>

The Agricultural College Msane envisioned was meant to offer industrial training and livestock breeding for Africans. This tallies with Msane's proposed plan he presented at the South African Native Affairs Commission, fourteen years earlier, to educate and reskill Africans according to what the then market dictated. It is possible that Msane planned to re-recruit some of the Zulu men who were stranded in Johannesburg back to Zululand to form part of the cohort of the school he had in mind. Msane knew where in Zululand the best land was in the African Reserves. He also knew that very little of it was used by the Zulus and aimed to grow the college into being an educational institute where Africans from all parts of the country studied. It is not clear where Msane was going to get funding from to build the college or whether he had already acquired funding to do so. However, his involvement of Solomon kaDinizulu translated into acquiring land as a donation because it was for the common good of the Zulus living in the Nongoma Division.<sup>280</sup>

However, throughout his career as a compound manager, Msane recruited and managed Zulu labourers, on behalf of the Chambers of Mines (CoM) as per its instructions. Saul Msane was acknowledged by the CoM as a person of high calibre, and a trusted ally as he followed the instructions set out in his job description with diligence and professionalism. It is also possible that Msane received a per head fee as standard procedure but there is no record stating that point. Created to represent the mining industry, the CoM devised a recruiting system

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<sup>279</sup> Hourwich Reyher, *Zulu Woman*, 76 and 109-111.

<sup>280</sup> Grant Christison, 'African Jerusalem: The Vision of Robert Grendon', PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu Natal, 2007, 838.

concerned with organising and handling one hundred thousand men per year. Transportation, terms and validity of contracts, tariffs, housing quarters, rates of pay, sanitation, diet, medical inspection, work schedules, were all handled by the CoM on behalf of the government. However, the CoM and government were concerned about the severe shortage of low-earning African workers and as a result Alfred Milner, a colonial representative in the Transvaal, appointed the South African Native Affairs Commission (SANAC) to seek a solution to the shortage. One of the recommendations SANAC made was that Africans were only allowed to live on white farms if they form part of the labour system as labourers. This system came to effect after the 1913 Natives' Land Act was passed. The CoM was given power to recruit migrant labour in the African reserves and in neighbouring countries while white farmers were allowed to evict African tenants, sharecroppers, and squatters whom the landowners did not permit to reside in their farms.<sup>281</sup>

The newly recruited labourers from Natal and other parts of southern Africa converged at the Central Compound of the Native Labour Association (NLA) in Johannesburg before they were placed in different mines depending on what mine-owners required. From the Association black workers went to the pass office, which was a division of the Department of Native Affairs, to register their names and receive their contracts. Each worker was issued an identification pass held, in the interim, by the employers until he quit. The pass contained a workers' particulars including his name, family, ethnic group, domicile, terms of contract and name of his employer. Without the pass system, there were no mass controls of the black labour force, and it was also a measure put in place to avoid desertion as well as "protecting" both the mine-owners and the worker.<sup>282</sup>

Part of being registered in the system was that workers had to pass medical tests and if they proved to be unfit, they were returned to the NLA to be repatriated or kept temporarily until their fitness improved. Another important procedure that was followed to induct the workers into the pass system was compulsory vaccination upon arrival.<sup>283</sup> Black labourers usually worked underground where black police and *indunas* collaborated in keeping discipline and avoiding any form of abuse and assault. However, favouritism and bribery were the order of the day, and any offense was punishable through deductions from wages and severe fines. Such

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<sup>281</sup> *Ibid*, 77; Ngcukaitobi, *Land Matters*, 22.

<sup>282</sup> LG Irvine and D Macaulay, "The Life-History of the Native Mine Labourer in Transvaal", *The Journal of Hygiene*, 6, 2, 1906, 155.

<sup>283</sup> Irvine and Macaulay, "The Life-History", 161.

deductions were monitored by fathers and brothers at home in Natal and Zululand who benefited from their earnings and by chiefs who depended on those earnings to service the tribal hierarchy. Presumably they exerted pressure for complaint behaviour. The chiefs' roles in this equation were to maintain the tribal systems at home and in the mines.<sup>284</sup>

Inasmuch as mines permitted men time off in the evenings and at night to spend some time outside its premises, but within the radius and nearby area, homosexuality, prostitution, and drunkenness were banned. However, the compound barracks were full of tens of thousands of men who were womanless and spent many months away from their wives and could not normally socialise. Msane as a compound manager, kept track of men who were permitted to leave the compounds through a pass system put in place to regulate their movements. Each mineworker had to carry a passport to be allowed entrance in a highly centralised area, in the compound, patrolled by police. That was the limit to his duties as he did not serve as a foreman or supervisor who escorted groups of workers underground. Part of Solomon kaDinizulu's visit to the compounds was to pacify agitated mineworkers especially because they threatened to go on strike and to build a unified working force. Instead of continuing with the resistance action, they usually heeded the king's call and resorted to performances including dancing and playing pianos, drums and other musical instruments made from petrol cans. Singing and dancing was one of their coping mechanisms given the harsh conditions they were subjected to in the mines. Another coping mechanism they resorted to was being intoxicated by alcohol, which was a trait Msane resented and consistently spoke against on different occasions.<sup>285</sup>

The whole economic structure depended on ethnic organisation and Solomon kaDinizulu strengthened the structure by supplying the labour force for the mine-owners. Furthermore, he ensured that through ethnic organisation all Zulu men in the mines stayed focused on digging gold for white-owners instead of resorting to rebellion. Perhaps this was part of his role in colluding with the imperial government which was paying him a huge sum of money per annum.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Hourwich Reyher, *Zulu Woman*, 77; Ngcukaitobi, *Land Matters*, 22.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid*; Gary Kynoch, "Controlling the Coolies: Chinese Mineworkers and the Struggle for Labour in South Africa, 1904-1910", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 36, 2, 2003, 313.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid*.

### “Kaffir Beer” canteens in the mine compounds

On 10 October 1916, the establishment of “Kaffir Beer” canteens, often called beer halls, in the compound, began through directives from the Department of Native Affairs. The full effect of these changes only became clear in the years immediately following Saul Msane’s death. Figures from 1921, show that the amount of illicit liquor destroyed in the compound between 1 January and 6 March was 3532 gallons, which was approximately 10% of the quantity consumed. From those gallons of liquor, 98% of it was a concoction “kill-me-quick” and only 2% was “Kaffir Beer”. As a result, 56 black people were arrested at the compound for being in possession of liquor. This shows that “kill-me-quick” was readily available compared to “Kaffir Beer”.<sup>287</sup>

As established earlier, the introduction of beer halls in Natal in 1908 generated income for the municipality through beer sales. The same applied in the compounds after the canteens or beer halls were built. The Native Affairs Department used beer sales to replace money it spent, which was £400 000, on building housing for black people. The same system relieved white ratepayers from paying the costs hiring a police force to control the liquor traffic.<sup>288</sup>

The precautionary measures taken by the compound manager, at this time not Msane, and the police raids failed to control the amount of illicit liquor in the Salisbury and Jubilee compound. This was an ongoing challenge for the authorities in the compound. Again, around the same time in 1922 another case stated that 133 black people were arrested, while 10 895 gallons of liquor were destroyed between 1 January and 23 July 1922. They were arrested for the same reason, which was contravening of Pass Laws and Liquor Law. The idea was to replace “kill-me-quick” with “Kaffir Beer” to stop the illicit liquor traffic in the compound. Before *hopana*, illicit home-made liquor, was barred, there was very little illicit liquor traffic. However, since its demise, black people resorted to making “kill-me-quick” which led the mine-owners to establish a Police Post to bring order in the compound.<sup>289</sup>

At one stage, police raided the Salisbury and Jubilee compound on a Sunday morning and found a thousand men drunk. According to the *Rand Daily Mail*, one witness said that “there must have been 4000 native and coloured people in the compound... 1000 were already

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<sup>287</sup> NASA, Pretoria, SA, Secretary for Native Affairs 3814/13/F734 Police Raids for Liquor at the above Compound.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>289</sup> NASA, Pretoria, SA, Secretary for Native Affairs 3814/13/F734 Police Raids for Liquor at the above Compound.

drunk...this is before ten o'clock on Sunday morning..."<sup>290</sup> The police destroyed 7000 gallons of intoxicating liquor and made 130 arrests. The liquor was concealed in big iron cases, paraffin tins and in wooden boxes. The police simply perforated the tins with picks and spilled the liquor down the compound gutters and drains. The drains were blocked by the liquor and streams of it simply poured along the gutters. Most of the liquor was hanging up openly in cases from overhead crossbeams, while other receptacles containing liquor were hidden under beds and behind doors.<sup>291</sup>

Notwithstanding the thorough search in the morning, black policemen raided the compound again in the afternoon and found 800 gallons more, mostly from the same rooms. From this business of illicit liquor, black s and coloureds who were part of the operation made a huge profit. One black person whose book was confiscated was found to have banked £240 in the past few months. On one occasion, police dug up the flooring of a stable full of animals, and unearthed 18 barrels of a highly intoxicating drink called *kali*, made from figs.<sup>292</sup>

With the illicit liquor situation being out of control, the assistant superintendent of locations, who oversaw Salisbury and Jubilee compound, was blamed for failing to control the compound and its illegal activities. It was also implied that the compound manager schemed at the brewing and sale of illegal liquor and that he failed to exercise full control, either because he was weak or desired to be popular amongst black people. Instead of being a residential compound for employed black s who could not be supplied with quarters by their employers, Salisbury and Jubilee Compound became a resort of unemployed itinerants, who brought crime that affected the entire city of Johannesburg. The sale of "Kaffir Beer" through the local authority in the compound benefitted the government's plan to finance its initiatives. This shows how the beerhall system was implemented in the Transvaal. It further demonstrates that Saul Msane saw how the entire system built around alcohol continued to oppress Africans in the compound mines. The above happenings occurred three years after Msane passed on. His advocacy for the total prohibition of alcohol throughout his 19 year long career as a compound

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<sup>290</sup> Unknown author, "Salisbury Compound Raided and Big Force of Police Engaged and 1000 Natives Drunk Before 10am and Black Brewer's Big Bank Balances", *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 July 1922 in NASA, Pretoria, SA, Secretary for Native Affairs 3814/13/F734 Police Raids for Liquor at the above Compound.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*

manager became almost prophetic, as the situation in the compound got out of hand when there was no one else advocating for the same cause.<sup>293</sup>

### **Police raids for liquor at the Salisbury and Jubilee Compound**

In 1914 when gold was no longer mined in the Witwatersrand, Salisbury and Jubilee compound transformed into a normal residence for all black people living and working around the same area. Some residents paid rent while others were squatters who paid a ticky, or three penny pieces, per night. A few of them were arrested following illicit beer sales and alcohol consumption in the compound. In 1921 police failed to keep thousands of black people away from the open ground in front of the compound they spent time at. In fact, on Sundays about 25 gambling cliques were all over the open ground adjoining the compound but no arrests were made. The “native police” hardly patrolled around the area and if they did, it was for about three to four months at a time, because they were afraid of the criminals that lived there. This raised big concerns for the police, who could not contain ‘criminal’ activities that happened in or adjacent to the compound. The knowledge of anything happening in the compound was conveyed to the police by the compound manager.<sup>294</sup>

By 1922, on 2 August, the Superintendent of Locations received a letter from Sergeant D.W. Swan, describing police raids for liquor at the compound. From the letter addressed to the Superintendent of Locations in 1922, it is evident that Salisbury and Jubilee compound was searched twice a day by Sergeant D.W. Swan for liquor. Between 2 January 1922 and 23 July 1922, 32 000 gallons of liquor were confiscated as well as 452 black people arrested. Those who were under ordinary law appeared directly before the magistrate while those who were under the Native Law appeared through “native police”. What was unique about this compound was that black people lived there as rent-paying tenants compared to other mine compounds where liquor was prohibited.<sup>295</sup>

Conditions at the Salisbury and Jubilee compound were very different. Many blacks were rickshaw owners who obtained pedlar licences and were issued slips, as evidence, from the pass officials. Many of them had criminal records. In addition, approximately between 35 000

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<sup>293</sup>NASA, Pretoria, SA, Secretary for Native Affairs 3814/13/F734 Police Raids for Liquor at the above Compound.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid*; Unknown author, “The Salisbury and Jubilee Compound: Reply to a Magistrate Criticism”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 January 1922 in NASA, Pretoria, SA, Secretary for Native Affairs 3814/13/F734 Police Raids for Liquor at the above Compound.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid*.

and 45 000 Black s passed through the compound annually, with many of them being criminals and had no pass. In July, apart from the regular tenants, 3894 casuals squatted in the compound, paying a ticky a night. They made their traditional beer, “kill-me-quick” or “*skofana*” from sugar and yeast, amongst other ingredients. They obtained these ingredients at any hour of the day on weekdays only, without the police watching. Casuals lived outside in the main compound. When they were arrested for an offence elsewhere...they naturally quoted “Mai Mai” as their place of residence.<sup>296</sup>

The Johannesburg Municipality had already used the migrant labour compound system as their model to accommodate and regulate many municipal workers. When the Salisbury and Jubilee compound was closed in 1914 after Saul Msane resigned, the Johannesburg Municipality took control of it. The rented disused mine compound was transformed into a hostel for 1000 men, and later named the Mai Mai Bazaar”. Msane earned the epithet “Mai Mai” from men who were under his control because he habitually rubbed his chin and said, “My, my”, as an exclamation of wonderment when he learned about workers who were hurt. What Saul Msane said in his lifetime about the liquor crises among black mineworkers and tenants in different compounds in the Witwatersrand proved to be significant after his lifetime.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> NASA, Pretoria, SA, Secretary for Native Affairs; Unknown Author, “Magistrate Taken to Task: His Location Criticism Resented and Defending the ‘Salisbury and Jubilee’”, *The Star*, 12 January 1922 in NASA, Pretoria, SA, Secretary for Native Affairs 3814/13/F734 Police Raids for Liquor at the above Compound; Unknown author, “The Salisbury and Jubilee Compound: Reply to a Magistrate’s Criticism”, *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 January 1922 in NASA, Pretoria, SA, Secretary for Native Affairs 3814/13/F734 Police Raids for Liquor at the above Compound.

<sup>297</sup> Wits Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa AD1787 Manuscript RVS Thema; Vivienne Linda Williams, “The Witwatersrand Muti Trade”, *Veld and Flora*, March 1996, 12; JP Leger and WA Martinson, The Newtown Compound: Reconstruction or Restoration? Presented at the University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop, 16-18 July 1992, and 1-2.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter presented Saul Msane and his thoughts on alcohol as a voice of temperance amongst mine-workers during his tenure as the first and only black compound manager at Salisbury and Jubilee for 19 years. As a compound manager, instead of using his power for his own benefit, he cared for the welfare of African people. In one of the testimonies, he gave he proposed temperance and schooling for mineworkers as a solution to their labour and liquor problems and as an instrument for individual self-upliftment. These values, taught to Msane by missionaries, informed his ideological standpoint on alcohol and why, as an elite, he rejected drinking. Saul Msane made a bold statement by saying he disliked alcohol because of how it was associated with idleness and an unChristian lifestyle. This chapter demonstrates the harmful use of alcohol and how it was used by mine-owners to control the labour force. Seeing how black mineworkers had abused alcohol in the compound and the chaos it caused further justified Msane's endeavours on temperance. Regardless of evidence provided on the pre-colonial benefits of African beer, missionaries demonised it by establishing temperance movements. Their perception also shaped Saul Msane's perceptions, as a teetotaler, on the demonisation of African beer or any type of alcohol.

## Chapter 5

### ***“[I] would like to see all individuals that can buy [land] to buy [land]”*: Saul Msane’s philosophy on land tenure and African landownership and the underpinning laws connected to the land question, 1895-1912**

When Saul Msane first arrived in the Transvaal in 1895, he found that laws that governed landownership were informed by the 1881 Pretoria Convention, which ended the first Anglo-Boer war (1880-1881), and that they were different from laws that governed land ownership in Natal around the time of the very war. This chapter compares and examines Saul Msane’s philosophy on African landownership between the 1880s and 1890s in Natal and the Transvaal. It will also weigh his justification of the individual land tenure and critique of communal land tenure systems in the ever-changing policies and regimes (of Paul Kruger and Louis Botha) that applied different laws governing landownership in South Africa. It further shows that as land continued to be taken away from black people, Msane questioned his belief in the system of British justice primarily because soon after the wars he was no longer allowed to own land in both Natal and the Transvaal.<sup>298</sup>

#### **The Pretoria Convention of 1881 and the London Convention of 1884 on communal land tenure system versus land allocation in Natal**

As a point of departure, all the land-ownership issues that Saul Msane faced throughout his stay in Johannesburg were underpinned by the outcomes of the first Anglo-Boer War of 1880-1881 which led to the 1881 Pretoria Convention and 1884 London Convention, in the same way that the second Anglo-Boer War of 1899 led to the 1902 Treaty of Vereeniging and ultimately the 1910 Union of South Africa. The 1884 London Convention underscored the principle that black people were only allowed to buy land through the Native Affairs Commissioner who was appointed as a trustee. The article of the convention read thus:

No grants of land which may have been made, and no transfers or mortgages which may have been passed between the 12<sup>th</sup> April 1877, and the 8<sup>th</sup> August 1881, will be invalidated by reason merely of their having been made or passed between such dates. All transfers to the

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<sup>298</sup> See NR Gunning, ‘Die Britse Bantoe-Administrasie, 1902-1906’, MA Thesis, University of Pretoria, 1966. It focuses on how black people were administered under the British in the Transvaal between what was termed the transition period 1902-1906; DR Burton, ‘The South African Native Affairs Commission, 1903-1905: An Analysis and Evaluation’, MA Thesis, University of South Africa, 1985. Burton focuses on the same period through analysing the South African Native Affairs Commission of the said period. Sheila Meintjes, ‘Edendale, 1850-1906: A Case Study of Rural Transformation and Class Formation in an African Mission in Natal’, School of Oriental and African Studies, PhD Thesis, University of London, 1988.

British Secretary for Native Affairs in trust for Natives will remain in force, an officer of the South African Republic taking place of such Secretary for Native Affairs. On 4<sup>th</sup> January 1886, the Executive Council of the late South African Republic appointed an officer to take transfer of land for Natives as stipulated by the London Convention Article 1 on the Order: the appointing of an officer in terms of Article 18 of the London Convention in whose name as trustee all transfers for the Natives shall be placed. Resolved for that person to appoint the Superintendent of Natives".<sup>299</sup>

This law applied to Africans who attempted to buy land as a collective through their chiefs. Chiefs were automatically seen as buyers, after collecting money from their subjects to buy land, and paid it to the Native Affairs Commissioner. Other laws created and ratified by the London Convention to displace black people were established through the Native Location Commission under the Pretoria Convention of 1881, which was ratified by the 1884 London Convention. These Conventions decided on government locations which were to be *de facto* living places for black people in the urban areas; hence they were not developed the same way as white suburbs at the time.<sup>300</sup>

The state owned most communal land, except farms purchased by white farmers. This land was held in a trust on behalf of a specific ethnic group thus making the Native Affairs Commissioner a trustee who then had the power to allocate land, through chiefs, to the people living within the jurisdiction of their chiefs via usufructuary bases. This meant that black tenants could use the land of the state but had no other rights over the land, including leasing and selling it. Tenants were only allowed to live in the state-owned lands and privately-owned white farms because they were employed in white areas (cities and farms) and formed part of the migrant labour system. They were employed to herd cattle as cattle farming was the main type of farming in the Transvaal. They mostly used the land through the one-family one-plot system, but the system only applied to families who already had plots, through chiefs and headmen who exercised limited powers bestowed upon them by the Native Affairs Commissioner.<sup>301</sup>

Unlike white farmers who were allocated land for private use, black people were allocated land through the communal land tenure system and did not enjoy the benefits the state provided, such as land bank, co-operatives and marketing. The idea behind the migrant labour system

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<sup>299</sup> SANAC, *Minutes of Evidence*, 431.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid*, 428.

<sup>301</sup> Edward Lahiff, "Land Tenure in South Africa's Communal Areas: A Case Study of the Arabie-Olifants Scheme", *Africa Studies*, 59, 1, 2000, 47.

was to concentrate Africans in reserves and hinder an emerging echelon of rich peasants and capitalist farmers. Therefore, the communal land tenure system was implemented to accommodate the migrant labour system and to maintain social control through appointing chiefs and headmen. Members of the particular ethnic groups technically paid for the land that they eventually did not own and had no say in how their land should be used except through what the state dictated. This justified why Saul Msane detested the communal land tenure system as an elite and a compound manager because it oppressed individual rights to individual landownership.<sup>302</sup>

However, in Natal, in 1880, the Crown lands started being open for public purchase at ten shillings per acre. This also meant that Africans were eligible to buy land. Several *amakholwa* bought land in different parts of Natal through communal land tenure/customary law which contributed different voices from interest groups, including the 1881-1882 Native Affairs Commission stressing that everyone, including Africans, should be allowed to purchase land as it created a class of civilised Africans that were required to own land to avoid a widespread eviction. This explains why Saul Msane's elitism was tied around land ownership and Christian values, and he felt that his social status was incomplete without anything material to show for it.<sup>303</sup>

Interestingly, the Commission opposed the communal land tenure system on the grounds that it extended locations and gave chiefs powers and independence from being supervised by the Natal Native Trust. Also, Edendale Methodist missionary, John Allsopp, seconded the Commission's recommendations by adding that communal land tenure caused difficulties regarding succession, and it should only apply to monogamists to avoid inheritance impediments. He further said that an English title deed should compel its holders to be under English Law or Ordinary Law and that it gave black people better security of tenure compared to leasing or living in mission stations. These were the same views Saul Msane shared when it came to how communal land tenure system was applied in Natal as opposed to how it was applied in the Transvaal. In Natal, it was applied to give individuals a voice in how their land should be allocated whereas in the Transvaal it was designed to exploit them. Also, it is evident that Msane's testimonies in the SANAC of 1903-1905 were informed by the practical

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<sup>302</sup> D. Cooper, "Land Reform and Rural Development in the Transvaal", *Development Southern Africa*, 4, 3, 1987, 495; Lahiff, "Land Tenure", 47-48.

<sup>303</sup> Sheila Meintjes, 'Edendale, 1850-1906: A Case Study of Rural Transformation and Class Formation in an African Mission in Natal', School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1988, 341-342; *Amakholwa* bought land in Ixopo, Msinga, Lion River, Alfred County, Umkomazi and Alexandra.

experience of how land tenure applied in Natal. In addition, shifting power from the hands of the chiefs to the magistrates was done to accommodate English Law which governed the likes of Saul Msane.<sup>304</sup>

However, a year after the second Anglo-Boer War *amakholwa* were no longer allowed to buy Crown land. As a result, this limited Saul Msane's chances of buying more land apart from what he already owned in Natal between both Anglo-Boer Wars. This further explains why Msane formed part of the collective that spoke in one voice for their rights to land ownership in Natal and the Transvaal.<sup>305</sup>

### **Saul Msane's views on individual and communal land tenure systems**

Chapter two provided a detailed account of how Saul Msane became one of the prominent elites born in a family of landowners as part of the Edendale social strata and it also proved his class position and interests. Consequently, this section explains his views on African landownership with regards to the communal land tenure and individual land tenure systems. Therefore, it is befitting to note that this move to Johannesburg in 1895 to work as a compound manager at Salisbury and Jubilee mining compound coincided with the passing of the 1894 Glen Grey Act by an imperialist and Cape Prime Minister Cecil John Rhodes. The Act threatened Msane's chances of purchasing land in all four parts of the country. It first applied specifically to the Glen Grey district in the Cape Province until it was extended to all black people living in the Cape and prevented them from purchasing land. It also created labour tax to force Xhosa men to work on farms and in mines, like the 1905 Poll Tax introduced in Natal (see chapter five).<sup>306</sup>

In addition, as Act 25 of 1894, it also prohibited black people from voting, and it only allowed them right to hold land under individual land tenure and excluded the communal land tenure and quitrent or a continued rent system.<sup>307</sup> Saul Msane advocated for the individual land tenure system because it gave Africans the right to vote and a direct influence on government matters affecting them. However, the 1913 Natives' Land Act decreed the communal land tenure system and did not allow individuals to own land as Msane hoped. He advocated for individual

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<sup>304</sup> Meintjes, 'Edendale, 1850-1906', 341-342.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid*, 390.

<sup>306</sup> Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, *The Land Is Ours: South Africa's First Black Lawyers and the Birth of Constitutionalism* (Cape Town: Penguin Random House, 2020), 75.

<sup>307</sup> The Glen Grey Act (1894), assigning an area for exclusively African development, was "a Bill for Africa," as Rhodes proudly called it. In reality it served to enforce segregation of Africans, further disenfranchise them, and control their economic options.

landownership because it came with the right to vote while the communal land tenure system disallowed individuals to own land. It also allowed the Native Affairs Commissioner the right to vote but not on behalf of black landowners under the communal land tenure system. Msane was vocal during the period between the passings of both Acts because they directly affected his livelihood.<sup>308</sup>

However, in the Transvaal the system that operated entirely was communal land tenure which denied Africans an individual land tenure option. This implied that they were only allowed to stay as tenants on private farms owned by white farmers. Other Africans lived in government locations, and some were scattered in uncharted locations that government still recognised. The rest were spread all over the Transvaal and farms purchased by Africans whose land was held in a trust by the Native Affairs Department and somewhat by missionaries. Missionaries were provisional trustees of the private land Africans purchased although they eventually transferred land directly to the Native Affairs Department in trust. However, Africans were not allowed to buy land without the approval of the Commissioner for Native Affairs. In fact, they were distributed thus: one-fifth on private farms or companies white people owned; one-fifth on established government locations; one-eighth on crown lands; one-twelfth on land they owned; and two-fifths in the remainder of the Transvaal. This indicated the distribution of the population, one-third thereof was in Zoutpansberg, in the Northern Transvaal comprising about 300 000 Africans in total.<sup>309</sup>

In Natal, chiefs were allowed to buy land and hold title deeds yet expected their subjects to contribute to the buying price and annual instalments without eventually being listed as title deed holders. This meant that they had no legal claims to the land, which explained why some followers were usually reluctant to contribute to the purchase of land as a collective unless they were listed as holders through a trust deed. Hence Msane saw the communal land tenure system as impractical and retrogressive to the social mobility of *amakholwa* during the early 1880s, although it was more considerate of Africans in Natal than in the Transvaal, in the sense that collective buying of the land was on the share basis by communities. If individuals wished to sell their shares/portion of land, they were allowed to do so. This tenure of collective buying through a title deed accommodated the individuals over the chiefs and it stood as a second

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<sup>308</sup> Ngcukaitobi, *The Land Is Ours*, p.219; Ngcukaitobi, *Land Matters: South Africa's Failed Land Reforms and the Road Ahead* (Cape Town: Penguin Random House, 2021), 22.

<sup>309</sup> South African Native Affairs Commission (SANAC), "South African Native Affairs Commission Minutes of Evidence, 1903-1905 Volume V" (Government Publication, University of Cape Town), 247.

option Msane opted for in helping individuals to own land inasmuch as he preferred individual land tenure system. In fact, this was the system that operated when his father, Matthew Msane and other first generation Christian converts bought and owned land in Edendale. Therefore, it primarily informed his philosophy on African landownership.<sup>310</sup>

An arrangement was made for co-purchasers who could not afford to deposit the full amount or were in arrears. It stipulated that overdue payments were disregarded if lessees and buyers agreed to pay £1 rent for the years of the overdue rental money. They were also subject to six months' notice in case the land was to be sold or leased. They were also given the first option to buy land, in case their financial situations improved, and if not, the new owners were allowed to charge them rent or notice to quit. This reduced occupants to the status of being squatters under Squatters Rent Law of 1884, meaning that they were not thrown out of the land they temporarily used as squatters unlike in the Transvaal.<sup>311</sup>

The issue of land was widely debated across the country and different platforms, especially the 1903-1905 South African Native Affairs Commission (SANAC), which were important sites of discussion and contestation building up to the Union of South Africa in 1910 and the 1913 Natives' Land Act. Some white sympathisers such as Howard Pim also supported Msane's stance on the individual land tenure system by equating it to the progress of Africans. As they climbed up the social ladder there ought to be a domino effect between being elites and being allowed to own land individually thus being granted franchise. Pim argued that this was in line with the foundation George Grey laid, which was establishing racial hierarchy in the Cape and Natal frontiers whereby he created black Englishmen and women under the British colony who enjoyed certain rights and privileges if they were educated. Pim stressed that Africans who were educated like Saul Msane should be given rights to own land and title deeds. This explains why Msane was preoccupied with the ideals of the British justice system even during the undoing of Grey's philosophy (see chapter two).<sup>312</sup>

A communal land tenure system did not have a place in the modern world unlike when there were no title deeds for clans and families or a system that forced them to choose which tenure worked best for them on their own land. As an exempted black person in the Transvaal,

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<sup>310</sup> Sheila Meintjes, 'Edendale, 1850-1906: A Case Study of Rural Transformation and Class Formation in an African Mission in Natal', School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1988, 343-344.

<sup>311</sup> Meintjes, 'Edendale, 1850-1906', 346-348.

<sup>312</sup> SANAC, South African Native Affairs Commission Minutes of Evidence, 1903-1905 Volume V, 887. Howard Pim, a Chartered Accountant and a deputy mayor of Johannesburg whom Pimville, Soweto, was named after. He first arrived in 1889; Ngcukaitobi, *Land Matters*, 35.

Msane's exemption barred him from buying land as an individual unless he was buying it as a collective under a mission station. He was regarded as a migrant even though Africans born in the Transvaal, and had the same social standing as Msane, were not allowed the same privilege. Without undermining the legitimacy of chiefs, Msane thought it was not wise to allow chiefs to hold land on behalf of their subjects considering people evolve through being educated and civilised and reserve the rights to take an individualistic position regarding their land. To elaborate on this point, he made an example about his father, Matthew Msane, who was under a chief while he resided in a mission station on land that he bought himself without involving a chief. Msane made this point to show the government that individuals could purchase and own land outside the jurisdiction of their chiefs and wished that "...all individuals that can buy [land] to buy [land]". It was the case when Africans shared the same rights with white people until the Glen Grey Act revised those rights. This further explains why this was an important issue for the likes of Saul Msane for they wanted rights equal to those of white people.<sup>313</sup>

Msane preferred *indunas* over chiefs because they did not have the same power as chiefs and were under the control of the magistrates. Msane emphasised that it was best to have Africans under the control of the magistrate to allow them access to individual land tenure. With his interpretation of the land laws, Msane indicated that the government deliberately denied Africans their judicious freedom and the only thread he was hanging on to was his belief in the British justice system and how it aimed to protect black elites under the colony. Nevertheless, laws were becoming more exclusionary over time meaning that these laws increasingly excluded the majority.<sup>314</sup>

As someone who was accustomed to buying land in Natal, Msane was dissatisfied by how black people were ill-treated and were barred from buying land in the Transvaal and because they owned no land in the republic, their movement was also restricted as they were literally walking on land that did not belong to them. Instead, poor black people were haphazardly removed from one location near the compound to be temporarily placed close to where Indians were placed although they could have been placed in town and outside stations. This caused a lot of panic such that in many cases, they were moved anytime of the day or night even though locations were available for them to settle in.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> SANAC, *Minutes of Evidence*, 919 and 859.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid*, 868 and 859.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid*, 853.

## **Curfew Laws, Pass Laws, Tax Laws and Exemption Laws as a form of control for the land dispossessed Africans in the Transvaal**

Msane lived throughout two political regimes as he moved to the Transvaal or *Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek* (ZAR) under Paul Kruger's tenure, to the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910 under Louis Botha's tenure as prime minister. In both tenures, his *kholwa* and exemption status did not protect him from being harassed by the police under pass laws. He complained:

A policeman would walk in, push the door open and sometimes in the middle of the night when we are sleeping, lots of policemen would take everyone out of their houses to the square in the location.<sup>316</sup>

Msane further said pass laws were necessary but they gave policemen too much power to invade their privacy at night when they were asleep and that “giving a right to a man to interfere with another man when he is in his own castle” was not an ideal way of enforcing the law based on his experience as a compound manager who was familiar with the pass system.<sup>317</sup> It also shows that he detested the Curfew Law, or the nine o'clock bell as it was known, which the government passed into law to control 150 000 Africans living in Johannesburg. The Curfew Law dictated that all black people living in Johannesburg should be home by nine o'clock in the evening unless they were working or going out at night, in which case their employers had to grant them a special pass.<sup>318</sup>

These petty and enforced laws explained why the land question was important to Saul Msane in the sense that if Africans owned land in the Transvaal, they were guaranteed a say in how they wanted to move and be restricted around Johannesburg. They also impacted negatively on the general working conditions of Africans living in the Transvaal regardless of their social standing. From what has been said above, it was clear that Saul Msane was not in favour of any system that worked against Africans in any form. However, he said he supported pass laws on record, during the South African Native Affairs Commission, to pacify white officials and appear as a moderate African who saw himself as an outlet for white officials to resort to when it came to engaging in matters concerning Africans.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*

Africans were controlled and suppressed in multiple ways including taking tax from their meagre pay, creating further impoverishment. Msane expressed concern over general tax that everyone, including white people, had to pay because it made Africans miserable considering they were already struggling to make ends meet. Annually, Msane paid a total of £4 for himself and his underage nephew who was still in school and too young to work. Interestingly, he did not pay an additional £1 for a pass unlike other Africans who were not exempted from paying pass tax.<sup>320</sup>

However, throughout his stay in the Transvaal he remained under the Native Law instead of the Ordinary Law because the Ordinary Law in Natal already admitted him as a “raw native” or uneducated man, and it practically lowered his standards and did not allow him to buy land in Natal. Yet, when he applied for exemption in the Transvaal, he produced his certificates of education or certificates showing his qualifications as well as an exemption certificate, to distinguish himself from the non-exempted. But he was still treated the same as non-exempted people.<sup>321</sup>

The attitude of exempted black elites towards the non-exempted was condescending and that included Msane who was usually arrogant towards them. He did not want to be associated with the “raw native” and did not accept the idea that non-converts qualified for exemption under the Native Law Code. In one instance he decided against obtaining exemption because it gave him the impression that he was lowering himself. It was clear that his fight for liberty and justice was predominantly for elite black people who were exempted like him, making him a moderate who believed in civility and was not empathetic towards non-exempted people.<sup>322</sup>

In contrast, many people of his generation spoke highly of Saul Msane, for instance Allister Miller, one of the settlers in Eswatini, called him an “intelligent, responsible, and broad-minded native” and a “man of sound judgment, many seeking his advice on important matters” noted in Trevor Dan Mweli Skota’s biographical dictionary.<sup>323</sup> Saul Msane was born within an elitist black Christian family and developed an elitist persona. When he spoke about his Zulu identity, he projected the character traits of a member of the upper echelon. He never lowered his social class status as he conformed to the morals, values and principles of his Christian education and

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<sup>320</sup> *Ibid*, 854. It is not clear who, amongst his siblings, was a parent to his young nephew.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid*, 859.

<sup>322</sup> Grant Christison, ‘African Jerusalem: The Vision of Robert Grendon’, University of KwaZulu-Natal, PhD Thesis, 2007, 780.

<sup>323</sup> Christison, ‘African Jerusalem’, 780.

family values. These aspects of his personality prevented him from becoming a radical. In contrast, *Abantu-Batho* eulogised him as a “...cultured man in every way” denoting that even if he “...always commanded...respect for the civilised black man” it remains unclear how “uncivilised” black men saw him outside his political character.<sup>324</sup>

As an educated Zulu man and a compound manager, Msane was preoccupied with several pressing issues under Kruger’s government and some of them included being exempted from paying tax and being allowed to buy land in the Transvaal. When he was in the process of buying land in Johannesburg, he was forced to reverse the transaction between himself and the owner because being prohibited from buying land and his Natal exemption certificate did not help him as it was not applicable in the Transvaal. The landowner was informed by the Native Affairs Commissioner not to sell land to Msane because Africans were prohibited from buying land. That is why he strongly pleaded with the government to allow black people the “privilege of buying land”.<sup>325</sup> Throughout his sojourn in Johannesburg he listed his domicile as number 9 Kruis Street, Johannesburg. His will confirms that he rented the place.<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> Christison, ‘African Jerusalem’, 780.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid*, 856.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid*. Testate Estate of the late Saul Msane. Re: Estate Saul Msane and Surviving Spouse Rosaline Msane, No. 42409. National Archives of South Africa, NASA, Pretoria. When he passed on his debtors’ list showed that he owned A. Lederman September and October 1919 rent.

## Conclusion

This chapter argued that Saul Msane's philosophy on landownership provided solutions that could have built an inclusive state that comprised of black elites. He worked to demonstrate how an educated black elite could be beneficial to allowing progressive representation in the Transvaal government, as a pilot plan for the Union government, and thus setting an example for others to ascend the socio-political and economic ladder on merit. Kruger's government had an opportunity to include and value the black elites in mainstream politics by offering them the same voting rights and citizenship, but the opposite happened. On the contrary, Msane's philosophy on landownership revealed that Kruger's government, had no legal and political plans to include elite Africans in the government regardless of their prominent social standing.

Msane suggested that exempted elites should be granted rights to buy land under individual land tenure system to avoid inheritance complications and to offer black elites a qualification to the franchise. Also, by defending individual land tenure system over communal land tenure system, Msane was offered a direction the government could take in embracing modernity as a vehicle for individual rights to land and other values. The communal land tenure system denied individuals any of the rights and values. Instead, it created chaos and conflict between individuals and took away their individuality as it was the perception the government had against black people. It also complemented the migrant labour system which was another system Saul Msane spoke against throughout his domicile in Johannesburg.

His moderate character, which brought sound reasoning and sober mindedness, went hand in glove with the deep-seated understanding of how the law worked under Kruger's government in the Transvaal. Msane used the law in different platforms (deputations, commissions, newspapers) to show Kruger's government how black and white people could live together if they were governed by the same law. He remained moderate even when he learned that black people were slowly losing their rights to buy land and to protect land, they already owned under the pretence of the British justice system. However, his tone changed when he realised that what he believed about the British justice system was full of contradictions, biases and injustices targeting African people for economic gain and white supremacy.

As sensitive as land matters were in that era, Saul Msane's moderate character demonstrated that black people, too, contrary to popular belief, were rational beings capable of handling sensitive matters with dignity even when circumstances dictated that they resort to violence and strikes. He worked tirelessly to pacify white people and maintained his elitism by fighting

land matters using what they deemed proper channels such as petitions, delegations and forming newspapers.

## Chapter 6

### **“Fighting to a Finish”: The role of Saul Msane in the fight against the 1913 Natives’**

#### **Land Act, 1914**

Saul Msane interpreted their trip to London as a “great war...to fight...” and to win it he said that they “must be one person to handle [it].<sup>327</sup> This chapter is about the role Saul Msane played in the fight against the 1913 Natives’ Land Act. It traces events that took place and his actions from when the Act was still a Bill to when it was officially law and the trip, they took to London in 1914 as the Congress delegation to oppose the Act from being further implemented. It further shows us how Saul Msane took an active stance in the fight against the Act as an elite who advocated for the rights of individuals to own and retain land they already owned. Furthermore, as young as the Congress was, it was united from the time it opposed the Natives’ Land Bill until its delegates travelled to London where upon their return, they started allowing their differences to interfere with the fight against the 1913 Natives’ Land Act. It also captures different voices from white sympathisers who attacked Louis Botha’s government following the making of the Bill into law.

#### **How the Natives’ Land Bill became the 1913 Natives’ Land Act**

When the Natives’ Land Bill was debated in parliament, meetings took place in a few locations and villages opposing Prime Minister Louis Botha’s government’s decision to incorporate Free State land laws into the Bill and opposing the Bill itself. The Free State land laws made it illegal for Africans to reside on farms unless they were serving whites. Also, they were not allowed to live in a municipal area or own properties in urban areas and they were only allowed to live in town if they worked for white employers.<sup>328</sup>

Msane fought tirelessly against the Natives Land Act when it started as a Native Land Bill. In a well-attended meeting held at the Masonic Hall in St. John Street in Johannesburg in 1913, the Native Land Bill was already before parliament at the time Msane, and other Congress leaders attended the meeting. Advocate Alfred Mangena rejected the Bill on the basis that there was no single clause which they thought was reasonable and as a result he urged the government to withdraw the Bill. Saul Msane who represented the Congress like Mangena, argued that it was a pity that they had to have a meeting of that nature to protest bad legislation,

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<sup>327</sup> Saul Msane, “The Delegates”, *Ilanga laseNatal*, 29 May 1914, 2 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg).

<sup>328</sup> Sol Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa* (London: King and Son, Ltd, 1916), 58-59.

especially on a Sunday afternoon. They were all subjects of King George and the flag that was floating over them was an emblem of liberty. He refused to admit that black people were an inferior race as much as they were backward in civilisation, as Europeans were several hundred years ahead of them, or so it was claimed. However, they were the majority, and the Union government of South Africa was called a democratic government. He asked: “the House of Parliament was called a representative House, but were the Natives ever represented in that House?”<sup>329</sup>

In pleading for fair play, Msane’s main argument on the Native Land Bill was that Africans were not consulted about the Bill which took away their rights to buy land, in the land of their birth. What they wanted was “fair play; live and let live”. It was said that they had four special representatives in Parliament, but they were not consulted in selecting those representatives. In addition, the Act of the Union itself was faultily drafted in a “democratic” country when only a select few were given a voice in the affairs of the Union.<sup>330</sup>

Msane continued to argue that before the advent of the Europeans in the country there were no paupers and that was exactly where the Bill led Africans to. He said that they were paupers who must beg their way and dissatisfied as they were, had to do all they could constitutionally, to prevent the Bill from becoming law, and they meant to “fight to a finish”.<sup>331</sup> In legally opposing the Bill, there was no provision for Africans to appeal to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of South Africa. In fact, Msane predicted that for their pointless appeal, the court consisted of two magistrates or two commissioners, or sub-native commissioners who deprived them of the legal means to oppose the Bill. The Administration Bill and Act 27 of 1913 prevented a convention for all chiefs and African leaders in meeting the Governor-General-in-Council to seek for the rejection of the native policy. Saul Msane was a staunch antagonist of the 1913 Natives’ Land Act, who studied and applied legal terminologies the Act implied, and he endeavoured to veto such clauses from being implemented.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Unknown author, “Native Land Bill”, *Ilanga laseNatal*, 16 May 1913, 4 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg).

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*; Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (ed.), “Document 27a. Testimony of Saul Msane, Sprinkhaan, and Jonas Mapope before the Eastern Transvaal Natives Land Committee, October 23, 1917” [Extracts] (Published in *Minutes of Evidence, Eastern Transvaal Natives Land Committee*” in Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (ed.) *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 88-90.

In one of its annual conferences in late March 1913 the Congress leadership met in Johannesburg. An outcome was the appointment of a delegation sent to Cape Town to voice their objections against the Bill to the government especially the recommended restrictions regarding buying and leasing of land. The Congress delegation also pointed out that the Bill was a cruel exploitation that affected economic independence of Africans and reduced them to slaves. The delegation consisted of John Dube, Walter Rubusana, Alfred Mangena, Reverend L. Dlepu, WZ Fenyang, Saul Msane, Thomas Mvabaza and Daniel Letanka.<sup>333</sup>

Sympathetic friends of Africans, as they were called, and missionaries also joined in the protest the Bill and appealed for justice by maintaining that government should provide alternative locations for the evicted to go to. A few resolutions through telegraphs and other means were made to Jacobus Wilhelm Sauer, one liberal politician of the Cape Colony who endeavoured to see Africans enjoying equal political rights. In response to the proposed Bill, meetings around the country were held to address it. Even the Transvaal Landowners, a society that advocated for a separation of blacks from whites, opposed the Bill and argued that the country should be granted a chance to make sense of the Bill and make recommendations, and that the Bill should not be passed until it was amended. However, none of those representations impressed the government and vehement public opinion that was against the Bill being passed was ignored. However, the government included recommendations from thirteen petitions from three hundred and four Afrikaners, of which one of the petitions had only four signatures.<sup>334</sup>

According to Sol Plaatje, the Natives' Land Bill was sent off from the Lower House to the Senate, adopted speedily by the Senate, reverted to the Lower House, and swiftly went to the Government House for the Governor-General's signature. Usually, Bills were passed and approved after a certain period, whether long or short, and were not acted upon until a given day, be it the next financial year or so. Yet, the Natives' Land Act became law and operated as soon as it was gazetted.<sup>335</sup>

In response to the news that the Natives' Land Bill was officially law, the Congress held a second meeting on 25 July 1913 in Johannesburg. This meeting had an attendance of two hundred delegates compared to the previous meeting held in March 1913. Attendees came from all parts of the country including King William's Town as well as East London in the Eastern Cape and Zoutpansberg in the north of Transvaal and others came from Bechuanaland

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<sup>333</sup> Plaatje, *Native Life*, 59 and 169.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid*, 59.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid*, 62.

Protectorate, Zululand and Natal. They discussed the effects the 1913 Natives' Land Act had on the African population and to show the seriousness of the matter, the usual routine of translating speeches for the benefit of white audiences who always attended Congress meetings was quite minimal primarily because the Congress wanted to spend more time addressing the issue at hand.<sup>336</sup>

Walter Rubusana reported to the deputations about their Cape Town meeting. The Cape Town delegation had four consultations with the Native Affairs Minister, JW Sauer, and a series of meetings with members of parliament. With those government officials the Congress delegation discussed the setting aside of some farms owned by government for evicted people to settle on to avoid seeing them homeless as per the regulations of the then Bill. To that effect, Sauer sympathised with the Congress regarding their concerns but stressed that his hands were tied. After fruitless consultations with the ministry, the Congress delegation requested a delay of the Bill until the commission's report was complete, but the government rejected that request. Lastly, the Congress wrote a letter to Lord Gladstone, the Governor General, pleading with him to not approve the Bill until he heard views of Africans, but that effort was futile.<sup>337</sup>

When diplomacy did not work, the Congress suggested a strike action plan as an alternative to oppose the 1913 Natives' Land Act, but it was immediately outvoted in the Congress. In July 1913, Dube, as Congress president, then decided to contact the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Society (ASAPS) in London prior to their trip to ask for their support. The ASAPS turned down the Congress on the grounds, that the 1913 Natives' Land Act protected Africans from losing land already owned by Africans. Even when they arrived in London the Society continued to sabotage the Congress' plans of convincing Britain to veto the 1913 Natives' Land Act. It was clear that no one was on the side of the Congress. In Plaut's view, the Society was pretending to support the interests of the marginalised but chose to support Pretoria and London who destroyed the ideals of a non-racial society through the Act.<sup>338</sup>

The only entity that sympathised with the Congress was the newly formed South African Society whose patrons were WP Schreiner, Alice Greene and Betty Molteno. The Society's aim was to "promote the welfare of the native and Coloured Races".<sup>339</sup> While they were in

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<sup>336</sup> *Ibid*, 168.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid*, 169-170.

<sup>338</sup> Martin Plaut, *Promise and Despair: The First Struggle for a Non-Racial South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2016), 191.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid*, 189 and 191.

Cape Town, shortly before they sailed to England, the Congress delegation addressed the South African Society (SAS). They discussed with SAS what they were going to lay as grievances before the British parliament, in the hope that the Act was revoked. To show concern on the dire effects the Act had on Africans Saul Msane foretold that “if natives were removed from their ancestral homes, their removal would surely bring trouble”.<sup>340</sup> Msane further pointed out that Africans were kept out of the protection of the imperialist government. Walter Rubusana added that thirty-four families were evicted from the farms they lived on for a generation. However, if they had agreed to stay in the farms, they subjected themselves to what was like slavery. By referring to Africans losing their ancestral home, Saul Msane showed the connection Africans had with the land and a lot could be decoded from their languages, totems and clan names. This also indicated that the new era of His Majesty’s government showed the Msane generation that their protection as black citizens was short-lived and superficial.<sup>341</sup> Eventually Prime Minister Louis Botha met with the Congress delegation, in Cape Town before departing for London, and informed them that it was too late to amend the 1913 Natives’ Land Act.<sup>342</sup>

Botha was criticised by English-speaking South Africans for establishing the “Native Reserves”. He angrily pointed out that:

[T]he principles...were originally passed by the British citizens. I refer to the [South African Native Affairs] commission of 1903-1905... I say that the whole principle of territorial segregation came out of the head of [these] people.<sup>343</sup>

It was his government that implemented the proposals of the 1903-1905 commission that eventually laid the ideological foundations for apartheid from 1948. Although, if Botha’s government had rejected the 1913 Natives’ Land Act, and the Native Labour Regulation Act of 1911, which was enacted to prevent African labourers from deserting mines and created an inclusive commission where everyone had a say, the ideals of a non-racial South Africa achieved for the benefit of every generation. However, due to the continued objective of economic exploitation by pro-British Botha, the victory Saul Msane and the Congress hoped to achieve at their meeting with Botha was in vain.

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<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>341</sup> Unknown author, ‘The Native Menace in South Africa’, *Daily Herald*, 18 May 1914, 3.

<sup>342</sup> Plaut, *Promise and Despair*, 191.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*

In his reference to being protected by His Majesty's government, Saul Msane and the Congress delegation believed that, as a second generation of Christian elites, they had the privilege of being granted the same rights as white people. It seemed that this belief might have blinded the 1914 the Congress delegation who did not consider the dismissive treatment of the 1909 South African Act delegation. Their experience taught them that the so-called protection of African interests Saul Msane usually referred to had dissipated after the Victorian era. In March 1909, the precursor of the Congress, the South African Native Congress (SANC) was formed in Bloemfontein, comprising sixty delegates elected to fight for the rights of black people during the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. Paul Xiniwe's brother-in-law Daniel Ndwanya was a member of the delegation that travelled to England in 1909 to object the proposed colour bar in South Africa but their trip to England was fruitless as the South African Act of 1909 was passed and later the Union of South Africa was established in 1910.<sup>344</sup>

Subsequently, the Union government under Louis Botha passed several laws that continued to exclude black people and cemented the place for Afrikaner nationalism in the 'new' South Africa. Botha passed the Dutch Reformed Church Act which prohibited full African membership in the church; the Native Labour Regulation Act maintained control over African labour and the Mines and Works Act protected certain classifications of work for whites, which was the first time such a code materialised in the legislation. These crucial political decisions by Botha should have warned the 1914 delegation that their place in the 'new' South Africa was in the margins.<sup>345</sup>

However, only in hindsight, around 1919, did the Congress learn that black people were outmanoeuvred as the ruling elites in London and Pretoria placed the reconciliation between Afrikaner and English in the Union a priority over the interests of African people. The Congress, although they were not yet formed by then, described the South Africa Act of 1909

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<sup>344</sup> Bongani Ngqulunga, *The Man Who Founded the ANC: A Biography of Pixley kalsaka Seme* (Cape Town: Penguin, 2017), 156 and 157. Born in Middledrift and trained as a teacher in Healdtown he later became a law agent of the successful firm. His sister Eleanor, and Paul, travelled to London in 1891 to perform for Queen Victoria, becoming the first black choir to do so. Before enrolling in Lovedale, Paul worked on the railways as a time-keeper and later as a telegraph operator. Upon completion of his studies he taught for many years until he became a merchant, opening stores and buying properties in Port Elizabeth, King William's Town and East London. His reputation grew after opening the Temperance Hotel which became a popular spot intended for black travellers. The founding of the SANC was inspired by the formation of political organisations at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, in the late 1800s, the Native Educational Association (NEA) was formed. Although it was an educational organisation, it addressed political issues. NEA comprised Eastern Cape leaders such as William Wellington Gqoba, Pambani Mzimba, John Tengo Jabavu, Elijah Makiwane, Walter Rubusana, William Soga, H. Maci and Paul Xiniwe.

<sup>345</sup> Ngqulunga, *The Man Who Founded the ANC*, 61.

as treacherous and ruthless as it robbed them of any constitutional means to protect their rights and interests as a people. In protecting the welfare of the white race, the South Africa Act of 1909 excluded black people from entering parliament and defending their rights. The second time, after the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, General Louis Botha passed the 1913 Natives' Land Act which then forced the Congress to consider travelling to London as a 1914 delegation. However, in learning about the nature of black delegations to London at that time, it is not clear why the Congress insisted on going to London when the 1909 delegation opposing the South Africa Act of 1909 was unsuccessful.<sup>346</sup>

### **The 1913 Natives' Land Act and the 1914 Congress Delegation to London**

After all the efforts to veto the 1913 Natives' Land Act within the South African parliament went in vain, the Congress sent a delegation to England in an endeavour to persuade the British parliament to reject the Act. The Congress leaders hoped that using the British traditions of legal equality and liberalism, which shaped their worldview, put them in a good stead but eventually nothing came out of that proposal. Saul Msane regarded the British flag, usually called the Union Jack, as the "emblem of liberty...floating over them" and in forming part of the Congress delegation to London, he kept his faith in what he called "British justice". He had anticipated that the Act be vetoed through the established system of "British justice", which he claimed that black elites' rights be protected by the law if they showed their loyalty to Britain.<sup>347</sup>

In planning their trip to London, the Congress sat in Johannesburg again on 26 July 1913 and decided to elect a delegation that represented them in England. After he resigned as a Compound Manager at Salisbury and Jubilee Mining Compound in 1914, Saul Msane was voted as a fund-raiser and organiser with the duty to visit the whole country disseminating information about the delegates' trip to London. He informed various chiefs about their trip as well as requesting them to ask their subjects to raise monies for the trip. With the help of Msane the Johannesburg-based fund-raising committee raised £1, 353 19s 5d. Msane was chosen because of his prior experience in fund-raising through the *isivivane* scheme he was part of in Natal before moving to Johannesburg. Meanwhile Elka Cele, who was the treasurer of the fund-

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<sup>346</sup> Richard Victor Selope Thema, "Dingane kaSenzangakona: The Great Warrior and Patriot of the Fatherland", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 29 December 1916 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg), 5.

<sup>347</sup> George Fredericks, *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 130; Peter Limb, "Early ANC Leaders and the British World: Ambiguities and Identities", *Historia*, 47, 1, 2002, 73.

raising committee, announced the total amount of money raised. The chairperson of the committee was WF Jemsana, assisted by Daniel Simon Letanka, Richard Msimang, HD Mkize, Benjamin Phooko, DD Tywakadi, D Moeletsi, MD Ndabezita, with Selby Msimang as honorary secretary. The period between 1913 and 1914 was crucial for the Congress as it endeavoured to find means to fight the Land Act.<sup>348</sup>

After raising funds for the proposed trip to London, a deputation to Pretoria was sent to the Union government's administrative capital city to address the three resolutions the Congress passed, before Botha's government. The first one was sympathising with the death of the Minister of Justice and Native Affairs JW Sauer. Second, the Congress completely distanced itself from "the industrial struggles on the Witwatersrand and elsewhere and preferred to seek redress for their grievances through constitutional rather than by violent means". The last resolution was to humbly request representations to the powers that be, against the eviction of black people from farms as they had no one who represented them. The Pretoria deputation also informed Botha's government that they have decided to raise funds for the London deputation to appeal to His Majesty the King and the British public. They further stated that Saul Msane had been chosen as the organiser of the appeal fund and for that reason they requested permission for him to tour black people's villages.<sup>349</sup>

In February 1914 the Congress held another meeting in Kimberley where Edward Dower, Secretary for Native Affairs, attended. The Congress meeting could not be held in Johannesburg due to the martial law regulations enacted in consequence of white miners' strike which prevented people from going to Johannesburg. Dower also said that the Congress must not conclude that the government was against it because of its decision to support the Act. Dower was sent by General Louis Botha to meet with the Congress and to establish ties between his government and the Congress. Upon his arrival in the afternoon in his car, President John

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<sup>348</sup> Heather Hughes, *First President: A Life of John L. Dube, Founding President of the ANC* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2011), 105; Unknown author, "Virgil Slade", *Izwe laKiti*, 1 October 1913 (National Library of South Africa, Cape Town); Christison, "'We of Abantu-Batho'", 157-158; Sol Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa* (London: King and Son, Ltd, 1916), 174-175. Msane single-handedly raised £360 in the Eastern Transvaal. Similarly Dube raised £200. They raised that much regardless of the fact that the government tried to dissuade chiefs and their subjects from funding the Congress' trip to London. See 180.

<sup>349</sup> Plaatje, *Native Life*, 175. The appointed delegation to Pretoria consisted of Chief Karl Kekana and Sefako Makgatho (Transvaal), E Mamba (Transkei, Cape Province), Saul Msane and Reverend R Twala (Natal), Sol Plaatje (Kimberley) and JM Nyokong (Free State). They were received in the Government Buildings by SF Malan who succeeded Sauer as the Minister for Native Affairs. Government Buildings were formerly known as the Transvaal Houses of Parliament during the Paul Kruger's era as the President of the ZAR. Today they are called Union Buildings. SF Malan was joined by E Barrett (Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs), Pritchard (the Johannesburg Commissioner) and Cross (a Rand Magistrate).

Dube of the Congress welcomed him on behalf of the chiefs, those who were present and absent, while the house stood up and clapped hands for him. Dower mentioned how the government had acknowledged the Congress and had common understanding of each other's position on land issues but that was not so. Dower might have implied that Britain had always been cordial with the Congress, but it did not mean they were friends.<sup>350</sup>

On the land question, which was the most pressing issue the Congress faced, Dower talked about the history of how white people found themselves on the people's land and to that effect the government should make provisions for the people to own land. Dower's attendance of the meeting came as a surprise to the Congress because government hardly attended SANNC's meetings. When Plaatje heard the news, through a telephone call in the local magistrate's office, that Dower was coming, discussions within the conference changed. Dower failed to dissuade the Congress from sending a deputation to London. He argued that it was a pointless exercise that made the Congress look like fools before the British parliament. Instead, Dower suggested that the Congress must rather focus on having committees everywhere in South Africa guiding and voicing their concerns pertaining the nation's law. He concluded by saying that going to Britain made the Congress the enemy of the South African Union government.<sup>351</sup>

Dube, voiced his views in saying that he did not see how the Congress and the Union government could be sworn enemies:

Are we not Children of the Union of South Africa's law? Why is it criticising us if we go to our big father (Britain)?<sup>352</sup>

Dube rejected the idea that the government's law on land was any good as it left many people in the Free State wandering around and that Dower provided incorrect information suggesting that people were accommodated in Natal. Dube further maintained that they were not pleased with the idea that white people were a governing minority group and were better accommodated than black people. Saul Msane accused the Union government of formulating the Natives' Land Act of 1913 in darkness and as a result they could not be blamed for not trusting white South Africans. He mentioned the aftermath of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 when the British colony annexed the land of the Zulu people in Zululand after they asked the colonial authority to avoid annexation. This was an example of how the Congress could not

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<sup>350</sup> Unknown author, "uDube uyabongwa", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 6 March 1914, 2 (National Library of South Africa, Pretoria); Brian Willan, *Sol Plaatje: A Biography: Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, 1876-1932* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1984), 225.

<sup>351</sup> Unknown, "uDube", 2.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*

easily trust that the Union government acted ethically. In the same meeting, Plaatje seconded him and showed Dower and the Congress members, present in the meeting, the negative effect of the Act on black people living in South Africa.<sup>353</sup>

Dower failed to discourage the Congress from going to London to raise their crucial and pressing issues with regards to the 1913 Natives' Land Act and its implications. After raising money to go to London the executive committee elected five delegates to accompany Dube to England. Plaatje topped the ballots with thirteen votes. He was followed by Sefako Makgatho with nine votes, Saul Msane got six votes, WZ Fenyang and Thomas Mapikela with three votes respectively. Walter Rubusana took the place of Fenyang while Makgatho did not get to Cape Town on time.<sup>354</sup>

Botha did not underestimate the influence the Congress had, and he endeavoured to persuade the Congress to be on his side, but it was not to be. The Congress knew that the only way to be convinced that Botha's government had good intentions for black people was if he declared the 1913 Natives' Land Act null and void. Instead, the Congress stood its ground by sticking to their plans of fighting the Act. This was an indication that Botha did not manage to control the Congress and its voice on the Act inasmuch as he desired to, as he usually wanted to be fully in control of the domestic affairs of the country. Despite their inherent differences, the Congress passed the first test when it presented a united front when Dower was chosen by the government to influence the Congress' decisions.<sup>355</sup>

As the newly elected five-man delegation they carried with them a petition challenging the 1913 Natives' Land Act in terms of its limitation of the rights of black people to purchase property and enjoy better economic opportunities. They questioned whether the Act "is not a form of slavery which will gradually lead to conditions rendered insupportable for self-respecting human beings?" The petitioners' argued that the Act violated the idea that "every coloured subject shall remain free beneath the Union Jack".<sup>356</sup> And the Act made such freedom subject to oppressive laws that economically benefitted the ruling minority.

Dube, through *Ilanga laseNatal* column, maintained that not only did the Act prevent them from buying land, but it did also not say anything about the heavy tax black people paid and

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<sup>353</sup> Unknown author, "uDube", 2.

<sup>354</sup> Willan, *Sol Plaatje*, 168; Jackie Grobler, *A Decisive Clash? A Short History of Black Protest Politics in South Africa, 1875-1976*, (Pretoria: Acacia, 1988), 42.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> Frederickson, *Black Liberation*, 130.

when it came to breaking the tax law by not paying tax, they received worse punishment than whites. He referred to the Union as their country and as a result he believed that black people should not be discriminated against especially when it came to carrying passes in their own land.<sup>357</sup> Msane did not see any justice in this Act. He made a remark that the government wanted to destroy Africans by putting all of them in one small kraal, comparing 13% of allocated land to Africans as a kraal.<sup>358</sup>

The delegates sailed through the Atlantic Ocean on the *Norseman* from Cape Town to Plymouth in England. While they were travelling to Plymouth, white South Africans on board were shocked to see Saul Msane, who was a chess boffin, winning a sweepstake by beating all passengers who were playing with him. For them it was not a norm to see black people boarding a ship with them as in South Africa they were separated along racial lines.<sup>359</sup>

Upon their arrival in London, they submitted a document to the Colonial Office containing a statement of grievances in the hope that the Office sided with them. This meant seeking support to have the 1913 Natives' Land Act revoked considering that Africans did not have a say in the making of the Land Act. They questioned how the Land Act became law with the exclusion of Africans in all the processes. Therefore, because Africans were unable to own or lease land this resulted in them becoming impoverished and dispossessed under the Act.<sup>360</sup>

However, their campaign in England did not meet their expectations especially when the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society (ASAPS) sabotaged them by telling them to not speak to the press until they met the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Dube and Plaatje were surprised by that instruction because as newspapermen they knew the influence print media had on any campaign. John Harris, of the ASAPS, stressed to the deputation that, since Lewis Harcourt, Secretary of State for the Colonies, was not going to change the Natives' Land Act, it was better for them to back the principle of territorial segregation, which Dower had emphasised in the Congress meeting before they departed for England. Harris made the deputation sign a document that undetermined the purpose of their trip to London. Instead of promoting their campaign of questioning and rejecting the Natives' Land Act, for fear of being summoned by Harcourt, they signed the document in which it was proposed that Botha's policy

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<sup>357</sup> John Dube, "Where Mafukuzela Goes", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 26 June 1914, 2 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg).

<sup>358</sup> Karis and Carter (ed.), "Document 27a. Testimony of Saul Msane, Sprinkhaan, and Jonas Mapope before the Eastern Transvaal Natives Land Committee, October 23, 1917", 88-90.

<sup>359</sup> Willan, 265.

<sup>360</sup> Unknown author, 'Our London Letter', *The Devon and Exeter Gazette*, 10 June 1914, 3.

of segregation be approved by the imperial government. It could be said that Harris was condescending towards the Congress and tricked them into signing a document that they might not have signed if they were fully aware of its contents and implications.<sup>361</sup>

Notwithstanding the fact that they signed the earlier document, the deputation ensured that the Colonial Secretary knew that they did not approve of the imperial government's policy of segregation. Instead, they sought an investigation into how the Act was going to operate as well as insisting on the suspension of some of its clauses. The Colonial Secretary refused to accommodate the delegates' demands arguing that Britain did not want to interfere in the domestic affairs of South Africa and that the power rested in Botha's hands.<sup>362</sup>

Harcourt supported Botha on not offering black people land under the Act, and that any intervention of His Majesty's government on behalf of the delegates breached the formalised and structured relationship between London and Pretoria. Although the Act did provide black people with some land, albeit very little. As Dower warned, the trip of the Congress delegation was futile even after they tabled their demands because it appeared that Britain did not want to compromise its relationship with the Union of South Africa. The message started to be clear to the Congress leadership that the Union of South Africa was officially built on the policy of territorial segregation that excluded them from the 'new' government. As a result, Africans were not going to be considered as equal citizens with white people regardless of their social class as Christian converts.<sup>363</sup>

Botha, together with the Governor General Lord Gladstone, agreed that there was no need for His Majesty to meet the deputation. Therefore, the King's personal secretary barred the deputation from being granted an audience with His Majesty King George V because the palace preferred to see Africans who visited wearing traditional African garb. Their intentions to meet His Majesty was influenced by Section 65 of the 1913 Natives' Land Act which gave His Majesty the right to amend a Bill, although not personally, even after Governor-General's approval. Through the Act Africans were bound by the South African Native Commission, whose task was to buy land as a trustee on behalf of the Africans under the communal tenure, thus losing protection from parliament. Msane was aware that for the Bill to become an Act, it had to go through both houses first then go to the Governor-General who may approve or reject it or reverse it on behalf of the British parliament under Section 60. However, in pleading

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<sup>361</sup> Willan, *Sol Plaatje*, 266.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid*, 267-270.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid*.

for that Section to be revoked, Msane's efforts went in vain. The delegation gathered at the House of Commons to hear from some sympathisers who were members of the British parliament as well as some church bodies and a small number of supporters. The press and public influence bore unfruitful outcomes for the delegation.<sup>364</sup>

With that being said, the ASAPS redeemed themselves by giving the delegates some form of support. They assisted Dube with the publishing of a pamphlet marketing Ohlange Institute in terms of its achievements since inception. The Brotherhood and the Christian movement, which the 1909 deputation on the South African Act met in Cardiff, Wales, warmly welcomed the delegation while Sophie Colenso, Jane Cobden and the Liberal Member of Parliament Sir Alfred Spicer and organised accommodation for the delegates. There were also public forums to deliberate the 1913 Natives' Land Act and a few British newspapers interviewed the Congress delegation although it was already decided that the 1913 Natives' Land Act stood as law.<sup>365</sup>

Although the delegation received a cold shoulder from the Colonial Secretary, they had an opportunity to shape public opinion through addressing several Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods, at their centres, who were sympathetic towards their cause of action. One meeting, Plaatje noted, happened at the beginning of July when they were invited by the National Brotherhood Council to their headquarters in Norfolk Street, Strand, to give details of the purpose of their visit to London. They were personally welcomed by Brotherhood national secretary, William Ward, London Federation secretary, W. Mann and others. Ward and others hosted the delegation in their quarterly meeting of the London Federation at Bishopsgate in July 14 followed by over twenty centres they visited to address the brotherhoods and sisterhoods. At the evening of the meeting a surprise guest of honour was the British Member of Parliament, Will Crook, who commended Saul Msane and Walter Rubusana on how they remained moderate in addressing the 1913 Natives' Land Act. However, there is no record of any of Saul Msane's speeches to further understand what his main points were but, according to Limb,

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<sup>364</sup> *Ibid*; Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (ed.), "Document 27a. Testimony of Saul Msane, Sprinkhaan, and Jonas Mapope before the Eastern Transvaal Natives Land Committee, October 23, 1917" [Extracts] (Published in *Minutes of Evidence, Eastern Transvaal Natives Land Committee*" in Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (ed.) *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 88-90.

<sup>365</sup> Martin Plaut, *Promise and Despair: The First Struggle for a Non-Racial South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2016), 192; Initially called the Zulu Christian Industrial School, the Ohlange Institute was founded by John Dube in 1900, and was the first education institution for Africans, established by Africans in Inanda, Natal.

it seems that Msane, two years later in the essay he penned for *Abantu-Batho* criticised Britain “for compromising its principle of government to accede to the Boers opinions”.<sup>366</sup>

On the other hand, John Dube hardly addressed any of the sixty brotherhoods centres and additional sisterhoods, adult schools and several churches while Saul Msane addressed four brotherhoods centres, Rubusana five, Thomas Mapikela three and Plaatje forty-eight. By mid-July President John Dube became the first one to leave for Cape Town while the rest of the deputation still had some fighting spirit in them. Sol Plaatje noticed that Dube was distracted and that his mind was never set on their London trip in the first place. Apart from the embezzlement of the delegation’s trip funds to London, which happened under his presidency, Dube was worried about the affair he had with one of his students in his school in Natal. Their baby was due in November. He was more concerned about his reputation and that of his school and he could not afford any bad publicity as the president of the Congress. Later, Rubusana, Msane and Mapikela accepted their fate after Dube wrote to them to come home because of the exhaustion of funds.<sup>367</sup>

Their immediate challenge was that they had no money to return to South Africa because Dube failed to raise money for their return trip due to martial law. It prevented him from holding meetings around the country to raise funds. Rubusana negotiated a loan from the London Missionary Society (LMS) under the condition that the deputation must neither approach other parties for assistance nor speak to any African about the outcome of their trip. It proved to be an impossible mammoth task that the Congress undertook as all their endeavours to veto the Natives’ Land Act fell on deaf ears. It was ironic how LMS, ASAPS and the League of International Brotherhood (LIB) did nothing to help the Congress when they needed their urgent support. Instead, they completely dissuaded the delegation to refrain from questioning Britain’s position on the 1913 Natives’ Land Act and it was clear that backing the delegation meant defying His Majesty’s authority.<sup>368</sup>

Mapikela, Msane and Rubusana accepted the terms of the loan set out by the LMS and sailed on the *Borda* in the middle of September. Plaatje stayed behind to finish his book *Native Life in South Africa* while the other three gentlemen left for Cape Town. Before their departure, they faced another financial challenge that left Plaatje with no funds to survive. Msane

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<sup>366</sup> Sol Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa*, (London: King and Son, Ltd, 1916), 225 and 232-233. See the list of Brotherhoods the delegation addressed in the addendum; Christison, “We of Abantu-Batho”, 157-158.

<sup>367</sup> Willan, *Sol Plaatje*, 270-271; Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa*, 225 and 232-233.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid*, 272-273.

proposed that considering the delegation received loans from the LMS and that Plaatje was penniless, the departing delegates must give Plaatje £20 to sustain him while in London, but Rubusana and Mapikela objected. Msane lost his temper, following others' citing their reasons for challenging that decision, and walked out of the meeting, feeling revolted. On top of that, Plaatje was not pleased with the loan terms from the LMS. He passed his ticket to John Tengo Jabavu's son, Davidson Don Tengo, who was then in his late 20s and had spent over a decade in London.<sup>369</sup>

After six weeks of waiting in London, on 17 September 1914 the *Borda* departed. On board, Davidson Don Tengo shared a cabin with Saul Msane who spent most of his time playing chess and checkers in the smoking room. Their ship docked in Cape Town on 8 October 1914. The Congress' trip to London was futile because of the joint decision between London and Pretoria on the Land Act of 1913 and as a result they were left stranded with no one to support their cause. His Majesty's office did not wish to see the delegation as the decision was already concluded with Botha's government. Hence, they played underhanded tactics of requesting to see them in traditional garb, which was rather a weak excuse because by that time westernised people from colonial countries were far more commonplace. LMS, APS and LIB also misled the delegation into dropping their campaign, but they were adamant to fight for justice, yet they ran out of options to do so, given their limited resources.<sup>370</sup>

It can also be noted that the SANNC deputation was neutralised by many invented protocols aimed to impede their progress, objectives and representation. As they viewed themselves as representatives of an educated professional class and organisation, they did not resort to wearing traditional garb which allowed them to meet with His Majesty. Their presence in London as *amakholwa* or loyal Christian converts had no direct impact in breaking London-Pretoria ties, especially the 1913 Natives' Land Act. To this end, the delegation might have learned that loyalty between themselves and Britain was not reciprocal. Moreover, it was disappointing for Saul Msane who experienced the same hostilities in both his trips to London and witnessing how other interest groups were not supportive especially the LMS, yet other missionary groups were backing the Congress when they were opposing the Bill. To the

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<sup>369</sup> Sol Plaatje's Letter to Sophie Colenso, 31 August 1914. I am grateful to Brian Willan for sharing the original letter Sol Plaatje wrote to the daughter-in-law of Bishop Colenso.

<sup>370</sup> Catherine Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality: The Public Lives of D.D.T. Jabavu of South Africa, 1885-1959*, (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1997), 30.

Congress leadership, this was another disappointing and fruitless trip as it learned that Britain fully tolerated segregation and indifference to the rights of the assimilated Africans.

However, after their unsuccessful trip to London the Congress continued its endeavour to influence the government to abandon the Act. In their Annual General Meeting held in Kroonstad between 30<sup>th</sup> July and 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1915, they maintained their stance on the Natives' Land Act and passed the following resolution directed at the government. They requested the government to hinder the development of the Act with regards to purchasing, leasing and hiring of land by Africans until the Native Land Commission report was presented in parliament. However, the report of the Native Land Commission did not convince parliament not to act on operating the Natives' Land Act.<sup>371</sup>

Africans lived in unhealthy conditions in municipal locations, therefore, the Congress suggested suitable accommodation for black people who lived in towns and that the government should consider providing decent boarding houses for respectable Africans within the municipalities because they were not licenced to establish for themselves boarding houses within the municipal areas. The Congress further resolved that proper accommodation and housing for blacks should be in townships established within municipal areas where they could buy sites and build suitable houses.<sup>372</sup>

For the restricted movement of black people in any area, the Congress suggested that wide scale arrests and prosecutions of those black people who resided in towns without permits be abolished until townships are established. One of the laws that overwhelmed Msane was exemption. The Congress suggested that exemption must apply in all provinces to allow Africans to buy land in every corner of the Union. In Msane's case, as mentioned before, he was close to buying property from a white man while he was residing in Johannesburg but because he was only exempted in Natal where he already owned land, his exemption did not apply in the Transvaal.<sup>373</sup>

Still, the united front the Congress delegation presented petered out due to inherent personal differences which often overlapped into the Congress. However, their political squabbles resurfaced because they were prominent men who were well-respected in their own rights. As a result, pressing issues they needed to attend to lagged. One of them being that there were

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<sup>371</sup> John Dube and Richard Victor Selope Thema, "Resolution Passed by the Native National Congress", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 13 August 1915 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg).

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*

irregularities of funds raised to pay for their deputation to England in 1914. This matter took about three years without being completely resolved to an extent that the claims and counterclaims on the use of the Congress monies brewed intense rivalry which led Msane to force John Dube to resign, in 1917, as the Congress president, after five years at the helm. This was the lowest point of the rivalry between Saul Msane and John Dube.<sup>374</sup>

Msane might have attacked Dube in *Abantu-Batho* columns to defend himself, but Selby Msimang, who was the honorary secretary of the fundraising committee of the London trip, argued that Msane apparently embezzled some funds he raised. When the matter was brought to Seme's attention, he "regularised" the embezzled money as salary and immediately inflated the amount and paid salaries to the rest of the committee. It is possible that Msane used some of the money to cover the expenses he incurred during his countrywide trips. Consequently, funds for the London delegation were reduced by a big margin, which was why they experienced financial troubles while in England. However, Sol Plaatje, Msane, Walter Rubusana, and Thomas Mapikela of the deputation criticised Dube for letting down the cause by being the first to come home early and not raising funds for others to return home. Dube incurred the blame when it should have been Seme. To retaliate, Dube, through his *Ilanga* newspaper, exposed the *isivivane* fund-raising scheme Msane and Alfred Mangena were involved in to raise monies through chiefs and their subjects. Again, Msane and Mangena, in 1917, accused Dube of misrepresenting the Congress' views on the principle of segregation.<sup>375</sup>

Richard Victor Selope Thema observed that the feud between Msane and Dube started when Msane was appointed editor of *Abantu-Batho*. In this new position, Thema claimed that Msane used his editorial power to air his personal vendettas with Dube, but it was possible that their feud began in the NNC and was carried through in the Congress. Ironically, in the NNC politics Chief Stephen Mini did not see eye to eye with John Dube and this led to the splitting of NNC. Thema stated, a decade after Msane's passing, which was also a year before *Abantu-Batho* became defunct, that the clash between Dube and Msane including Seme, "crippled [the Congress] in its infancy." He further said that "the quarrel was a fatal blow to its growth and progress".<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Chris Lowe, "The Swazi Royalty and Founding of *Abantu-Batho* in a Regional Context", in Peter Limb, (ed.), *The People's Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Johannesburg: Wits Press, 2012), 187; Limb, (ed.), *The People's Paper*, 21; Christison, 'We of Abantu-Batho', pp.158-159; Willan, *Sol Plaatje*, 211.

<sup>375</sup> Lowe, "The Swazi Royalty", 187; Limb, (ed.), *The People's Paper*, 21; Christison, 'We of Abantu-Batho', 158-159; Willan, *Sol Plaatje*, 211.

<sup>376</sup> Christison, 'We of *Abantu-Batho*', 162.

Thema wrote that since the formation of the Congress in 1912 its leaders were not able to work in unison due to personal biases and that led to divisions amongst them. His main point was that the quagmire the Congress found itself in could have been solved through unity, not by proving Msane's or Dube's innocence or vice versa because the Congress was formed in the interest of the people and not of the individuals.<sup>377</sup>

After Dube resigned the Congress held an elective conference where Sefako Makgatho defeated Msane's father-in-law, Mini. Mini was promoted by Msane and Mangena for the Congress presidency while Letanka and Mvabaza backed Makgatho throughout his term in office, 1917-1924. Perhaps the logic was to have a president from a different ethnic group, within the Congress, to unite all people from all walks of life. Lowe and Christison do not provide more details into the Saul Msane and John Dube feud and how that led to Dube resigning as the Congress president. The same applies with Richard Victor Selope Thema, who witnessed the conflict between Msane and Dube during Dube's presidency. There is not much evidence to substantiate the claim they made about the Msane-Dube conflict.<sup>378</sup>

Apart from the Congress' disputes and contradictions and returning to South Africa dispirited, Saul Msane interpreted the trip as a "great war...to fight..." and he said that to win it there "...must be one person to handle [it]". He believed through unity in the Congress, they achieved a lot. Even though their fight was in vain in England, he continued to challenge the 1913 Natives' Land Act in different platforms in South Africa. For instance, in 1916, through *Abantu-Batho* Msane criticised Britain "for compromising its principle of government to accede to the Boers opinions". At that stage of his life, this criticism shows us that Msane stopped praising Britain and their Grey-inspired colonial project of creating a crop of black elites who were landowners. He started to see that project as a fallacy as he had witnessed laws created against elites from owning land throughout South Africa from the time he arrived in Johannesburg until he left for Nongoma towards the end of his life.<sup>379</sup>

Again, in 1917, at the beginning of Sefako Makgatho's tenure as the Congress president, Saul Msane testified before the Eastern Transvaal Natives' Land Committee. He pressed on the issue

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<sup>377</sup> Richard Victor Selope Thema, "The Voice of the Races of South Africa vs. The Bantu People of South Africa", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 28 April 1916, 5 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg).

<sup>378</sup> Lowe, "The Swazi Royalty", 188.

<sup>379</sup> Sol Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa*, (London: King and Son, Ltd, 1916), 25 and 232-233. Christison, "We of Abantu-Batho", pp.157-158; Saul Msane, "The Delegates", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 29 May 1914, 2 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg); Unknown author, "The Report of the Native Lands Commission", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 19 May 1916, 1 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg).

of land through the legality of the Natives' Land Act and its overall implications on Africans. He told the Committee that they urged Sauer, then Minister for Native Affairs that a Commission be sent around the country to ascertain black people's viewpoints before the Bill could become an Act, but nothing came out of that proposal. Msane saw the code established by the Act of 1913 as a mockery to Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 12<sup>th</sup> May 1843, which as a result took away their rights as loyal British subjects.<sup>380</sup>

### **Different voices against the 1913 Natives' Land Act**

Different voices also supported Msane's stance on the government's decision to make the Natives' Land Bill law. Therefore, on the issue of the "native question", the Church of England under Bishop Roach identified with the Congress who were at the forefront in fighting against the Natives' Land Act of 1913. The Church of England believed that the Union Government stance on the "native question", and passing the Natives' Land Act of 1913, rested on the fact that they feared Africans' growing population. One political speech delivered by one Mr. de Beer in Harrismith showed the same sentiments. De Beer warned about the uprising of black people against colonialists, and he used that warning to justify why they should not be allowed to have any law of their own. As the Union of South Africa comprised of British and Afrikaners, Africans were not part of the government hence "the native question" was a pressing issue Botha was preoccupied with. It included dispossessing black people of their land and ensuring they had no place in the Union government.<sup>381</sup>

In a Synod of Bishops of the Church of the Province of South Africa the resolution was unanimously passed, urging the Union government to make provisions for the "civilised Natives" in terms of the acquisition of land by allowing them to at least lease or purchase land; without being forced to either be labourers on whites' farms or to live under chiefs through communal land tenure. Msane deemed communal land tenure as backwards considering the evolving world that suited elites. The Synod of the Bishops of South Africa advocated for the "complete abolition of [the] Land Act in order to pave the way for a humane and constructive Native policy" that accommodated Africans under the Union government. The Synod saw

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<sup>380</sup> Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (ed.), "Document 27a. Testimony of Saul Msane, Sprinkhaan, and Jonas Mapope before the Eastern Transvaal Natives Land Committee, October 23, 1917" [Extracts] (Published in *Minutes of Evidence, Eastern Transvaal Natives Land Committee*" in Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (ed.) *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 88-90.

<sup>381</sup> Unknown author, "Mr. De Beer's Logic", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 19 May 1916, 1 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg); Unknown author, "The Church of England and the Natives", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 26 May 1916, 5 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg).

Africans deserving of “material and political privileges in the land of his birth” because the land, whether occupied by either white or black people belongs to the people and not to the government. However, protagonists of the Act understood that to deal with the native question, the first thing they needed to legalise was territorial segregation, to effect individual segregation. Therefore liberty, freedom and rights of property of the individual, especially a black person, were overridden by the Act. Botha’s government expropriated land that was already occupied by indigenous groups.<sup>382</sup>

*Cape Times* considered the report on Native Lands Commission disappointing:

We know from the Commission’s maps and statistics the area now consisting of Crown Lands or land owned by Europeans, which is to be added to the Native reserves, but we do not know-nor is the slightest indication given in accessible form- to what extent the application of the act in what may be termed the white areas would involve displacement of Native owners or occupiers.<sup>383</sup>

Africans were removed by the government from the areas they occupied, in place for the whites. The study of the report discloses that, unlike white people, black people were most affected by what was in the Act and “in the long run have to pay the piper”, as the class legislation was made law. Land had a metaphysical meaning to Africans which was connected to their ancestral, spiritual and traditional realms and with their land stolen they could not practice their rituals in sacred places. Therefore, the Act destroyed those deep connections with the land and disrupted the formation of their identities and sense of being.<sup>384</sup>

Chairman of the Commission, Sir W. H. Beaumont bemoaned the Act as one-sided:

The Act does not state, and the Commission, could not know, the terms on which lands shall be acquired and held in native areas; nor could the Commission know what attitude Parliament might take as regards European-owned lands in native areas and native reserves and native-owned lands in European areas. The want of this knowledge seriously handicapped the work of the Commission.<sup>385</sup>

The report was detailed when it came to the process of addition or devalued land to be allocated to black people, but it showed little information on the government subtraction process from

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<sup>382</sup> Unknown author, “The Church of England and the Natives”, *Ilanga laseNatal*, 26 May 1916, 5 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg); Unknown author, “The Report of the Native Lands Commission”, *Ilanga laseNatal*, 26 May 1916, 5 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg).

<sup>383</sup> Unknown author, “The Report of the Native Lands Commission”, *Ilanga laseNatal*, 26 May 1916, 5 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg).

<sup>384</sup> Unknown author, “The Report of the Native Lands Commission”, 5.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*

the present lands as well as black-owned areas that were likely to be expropriated, by the government, for whites. In other provinces, reserves and other black areas were inter-mixed with white-owned lands. Therefore, it proved to be an injustice to Africans to lose land due to the Act. In fact, the Act was a crowning moment for the Union government to officially recognise the robbing of the Africans' lands by "unprincipled Europeans [as] [l]and-grabbing and removal of beacons of Native areas and Native occupied land has been common in South Africa". The difference was that Botha's government expropriated land on a gigantic scale and through the consent of parliament.<sup>386</sup>

The *Natal Mercury* indicated that: "The Act, in fact, was intended to placate Mr. Hertzog and his followers who were calling for a policy which had for its object the segregation of the Native peoples".<sup>387</sup>

The same paper saw the Commission's report as a demarcation of Zululand and stated that:

The impracticability of carrying such recommendations into effect is at once apparent. The removal of Natives to these locations from the lands upon which they have been living for generations, would lead to far greater trouble than ever was caused by the poll-tax, whilst the protest of farmers in the new Native districts, who may find that they can dispose of their lands only to Natives or be expropriated by Government, is certain to be loud and long.<sup>388</sup>

Africans, although with no parliamentary vote, remained a great concern for the Union government. By early 1900s South Africa had a crop of black intellectuals who challenged every government policy through their newspapers and the government could not do anything about it, even Hertzog under Botha's government could not. Ironically, Hertzog and M.T. Steyn went to London in 1909 as part of the South African delegation to observe the South African Act being channelled through the British parliament. This led to the Union of South Africa in 1910 under Botha who found himself having to deal with the 'native question' as the Minister of Justice and Native Affairs.<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>389</sup> Unknown author, "The South African Union", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 19 May 1916, 2 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg); South African History Online (SAHO), "James Barry Munnik Hertzog", available at: <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/james-barry-munnik-hertzog> [Accessed on 20 April 2019].

Considering the character of black people at that time, one Scottish missionary, of the Scotch Congregational Mission, who had been in South Africa since 1893, but commented on the future of black people in the newly formed Union of South Africa, in 1916:

The Native is advancing by rapid strides in civilization, education and religion. The position of the Native as a great factor in this country is assured. Taking the large proportion of Natives in this country into consideration, the Government can be thankful that so little crime exists amongst them. They are completely loyal and with a few exceptions law-abiding. Repressive Native measures introduced by any South African Government are bound to fail. The Native as he is to-day, can be led but not driven; and it will require the most skilful handling by South African legislators in dealing with the legitimate aims and aspirations of the Native population.<sup>390</sup>

One of the views that the Scots raised were that some whites did not see the benefit of educating black people as it made him “presumptuous”. He replied:

Such people do not know what they are talking about. Education cuts both ways amongst Europeans and Natives. It makes a man either a very good man, or, if he inclines towards crime, it can help to make him a great criminal. But the general and universal trend and influence of education upon the human mind, especially when joined with moral and religious teaching, as is the case in every Mission School and Institution, goes a long way to efface criminal or immoral tendencies and in fact, is the only instrument coupled with the power of the Gospel of Christ which can elevate and ennoble him.<sup>391</sup>

However, mission educated black elites were posing a threat to Botha’s government at this time and this paternalistic Scots missionary was cautioning the use of extreme measures to contain blossoming black power while black population was increasing by three or four to one compared to the white population. South Africa, unlike other British Colonies of the Empire where native lands and rights were a concern, was entirely different. The aborigines of Australia and New Zealand were dying out due to numerous causes regardless of a few liberties such as the smooth administration of the native areas. The same applied in India and Canada where the Indian population had been allocated certain areas such that it was rare to learn about any native disturbances or complaints from Canada. In South Africa, black people as most of the population were the backbone of the colonial economy and they were improving themselves through education and the philanthropy of missionaries (see chapters two and three). Therefore, instead of exterminating them, the House of government exploited them for its economic

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<sup>390</sup> Unknown author, “A Scotch Missionary’s Views of South Africa”, *Ilanga laseNatal*, 21 April 1916 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg).

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*

interests. However, Botha and Hertzog, considering they were given full control of South Africa at the expense of black people, wanted to keep them marginalised from the mainstream politics hence the “native question” was Botha’s major subject of discussion throughout his term in office.<sup>392</sup>

Like Botha, the American Board Mission also asked about the “native question” in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was basically about the race relationship between white and black people in terms of how black people related to whites and vice versa and how that relationship could be adjusted over time. Any kind of change in dynamic impacted upon the life of the other race. For instance, with regards to land, labour, missions, education or social, moral and economic condition of the Africans in the Union, every change in the status quo of the black people must touch the interests and the position of whites. That is what is meant by the “native question”.<sup>393</sup>

From the list of questions asked by C.H. Maxwell of the American Board number 11 and 20 (see appendix A) acknowledges the grabbing of land by Europeans and how much land should black people be allowed to buy. Msane and the Congress advocated for the rights of the people, both black and white, to be allowed by law to buy land in any areas they pleased. They did not wish to be given land for free by the government because they had witnessed how the government dealt with communal land tenure under chiefs and Native Administrators, where individual rights were not at the centre stage.<sup>394</sup>

Jan Smuts, during his term as Minister of Interior, Defence and Mines under Botha’s cabinet, like his colleagues (Botha and Hertzog), supported and affirmed how the Union government treated Africans. In his address in Stellenbosch at the banquet honouring the Right Honourable J.X. Merriman, he spoke about how whites advocated for the highest ideals of freedom and contrary to so doing they betrayed the future of the land, referring to the Union of South Africa. Freedom to him meant self-determination of white South Africans from Britain and not black people whose freedom was curtailed by the Natives’ Land Act of 1913, Native Pass Laws and the Transvaal Marriage Laws. However, the Congress continued to fight for the legislation

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<sup>392</sup> Unknown author, “The Native Land Act”, *Ilanga laseNatal*, 31 March 1916 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg). Sir George Grey, as a British colonial governor dispossessed the Maori people of their land to make way for white settler farmers in New Zealand. There were few similarities between his role in South Africa and New Zealand especially through his modus operandi which was quite brutal and undermining and missionaries trying to convert people to Christianity.

<sup>393</sup> C.H. Maxwell, “American Board Mission: What is the Native Question?”, *Ilanga laseNatal*, 25 February 1916, 5 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg).

<sup>394</sup> C.H. Maxwell, “American Board Mission”.

that repealed Pass Laws against women in the Orange Free State and also pass regulations against women in the Union.<sup>395</sup>

Different sections of the Natives' Land Act which operated unjustly against black people and demonstrated that the development of the Act divided Africans into six different classes of victims were: (a) persons under notice to quit (the farms); (b) persons actually evicted from farms; (c) migrants to territories outside the Union; (d) homeless wanderers with families and stock in search of new homes; (e) persons who had to leave their crops unreaped, or who had not ploughed last season; and (f) persons who yield unrequired labour. These imposed classes and cases were linked to the questions the American Board Mission raised in the newspaper *Ilanga laseNatal* on the native question. They were legislated off their farms without being allocated an alternative settlement elsewhere and were forced into unfair labour as the condition to their living on white farms.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> Unknown author, "General Smuts Answered", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 31 December 1915 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg); John Dube and Richard Victor Selope Thema, "Resolution Passed by the Native National Congress", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 13 August 1915 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg).

<sup>396</sup> Unknown author, "South African Native National Congress", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 13 August 1915 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg).

## Conclusion

Contrary to being criticised as too conservative, this chapter showed us how being a moderate made Saul Msane one of the key figures who led the fight against the Act. Given that this fight took place under the presidency of another moderate John Dube, Msane demonstrated the importance the importance of remaining calm and being of sound mind was effective and why the Congress rejected radicalism or strike action plan and resorted to using diplomacy regardless of the magnitude of the issues at hand. The Congress treated the Act as a sensitive matter that needed its key members to be strategic in appealing to the emotions of the white population across all levels. It understood that it was not going to be taken seriously if it resorted to any form of violence.

Saul Msane shared a lot of insight into the legal technicalities the Act carried from the time it was a Bill, legal processes employed in turning it into an Act, ways in which the Congress tried to curb that evolutionary legal process, and how it travelled to London under Section 65 of the Act. As the Act was not immediately implemented the Congress, as divided as they were, continued to oppose it in different platforms until towards the end of the 1910s, showing us that it remained consistent in opposing it across its different processes building up to its eventual implementation. Msane further highlighted the long-term effects the Act had on the African population in terms of how land dispossession was two-fold, physical and metaphysical. As elitist as he was, he understood the physical and spiritual connection Africans had with the land.

## Chapter 7

### **“...A one-time editor of *Abantu-Batho*...”: The controversial editorship of Saul Msane, 1915**

This chapter traces Saul Msane’s controversial editorship under the Congress’ organ, *Abantu-Batho*. It argues that journalism was an important part of being an elite in the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century South Africa and that Saul Msane used writing as a tool to challenge the colonial order especially where Africans were excluded in the mainstream politics. Although his editorship in *Abantu-Batho* was short-lived, it exposes us to contradictions and controversies Congress elites were faced with.

### **The involvement of Msane in the formation of the Natal Native Congress (NNC) in 1900 as a response to laws of land dispossession**

Saul Msane’s first political involvement began when he became a founding member of the Natal Native Congress (NNC), inaugurated on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1900. He was not involved in the formation of the first political organisation in Natal demanding civil rights; *Funamalungelo* unlike Josiah Gumede, who was part of the formation of *Funamalungelo* in 1888 and the NNC in 1900. There is no evidence of his involvement in the founding of the *Funamalungelo*. Even so, this section focuses on his involvement in the NNC and its politics both in Natal and the Transvaal.<sup>397</sup>

Saul Msane together with Martin Luthuli approached Harriette Colenso, around 1900, and held discussions with her regarding the establishment of the NNC. Colenso, daughter of the first Anglican Bishop of Natal John Colenso, who had encyclopaedic knowledge of African leaders encouraged and advised Msane and Luthuli to form the NNC. Saul Msane’s name is not mentioned in the events that took place after their meeting with Colenso, and the evidence of his continued involvement in the NNC is scanty especially at the time John Dube started becoming involved in the NNC. Luthuli was a Secretary to Dinizulu kaCetshwayo in the 1880s and a leading member of the American Zulu Mission (AZM) in Groutville where, in 1908, he was elected chief of the mission reserve. As one of the founders and chairman of NNC his

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<sup>397</sup> In 1887, a society for the protection of the rights of exempted Africans was founded, The Funamalungelo Society. Its aim was to bring exempted Africans together, in order for them to know and understand one another, to learn about the position of exempted Africans, and to improve themselves 'to the highest state of civilisation', The Early African Press in Natal Inkanyiso Yase Natal April 1889 - June 1896, <http://natalia.org.za/Files/16/Natalia%20v16%20article%20p6-11%20C.pdf>, accessed 10.02.2021; South African History Online (SAHO), “Saul Msane”, Accessed October 01, 2020, <http://www.saho.org.za/>

strong focus was on African education, land tenure, agriculture and the situation of exempted Africans in Natal. This was what the NNC stood for, and it justifies why Saul Msane lobbied for its founding to Harriette Colenso to pacify white antagonisms around the issues of land and the job market.<sup>398</sup>

Mark Radebe, James Majozi and Isaac Mkhize were other prominent figures who founded the NNC, in 1900, and the trio were owners of the Zulu Printing and Publishing Company which published *Ipepa loHlanga*. The newspaper became the mouthpiece of the NNC during the second Anglo-Boer war. It was created to expand the scope, membership and readership of *Funamalungelo* representing the interests of the African people in the same fashion as the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) served the interests of Indians, as well as the Farmers' Congress doing the same for farmers. As a mouthpiece of the NNC, *Ipepa loHlanga*, formed in 1901, was vocal in exposing serious inconsistencies between liberal promises Britain made to Africans and the actual discrimination Africans suffered in the British colony of Natal. These injustices fuelled Saul Msane's political involvement and heightened a sense of his Zulu identity upon arriving in the Transvaal where the increased awareness of the limits of assimilation and acceptance, as a black Englishman, made him conscious that life outside the missionary cocoon was different and harsher than life within the missionary fold. Barriers to integration were evident when he was living in Johannesburg where Boer racism was more punitive than British racism.<sup>399</sup>

In Natal, other newspapers that targeted African readership were *Imvo Zabantsundu* and *Izwi Labantu*, the former run by John Tengo Jabavu while the latter was owned by Allan Kirkland Soga and Walter Rubusana. Both newspapers were from the Eastern Cape, but they enjoyed access to Natal readership to an extent that while Saul Msane was based in Healdtown, in the late 1880s, he became *Imvo*'s agent in Edendale, as *Imvo*'s headquarters in King William's Town were close to Healdtown. Saul Msane was also a correspondent of *Imvo* such that in

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<sup>398</sup> Shula Marks, "Harriette Colenso and the Zulus, 1874-1913", *The Journal of African History*, 4, 3, 1963, 409-410; Jackie Grobler, *A Decisive Clash? A Short History of Black Protest Politics in South Africa, 1875-1976* (Pretoria: Acacia Books, 1988), 37; Andre Odendaal, *The Founders: The Origins of the ANC and the Struggle for Democracy in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2012), 272. Martin Luthuli was an uncle to Chief Albert Luthuli who later became ANC President in 1952.

<sup>399</sup> Heather Hughes, *The First President: A Life of John L. Dube, Founding President of the ANC* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2011), 105; Andre Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu! The Beginnings of Black Protest Politics in South Africa to 1912* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1984), 32-33.

1890 he wrote letters to the publication on constitutional politics in Natal and the petition by 'Exempted Natives' which comprised the names Mini and Luthuli.<sup>400</sup>

However, in 1896, four years before the formation of the NNC, Saul Msane and John Tengo Jabavu's relationship soured when Msane was persuaded to join the African Christian Union (ACU) of the English missionary to Central Africa, Joseph Booth. Booth was well-known for the slogan, which he did not coin, 'Africa for Africans'. He first recruited Solomon Kumalo, another close friend of Saul Msane, who was already in Durban and together with Booth they formed part of the African Land and Transport Company (ALTC) started by Booth. The aim of the ATLC under Booth was to function as land, river or ocean transport agencies specialising in giving Africans free pass to parts of the continent and the rest of the world and to give Africans full ownership of profitable mining and other industries.<sup>401</sup>

Jabavu judged Booth on his ALTC's "wild cat scheme" and said how he was shocked that men of prominence like Saul Msane and Solomon Kumalo fell for the scheme. As a result, Msane threatened to start a national newspaper, edited by him in the Transvaal and Kumalo in Natal, to oppose *Imvo* and Jabavu. Msane's connection with ACU and African cooperative societies led to his conflict and competition with John Dube. Heather Hughes noted that John Dube was not a founding member of NNC but became a member few years after its formation.<sup>402</sup>

*Inkanyiso yaseNatal* of Solomon Kumalo (son of Johannes Kumalo), opened its doors in 1889, as the first black-owned newspaper in Natal bought by a Zulu syndicate as a protest paper. *Inkanyiso yaseNatal* was founded by the Anglicans of St Alban's College in Pietermaritzburg. It changed its name to *Inkanyiso* and its circulation was 2500 by September 1891. Its main aim was to expose irregularities in the legalities exempted Africans experienced, for instance being denied civil rights as colonial subjects who abandoned customary law. It began as a monthly until 1896 when it became a weekly, by that time exempted Africans decisively supported *Inkanyiso* and *Funamalungelo* and this could include Saul Msane although there is no evidence on his involvement in *Funamalungelo*. *Inkanyiso* paved a way for *Ipepa loHlanga* when it was

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<sup>400</sup> Hughes, *The First President*, p.105. In my consultation of *Imvo* (4 January 1889 to 25 December 1890), on a microfilm in National Library of South Africa in Cape Town, I did not come across Saul Msane's letters and petition.

<sup>401</sup> Grant Christison, 'African Jerusalem: The Vision of Robert Grendon', PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2007, 781.

<sup>402</sup> Christison, 'African Jerusalem', 782; Hughes, *First President*, 106; Andre Odendaal, *The Founders: The Origins of the ANC and the Struggle for Democracy in South Africa* (Jacana: Johannesburg, 2012), 164.

established in 1894 until it closed its doors in 1904, which ironically, is the same year that Kumalo died.<sup>403</sup>

Other political organisations established in the late 1880s were *Imbumba yamaNyama* which was established in Port Elizabeth in 1882, followed by the South African Native Association (SANA) as well as the Thembu Association (TA).<sup>404</sup> Parallel to the formation of political organisations were emergent newspapers like *Isigimi samaXhosa* which started as a Lovedale missionary newspaper, edited by Elijah Makiwane. In 1884, *Imvo Zabantsundu* was started and edited by John Tengo Jabavu. Its main competitor, *Izwi LaBantu* was formed in 1897 by Walter Rubusana, Meshach Pelem, A.K. Soga, S.D. Soga and R. Mantsayi.<sup>405</sup>

At the NNC's 1st June inaugural meeting held in the Fynney Memorial Hall, Pietermaritzburg, a sugar baron George Hulett, of the influential Hulett family and a lawyer based in Verulam, presided over the first meeting to pacify white hostilities. According to Odendaal, it was attended by fifty-seven delegates, while Hughes noted sixty delegates.<sup>406</sup> However, what they both agreed upon was that all Christian delegates who attended the meeting presented a united front as British loyalists. They supported Britain in the Anglo-Boer War and showed their gratitude to Queen Victoria, the British Prime Minister, the British High Commissioner as well as the Commander of the British forces in South Africa. In passing their thanks to their "beloved Queen" all present members stood and sang *God Save the Queen*.<sup>407</sup>

Other resolutions that were passed by the delegates included their mistrust of the Boers and their policies in their two republics where Africans were not granted any rights. Meanwhile Joseph Chamberlain and Alfred Milner were also thanked for their stance on affairs in the Transvaal with regards to rights of Africans. They were instrumental in convincing the British government to protect the rights of Africans in terms of individual and communal rights to buy land, education and representation in the legislation of both Afrikaner republics considering in Natal and the Cape, black people were not granted the same rights. However, nothing came out the proposal to legislate rights of black people in the Transvaal regarding buying land and owning property. Saul Msane's awareness of legislative differences between Natal and the Transvaal pushed him to be at the forefront of the founding of the NNC five years after he

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<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>405</sup> Ngqulunga, *The Man Who Founded the ANC*, 63.

<sup>406</sup> Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu!* 33.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.* 106; Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu!* 33.

moved to the Transvaal because of his failed attempts to buy land. Black people were prohibited from buying land in the Transvaal and his foresight of what the end of the war between the British and Boers implied for Africans, regardless of who won the war, meant continued land dispossession for black people.<sup>408</sup>

Furthermore, the meeting opened membership to all Africans who were either exempted or non-exempted while the NNC acted as a voice of reason to authorities on behalf of Africans. It proposed that four white parliamentarians be voted by exempted black people to represent them in parliament. Isaac Mkhize was elected a founding president while Bryant Cele deputised him. James Majozi was the treasurer and Cornelius Matiwane the secretary. Members who formed a part of the rules committee were Stephen Mini, father-in-law to Saul Msane, Stephen Mlawu, Cornelius Matiwane and Mark Radebe.<sup>409</sup>

As it continued to establish itself as a progressive movement in Natal, increasingly the NNC did not accommodate “civilised” Africans, like Saul Msane, who had reservations about non-conforming Africans who were not exempted. Instead, it spread its influence to include all Africans across social classes. However, what made others doubt its so-called progressive stance was that it remained loyal to the empire. Observing less of Saul Msane’s presence in the NNC meant his job as a compound manager was too demanding for him to give his full attention on both duties.<sup>410</sup>

Inasmuch as the NNC was establishing itself as an all-encompassing Congress in Natal, it could not secure support from chiefs and as a result, during its meetings, they did not send representatives. To respond to lack of royal support, NNC established *Iliso Lesizwe Esimnyama* (The Eye of the Black Tribe) as an organisation to forge a standing tribal participation in the politics of the day. However, this response was met with hostility from the Natal government because NNC was viewed as radical even though it only wished for white representation in parliament. The government indirectly interfered through its Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to keep an eye on its meetings, but private meetings were successfully held by reserving admission to ticketholders issued by the Secretary. Therefore, the CID could not determine what transpired in their meetings.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>409</sup> Hughes, *The First President*, 106.

<sup>410</sup> Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu!* 59.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

The NNC endeavoured to convince the Natal government that it held moderate political views because of the fear of being punished for what the government deemed unconstitutional or negligent policies. Stephen Mini, a prominent member of the NNC and later a president, nearly lost his chieftaincy for his participation as a chief because it proved antagonistic for a chief who was paid by the state yet served an organisation the government regarded radical. As a *kholwa* Chief the government had the power to remove anyone it considered no longer serving its interests. Instead of being fired, in 1905, the Natal Cabinet rejected Mini's franchise application. Also, NNC raised £25 to challenge both the Native High Court and the Supreme Court on the decision that children of exempted fathers were not automatically exempted on the ground that they were born after exemption was granted. Nevertheless, the NNC lost the case, and it did not take the matter forward.<sup>412</sup>

*Iliso Lesizwe Esimnyama*, formerly known as *Iliso loMuzi*, was established in Blaauw Bosch, Newcastle, at a meeting in March 1907. Attendees of meetings were three hundred chiefs and ordinary people but *kholwas* controlled the proceedings and served in the executive. The aim was to unify all black people and its constitution stated that its objectives were to unite people in Natal and Zululand and to avoid sources of division and distrust and bring cooperation among Natal and Zululand people.<sup>413</sup> Membership was open to all black people in Natal and Zululand if they were over eighteen. At grassroots level Tribal Committees were set up, subject to reporting to the mother body's executive committee comprising *kholwas* or prominent members of the Congress such as Martin Luthuli, Abner Mthimkhulu, Cornelius Matiwane, Cleopas Kunene (later editor of *Abantu-Batho* in the 1910s), Mark Radebe and Josiah Gumede. Both Kunene and Gumede were Secretary and Acting Secretary, of *Iliso*, respectively.<sup>414</sup>

Apart from laying a solid foundation for the NNC and its other bodies, its founding members were caught in a web of confrontations and conflict which affected the progress of the Congress. Of course, it was going to prove difficult for the NNC to achieve its objectives given the political context of that time but conflict between Stephen Mini, Saul Msane's father-in-law, and John Dube led to its split into two different political factions. In the SANNC, the conflict between Saul Msane and John Dube continued and caused the same split, but at a

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<sup>412</sup> *Ibid*, 60-61.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid*, 107.

national level. Ironically, during Dube's active years in the NNC there were no records of Saul Msane taking part in the NNC.<sup>415</sup>

In retrospect, clashes between Saul Msane and John Dube were inevitable considering *kholwa* politics and the NNC, by their nature, were deeply characterised by internal divisions, which eventually led to its splitting up. This was a direct result of the British government and missionaries treating *amakholwa* differently in Natal resulting in their political ideologies being dissimilar. Ultimately, Saul Msane's personal need to be part of the founding of the NNC was informed by understanding those differences and what they meant for him and *amakholwa* in Natal. For Msane as a landowner in Natal those differences affected how he climbed up the social ladder. Population growth of settlers in the colonial state of Natal, which restricted Africans from buying and owning land and laws imposed, did not allow him to buy land. Therefore, the NNC was a self-serving platform for Msane to voice his dissatisfaction. It became a part of the bigger initiative to address those restrictions which threatened his social position as a *kholwa* and the need to appear as civil as possible in the eyes of the colonials.<sup>416</sup>

The NNC, like SANNC, was a unified body with different denominations connected to mission communities including the coastal American Zulu Mission (AZM), Congregationalist of John Dube and inland Methodist of Saul Msane (see chapters two and three). AZM was granted extensive mission reserve lands when the colonial state of Natal was established in the 1840s. On the other hand, Methodist communities did not have mission reserves and inland Africans were not granted government reserves after the dismantling of chief Langalibalele's Hlubi chiefdom in 1873. This led the Edendale *amakholwa* and its offshoot mission communities to pursue land ownership through collective buying by consortia of peasants. However, as the colonial state gained control, labour demands increased the price of land thus making a collective buying of land difficult.<sup>417</sup>

After the Anglo-Boer War ended, in 1902, African leaders realised that their expectations to be included in the British agenda were not met. They had supported Britain in the war and as a result of being disregarded as allies and equals political organisations in other colonies and republics emerged. For instance, the Cape Native Congress (CNC) and the Transvaal Native Vigilance Association (TNVA) were formed while in 1904 the Orange River Native Vigilance

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<sup>415</sup> Christopher Lowe, "The Swazi Royal and the Founding of Abantu-Batho", in Peter Limb (ed.), *The People's Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012), 180.

<sup>416</sup> Lowe, "The Swazi Royal", 183.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*

Association (ORNVA) emerged. Political organisations and newspapers were owned by the same leaders across South Africa, to continue to fight for the voting rights of Africans.<sup>418</sup>

### **The nature of *Abantu-Batho* and Saul Msane's controversial editorial seat**

Before the advent of *Abantu-Batho* Saul Msane and Thomas Levi Mvabaza started *Umlomo waBantu* in 1910. *Umlomo waBantu* was an English/isiXhosa/Sesotho weekly, based at number 10 Kruis Street. Msane lived next to its offices at number 9 Kruis Street, Marshalltown, Johannesburg. Mvabaza oversaw the isiXhosa columns while L.A. Ramosime handled Sesotho columns, it is possible that Msane edited English columns. Its policy was about the “unifying of all African tribes into one people, and to improve and expedite the education of the African children”. Pixley kaIsaka Seme then invited Mvabaza to amalgamate *Umlomo* with *Abantu-Batho* considering their policies were almost the same. Subsequently Mvabaza became managing director of *Abantu-Batho*.<sup>419</sup>

Limb does not clarify the nature of the business relationship and share ownership agreement between Mvabaza and Msane as owners of *Umlomo waBantu* and whether Saul Msane sold his shares to Mvabaza who became sole owner of *Umlomo* at the time Seme approached Mvabaza for the amalgamation agreement of *Umlomo* and *Abantu-Batho*. Also, Limb does not explain in detail what linked Mvabaza and Msane together in the first place. Later, we will see how Msane and Mvabaza happened to be antagonists as if they never owned a newspaper together. However, Limb portrays Msane as a staff member and Mvabaza as the proprietor of the newspaper when Seme merged it with *Abantu-Batho*. Even after the merger, Mvabaza held an important position as one of the directors while Msane only became an employee or an editor of *Abantu-Batho*.<sup>420</sup>

The SANNK organ, *Abantu-Batho* found its roots from black-owned and edited newspapers which emerged in the 1880s. It was a national paper and Johannesburg based forum that challenged the hegemony of white press that monopolised public knowledge. Its niche as a paper was to be a repository of national political affairs affecting black people. Unlike one of its predecessors, *Izwi laBantu* of A.K. Soga and Walter Rubusana, which was somewhat radical, *Abantu-Batho* was a hybrid of politics, human-interest stories and advertisement, it was far from being a tabloid newspaper. With most of the staff members being key proponents of

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<sup>418</sup> Ngqulunga, *The Man Who Founded the ANC*, 63.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>420</sup> Limb, (ed.), *The People's Paper*, 23.

African nationalism, who were denied a seat in parliament, their style of journalism was investigative. They wrote authentic and objective stories and turned an eye on corporate interests as they were independent. As a staff they had different ideologies. In their opposition of white supremacy each member had a unique ideology on the fight against white supremacy. For instance, Saul Msane was a moderate writer while Richard Victor Selope Thema was an African nationalist protagonist, leaving Daniel Letanka to lean more on socialism and Robert Grendon graced their columns with poetic lyricism. Trevor Dan Mweli-Skota, Josiah Gumede and his son-in-law AWG Champion were radicals.<sup>421</sup>

Other characteristics *Abantu-Batho* journalists possessed were the ability to interpret events and help shape public views. They expressed their critical journalism with zeal, fearlessness and even an aggressive style amid being excluded from mainstream political representation. Again, different philosophies combined with Garveyism, socialism, African nationalism and Christianity, were blended in their style of writing. Saul Msane's style of editing evolved from radical liberalism, just like Cleopas Kunene's, to radical socialist while Daniel Letanka and Josiah Gumede's styles were Garveyist. Meaning that his writing evolved from defending elite rights to defending workers' rights. There is a need to explore Msane's repertoire to deepen our understanding of his writings and what they could teach us about his personality and thought processes but there is no further evidence thereof. However, Limb's observation of Msane's writing style exposes us to his ability to adapt to different political trends of the time but on the ground, he was still a moderate.<sup>422</sup>

In the early 1930s before it was defunct, *Abantu-Batho* editors all had one voice when it came to editing style on any issue relating to African nationalism. However, factional politics was one of the factors that split their voices during its eighteen-year existence. This was attributed to the fact that their inherent multiple views were informed by their different backgrounds. Letanka and Mvabaza remained with the paper for years while Msane and his close friend Robert Grendon had a short spell on the editorial chair two years after the 1914 London delegation trip.<sup>423</sup>

Robert Grendon arrived in Johannesburg in February 1916 to join Saul Msane on the writing staff of *Abantu-Batho*. The former and the latter replaced *Abantu-Batho* founders, Cleopas

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<sup>421</sup> Peter Limb, (ed.), *The People's Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Wits Press: Johannesburg, 2012), 298-299.

<sup>422</sup> Limb, (ed.), *The People's Paper*, 299.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid*, 298-299.

Kunene and Cleopas Mabaso. Msane oversaw isiZulu, while Daniel Letanka and Robert Grendon penned Sesotho and English columns respectively.<sup>424</sup>

However, Msane's and Grendon's editorship was short-lived, as it lasted until July 1916 or merely five months. Saul Msane, Robert Grendon and Pixley kaIsaka Seme attacked Dube's leadership in *Abantu-Batho* columns. Msane continued to be critical of Dube's leadership in every issue of the press in terms of how Dube handled the Congress' affairs. In one Congress meeting in Kroonstad, Msane overtly confronted Dube on how he managed finances of the Congress. A committee meeting later sat in Johannesburg to address the chaos Msane caused by "humiliating" the president. These attacks on Dube could also be attributed to Msane confronting Dube based on how Dube treated Robert Grendon when he was acting as the head of Ohlange and editor of *Ilanga laseNatal*. Apart from the Dube-Grendon agenda, Msane and Dube did not see eye to eye from their time in Natal. As a result, Saul Msane's attack on Dube, led to him being fired together with Grendon for undermining the highest office in the Congress and for insubordination.<sup>425</sup>

This "serious dispute" that caused the dismissal of Saul Msane and Robert Grendon also came in the form of writing censorship: Seme barred them from publishing any articles exposing corruption within the SANNC. On 14 July 1916 Kunene was reinstated as editor while both Msane and Grendon brought a lawsuit against the newspaper for unfair dismal and unpaid salaries, to be heard on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July. After two months, they settled out of court and coincidentally the amalgamation of the paper Msane co-founded with Thomas Mvabaza was officially over and out of their hands, leaving Letanka to manage the paper. In the wake of their dismissal, Msane and Grendon became involved with the Economic and Shilling Bank and they travelled to Natal to present their proposal in that regard. It is not clear to what extent Msane and Grendon were involved with the Bank.<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> Christison, "'We of *Abantu-Batho*'", 157-158.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid*, 158; Brian Willan, *Sol Plaatje: A Biography, Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, 1876-1932* (Ravan Press: Johannesburg, 1984), 211. To understand the working relationship between Robert Grendon and John Dube, see Grant Christison, 'African Jerusalem: The Vision of Robert Grendon', PhD Thesis, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, 2007.

<sup>426</sup> Unknown author, "Ezase Jozi", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 28 July 1916 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg); Christison, 'We of *Abantu-Batho*', 158-159.

## Conclusion

Considering that the archive has been lost and we may never know how much was written about Saul Msane, this chapter asserts that the views of the newspapers he was associated with also reflected his own views. This further explains why he left *Abantu-Batho* for *Umteteli waBantu* because he regarded the former as radical and the latter as moderate and relevant to the modus operandi he employed as an elite. This chapter also highlighted Saul Msane's controversial editorial span when he reported the misuse of funds under John Dube's presidency. This demonstrated Msane's need to always do what was just as a *kholwa* elite whose assimilation was in line with Christian values. However, his exposure of such news is attributed to his personal issues with John Dube. When Dube exposed him using his newspaper, *Ilanga laseNatal* its readers attacked Msane and accused him of being too elitist and not making popular decisions that affected everyone.

## Chapter 8

### **“UMsane Akafuneki”: The attack on Saul Msane and being labelled “The Enemy of the People” around the 1918 Shilling Strike**

This chapter is about political events that surrounded and challenged the elitist character and social position of Saul Msane amid the dynamic political contexts in the Transvaal, forcing the Congress to evolve into a radical entity under the presidency of Sefako Makgatho between 1917 and 1924. It also traces Saul Msane’s involvement in the International Socialist League (ISL) through his attendance of its meetings but not its strike actions with the other faction of the Congress that was radical or supported strikes. After John Dube’s conservative presidency Saul Msane, as a moderate, maintained his elite social status while the Congress was radicalising. As a result, it made him more unpopular within the Congress as he opposed any strike action plans to avoid hostilities with white mine-owners. However, Thomas Mvabaza, Daniel Letanka and workers interpreted Msane’s standpoint as a double standard, whereas Msane argued he understood the psyche of the white mine-owners and urged that appealing to them moderately would save workers’ jobs and lives. This chapter does not perpetuate the narrative that Saul Msane was the “enemy of the people” but argues for a more mitigated approach. Saul Msane represented workers’ needs as a moderate while the radical Congress leadership encouraged workers to strike but for Saul Msane being radical was uncharacteristic of the Congress regardless of the external forces that pushed the Congress to radicalise. Proponents of the Congress historiography reiteration of that narrative without thoroughly interrogating and balancing that narrative with other sources is limiting. Therefore, in this chapter I am arguing for and contributing towards a fuller biography of Saul Msane within the context of his political endeavours to provide a rich case for interpretation.<sup>427</sup> All of the above-mentioned events took place during his short tenure as the second Congress Secretary General between 1917 and 1919.

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<sup>427</sup> Arianna Lissoni, Jon Soske, Natasha Erlank, Noor Nieftagodien and Omar Badsha (ed.), *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Histories Today* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012); Andre Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu! The Beginning of Black Protest in South Africa to 1912* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1984); Andre Odendaal, *The Founders: The Origins of the ANC and the Struggle for Democracy in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2012); Grant Christison, ‘African Jerusalem: The Vision of Robert Grendon’, PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2007; Peter Limb (ed.), *The People’s Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012); Brian Willan, *Sol Plaatje: A Life of Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje (1876-1932)* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2018); Sol Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa* (London: King and Son, Ltd, 1916); external forces such as its radicalisation or evolving from being moderate to radical.

### **Saul Msane's short tenure as the Congress Secretary General, 1917-1919**

According to Limb, the Congress, in 1912, declared the following in shaping African national unity and Msane followed this policy during his seven-year stint as the Congress leader and more especially in his tenure as the Secretary General of the Congress:

(1) To effect unity... (2) to educate public opinion on matters affecting the political, land and economic conditions of the people; (3) to encourage the spread of knowledge; (4) to be the channel of communication between the government and the people; and (5) to cooperate with all...interested in the welfare of the Bantu people.<sup>428</sup>

The Congress leaders, in its first three months, held meetings with government ministers regarding job discrimination on the railways, imposition of passes on women, Squatters' Bill, and extending workers' compensation to mine labourers. Again, between 1914 and 1915 Saul Msane and Richard Msimang sat with government ministers and labour officials. They began by pledging their loyalty to the government yet voiced their concerns over protecting migrant labourers and black people from rural areas against acts by white people seizing their property. In addition, while Congress' Secretary General Msane, in 1917 and 1918, attended meetings focusing worker demands.<sup>429</sup>

Msane's leadership style as the Congress Secretary General, between 1917 and 1919, consisted of sympathy and constant contact with black workers and condemning strike action plans. His approach was informed by his tenure in the 1890s as the compound manager at Salisbury and Jubilee Mining Compound and a labour recruiter. As the head of black workers, Msane dissuaded the idea of the formation of their independent organisation. He supported franchise only for the educated and privileged few and not mass franchise. He also supported pass laws when it came to controlling the masses yet objected it when individuals were forced to carry passes. In the Mining Industry Commission of 1907, Msane singled out pass laws as the only complaint his workers in the compound had as it restricted their movement. Msane, before the Government Native Labour Bureau Director, Henry Taberer, stated that black labour's only difficult was pass laws instead of the question of higher wages for the workers. This implied that Msane was compromising the workers' needs over his position. However, he was popular

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<sup>428</sup> Peter Limb, *The ANC's Early Years: Nation, Class and Place in South Africa before 1940*. (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2010), 123.

<sup>429</sup> Limb, *The ANC's Early Years*, 124.

amongst his subjects and under his tutelage kept his compound clean and workers on a good diet.<sup>430</sup>

In essence, Msane, as an elite, did not identify with the workers. For instance, in the 1917 Natives' Land Commission he was agitated by the fact that the Commission was meeting "the most primitive" black people while they, the elite, had lost all their property. Msane, as an African leader, was pulled in different directions based on his experience as a compound manager and he took his position when he decided to join radical social meetings during the First World while refusing to attend the 1918 Shilling Strike as the Secretary General of the Congress.<sup>431</sup>

Even in its 1919 constitution, the Congress aimed to protect the interests of black workers by advocating for their dignity in the mines as well as the removal of the Colour Bar in the industrial, education and political sphere because the industrial colour bar meant low wages and few job opportunities. Following the passage of the Mines and Works and Native Labour Regulation Act, the Congress further adopted worker centred resolutions including appointing Education and Labour Board, shadow Minister for Labour and Secretary for Mines to address labour issues. All of these resolutions were meant to deal with the pressing issues black workers faced, including reducing mine deaths and compensating injured miners but the government did not accommodate the Congress' views.<sup>432</sup>

All of these failed Congress endeavours, which happened during Msane's tenure as the Congress Secretary General, culminated into what became the 1918 Shilling Strike whereby the radical side of the Congress realised that petition-style of politics was futile in addressing labour issues and conditions black people found themselves in. It could be said that Msane did his part as Plaatje's successor although the events surrounding the 1918 Shilling Strike told a different story.

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<sup>430</sup> *ibid*, 136-137.

<sup>431</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>432</sup> *ibid*, 124.

## **“The Veteran Spokesman of the industrialised native”: Saul Msane and the International Socialist League (ISL)**

There were other forces at play, apart from the context of British Empire building and the creation of the Union of South Africa that stifled Saul Msane’s *kholwa* identity and his petition-style approach. One of them was his involvement in the International Socialist League (ISL) meetings that divided the Congress between radicals and moderates with moderates like Saul Msane, Isaiah M’belle and Robert Grendon attending “civil” ISL meetings while the radicals like Sefako Makgatho, Thomas Mvabaza and Daniel Letanka only attended ISL meetings where workers and strike action plans were concerned.<sup>433</sup>

The ISL was formed in 1915 during the First World War, and when the war started a year earlier, in 1914, the Congress London delegation travelled back to South Africa due to their unsuccessful London trip. The ISL, which was the forerunner of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), was formed on the doctrines of international socialism and anti-militarism. These doctrines created ideological differences within the Congress leadership in the sense that when ISL infiltrated the Congress, Saul Msane and Robert Grendon supported ISL against the directives of the Congress leadership and his decision to be part of the ISL turned him against Congress supporters. The reason behind this antagonism was that Congress supported Britain during the First World War while Saul Msane distanced himself from supporting Britain in the war due to the land issues. Nevertheless, Congress was still convinced that showing their support to Britain during wartime would eventually make Britain reconsider their grievances in the Union of South Africa.<sup>434</sup>

Initially, the ISL disguised itself as the War-on-War League (WoWL) focused on opposing the First World War. It included mainly East European Jews and a small number of Afrikaners. As pacifists, the WoWL opposed the First World War based on the atrocities the Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 had caused. These included the spread of epidemic disease which occurred in racially segregated concentration camps, massive social disruption and the destruction of farms and herds of cattle.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>433</sup> Wessel Visser, “The Uneasy Electoral Relationship between Socialists and the South African Labour Party, 1910-1924”, *Historia*, 45, 1, May 2002, 90.

<sup>434</sup> Visser, “The Uneasy Electoral Relationship”, 90.

<sup>435</sup> See Garth Conan Benneyworth Land, Labour, War and Displacement: A history of four black concentration camps in the South African War (1899 1902), *Historia*, 64, 2, Durban Nov. 2019.

The emotionality of this response to the First World War came from the fact that members of the WoWL fought in the Anglo-Boer War and had witnessed the catastrophe the war left and the consequences thereof. Saul Msane's anti-war stance indicated that he accepted their collective aspirations, as the Congress, although being included in the Union government to represent tenets of African nationalism went in vain. Joining ISL was not only his personal form of protest Britain in the war considering how they were treated in London, but it also justified why he went against Congress' directives. Also, his reasons for aligning himself with the ISL were different from the Anglo-Boer War veterans and East European Jews.<sup>436</sup>

Many supporters of the WoWL were East European Jews while a small number were Afrikaners, but it was dominated by British immigrant workers and intellectuals. Both British immigrants and Afrikaners, especially after the Anglo-Boer war and the formation of the Union of South Africa respectively, feared that blacks would replace them in the mines as they provided cheaper labour as much as they occupied skilled jobs. As a result, in October 1909, unions formed the South African Labour Party (SALP) whose objective was the protection of the wages of white workers against Africans and Asians.<sup>437</sup>

The formation of the SALP was backed by the unions in the Witwatersrand, Natal and the Cape. Apart from the objective of fighting for the protection of wages against Africans and Asians, the party advocated for separate segregation, job reservation, the repatriation of Indians and the welfare and municipal reforms modelling socialist aim of the British Labour Party. The SALP lasted ten years following its failed attempt to remain an anti-war organisation. This was mainly due to its stance on black labour issues and racism that led to it becoming defunct. The ISL inherited the anti-war position of SALP when it was formed in 1915. It included some of the SALP radicals and veterans from the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) and Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Unlike SALP, the ISL accommodated industrial workers from all classes,

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<sup>436</sup> Jonathan Hyslop, "The War on War League: A South African Pacifist Movement, 1914-1915", *Scientia Militaria*, 44, 1, 2006, 23.

<sup>437</sup> Hyslop, "The War on War League", p.24. In context to British immigration in the Witwatersrand in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is useful to note that during Napoleonic Wars or British colonisation to the 1870s, British immigrants were not attracted to Southern Africa as their ideal destination. The arrival of 1820 Settlers in the Eastern Cape as well as the Byme settlers in Natal in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century proved to be unusual events. However, a huge change happened when diamonds were discovered in Kimberley in the 1860s and when gold was discovered in Transvaal in the 1880s. As soon as the Witwatersrand industrialised, immigration of the United Kingdom rose between 1890 and 1906. In consequence, the number of British working class in the Witwatersrand grew exponentially and British political ideas with respect to labour political representation and socialism took centre stage. When the First World War broke out, white workers in the Witwatersrand formed trade unions under the guise of Industrial Federation (IF). The Federation was led by British Amalgamated Society of Engineers (BASE), W.H. Andrews, an engineering worker who worked for the British during the Anglo-Boer War.

race or background and endeavoured for their emancipation, it also consolidated its base through branches in the Cape and Natal. It further encouraged Africans to organise themselves industrially against oppressive laws with the view that once workers from all races were organised, the next step would be to overthrow the capitalist system.<sup>438</sup>

The nature of the ISL as a syndicalist movement and its historical background points to Saul Msane's position on labour issues. He advocated for fair treatment of workers in the mines. Syndicalism or anarcho-syndicalism or left libertarianism was a leftist tradition that was born in the 1860s as part of anarchism. Syndicalist movements subscribed to socialism and opposed capitalism and were sceptics of the state as well as political parties. In contrast, they believed that the working class or organised labour unions, should spearhead society. This explains why Msane was linked to the ISL through one of its meetings. Msane was also familiar with the dynamics that revolved around the IWW, by the time he attended the ISL meeting. He had already travelled overseas and had close to two decades of experience on labour issues and unions in the mines.<sup>439</sup>

The second reason that led to the demise of the SALP and the formation of the ISL was that the majority of SALP members, at the time David Ivon Jones was its secretary, supported the war. From the split, leaders of the newly formed ISL were David Ivon Jones, Sydney Percival Bunting, Colin Wade and W.H. Andrews. Considering the new ISL leadership believed in an organised labour force across all races and classes, in 1917, it formed a black organisation called the Industrial Workers of Africa (IWA) to be a basis of black industrial unionisation. Jones organised many of the ISL activities including becoming its secretary as well as editor of its organ, the *International*. Through his influence, he brought several black intellectuals into the ISL including Thibedi William Thibedi. Due to his active involvement in the ISL and his understanding of the first Russian revolution of February/March 1917, Jones became a

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<sup>438</sup> Lucien van der Walt, "The First Globalisation and Transnational Labour Activism in Southern Africa: White Labourism, the IWW, and the ICU, 1904-1934", *African Studies*, 66, 2, 3, August-December 2007, 228; Van der Walt, "The First Globalisation", 234. The IWW was formed in the United States in 1905 based on syndicalist ideas which were spread across the globe through labour migration, radical press and activist networks and into the British colonies, particularly southern Africa and the United Kingdom. Longshore workers and sailors in the marine transport sector were responsible for diffusing the IWW model. See Peter Cole and Lucien van der Walt, "Crossing the Color Lines, Crossing the Continents: Comparing the Racial Politics of the IWW in South Africa and the United States, 1905-1925", *Safundi: The Journal of Southern African and American Studies*, 12, 1, January 2011, 71.

<sup>439</sup> Cole and van der Walt, "Crossing the Color Lines", 69.

Bolshevik. Therefore, to be inclusive, the ISL made it clear that their connection with black labourers was based on the idea that the League was pro-working class.<sup>440</sup>

However, the Congress supported the IWA because of its fight against capitalism and all forms of indentureship the government put in place to oppress black people, and that included the compound and pass system. Jones was known as a white sympathiser for his relentless fight for the rights of black people in the mines. Another founding member of the ISL who was known as a sympathiser of black people was Sydney Percival Bunting.<sup>441</sup>

At the inaugural conference of the ISL in 1915 Bunting proposed a “petition of rights” for black workers. As mentioned earlier, he was also instrumental in the formation of the IWA in 1917, promoting the slogan, *Sifuna Zonke* or we want all. In his fight for the rights of black workers, Bunting was involved in several mass demonstrations organised by black workers, for instance the “bucket strike”, of 1918, organised by the Native Sanitary Workers as well as pass burning. As a result, Bunting and other members of the ISL were arrested several times because of defending the black “agitator” in many cases. The ISL might have acted as the voice for black workers, but it remained a white-dominated party.<sup>442</sup>

Saul Msane’s sole link with the ISL was through its meetings that were concerned with the welfare of the workers. He did not go as far as putting his words into action through participating in a strike, but he positioned himself as the voice for the workers to the white mine-owners. As a result, he was well-respected in the ISL as they referred to him as the “veteran spokesman of the industrialised native” who was well versed when it came to worker-related issues in the mines hence he was invited numerous times to participate in the ISL meetings to share his expertise.<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> Baruch Hirson, “David Ivon Jones: The Early Writings on Socialism in South Africa”, *Searchlight South Africa*, 1, 1, September 1988, 104; See Lucien van der Walt, “Thibedi, William Thibedi (1888-1960), South African Revolutionary Syndicalist and Communist” in Emmanuel Akyeampong and Henry Louis Gates, Jr (eds.) *Oxford Dictionary of African Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 13-14.

<sup>441</sup> Van der Walt, “Thibedi, William Thibedi”, p.13; Unknown author, “Ivon the Estimable”, *The Welsh Political Archive*, Spring 1994. See Edward Roux, “S.P. Bunting”, *Forward*, May 29, 1936, 5, Historical Papers Research Archives, Wits University, Johannesburg. A949.A5.3 Newspaper clips with obituaries for S.P. Bunting, written by Edward Roux, as well as reviews of S.P. Bunting’s biography written by Edward Roux.

<sup>442</sup> Roux, “S.P. Bunting”, p.5.e. See Edward Roux, *S.P. Bunting: A Political Biography* (Cape Town: Edward Roux, 1944), p.27, Historical Papers Research Archives, Wits University, Johannesburg. A949. A5.1 Bunting, SP, Papers, 1922-1945.

<sup>443</sup> Lucien van der Walt, “Adding Red to the Black Atlantic? Black Revolutionary Syndicalist and the South African Native National Congress’ Radicalisation, 1917-1920”, 7. Presented at the Critical Studies Seminar Series, Rhodes University, 31 August 2012.

Both the ISL and the Congress were about fighting for the rights of black workers. Although it was a white party, it endeavoured to unite both black and white workers as well as eradicating racially discriminatory regulations and laws, some of which made Saul Msane unpopular amongst the black workers living in mining compounds because he was behind the implementation of the very laws. As a compound manager, he lived in a lavish house provided by his employers while black mineworkers were subjected to poor living conditions in the compounds, but by 1918 he was no longer living in the compound house because he had already resigned. While Saul Msane was not being vocal about black mineworkers' poor living conditions in one of the ISL meetings - or with no evidence suggesting that he was vocal about living conditions in the compound he oversaw - the ISL aimed to campaign for the "abolition of all forms of native indenture, compound and passport systems" to improve the living conditions in the compounds. Msane could not navigate his way through operating as both a compound manager and a supporter of the workers and this explains why he was marginalised in the Congress, but he was genuinely involved in protecting the rights of the workers.<sup>444</sup>

It is not clear whether the ISL criticised Saul Msane the same way the Congress and black mineworkers did and to what extent. However, Msane on the other hand, criticised the ISL in terms of the way it failed to negotiate with white workers to refrain from establishing whites-only trade unions. He further blamed white trade unions for excluding black mineworkers:

You are, therefore, one with the capitalists you speak about... If you really mean business, you must be prepared to permit us to join with you.<sup>445</sup>

All of this was said in the ISL's first annual conference which was held in January 1916, shortly before Msane and Robert Grendon joined *Abantu-Batho*, with the topic being "native affairs" as part of its syllabus lecture of the conference. Its central Johannesburg branch invited Africans including Msane and Grendon. Reverend Father Hill of the Community of the Resurrection, in the same meeting, condemned the 1913 Natives' Land Act as a blatant attempt to force peasants into the labour market. This burning issue continued in February 1916 when the ISL protested the 1913 Natives' Land Act three years after it was passed. The ISL regarded the 1913 Natives' Land Act as an attempt to push African workers into a "cheap, helpless and unorganised..." labour force for white employers. Part of inviting Msane on one of its gatherings was that they regarded him as one of the prominent voices on land issues. Therefore,

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<sup>444</sup> Van der Walt, "Adding Red to the Black Atlantic?", 7.

<sup>445</sup> Unknown author, "Blacks and Whites: Socialists and Natives", *The Star*, 09 June 1916 (South African National Archives, Pretoria) GNLB 206 1697/14 D76 Native Intelligence (1921-1923).

it is possible that Msane spoke about his huge disappointment with the British as part of the 1914 delegation.<sup>446</sup>

In April 1916, Saul Msane was invited again together with other Africans into the ISL lecture class held at Trades Hall in Johannesburg. The lecture, titled “Trade Unions and the Native Question” was delivered by George Mason. Mason, in July 1913, had persuaded African workers to unite in a strike with white workers at the Kleinfontein mine. At the lecture white people who attended were shocked by an unusual appearance of black audience members. This was part of ISL’s endeavour to transform itself to accommodate and serve every worker. Therefore, a second lecture took place two months later and the guest lecturer was Robert Grendon who was a black man and an editor of *Abantu-Batho* and a close friend of Saul Msane.<sup>447</sup>

Grendon’s lecture was titled: “The Link Between the White and the Black” and what he wanted the white and black audience seated in a filled hall to recognise about his lecture was a better understanding between black and white people as well as a plea for an intellectual entente between both races. He maintained that those were the wishes of black people living in the British colonies, considering black people had no political power that white people enjoyed. His main argument was that the key to economic emancipation of black people rested in the political power that the white population revelled in.<sup>448</sup>

Msane added that the side-lining of black workers in the mines came from white workers maintaining power atop by fostering relationships with the owners and their established means of production and thereby benefitting from that relationship. Msane and Grendon demonstrated that the race question in South Africa had been, on the one hand, a means to build a capitalistic world where white people advanced themselves economically and socially over black people. On the other hand, it was a means used by white people to block black people from progressing in all spheres of life. Therefore, it was not a coincidence to see how the SALP, which later became ISL, protected the rights of white workers over black workers.<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> Jack Simons and Ray Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950*, (Victoria: Penguin, 1969), 193.

<sup>447</sup> Roux, S.P. *Bunting*, p.31, Historical Papers Research Archives, Wits University, Johannesburg. A949. A5.1 Bunting, SP, Papers, 1922-1945.

<sup>448</sup> Unknown author, “Blacks and Whites: Socialists and Natives”, *The Star*, 09 June 1916 (South African National Archives, Pretoria) GNLB 206 1697/14 D76 Native Intelligence (1921-1923).

<sup>449</sup> Peter Limb, (ed.), *The People’s Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2012), 21.

Black workers came to Johannesburg to find work in the mines to contribute positively to the economy but that was curtailed by racial lines drawn between them and white workers. Msane was not convinced that the ISL could deal with racial issues especially when it came to the treatment of black mine workers. The ISL had a mandate to win the hearts of many black workers and intellectuals like Msane because it was clear that the ISL, as a white party positively responding to black workers' grievances, still had the tendency to represent the interests of white workers. Some was not pleased with Msane and Grendon's attendance of the ISL meetings because he believed that their support for the ISL divided the Congress. This led to his writing bitterly in the columns of *Abantu-Batho* about firing them. Points that both Msane and Grendon raised in the ISL were part of the Congress' agenda, which was to be the voice of many labourers working in the mines in the Witwatersrand.<sup>450</sup>

### **“uMsane Akafuneki”: The attack on Saul Msane and being labelled “The Enemy of the People” around the 1918 Shilling Strike**

Apart from ending Saul Msane's political career in Transvaal, the 1918 Shilling Strike became one of the events that exposed the Congress leadership's elitist character and their reluctance to act proactively and decisively. The 1918 Shilling strike forced them to radicalise through joining strikes and linking with the workers. However, being radical was a political direction the Congress leadership could not take for too long as elitism was still part of its culture although it kept on representing Africans workers in Johannesburg. Therefore, it was criticised, by the ISL, as a “party of the black elite [which was] completely alien to the great mass of the Native proletariat” and as a “small coterie of educated natives...black-coated respectables” which explained clashes between moderates like Saul Msane, Isaiah Bud M'belle and radicals Thomas Mvabaza and Sefako Makgatho and the young Congress leadership.<sup>451</sup>

Even Makgatho, under his Congress presidency which turned to radicalisation admitted that during the Victorian era there was no need for them to radicalise and they were treated as elites unlike in His Majesty's era which forced them to sacrifice their leadership strategies, including

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<sup>450</sup> Limb, (ed.), *The People's Paper*, 21.

<sup>451</sup> Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone (ed.), *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness, 1870-1930* (Longman: New York, 1982), 296; Paul Landau, “Johannesburg in Flames’: The 1918 Shilling Campaign, *Abantu-Batho* and Early African Nationalism in South Africa”, in Peter Limb, (ed.), *The People's Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Wits Press: Johannesburg, 2012), 255-262; Lucien van der Walt, “Adding Red to the Black Atlantic? Black Revolutionary Syndicalist and the South African Native National Congress' Radicalisation, 1917-1920”, 11, 17 and 18. A Paper presented at the Critical Studies Seminar series, Rhodes University, Makhanda, 31 August 2012.

the deputations and petitions. Even so, the Congress leaders continued to uphold their elite characters whose duty was to uphold law and order. Evidently, in one IWA meeting of 3 January 1918 the Congress members were received with antagonism whereby one IWA member said that “some of the members seemed to dislike the members of the Congress to join us as workers” while the other asserted that “we must not talk about Congress anymore, as they are the men who organise rich and high people who are the men who suck our blood and sell us”. Saul Msane, who never attended any strike-related meetings because of being anti-radicalism as radicalism conflicted with his elitist identity, status and class, was unfazed about how others might have viewed him at that point. Mvabaza and Daniel Letanka seemed to be some of the Congress leaders who were willing to sacrifice their elitism for the common good of the African workers. Mvabaza opted for a peaceful stay-at-home strike where no workers picketed, but things turned out differently.<sup>452</sup>

At the beginning of 1918, 152 African municipal workers, inspired by a successful white municipal workers - the “bucket boys” or night soil workers - strike at the Johannesburg power station, were sentenced to two months imprisonment with hard labour and no pay followed by daily hard labour work under armed guards. African municipal workers breached their contracts which stated that they were not allowed to strike but they continued striking while Africans in the municipal compounds also went on strike. Africans in the multi-racial slums of Johannesburg were angered by the sentencing of the African municipal workers hence from June 1918 there was several joint rallies including the Industrial Workers of Africa (IWA), the ISL and the Congress which joined primarily because of witnessing a successful white workers’ strike.<sup>453</sup>

The strike was organised in Village Main Reef Mine, a mine close to Salisbury and Jubilee Mine where Msane had been the first and only black Compound Manager for close to two decades (1895-1914), where 5000 black workers avoided work one morning until they were forced to go back to work at the point of a bayonet. Msane defused strike action plans to avoid

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<sup>452</sup> Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone (ed.), *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness, 1870-1930* (Longman: New York, 1982), 96; Paul Landau, “Johannesburg in Flames’: The 1918 Shilling Campaign, *Abantu-Batho* and Early African Nationalism in South Africa”, in Peter Limb, (ed.), *The People’s Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Wits Press: Johannesburg, 2012), 255-262. See Lucien van der Walt, “Adding Red to the Black Atlantic?” 4, 16 and 17.

<sup>453</sup> The Shilling strike, also known as the African general strike of July 1918 marked the radicalisation of SANNC under Sefako Makgatho’s presidency (1917-1924). Saul Msane was left behind in that radicalisation process/tactic as he did not support strikes. See Lucien van der Walt, “Adding Red to the Black Atlantic?” 19.

the humiliation black workers were subjected to. However, the Congress leadership stressed that regardless of such humiliation, workers needed to show that they could stand on their own in fighting for their rights.<sup>454</sup>

At the 19 June rally attended by over a 1000 people, Thomas Mvabaza who spoke for the joint committee (comprising SANNC, IWA and ISL) advocated for the wage increase and same rights for white and black workers:

If they do not agree to pay every native 1/- per day, then the strike will follow on the 2 July 1918. There will be no native working from Springs to the West Rand. The capitalists and workers are at war everywhere in every country... The white workers do not write to the Governor-General when they want more pay. They strike and get what they should.<sup>455</sup>

With all members of the joint committee agreeing on the general strike, conservatives Saul Msane and Isaiah M'belle did not attend any of the strikes and reacted differently. Msane did not support the Transvaal Native Congress (TNC) and workers demand on wage increase of shilling a week while M'belle sent the Minister of Justice a telegram message informing him that the top brass of the Congress had hard times in "calming the natives" and pleaded with the Minister to pardon the sanitary workers to end the strike. Saul Msane circulated a pamphlet dissuading the strike and boycotts as well as the proposed 2 July strike and warned that:<sup>456</sup>

...Brothers, there are two ways to resolve matters, a good and a bad way. The good way helps and the bad one is destructive. That is the reason why I have decided not to keep quiet about the strike. I have been in Johannesburg for a while now and I am familiar with how things work. I have worked with whites for a long time, and I know their ways.<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> Hirson, "General Strike of 1922", p.68; Unknown author, "uMr Saul Msane", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 17 July 1914, p.2 (Bessie Head Library, Pietermaritzburg). This was a period where trade unions grew exponentially as well as strike actions, across all of Southern Africa, including Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia. In South Africa union membership escalated: from 1906 to 1920 there were 199 officially recorded strikes while from 1916 to 1920 there were 168. Union enrolment went from about 9,178 in 1914 to 40 000 in 1917, to 135, 140 in 1920. Until the late 1910s, trade unions in South Africa, which dated back to the 1860s, were predominantly white, although there were a small number of Coloured people in the Western Cape. However, that changed from 1917 when the first African and Indian unions emerged, starting with the IWA as well as the Indian Workers Industrial Union; the rise of the ICU in the 1920s saw Africans dominating union memberships compared to white people. See van der Walt, "Adding Red to the Black Atlantic?" 5.

<sup>455</sup> Van der Walt, p.20. 1/- is One Shilling.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid*, 21; Limb, *The ANC's Years*, 138.

<sup>457</sup> Saul Msane, *Simi Kanjani Na? Ku Bantu Bakiti eGoli* (29 June 1918). Lionel Forman Papers BC581 B22 ICU Leaflets (University of Cape Town).

Msane acknowledged that there was a need to demand increased wages because the cost of living was too high, yet he condemned strikes as the worst tactic. This was his way of protecting workers from facing jail term, losing their lives and their jobs. He further maintained that:

There is a need to demand better wages in the light of the increasing cost of food and clothing in the city. However, in my opinion, a strike would be destructive. You will remember the strike that took place here in Johannesburg in 1913 between white workers and employers led to the shootouts and people died as a result.<sup>458</sup>

In offering an alternative for an organised strike and separating the Congress from Unions to show that the Congress should not have gone ahead with the strike, he concluded by saying that:

For a strike to be a success there has to be a strong and recognised Union. Be strategic and do not be misled by activists. The best way, in my opinion, is to elect upright men to negotiate with the government while the negotiations take place continue to work. My advice is, let no man strike, continue working while the issue is under negotiation.<sup>459</sup>

Subsequently, the workers caused an upheaval of which, according to van der Walt, Sol Plaatje noted that “Mr Msane became very unpopular among the younger native workers on the Reef... and earned... the name among the natives of *Isitha sabantu*”. Thomas Mvabaza verbally attacked Msane, in front of crowds of miners, sanitary workers, young immigrants and others. This was because the strike plan did not materialise and Msane had a hand in it. He was blamed instead of Makgatho. Mvabaza repeated the same verbal attack on Msane he used in the International Socialist League (ISL) meeting, accusing Msane of “selling people” and being “a snake”, to which the crowd cheered. Mvabaza, argued that “if we have a strike, we need not have Johannesburg in flames, and if you think otherwise, blame Saul [Msane], who made it seem thus”. Msane’s idea of a stay-at-home strike was futile, hence the crowd cheered with Mvabaza and attacked Msane for being too elitist. Meanwhile Richard Victor Selope Thema resigned from *Abantu-Batho* following Msane’s attack by Mvabaza as he termed the paper too radical.<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> Msane, *Simi Kanjani?*

<sup>459</sup> Msane, *Simi Kanjani?* I am grateful to Khulekani Mfeka, Zamanguni Thenjwayo and Ntando PZ Mbatha for helping me with the translation of Saul Msane’s pamphlet.

<sup>460</sup> Landau, “Johannesburg in Flames’, p.272; Van der Walt, “Adding Red to the Black Atlantic?”, p.22; Chris Lowe, “The Swazi Royalty and Founding of *Abantu-Batho* in a Regional Context”, in Peter Limb, (ed.), *The People’s Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Wits Press: Johannesburg, 2012), p.187.

Meanwhile the momentum of continuing with the general strike was still high and an additional joint committee sat to strategise for the 1 July general strike.<sup>461</sup> This alarmed authorities and white communities and as a result the government militarised soldiers to march through Johannesburg as human buffers. As soon as soldiers arrived the general strike set for 1 July 1918 was called off. Another reason for calling off the strike, which proved Saul Msane right in the leaflet he distributed, was that members of the ISL and IWA said that they were not organised enough to continue with such a huge strike because they did not have a clear programme of action. On June 27, the IWA held a meeting which was attended by 160 people, consisting of ISL and the Congress members in the Transvaal. But still attendees were indecisive about the way forward.<sup>462</sup>

With that being said, the general strike was never going to be successful, and the worst part was that the news of the cancellation of the strike did not reach everyone on time. As thousands of African workers went on strike, they were contained by armed police at the gold mines. Mineworkers clashed with the police at some compounds where they were armed with axes, iron bars, pipes and pick handles to fight the police in retaliation. The difficulties in communicating with the workers about the cancellation of the strike was because workers living in compounds hardly received any news unless they left mine premises on the weekends when they visited their loved ones in town or other mines. Perhaps this was where the Congress counted on Msane to step in and handle all communication channels in the mining compounds.<sup>463</sup>

As a result of the clashes between the workers and the police, nine people were arrested for fuelling public violence. Five of them were ISL members (SP Bunting, Fred Reuben Cetiwe, Hamilton Kraai, HC Hanscombe, TP Tinker), one unknown IWA member and three were the Congress' JD Ngojo as well as Thomas Mvabaza and Daniel Letanka. ISL offices in Fox Street were also raided by the police and they confiscated all ISL documents that had classified information.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.* In his book, Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, *The Land Is Ours: South Africa's First Black Lawyers and the Birth of Constitutionalism* (Cape Town: Penguin Random House, 2018), p.108, explains where the phrase "the enemy of the people" come from. The phrase comes from Lenin's categorisation of criminals. The first one being the one who committed crimes such as murder, stealing, pickpocketing and so on. While the second type being the "class enemy" or "enemy of the people". Therefore being guilty of committing "political acts" individuals were classified as criminals. In Johannesburg, Saul Msane was criminalised by the court of public opinion when he was called "the enemy of the people" hence he fell from grace.

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

To his defence, the mainstream white press such as *Sunday Times* attacked *Abantu-Batho* for giving Saul Msane such a label, by saying that it was a “contempt which some Natives have for those who run in opposition to their views”. However, *Abantu-Batho* did not retract the article. Instead, in a mass meeting in Vrededorp the speakers warned the people to “not be disturbed by what was in the white press by Mr Saul Msane”.<sup>465</sup>

The nature of strike actions in South Africa at that time had an intimidating undertone where respecting the strike action through threats was one of the characteristics, whether the leader was forced to submit to the strike action or followers in a crowd or not. That kind of strike action did not need leaders like Saul Msane and Isaiah Bud M'belle because of their conservative and bureaucratic politics compared to radical politics of Thomas Mvabaza.<sup>466</sup>

Msane did not support the strike action although the Congress leadership expected him to use his influence as a Congress leader in Transvaal to garner support. Instead, he followed a soft approach or deputation-petition-style which made him unpopular. As an elite Congress leader, he preferred to approach the white authorities in a quiet manner that was not too confrontational but rather diplomatic. This indicated that as the NNC was formed with divisive layers the same applied with to the Congress leadership. Therefore, we see Saul Msane and Makgatho as conservatives while the likes of Thomas Mvabaza were radicals who were more connected to the workers and their concerns. However, for Msane being radical included having tact because strikes, by their nature, were always very tense and Msane grasped the readiness of the authorities to use force, and mostly wanted to avoid bloodshed. All his previous experiences taught him that the powers that be were not likely to budge.<sup>467</sup>

However, Msane represented black mineworkers before white authorities using the very tact he would have loved to instil in the workers as someone who valued education. He advocated for the elimination of the job colour bar to allow black mineworkers to get better jobs. Second, he was in favour of mine-owners' employment of only black mineworkers administered by European staff members in the name of increasing profits. White mineworkers feared this question while mine-owners supported the idea. Msane's conservative approach might have not pleased the Congress leadership and followers, but it proved to appeal to white authorities as it mitigated violence. In contrast, Msane's approach to the 1918 strike was attributed to his

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<sup>465</sup> Peter Limb, (ed.), *The People's Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Wits Press: Johannesburg, 2012), 22.

<sup>466</sup> Landau, “Johannesburg in Flames”, 272.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*

prior experience as a Compound Manager and labour recruiter for almost two decades. This experience came with certain etiquette in addressing pressing mining issues with the white authorities considering they did not like strikes. With that being said, Saul Msane could not easily relate with what was happening on the ground as an experienced campaigner. He also did not consider that the strike action plans were inspired by the rise of the communists in Russia. Thus, the Congress under Makgatho was bound to adapt to different trends that happened globally while Saul Msane was left behind ideologically.<sup>468</sup>

The political feud spilled into the Congress organ, *Abantu-Batho* newspaper where Saul Msane was called *isitha sabantu*. Msane's son, Herbert, went against supporting his conservative father while Makgatho, to his distrust of white socialists (ISL), protected his association with the younger brigade, by speaking in radical terms and criticising Saul Msane. Having the Congress addressing the Native Affairs Department did not help the reputation of Saul Msane even though *Abantu-Batho* carried out a column praising "sympathetic white men". In the same issue *Abantu-Batho* accused Msane of being "thick with the white men" and abandoning black mineworkers. It further said that "[Msane] sa[id] Africans in the Mines must not ask for increased wages...if they increase their wages the Mines will have to close down".<sup>469</sup>

The article titled: "uMsane Akafuneki" (Msane Is Not Wanted) was about the young brigade in the Congress "lashing" their seniors to bring accusations of betrayal against Msane. It was reported that this accusation came from Msane causing trouble by claiming that there would be no strike. *Abantu-Batho*, recorded that Msane had "secret" meetings with the "white man" and did not attend any of the Sanitary Employees' meeting concerned with wage increases to show his sympathies, as a black mineworkers' representative. Attacked for being against the strike, Msane bore the brunt of the failed strike. The isiZulu version of the article stated that if he had attended the strike, he would have heard the declaration of the strike which was to ask for a shilling a day from 1<sup>st</sup> July, and had it resolved in Ebenezer Hall. Even moderates like R.W. Msimang criticised Msane by saying "some of our educated Natives are a danger to their people in that they go and arrange with white people without first consulting other Natives".<sup>470</sup>

The way Saul Msane handled the 1918 strike, and his dissuasion of strike action plans reflected how he and his colleagues in the Congress struggled to deal with their elitist character, social

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<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid*, 274; Peter Limb, (ed.), *The People's Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Wits Press: Johannesburg, 2012), 409-410.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid*, 274; Limb, *The People's Paper*, 21.

status and position, and that resulted in its failure to transform into a *de facto* radical Congress that prioritised workers' needs. As a result, when the ICU of Clements Kadalie was formed it took a radical populist appeal. Between 1920 and 1927, it enrolled 100 000 to 250 000 members over the Congress which only had 4000 members because it did not represent everybody including unskilled, illiterate, lowly-paid and unemployed people. Its organ, *Workers' Herald*, enjoyed the biggest circulation over *Abantu-Batho* until the 1940s. The *Workers' Herald* regarded the Congress leaders critically as "...good boys of imperialistic hypocrisy [who were seen] as old and irrelevant...anti-intellectuals who sat in the office and write newspapers".<sup>471</sup>

### **The aftermath of the Shilling Strike**

In addition, Sol Plaatje, upon his return from the United Kingdom in February 1917 had a different perspective on the ICU as he saw the ICU "as a future". This meant that after Dube's leadership (1912-1917) Plaatje saw the Congress as arguably defunct because it was not as elitist as before. Yet he acknowledged that the Congress needed to transform itself. However, under Josiah Gumede, from 1927 until 1930, it reinvented itself as a civil workers-oriented organisation to regain its strength. At this time, Gumede was associated with communism; a new political worker-centred force that was influencing and challenging unequal labour practices in the Union of South Africa.<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>471</sup> Conversation with H. Mitchell (Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa, August 2017). Mitchell is a biographer of Kadalie. His PhD is titled *Clements Kadalie: trade unionism, migration and race in Southern Africa* (University of Edinburgh, 2020). John Langalibalele Dube and Selby Msimang did not take lightly what the *Workers' Herald* said. In 1921 Selby Msimang attacked Kadalie in *Umteteli waBantu* using xenophobic tone following his failed attempt to organise black trade union in 1920, "We have to get rid of all these Malawians" and "we have our own leaders. We don't need foreign leaders". Msimang was part of the ICWU (Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union) which Bennet Nkoana joined after he cut ties with Kadalie's ICU. The ICWU was set up as a federation of a number of black trade unions including Kadalie's. Kadalie crossed swords with the ICWU leadership and decided to leave the umbrella organisation. Because of Kadalie's influence ICU became bigger than the ICWU, ICWU lasted until 1927. IB Nyambola and Nkoana, who wrote for ICWU organ, were the biggest critics of Kadalie and the ICU. Meanwhile, John Dube wrote to the sugar baron and Member of Parliament JS Marwick and said that "we have got to deal with Kadalie, he is a threat to Bantu nationalism and Bantu tradition". See also my article on Clements Kadalie: Thapelo Mokoatsi, 'Discovering Clements Kadalie's Writing', *The Journalist*. Accessed on 24 January 2021. Available at:

<http://www.thejournalist.org.za/pioneers/discovering-clements-kadalies-writing/>

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid*; Mokoatsi, 'Discovering Clements Kadalie'. Gumede, as a supporter of Kadalie, divided SANNK leadership in Natal into two factions in 1927 on his ascendancy to SANNK presidency. Stephen Mini and AWG Champion followed Gumede whereas Dube, as I have mentioned, did not follow Kadalie and his associates. A year later, in April 1928, Champion broke away from Kadalie's ICU as a strong independent figure who formed ICU *yaseNatal*. It is also important to note that Congress leadership under John Dube's presidency (1912-1917) was far more elitist anti-radicalism than under Sefako Makgatho (1917-1924). Makgatho believed in striking a balance between elitism and radical populism as the young Congress leaders pushed him to change his political direction. This explains why Plaatje felt that the old Congress will not be resuscitated to being as

What frustrated the young Congress leaders was that the old Congress' idea of nationalism was not politically progressive and relied on protecting their elitist status and positions and not on strikes or radicalism. The Congress' ethos, as the main national leadership with systems in place such as an electoral structure, rarely meant they aspired to take over the South African government. Their experience in organising labour recruitment on behalf of the mines and its ability to represent people from all walks of life regardless of its small membership were its strengths. Therefore, the Congress' cooperation with the Union government was the main goal of its old leadership. This was a comfortable fit for Saul Msane as opposed to radically challenging power hierarchies because that would mean that they would have to encourage radical populism which went against his elite character. However, Landau seems to use Msane as a scapegoat because it is easier to blame one person over the Congress than to figure out the complex challenges of the time, as power shifted both nationally and globally.<sup>473</sup>

The hope for those ideals to be adopted as the Congress-inspired policy or at least acting as a Native Affairs Department in Union government petered out as Botha's tenure ended in 1919. His successor, Jan Smuts, brought another major challenge for the Congress when the Native Affairs Act was passed. However, Smuts, like the old Congress leadership, did not sanction strikes but the 1922 Fordsburg strike pressured him to a point that changed his decision. He attacked the striking white mineworkers, using arms, to send a strong message against strike action plans. The continuation of strikes from 1918 into Smuts government and through Makgatho's Congress presidency proved Plaatje right. His foresight on the future ICU held, which included, using collective strike action plans as a persuasive was a means to an end to fight for workers' rights. Perhaps this explained why Gumede, who was fond of Kadalie, championed bolshevism.<sup>474</sup>

With his reputation at stake, Saul Msane and other moderate Congress leaders began to undermine and destroy *Abantu-Batho* to a point where it lost a lot of staff members, and its schedule and distribution were disrupted. In fact, *Umteteleli waBantu's* first issue stated that the paper aimed not to support strikes and "demonstrate the respective duties and obligations

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Makgatho wished it should be while Gumede took a brave stance and transformed SANNC into a civil workers' oriented organisation until he stepped down in 1930.

<sup>473</sup> Landau, 'Johannesburg in Flames', 259.

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid*, 258-259; after forming a government with a small margin Jan Smuts passed on the Native Affairs Act No. 23 of 1920. This Act came from the South African Native Affairs Commission report of 1905. The same SANAC Saul Msane testified in.

of the employer and employed”.<sup>475</sup> In addition, it aimed to create an ambition for black workers to excel as labourers and it informed its readership to not identify itself with the Congress programme because *Abantu-Batho* supported strikes. *Abantu-Batho* fought back by maintaining that *Umteteleli* was exclusively organised by the Chamber of Mines to undermine *Abantu-Batho*. The white secretary of the Native Recruiting Corporation (NRC) was its real editor and James Thaele of the *African World* accused *Umteteleli* of being “a disguise dragon that seeks to do harm to the African people” which was to counter the Congress’ organ.<sup>476</sup>

A decade after the 1918 Shilling strike, Richard Victor Selope Thema wrote that the African people in the Transvaal feared a general uprising, as dissatisfied as they were with the common conditions they faced in the mines. Therefore, it was ironic that the Congress leadership chose to call Msane *isitha sabantu*. In fact, an American missionary, Reverend Ray Philips, understood Msane’s view in disbanding and defusing the strike action. He later said that:

We attended some of their meetings; heard the disappointment and despair clothed in lurid language by the leaders. ‘We’ll never get anything out of the white man’, they cried, ‘except by violence...’<sup>477</sup>

The generation of Saul Msane had clashing class identities which led them to become moderates whose national identity was strictly to resist imperial forces. It was something he grappled with throughout his life and his political career. His public and private life show how he mostly identified with being “British” and underplayed his Zulu identity. His nineteen-year political involvement, first as the co-founder of NNC in 1900 and secondly as the Congress co-founder in 1912, showed that his liberal ideas emphasised resistance to injustice. In his speech to the Congress meeting in the struggle against the 1913 Natives’ Land Act, he spoke about the Union Jack as the “emblem of liberty...floating over them”. He kept his faith in “British justice”.<sup>478</sup> In the 1914 Congress conference, he made “unrealistic and pathetic appeals for justice through reliance on the Royal prerogative”. In his address to the 1918 Congress meeting, he encouraged Africans to be “inflexibly loyal to their Supreme Chief, His Majesty the King”. Msane resisted any militant labour action while radical African nationalists allied with black workers. While his contemporaries searched for their Africanist identities, he stayed trapped within the web of his imperialistic identity. His son, Herbert, who was involved in the

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<sup>475</sup> Peter Limb, “An African Newspaper in Central Johannesburg: The Journalistic and Associational Context of *Abantu-Batho*”, in Peter Limb (ed.), *The People’s Paper: A Centenary History and Anthology of Abantu-Batho* (Johannesburg: Wits Press, 2012), 308.

<sup>476</sup> Peter Limb, “An African Newspaper”, 308.

<sup>477</sup> Hirson, “General Strike of 1922”, 68.

<sup>478</sup> Peter Limb, “Early ANC Leaders and the British World: Ambiguities and Identities”, *Historia*, 47, 1, 2002, 73.

radicalised TNC and Industrial Workers of Africa (IWA) and Hamilton Kraai, a warehouse worker, challenged the imperial legitimacy that his father upheld. Kraai, in addressing black workers on the gold industry, was not a loyalist like Msane: “[w]e are slaves under the Union Jack...we must not forget to return our Africa [to its rightful place] ...this gold is also ours. It was placed [here] by God for us”.<sup>479</sup>

Saul Msane was further obliged to resign from the African Club and by 1919 he was succeeded by Daniel Letanka. In the same year, Msane and Grendon continued to work together to an extent that Msane proposed a business deal between them, which they tabled at the time Msane went to Mbabane in 1919. Either Msane offered Grendon an editorial post for the newspaper he planned to establish with the help of the Chamber of Mines or a teaching post at an agricultural college he planned to find in Nongoma in Zululand as he planned to relocate. None of the plans materialised because Msane suddenly died on 6 October 1919 in Dr. Titlestad’s home in Nkandla when he approached Solomon kaDinizulu for land to build the proposed agricultural college.<sup>480</sup>

A year after his death, in 1920, all was forgiven. *Abantu-Batho* hailed him as a “courageous and doughty leader” who “always commanded...respect for the civilised black man”. The paper went on to say that “[h]is death was a shocking loss, particularly in the Transvaal it has been keenly felt”.<sup>481</sup> Sefako Makgatho, the second Congress President Msane served under as the Secretary General, lauded him as a father figure for the Congress and an old friend. Msane was remembered as one of the best Zulu writers and a one-time editor of *Abantu-Batho* newspaper.<sup>482</sup>

In the same year, Marshall Maxeke and one of the marginalised Congress figures such as Jesse Makhothe who was a retired former secretary of the Transvaal Native Congress, sharply criticised *Abantu-Batho* in a November 1920 letter he wrote. Makhothe condemned factions within the paper and called for unity. Moreover, he expressed his dissatisfaction regarding how, during the 1918 Shilling strike, Saul Msane and Bud-M’belle were “mocked and insulted” due to the very factionalism he believed could have been resolved. However, it escalated into the

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<sup>479</sup> Limb, “Early ANC Leaders”, 73.

<sup>480</sup> Christison, ‘We of *Abantu-Batho*’, 166; Les Switzer, (ed.), *South Africa’s Alternative Press: Voices of Protest and Resistance, 1880s-1960s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 33; The African Club was a small entity based in Transvaal where young and old prominent black elites held social functions including enjoying games or sports and holding political and intellectual gatherings. In 1918 it held one of the ‘bucket’ strikes meeting.

<sup>481</sup> Limb, (ed.), *The People’s Paper*, 22.

<sup>482</sup> Christison, ‘We of *Abantu-Batho*’, 157; Landau, ‘Johannesburg in Flames’, 274.

eventual decline of the paper and Saul Msane remained a marginalised figure despite being remembered as a great man.<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> Limb, (ed.), *The People's Paper*, 321.

## Conclusion

After forcing Dube's hand to resign in 1917, Msane together with Alfred Mangena backed his father-in-law, Stephen Mini to be Dube's successor while Mvabaza and Letanka nominated Makgatho for Congress presidency. This marked the end of the Dube's leadership of the Congress as his presidency ushered in a culture of elitism. Sefako Makgatho's subsequent presidency balanced that culture with radicalism. As a result, Msane was isolated in two ways: he found it difficult to reconcile the two styles of Congress leadership being elitism and radicalism. Moreover, he was seen as an impostor for dishonouring the highest office in the Congress when he attacked Dube during his presidency. As the Congress radicalised after Dube's presidency, Msane, M'belle and Plaatje started seeing the Congress as a shadow of its former self and started attacking its organ for being too radical especially after Msane was fired by Seme, who sided with the radicals. Therefore, none of what Msane did under Dube's presidency was forgiven by Makgatho's main backers in Mvabaza and Letanka who continued to perpetuate the same narrative about Msane throughout Makgatho's presidency to discredit him.

In addition, the 1918 Shilling strike culminated in the Congress leadership judging Msane's soft approach and decisions when he behaved unethically towards the workers, hence he was eventually called "the enemy of the people". His elitist approach to workers' needs and demands was the final reason he was further isolated as crowds cheered with Mvabaza when he called Msane a "snake" or "treacherous" thus too elitist thereby compromising workers' rights and struggles. Even so, Makgatho did not side-line Msane as he roped him in the top senior position in the Congress as his Secretary General, in 1917, succeeding Plaatje.

Regardless of being isolated in the Congress leadership, Msane was still respected as one of the prominent voices in mining and workers issues by ISL and he frequented its meetings as a guest speaker with Robert Grendon. However, where strike action plans were concerned, he distanced himself. Msane attributed his disliking of strikes to his experience with working with white mine-owners and understanding their psyche. He claimed that they hated hostile situations a strike brought. To some extent his assessment was correct because of what happened during the 1913 white miners' strike. He feared for the lives and jobs of the workers, and this was his way of protecting them, but the Congress leadership interpreted that as being biased towards white mine-owners. Thema admitted, in 1929, that Africans in Transvaal were generally scared of going on strike for obvious reasons.

Msane mentioned in his pamphlet in 1918 that the Congress only joined the Shilling strike organised by the ISL after the successful strike of the “bucket boys”. Firstly, this indicated that they indeed feared strikes and Msane’s dissuasion of any strike action plans in Johannesburg had some merits. Secondly, Msane regarded strikes as anti-Congress, and this was evident during the Congress diplomatic fight against the 1913 Natives’ Land Act where in two Congress’ Pretoria and Cape Town delegations to Botha’s government they maintained that they did not support strikes regardless of the magnitude of the issues at hand. Mvabaza and Letanka were present in those two delegations as Congress members. This showed that the Congress understood the hostilities strikes could bring between itself and the government. At that time, one of the tactics elites always applied was to pacify the white community to show them that they distanced themselves from striking and would utilise petitions instead. This culture of petitioning had been part of the upbringing of black elites and Msane had no intentions of acting out of character by departing from this reasoned approach, yet Mvabaza and Letanka broke away from that culture.

On the contrary, as a confident black elite pacifying white people in Natal, Msane became popular within a broad economic network within the colony. It appears that Msane was well connected, a natural leader and a good spokesperson, which was why the NNC leadership founded the NNC with Msane at the forefront. However, undertaking a similar stance in Transvaal conflicted Msane as he could not maintain between remaining a good example of a civilised black man as seen by the workers and a “veteran spokesman of the civilised native” in the eyes of the white members of the ISL. Msane was rather praised by the ISL and vilified by the workers, and this explains how the epithet “the enemy of the people” came about.

## Chapter 9

### Conclusion

Saul Msane was the friend of the people, not its foe. That is how he must be remembered and calling him “the enemy...” was circumstantial. The people loved and respected him. They affectionately called him “MayiMayi...kaMatiyose”, because as the son of the first-generation Christian convert, Matthew Msane, Saul Msane understood his purpose. It was to walk in his father’s footsteps and become the voice of the people and that was what the people trusted Msane for because he cared for their welfare. They called him MayiMayi because they loved to impersonate him when he frequently exclaimed, “My, My” when workers were ill. Sol Plaatje called him “Mr Whatchamacallit” because of his dry sense of humour. This humanised Saul Msane as a warm and forthright person. Salisbury and Jubilee Mining Compound was named KwaMayiMayi in his honours because they acknowledge the calibre of the person he was. This shows that Msane was very closer to the people and was not lording over them.

Saul Msane and his thoughts on alcohol as a voice of temperance amongst mine-workers during his tenure as the first and only black compound manager at Salisbury and Jubilee for 19 years also reveals much of his character. As a compound manager, instead of using his power for his own benefit, he cared for the welfare of African people. In one of the testimonies, he gave he proposed temperance and schooling for mineworkers as a solution to their labour and liquor problems and as an instrument for individual self-upliftment. These values, taught to Msane by missionaries, informed his ideological standpoint on alcohol and why, as an elite, he rejected drinking. Saul Msane made a bold statement by saying he disliked alcohol because of how it was associated with idleness and an unChristian lifestyle. The harmful uses of alcohol and how it was used by mine-owners to control the labour force. Seeing how black mineworkers had abused alcohol in the compound and the chaos it caused further justified Msane’s endeavours on temperance. Regardless of evidence provided on the pre-colonial benefits of African beer missionaries demonised it by establishing temperance movements. Their perception also shaped Saul Msane’s perceptions, as a teetotaler, on the demonisation of African beer or any type of alcohol.

However, because of his elitism Msane became isolated in the Congress leadership. Yet he was still respected as one of the prominent voices in mining and workers issues by the International Socialist League and he frequented its meetings as a guest speaker with Robert Grendon. However, where strike action plans were concerned, he distanced himself. Msane attributed

his disliking of strikes to his experience of working with white mine-owners and understanding their psyche. He claimed that they hated the hostile situations a strike brought. To some extent his assessment was correct, as seen in what happened during the 1913 white miners' strike. He feared for the lives and jobs of the workers, and this was his way of protecting them. But the Congress leadership interpreted that as being biased towards white mine-owners. Thema admitted, in 1929, that Africans in Transvaal were generally scared of going on strike for the obvious reasons.

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Saul Msane's views on wide range of issues were somewhat buried and obscure because of lack of much evidence. It is taken that the views of the newspapers he was associated with also reflected his own views. This further explains why he left *Abantu-Batho* for *Umteteli waBantu*

because he regarded the former as radical and regarded *Umteteli* as moderate and relevant to the *modus operandi* he employed as an elite. Saul Msane's controversial editorial span highlighted how he reported the misuse of funds under John Dube's Congress presidency. This demonstrated Msane's need to always do what was just as a *kholwa* elite whose assimilation was in line with Christian values. However, his exposure of such news is attributed to his personal issues with John Dube. When Dube denounced him using his newspaper, *Ilanga laseNatal*, and its readers attacked Msane and accused him of being too elitist and not making popular decisions that affected everyone.

After forcing Dube to resign in 1917, Msane together with Alfred Mangena backed his father-in-law, Stephen Mini to be Dube's successor while Thomas Mvabaza and Daniel Letanka nominated Makgatho for Congress presidency. This marked the end of the Dube's leadership of the Congress when presidency ushered in a culture of elitism. Sefako Makgatho's subsequent presidency balanced that culture with radicalism. As a result, Msane was isolated in two ways: he found it difficult to reconcile the two styles of Congress leadership, elitism and radicalism. Moreover, he was seen as a threat for dishonouring the highest office in the Congress when he attacked Dube during his presidency. As the Congress radicalised after Dube's presidency, Msane, M'belle and Plaatje started seeing the Congress as the shadow of its former self and started attacking its media for being too radical especially after Msane was fired by Seme, who sided with the radicals. Therefore, none of what Msane did under Dube's presidency was forgiven by Makgatho's main backers in Mvabaza and Letanka who continued to perpetuate the same narrative about Msane throughout Makgatho's presidency to discredit him.

In addition, the 1918 Shilling strike culminated in the Congress leadership judging Msane's soft approach and decisions as behaving unethically towards the workers, earning him the epithet "enemy of the people". His elitist approach to the workers' needs and demands was the final reason he was further isolated because they felt Msane compromised workers' rights and struggles as he was too elitist. For instance, crowds cheered with Mvabaza when he called Msane a "snake" or "treacherous". Even so, Makgatho did not side-line Msane as he roped him into the top senior position in the Congress as his Secretary General, in 1917, succeeding Plaatje.

Another factor that highlights Saul Msane's life was African landownership and Christian conversion. These were only significant to the colonial economy because they assimilated Africans into obedient colonial subjects that were divided into different classes. The class struggle that formed a major part of Saul Msane's life was landownership because it was linked to his social status and elitist character. Also, owning land for Msane was important because it had metaphysical and physical values to African people. At the heart of the making of his hybrid identity or elite character was education. Upon obtaining his exemption letter Msane used his education to demonstrate to the colonial authorities that he was different from other black people who were subjected to child-like treatment, and he continued to prove that he was deserving of being treated as a "civilised" black person even after he met all requirements needed to be recognised as a black elite in the colonial economy. These important themes (Christian conversion, exemption, education and landownership) that made his elite character were important in understanding most of the decisions he made throughout his life including advocacy for individual landownership, education was connected to his elite character. Therefore, this explains why Msane he was called "the enemy of the people".

Saul Msane was a versatile and multi-talented prominent leader of his time. He was a chess boffin who defeated white passengers who played chess with while boarding a ship in 1914 following this second international trip as part of the Congress delegation to London. He was also a talented musician with a sonorous voice and was compared to Orpheus McAdoo of the Jubilee Singers. The focus was to provide insight into the life of Saul Msane as a product of mission education through his musical interests.

Saul Msane's trip to London was more than just a strategy to raise funds for the Edendale institution. It was in the personal interests of the three white men who saw a business opportunity to financially and culturally exploit the Zulu Choir through performances aimed primarily at white audiences who were fascinated by seeing blacks on stage. Msane used this experience as an opportunity to showcase more than their talent but to prove to the white people that they were the "perfect" example of white civilisation from Natal. At the same time, he justified this example through the lens of Christianity. As an enlightened Zulu man, he refused to perform in traditional garb because he felt that it went against his Christian values, which had encouraged his generation and his father's generation to abandon traditional ways, which were associated with darkness, for western ways. Therefore, he was caught between adhering to stipulations of the contract he signed with Moby, Illing and Holloway or follow to his adopted Christian values and associated identity.

What being part of the Zulu Choir has taught us about Saul Msane was that as much as he was trying to honour his civic duties tied to British imperialism, he was not always complicit or in agreement with how colonial subjects were “made to perform”. That was why he immediately left the Zulu Choir to form the Zulu Christian Choir because he felt that he was not going to act in a “savage” manner since because he was enlightened. He endeavoured to prove his loyalty to Christianity and government just like his father, Matthew, as an exempted *kholwa* who was consistently committed to Christian values.

Later in his life, he came to realise that he was in the third space, as Homi Bhabha puts it. He had a hybrid identity of a Zulu Christian who had to toil hard to demonstrate what an educated Christian looks like. He left a huge divide between himself as a *kholwa* and non-Christian converts at Edendale.

The same applied to Solomon Kumalo who said he learned a lot from being in London and he even preached in one of the meetings. This duality was evident in several aspects of their lives. Most of the songs they performed were composed by white composers while there were still traditional Zulu songs which they also performed on stage in London. Their western attire as well as their lifestyle have always been under the scrutiny of colonial whites who “othered” him because they were the ongoing standard of what whiteness was and were prejudiced towards what a black Englishman should be. That was why Moby, Illing and Holloway decided to exploit their exceptional musical and choral talents, proving Msane right. In turn, Msane defended his hard-earned reputation and influenced the choir to not perform in traditional attire in order to contest the colonial stereotypes of the Zulus as savage uncivilised black people.

It was these symbols of western civilisation such as Christianity, music, clothing and education that gave Msane a hybrid identity that was more western than African. As a colonised subject he navigated between different cultural and geographic spaces. In South Africa as a Zulu man, a *kholwa* and talented singer and performer he forged his own agency and in London he contested and questioned the colonial manipulation and systems that produced his hybrid identity. He would constantly contest it throughout his life, and this was evident in the Congress leadership.

Saul Msane’s philosophy on landownership provided solutions that could have built an inclusive state that incorporated black elites. He worked to demonstrate how an educated black elite could be beneficial to allowing progressive representation in the Transvaal government, as a pilot plan for the Union government, and thus setting an example for others to ascend the

socio-political and economic ladder on merit. Kruger's government had an opportunity to include and value black elites in mainstream politics by offering them the same voting rights and citizenship, but the opposite happened. On the contrary, Msane's philosophy on landownership revealed that the Kruger government, had no legal and political plans to include elite Africans in the government regardless of their prominent social standing.

Msane suggested that exempted elites should be granted rights to buy land under the individual land tenure system to avoid inheritance complications and to offer black elites a qualification for the franchise. Also, by defending the individual land tenure system over the communal land tenure system, Msane offered a direction the government could take in embracing modernity as a vehicle for individual rights to land and other values. The communal land tenure system denied individuals any of the citizenship rights and values. Instead, it created chaos and conflict between individuals and took away their individuality as it was the perception the government had against black people. It also complemented the migrant labour system which was another system Saul Msane spoke against throughout his domicile in Johannesburg.

As alluded before, Msane's judicious mind grasped finer prints of the Transvaal's laws under Paul Kruger's government. Msane used the law in different platforms (deputations, commissions, petitions and newspapers) to show the government how black and white people could live together if they were governed by the same law. He remained tactful even when laws were against black people buying and protecting land they already owned under the pretence of the British justice system. However, his tone changed when he realised that what he believed about the British justice system was full of contradictions, biases and injustices, and as such, targeted African people for the economic gain of the colonial state.

As sensitive as land matters were in that era, Saul Msane's calmness demonstrated that black people, too, contrary to popular beliefs, were rational beings capable of handling sensitive matters with dignity even when circumstances dictated that they resort to violence and strikes. Msane worked tirelessly to pacify white people and maintained his elitism by fighting land matters using what they deemed proper channels such as petitions, delegations and forming newspapers.

Contrary to being criticised as too conservative, being a moderate made Saul Msane one of the key figures who led the fight against the 1913 Natives' Land Act. Given that this fight took place under the presidency of another moderate John Dube, Msane demonstrated the

importance of remaining calm and being of sound mind was effective and why the Congress rejected radicalism or strike action plans and resorted to using diplomacy regardless of the magnitude of the issues at hand. The Congress treated the Act as a sensitive matter that needed its key members to be strategic in appealing to the emotions of the white population across all levels. It understood that it was not going to be taken seriously if it resorted to any form of violence.

Saul Msane shared a lot of insight into the legal technicalities the Act carried from the time it was a Bill, legal processes employed in turning it into an Act, ways in which the Congress tried to curb that evolutionary legal process, and how it travelled to London under Section 65 of the Act. As the Act was not immediately implemented the Congress, as divided as it was, continued to oppose it in different platforms until towards the end of the 1910s, showing us that it remained consistent in opposing it across its different processes building up to its eventual implementation. Msane further highlighted the long-term effect the Act had on the African population in terms of how land dispossession was two-fold, physical and metaphysical. As elitist as he was, he understood the physical and spiritual connection Africans had with the land.

In the process of rewriting South African history, liberation struggle players of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries should be included into the centre and not only its “heroes”. In fact, when ANC celebrated its centenary in 1912, Saul Msane’s name was still marginalised, and it was not included in the book the ANC commissioned to celebrate its centenary. For those reasons, this thesis writes Saul Msane back into popular memory of post-1994 South Africa.

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## APPENDIX

C.H. Maxwell, "American Board Mission: What is the Native Question?", *Ilanga laseNatal*, 25 February 1916. A list of separate elements on the Native Question the American Board Mission asked is as follows:

1. What is to be the eventual social, political and economic relationship between black and white?
2. What is our duty to the native?
3. What is our obligation?
4. What is the native's place and what is his obligation to Europeans?
5. How shall we overcome or off-set the evil influences of civilization upon the native and how endow him with the good influences thereof?
6. What kind and what degree of education should the native have?
7. Should this education be in the hands of missionaries with Government supervision or should it be assumed and paid for by the government?
8. By what methods can we improve the native's mode of living?
9. Should polygamy be abolished?
10. What degree of segregation of the races should be undertaken?
11. How much land should Natives be allowed to buy and in what locations?
12. How may we best utilize the natural abilities of the native for his own benefit and for that of the State?
13. How successfully remove the disabilities by which he is handicapped?
14. Should steps be taken to cut off the increase of a half-cast population?
15. What political and what social status shall the half-cast hold?
16. What legitimate stimuli may be applied to the kraal native to make him work?
17. How can the supply and the demand of labour for towns, railways, sugar estates, farms and Government departments be maintained in satisfactory ratio?

18. What modification of the Government's present legal and administrative methods should be suggested for the permanent welfare and best development of the native?
19. How may the public gain information on these questions?
20. As more and more land is taken up by Europeans, what is to be done with the now increasing native population?
21. How may the rightful desires and ambitions of the better class of Natives be realized?
22. What of the present powers of native chiefs? Should those be increased or diminished?
23. What of the present clan system? Should it be conserved or gradually broken up?
24. What degree of recognition and support should be given to the various missionary societies and how may the influence and strength of these bodies be best utilised by the State in the solution of these problems?
25. How vigorously should pass laws be enforced?
26. What should the public do to aid the Government in this or in other administrative matters relating to the control of Natives?
27. What punishments for native crime are most effective?
28. Would Beira benefit by the organization of a Native Reform Committee such as does effective work in several of the larger cities in South Africa?
29. Should the native be Christianized or should he be left indefinitely without religious and moral teachings?

