Résumé

L. Switzer — La communauté chrétienne africaine et sa presse dans l'Afrique du Sud victorienne.
La chrétienté sud-africaine et sa presse sont situées dans le contexte de l'action missionnaire au xixe siècle, de sa pénétration de la culture orale traditionnelle et de son rôle dans la création d'une culture écrite. Rédacteurs et lecteurs étaient les produits d'une culture missionnaire qui transcendants les limites individuelles, confessionnelles et même ethniques : l'imprimé constitue un facteur puissant d'unification de la communauté, aussi bien qu'un monument durable à son nouveau style de vie. A partir des années 1880, l'élite africaine chrétienne et lettrée contrôle plus ou moins les principales publications missionnaires et s'active à la création d'une presse politique indépendante. Découvrant le nationalisme, cette élite s'efforce de donner forme et contenu à la contestation du pouvoir colonial. L'ambiguïté de ce nationalisme africain de la fin de l'ère victorienne est bien représentée par la carrière de John Tengo Jabavu, directeur du premier journal africain indépendant du sous-continent.

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The African Christian Community
and its Press
in Victorian South Africa

'Some thoughts till now ne 'er spoken
Make shreds of my innermost being;
And the cares and fortunes of my kin
Still journey with me to the grave.
I turn my back on the many shams
That I see from day to day;
It seems we march to our very grave
Encircled by a smiling Gospel.
And what is this Gospel?
And what salvation?
The shade of a fabulous spirit
That we try to embrace in vain.'

Jonas Ntsiko

The African Christian community in Southern Africa has had a press of its own for more than a hundred and fifty years. Controlled initially by white missionaries but written and later edited largely by black converts, the mission press was dominant from the 1830s to the 1880s. Thereafter, the black press began to develop a more independent political and secular image. Between the 1880s and 1920s the mission-educated Christian community—linked principally to the first black political, religious and educational organizations—more or less controlled its own press. From the depression of the 1930s, white financial and business interests, with tacit support from the State, gradually took over the black press and the number of black publications subsequently declined. Alternative, independent organs of news and opinion continued to exist,

1. The poem was published in Xhosa in Isigidimi Sama Xosa ('The Xhosa Messenger'), Feb. 1, 1884. For the translation, see JORDAN 1973: 96.

but they remained few in number and relatively vulnerable to the forces of repression and control.2

This article seeks to locate the African Christian community and its press in the context of the missionary enterprise during the 19th century. While black religious publications were no longer as influential in the 1920s, for example, as they were in the 1860s, the codes and rituals of Victorian Christianity had been internalized by generations of African Christians with spiritual but not temporal homes in hundreds of mission communities throughout Southern Africa. The African mission and post-mission political press reflected these experiences and the seeds sown during this period were to be decisive in shaping the form as well as the content of the African nationalists' response to colonial rule in the 20th century.

European missionary agencies operating initially in the Cape from the early 19th century established the first stations among African societies living in the so-called frontier zones of the northern and eastern regions of the colony. The mission enterprise was generally unsuccessful on the Cape frontier before the 1850s, but gradually the African chiefdoms were subdued and the stability of traditional society was undermined with the penetration of Western European capitalism and culture.

By the 1880s, viable African Christian communities—still isolated for the most part from traditional society—had emerged on stations and outstations along the Cape and Natal colonial frontiers of the future settler State of South Africa and in the interior of the subcontinent. By the early 20th century, Christian communities had been established in town as well as countryside throughout Southern Africa.

The Mission Enterprise

Although divided by denomination, the missionaries living on the stations before the 1880s were generally identifiable as Protestants who had been influenced by the evangelical revivals that had swept through Western Europe and North America in the later 18th and early 19th centuries and inaugurated a new era of 'foreign' missions. In a sense, they were also refugees—European immigrants escaping an environment in the throes of an industrial transformation who were seeking to build the kingdom of God in a new world.

The pioneer missionaries before the 1850s assumed a chiefly role—allocating the land and exhorting their people to believe and behave in ways that would conform to the mission's understanding of a Christian lifestyle.

Initially, the missionaries discriminated on the basis of culture rather than race. Thus they regarded all men as potentially equal but they did not differentiate between Christianity and Western civilization. Plows and wagons, clothes, Western medicine, square, upright furniture and houses built along straight lines and, above all, literacy—these were regarded as the fruits of the Gospel. In contrast, initiation ceremonies, divining, traditional medicine, dancing, intoxication, nudity and, above all, polygamy and the role of ancestors in worship were condemned as anti-Christian.\(^3\)

Cattle herding, the traditional male activity, was discouraged in favor of tilling the soil, which was deemed to be more suitable for developing a Western work ethic. The change in occupational roles—agricultural work in African societies having been assigned to women—signalled yet another assault on the traditional way of life. The introduction of the Western concept of time—the seven-day week with every Sunday and certain other days of the year set aside for rest, prayer and contemplation—also helped to alter the prevailing pattern of work and recreation. Traders were encouraged to establish stores on the stations and mission converts were encouraged to become ever more dependent on Western material goods.

Communal habits of thinking and living were continually discouraged in favor of individual enterprise and self-sufficiency. The missionaries accepted the dictates of a \textit{laissez-faire} political economy and in later generations many actively promoted habits of work and thrift that they believed would enable individual Africans to progress in the station communities. Entrepreneurs were encouraged and in future it would be assumed that the creation of African traders and peasant farmers on individual land holdings, for example, was a requirement for economic advancement. When the African complied with these demands he saw himself, and he was seen by the settlers as well as the missionaries, as a modernizing representative of the Christian community.

God was at the center of this universe and the source of all power in a world where there was no distinction in practice between the sacred and the secular. Every thought and every act was imbued with a specifically Christian significance. In a sense, the missionaries were trying to construct the indivisible Church of early medieval Europe in Africa.

The mission took over and sanctified every stage of the life cycle—birth, initiation into manhood and womanhood, marriage, last rites and burial. The Church’s sovereignty was invoked in Christian homes and in the fields at harvest time and its temporal base—the church

building—was inevitably the biggest and most imposing on the station. Virtually every activity in the life of the Christian community became institutionalized in the Church.

Penetrating an Oral Culture

The strength of the pioneer missionary enterprise stemmed, in part, from its ability to shape the convert’s perceptions of reality in such a way that its authority was legitimized. The missionary’s construction of reality was to be accepted as objective reality. The Christian community was to be subordinated to a new social order with its framework articulated by the mission.

Symbolic and non-verbal as well as verbal and written codes of communication were employed by the missionaries in establishing a consensus for the Christian community. The cross, for example, came to occupy a central symbolic position in all the churches. The use of charms and amulets—badges, strips or bands of cloth—and the wearing of uniforms formed a regular part of the Church’s many and varied activities. The rites of confession and the use of ‘holy’ water and incense did not feature formally in the liturgy of the pioneer missionary non-conformists, but they certainly heard confessions informally and the symbolic interpretation of such rituals as the eucharist, for example, would have had much the same effect as a literal interpretation as far as their audiences were concerned.

These and other non-verbal communicative devices (such as religious paintings, sculptures and the use of stained glass in church buildings and even homes) were probably exploited more successfully by missionaries

4 An excellent illustration of the symbolic value of artifacts in communicating the Christian message was the so-called ‘blue ribbon army’, originally a children’s crusade associated with the temperance movement. The following example is based on the experience of the American Board Mission (ABM) to the Zulu in the colony of Natal. Mrs. Laura Bridgman, an ABM missionary who was stationed at Ummzumbe in southern Natal, started a temperance society among the primary schoolchildren in the early 1880s. If they agreed to abstain from drinking traditional Zulu beer they were given a blue ribbon: ‘... we planned a great picnic at the river and the children were to march around with music and flags and banners. This took with them like a charm, and enthusiasm was kindled. Then followed a series of meetings in the chapel...’ The boys and girls learned pieces, recitations and dialogues, the chapel was decorated in finest style with flowers, flags and banners. Much of the dramatics was employed with fine effect...’ The people ‘i.e. adults’ were amused, captivated and convinced. One by one they came forward to take the ribbon...’ (in Switzer 1971: 35-37). The blue ribbon army marched through the coastal stations of the ABM in Natal. Temperance tracts were published and the children’s crusade was taken up by other missionary societies as well as the settlers. Mrs. Bridgman became one of the founders of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union in Natal and, later on, in South Africa.
from the hierarchical, established State Churches of Western Europe, such as the Lutherans, Anglicans and Roman Catholics, who arrived in the latter half of the 19th century. Independent African Churches, moreover, were to use symbolic communicative techniques extensively and effectively from the 1890s.

Preaching and evangelizing, choral singing and daily prayer were encouraged from the beginning, and the effect of these and other verbal modes of communication on traditional oral cultures cannot be overestimated. African converts, recruited initially before the 1850s, embraced these techniques and were primarily responsible for the spectacular impact the tiny Christian community was to have on the non-Christian majority in the later 19th and early 20th centuries (Mills 1975).

Traditional songs, dances, folkstories and poetry continued to exist independently of mission influence even on the stations, but increasingly the mission appropriated these messages and altered or transformed their meaning in the ongoing task of constructing a consensus that would win the approval of the African Christian community. The mission did not control all oral media and it did not always or inevitably undermine the traditional culture of the non-literate, non-Christian majority. What the mission did was to recast this oral culture in a new and radically different framework. In essence, it created a new universe. Conversion from one to the other, for the first generation of converts at least, involved nothing less than a complete break with the universe of values and norms representative of traditional oral culture.

Creating a Literate Culture

The mission's ultimate success, however, stemmed from its monopoly over the written word. Mission station communities were centered on the church, school and either possession of or access to a printing press. Churches and schools were inseparable even on the more primitive stations, because the education of an African Christian community imbued with certain moral, emotional and intellectual qualities was deemed essential for the preservation and expansion of the Church. In turn, the preaching and teaching ministry was dependent on the mission's control and manipulation of literate culture.

While primary schools were located initially on the stations and the students were usually the children of converts, by the end of the century communities consisting largely of non-Christians were also sending their children to schools and preaching places established on an ever-expanding number of outstations. More specialized boarding schools were set up on the main mission stations which emphasized teacher training and, to a lesser extent, vocational training. Some of the more developed station communities of the prominent missionary societies evolved into
villages and even towns complete with primary, vocational and high schools, theological seminary and teacher-training college, farm, hospital, shops and sometimes even a post office; and, on a few of the stations, a printing press struggling to produce a literature in South Africa's four main African languages—Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho and Tswana.

Printing presses were acquired by several mission societies in the Cape Colony between the 1820s and the 1870s. The Methodists actually produced the earliest known black newspaper in Southern Africa Umshumayeli Wendaba ('Publisher of the News')—between July 1837 and April 1841, first in Grahamstown and later at Peddie in the eastern Cape. Written in Xhosa probably by white missionaries and published as an irregular quarterly, it also contained items of devotional concern to the African refugees-cum-converts in these frontier communities. In essence, it was an evangelical tract—an obviously dominant theme in the early African press.

The Anglicans acquired presses for several stations in the eastern Cape in the 1860s and 1870s, and in the later 19th and early 20th centuries missionary societies outside the Cape Colony were also active in publishing. This was especially true of Natal where several missions to the Zulu, including the Congregationalists (American Board), Lutherans (Swedish) and Roman Catholics (Mariannhill), were producing thousands of pages of printed material on a variety of subjects in the vernacular (Schutte 1969). By the 1880s, however, it was apparent that mission presses could not compete with commercial printing companies overseas and in the major cities of South Africa. It was cheaper and more efficient to publish material of interest to the Christian community in the secular world (McGregor 1977).

Nevertheless, two significant mission publishing centers had emerged during this period, and they were to play a major role in promoting a black press. The Presbyterians at Lovedale and the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) at Morija (modern Lesotho) became the major protestant mission publishing centers in Southern Africa. Lovedale printed material primarily in English and Xhosa while Morija produced books, pamphlets and serial publications in up to forty-five languages for countries throughout sub-Saharan Africa (Shepherd 1955; Zurcher 1972). Both missionary agencies were instrumental in promoting the works of African creative writers—especially those writing in Xhosa and Sotho, respectively. As such, they exercised a profound although not always positive influence on African literature in Southern Africa.5

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5. *Leselinyana La Lesotho* ('The Little Light of Lesotho'), published by the PEMS at Morija, is reputedly the oldest newspaper printed in an African language that is still in existence in sub-Saharan Africa. It was launched in November 1863 and continues today as a fortnightly. The only other significant mission printing and publishing center in South Africa was developed by
Lovedale Press and the Xhosa

The impact of the written word on the developing Christian station communities in Southern Africa is perhaps best exemplified by the Xhosa at Lovedale. The dialect spoken by the Ngqika Xhosa, one of the dominant chiefdoms in the eastern Cape, was accepted by the missionaries as the standard to be followed in developing a written Xhosa language. Once it was frozen in type, the written form of Xhosa as spoken by Ngqika's people was gradually established as the lingua franca of a major portion of the African people in southeastern Africa.

Early texts in Xhosa—the first known work was printed in 1823—were written phonetically using African informants. The missionaries did not really begin to master the language until the 1830s, when the first grammars were published. Missionary publications in Xhosa were devotional, evangelical and educational in content. The missionaries concentrated on producing translations of the Gospels and other portions of the Bible, catechisms, prayer books, religious homilies, hymns and primary-school instructional materials in addition to dictionaries and other works concerned with the language.

The goal of all the mission societies was to produce the whole of the Bible in Xhosa—the centerpiece of literate culture. The first translation of the New Testament appeared in 1846 and this was followed by the Old Testament in 1857. In the 1860s, the Presbyterian mission undertook to revise the Xhosa Bible and this was completed in 1887. Even English versions, however, were selling well in the more prominent mission communities of the eastern Cape by this period. The possession of books in the Christian home—ideally the Bible, hymnbook or catechism and perhaps one or two other religious publications—came to symbolize the Christian's commitment to a particular value system in much the same way as square houses, cotton clothing or the use of the plow.

Ikwazi ('Morning Star') was published jointly by the Presbyterians and the Methodists, for example, at Tyhume mission station near the present site of Lovedale between August 1844 and December 1845. The journal was concerned mainly with events between two warring Xhosa chiefdoms in the region and it contained the earliest known writing in Xhosa by Xhosa writers.

Among its contributors were William Kobe Ntsikana and Zaze Soga. William Kobe's father was the legendary Ntsikana who, in 1815, had a vision that changed his life and ultimately the lives of his people. He is believed to have been the first African Christian in the Cape Colony, and probably in Southern Africa. Although he himself attracted very few

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the Roman Catholics at Mariannhill in Natal, beginning in the 1880s. Later on, they also established a center at Mazenod in Lesotho.

6. The printing department at Lovedale was opened in 1861.
followers, his disciples were to be key mediators in making Christianity comprehensible to the Xhosa. Ntsikana’s beautiful hymn, ‘Ulo Thixo Okhulu, Ngose Zulwini’ (‘He, the Great God, High in Heaven’), exemplified his conversion experience and was a unifying symbol for the African Christian community (Hodgson 1980). William Kobe followed in his father’s footsteps to become one of the founding fathers of the Church. William Kobe’s son, also named William Kobe Ntsikana, was to become an important political figure in the Christian community in the 1880s and 1890s.

Zaze Soga was a son of Soga, a friend and companion of the prophet Ntsikana and a counsellor to several Xhosa chiefs. Zaze Soga’s father was reputedly the first Xhosa to use a plow, irrigate the land and grow cash crops for the market (Peires 1981: 108). The Soga family dynasty was to become one of the most influential in the Cape Colony.

English-Medium Newspapers

By the 1850s, English as well as the vernacular was being used as a medium of communication in the mission station communities. One of the earliest newspapers to adopt the trend was Indaba (‘The News’), which was published monthly at Lovedale between August 1862 and February 1865. One third of the journal, which had an estimated 500-600 readers, was in English for the ‘intellectual advancement’ in particular of school-going youth (Indaba, August 1862). Indaba contained news of general interest as well as religious news—a pattern that would become characteristic of the more influential periodical publications in future decades.

As a mission publication, Indaba tried to avoid ‘local and party politics’ but the journal covered Cape parliamentary news as well as overseas political news (ibid.). Legislation affecting Africans was a subject for discussion as well as a variety of other secular and religious topics of interest to the Christian community. Indaba’s correspondents were the vanguard of an educated elite. Among the journal’s contributors were Ntibane Mzimba, father of Pambini Mzimba, the most significant independent African Church leader in the Cape Colony at the turn of the century; Nikani Mantsayi, father of Robert Mantsayi, a prominent Cape African politician in the 1880s and 1890s; and Gwayi Tyamzashe, one of the first Africans to be ordained to the ministry in South Africa and the father of Henry Daniel Tyamzashe, editor of the Workers Herald, organ of the Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union, the principal African political and labor organization in Southern Africa during the 1920s.7

7. For information on these and other African correspondents with the mission press at Lovedale, see ODENDAAL 1984: ch. 1-11.
The most prominent writer for *Indaba* was Tiyo Soga, another son of Soga, the royal counsellor. Tiyo Soga was unquestionably the pioneer African literary figure in Southern Africa as well as its most important missionary spokesman until his death in 1871 (Williams 1978). The first book in Xhosa by an African was his translation of the first part of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, John Bunyan’s extended allegory in prose of the search for a Christian utopia. It was published by Lovedale Press in 1867. As Soga and other African writers of the period demonstrated, devotional, evangelical and primary educational themes acceptable to the missionaries continued to dominate book and pamphlet production in the vernacular at Lovedale and other missionary institutions. Between 1876 and 1882, for example, production at Lovedale Press rose from 6,000-7,000 to 12,800 books—virtually all hymnals and texts for the primary schools (Davis 1969: 263-264).8

Real access to literate culture even for the African Christian community, however, was limited to an élite conversant in English. The development of a specifically Xhosa literature—with a coterie of African authors and an established audience—was a product of the 20th century. Very few original works in Xhosa were printed before World War I. Lovedale Press had published an estimated 238 Xhosa manuscripts up to 1939—second in black Africa only to Swahili—but most of these were produced from the 1920s. The printing of original manuscripts, moreover, was virtually dependent on the goodwill of those missionaries who controlled the mission press. There is evidence that the missionaries at Lovedale and elsewhere effectively manipulated their control over the production of manuscripts until their monopoly was broken by the South African State in the 1950s.9

The Secular World

Mission journals in English and various African vernacular languages, however, were moving ever more confidently into the secular world by the 1860s and 1870s. Increasing numbers of Africans were literate in Xhosa, for example, and in post-primary schools at Lovedale and other mission stations an élite was being educated in English. At long last, education was beginning to have an impact on the African Christian community.

Undoubtedly the most important periodical produced in the first

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8. Along with Tiyo Soga, William Wellington Gqoba is also cited as a pioneer figure in Xhosa literature. A contemporary of Soga, he wrote essays and was an accomplished poet as well as a future editor of *Isigidiini Sama Nosa*.

9. On the role of the missionaries at Lovedale as gatekeepers monitoring the development of a Xhosa literature, see Peires 1979; Opland 1983.
fifty years of the mission press in Southern Africa was *Isigidimi Sama Xosa* ('The Xhosa Messenger'). Initially, it was a supplement in the *Kafir Express*, forerunner of the *South African Outlook* as the oldest, continuous missionary journal in South Africa. *Isigidimi* was launched as an independent Xhosa-language publication aimed exclusively at the Xhosa Christian community in July 1873. It was to appear as a regular monthly—and at intervals between 1879 and 1884 as a fortnightly—until its demise in December 1888.

Elijah Makiwane, an editorial assistant to James Stewart, principal of the secondary school at Lovedale and editor of the *Kafir Express*, was placed in charge of the new publication. For eight years Makiwane was responsible for the newspaper, the first known African editor of a mission journal in Southern Africa. In 1881 Makiwane, now an ordained minister, was succeeded by John Tengo Jabavu, a teacher and Methodist lay preacher. Jabavu had attended school at Healdtown, the principal Methodist mission station in the eastern Cape, and was continuing his studies at Lovedale. Makiwane, later a founder-member of several important African political and educational organizations, and Jabavu, soon to emerge as the most prominent black political figure in the colony, set the tone of the publication.

In addition to the editors, *Isigidimi* had more than twenty named correspondents representing at least thirty rural settlements and towns in the Cape and in the colony of Natal. The newspaper also received contributions from a broad section of the educated élite, many of whom had been writers for *Indaba* and other mission publications.

The African editors and contributors to *Isigidimi* were politically conscious and concerned with topical news and opinion of concern to their readers. The newspaper acted as a vehicle for mobilizing African opinion during this period. A sustained, albeit muted, level of protest could be discerned in the news and 'letters-to-the-editor' pages of *Isigidimi* that was to have important implications for the literate African community (Switzer & Switzer 1979: 45-46; Odendaal 1983: 49-53 sq.).

**Mission Press in Transition**

In the last half of the 19th century, the literate African Christian community found itself increasingly isolated and marginalized in colonial society. It was becoming ever more apparent that no matter how successful African modernizers were in meeting the 'civilized' standards of their conquerors, they would never be accepted on equal terms.

In Britain, the modernizing agencies of Victorian middle-class culture were being increasingly employed as agencies of social control. Liberal values, once articulated as rights, now became privileges to be inherited by those who were in power. The strategies used by the middle classes
to legitimate hegemonic control in the imperial metropole were employed for the same purposes by the middle classes in its settler-dominated satellites.

Missionary support for continuing British colonial efforts to destroy indigenous African societies in the 1870s and 1880s, for example, was increasingly criticized by the educated African Christian élite. *Isigidi*, the leading mission journal in the colony, was now condemned by many because it supported these settler-inspired wars (Brock 1974: 134).

At the same time, the modernizing African élite’s potential leadership role in the mission churches and schools was now being undermined. Attempts by the settlers to segregate, control and downgrade African education, initiated in the 1860s, were accelerated in the 1870s and 1880s. Particularly unsettling from the perspective of the African modernizers was the attitude of missionaries who seemed unwilling to oppose settler demands that they abandon the effort to educate an élite and concentrate instead on educating as many Africans as possible to the lowest levels of functional literacy.

Missionaries were actively debating the role of the African Christian community in colonial society during this period. James Stewart of Lovedale, for example, believed it was essential that the mission enterprise win the approval of the settlers. To do this effectively, African mission policy had to be in harmony with their interests.10 Stewart’s ideas signalled a shift in missionary attitudes from the pioneer generation, which had sought to ‘civilize’ the African to the level of the ‘civilized’ European, to the new generation, which sought to legitimize an inferior role for African Christians in a racially stratified society. In essence, subordination by race in a segregated society rather than incorporation of individuals by class in a potentially integrated society was more acceptable to the mission enterprise in the later colonial period.

Voices of Protest

The disillusionment of many African modernizers who found themselves increasingly alienated from mission culture was already apparent by the 1880s. The sense of abandonment was vividly expressed in the poem (quoted above) by Jonas Ntsiko, a blind catechist from the Anglican station of St. John’s at Umtata in the Transkei, who wrote under the pseudonym uHadi Waseluhlangeni (‘Harp of the Nation’).

African modernizers responded in a variety of ways to these developments. In the Cape Colony, in particular, they launched the first

10. For the educational policies pursued by the missionaries at Lovedale during the later Victorian period, see Brock 1974: ch. III; Burcheall 1979: ch. i-ii.
African pressure groups independent of settler or missionary control and sought to mobilize African opinion and organize the African vote in the 1880s and 1890s. The modernizers were guided primarily by the belief that if they participated in parliamentary politics they would influence the enactment of legislation more favorable to African interests.

Efforts were also made to establish indigenous political, educational and religious organizations that would offer the African a more independent base in the settler-defined and -dominated world of the later colonial period. The actions as well as the reactions of the modernizing Christian elite to their environment during the later Victorian period constitute the beginnings of African nationalism in Southern Africa.

These developments profoundly influenced the mission press. Tengo Jabavu, editor of Isigidimi, sensed that the depths of African protest had hardly been tapped. He not only brought his readers’ grievances nearer the surface but also tried to get the newspaper involved in Cape colonial politics by canvassing African voters for white politicians deemed to be sympathetic to black interests. This was too much for Stewart, the dynamic but increasingly paternalistic missionary segregationist who ultimately controlled Isigidimi, and Jabavu resigned in 1883. In November 1884, he launched Imvo Zabantsundu (‘Native Opinion’), the first newspaper owned and controlled by an African in Southern Africa. Isigidimi could not compete with a journal that provided a platform for black political aspirations and it ceased publication five years later when William Gqoba, editor at the time, died. A new era had begun.

Isigidimi’s demise suggested that the credibility of the mission press, even when it was a protest press, would depend in the future on its ability to communicate more effectively the secular and ecclesiastical aspirations of its African readers. Some mission publications accepted the challenge and made the transition during this period. Others did not. In any event, from the 1880s the mission press no longer had a captive audience.

11. The principle of a qualified but non-racial franchise was enshrined in the Cape Colony’s 1853 Constitution, when the settlers were granted representative government with their own parliament. They were granted responsible government in 1872, which opened up the possibility that African and ‘colored’ voters would be able to participate in the political life of the colony (Edgecombe 1978).

12. There is considerable debate over the dynamics of modernization within the African Christian community and the ambiguities of African nationalism in general during this period. See Mills 1975 (on the African clergy); Marks 1975, and Davis 1975-1976 (on John Duibe); Davis 1979 (on Elijah Makiwane); Ashley 1979 (on missionary education); Chanaowa 1950 (on mission-educated elites); Odenaal 1983 (on African politics); see also fn. 14.

From the 1890s, if not earlier, African nationalism was fatally undermined by the loss of economic independence. The economic decline of the peasant majority was accelerating while the Christian community was being increasingly denied the right to develop alternative opportunities in private business, commercial farming, the skilled trades and in the professions. See Etherington 1978: ch. IX; Bundy 1979: ch. IV sq.
Outside the Cape

Mission publications launched in Natal and in the interior during this period reflected the trends set in the eastern Cape. Many were published in English as well as the vernacular, and in terms of content they were not restricted to religious matters. General-interest news, including articles and letters of protest, formed an important part of some of these publications and a few were highly critical of colonial rule.

_Inkanyiso Yase Natal_ (‘The Natal Light’) was an interesting example of a mission newspaper that not only made the transition to an organ of political protest but was apparently placed entirely under African control. _Inkanyiso_ was an English-Zulu newspaper established in April 1889 by the Anglicans in Pietermaritzburg, Natal. It quickly gained a reputation as a protest publication and by 1891 it claimed 2,500 subscribers—a very high number for this period. In January 1895, the Anglicans turned the journal over to its African editors and for the last one and a half years of its life _Inkanyiso_ was a relatively militant organ of protest and probably the earliest African-controlled publication in Natal.

The London Missionary Society (LMS) and Methodist missions produced the earliest journals aimed at the Tswana Christian community from their stations at Kuruman, in the northern Cape, and Thaba ‘Nchu, in what is now the Orange Free State. Two publications, launched in the turbulent 1850s, were shortlived. _Mokaeri Oa Becuana, Le Muleri Oa Mahuku_ (‘The Teacher of the Bechuana, the Announcer of the News’), October 1857-May 1859, is regarded as the oldest newspaper in the Tswana language. It was a four-page general-interest newspaper which included translations of colonial regulations, religious articles and, of special importance, information on the frontier wars in the region. _Molekuli Oa Becuana_ (‘Bechuana Visitor’), May 1856-April 1858, was described by one observer as a ‘partly religious, partly political and social’ newspaper which apparently had an enthusiastic readership in and around the mission station community at Thaba ‘Nchu (Plaatje 1916: 4).

The major mission newspaper among the Tswana during this period, however, was _Mahoko A Becuana_ (‘News of/for the Batswana’), an eight-page journal produced by the LMS at Kuruman between January 1883 and July 1896. Like all the better religious publications at this time, _Mahoko_ covered general-interest as well as religious news, and it was widely read by ‘native peasants in Bechuanaland [modern Botswana], and elsewhere’ (ibid.: 5). It provided ‘insights into the life of the Church in the western Tswana area [. . .] and no less into the attitudes of the missionaries [. . .] a window into a significant period in the history of the Tswana people’ (Jones 1972: 119-120).

To an extent, then, a few mission journals appear to have had some success in making the transition to publishing critical news and opinion.
on contemporary events and issues of importance and interest to the Christian community. The trends discernible in the major publications outlined above, however, were not dominant in the mission press as a whole during the period. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that the serial publications of many missionary agencies actually became more restricted in terms of content after World War I.13

While the mission press before the 1880s tended to reflect the views of the European missionaries, those Africans who controlled journals of political news and opinion after the 1880s were equally at home in the mission experience and continued to reflect mission values. The apostles of African nationalism in South Africa during the later Victorian period included men like Tengo Jabavu (*Imvo Zabantsundu*), Solomon Plaatje (*Koranta Ea Becoana* and *Tsala Ea Batho*), Allan Soga and Walter Rubusana (*Izwi La Bantu*), Levi Khomo (*The Native Eye*), John Dube (*Ilanga Lase Natal*) and Mark Radebe (*Ipepa Lo Hlainga*). As nationalists, the grievances and aspirations they communicated through their publications were also the ruling ideas of the African Christian community.

Jabavu and *Imvo Zabantsundu*

The ambiguities of African nationalism in South Africa are fully reflected in the secularized political press of the African Christian community during the later Victorian period. Undoubtedly the most significant example is *Imvo Zabantsundu*, the Cape African newspaper edited by Jabavu, the single most important mobilizer of African political opinion in the subcontinent during the 19th century.14

Jabavu was the éminence grise behind a number of African political, cultural and economic organizations in the eastern Cape and his newspaper virtually established the agenda for discussion and debate on the options that were available to the African in colonial society. Jabavu

13. From the 1940s to the 1960s, for example, there was apparently a major upsurge in purely devotional and evangelical literature that was published in a variety of languages. In part, this was due to the appearance of several overseas evangelical missionary organizations which began operating in South Africa after World War II. The triumph of the National Party in 1948 and the implementation of apartheid also encouraged Afrikaans Churches to concentrate their missionary activities inside instead of outside the country as they had done previously. Furthermore, the growth of the African independent Church movement offered a receptive audience for these kinds of publications. Above all, the African literacy rate rose rapidly after World War II and encompassed about 50% of the adult population, for example, in 1970 (SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS 1972: 264).

14. Jabavu's role in African and Cape colonial society during the later Victorian period has not as yet received the attention it deserves. See *Jabavu* 1922; Ngccongo 1979; Ondendaal 1983: ch. II-III.
launched *Imvo* as a non-partisan journal—committed to libertarian values but independent of specific political interests. The newspaper was dedicated to ‘moderate men within all parties' (*Imvo*, Nov. 3, 1884), which in practice meant all settler politicians who were opposed to Afrikaner nationalism. Jabavu was certainly aware of the fact that English-speaking settlers were no more sympathetic than Dutch-speaking settlers to African needs. But he saw that if the English-Afrikaner split was deliberately polarized, his readers could more easily identify with the issues involved in settler parliamentary politics. Jabavu also hoped that editorial support for English-speaking colonists would lend credence to the popular myth that the political and cultural differences between the two dominant settler ethnic groups represented genuine ideological differences.

Jabavu’s newspaper was a protest journal at two levels. On the one hand, it sought to articulate and unify the interests and needs of the modernizing, mainly Christian African élite which by the late 19th century formed a distinct social class within Cape colonial society. Some idea of its composition can be discerned from a book produced by Stewart in 1887 in defense of Lovedale’s educational policies. More than 2,000 African students (1,520 males and 538 females) had been enrolled in post-primary classes since Lovedale seminary was established in 1841. The subsequent occupations of roughly seventy percent of these students were summarized and they represented a cross section of the modernizing sector—teachers, ordained and non-ordained clergy, transport riders and peasant farmers who owned or leased specific portions of land, law agents, police constables, journalists, magistrate’s clerks and court interpreters, and semi-skilled and skilled craftsmen such as carpenters, blacksmiths, sewing mistresses and dressmakers, telegraph operators, printers, bookbinders, wagon makers, masons, shoemakers, shop clerks, drugstore assistants, small traders and storemen (Stewart 1887: 533-534).

**A Petty Bourgeoisie**

*Imvo* was an effective protest journal for this educated Christian élite which, in essence, constituted an emerging black petty bourgeoisie in Cape colonial society. The communicators and consumers of news and opinion in *Imvo* and other black journals of the day stemmed from the same social strata. They remained, however, a very small segment of the African population as a whole.

*Imvo’s* circulation, for example, probably did not rise above 4,000 before 1910, even though, in addition to the eastern Cape, it was distributed in the colony of Natal, Basutoland (modern Lesotho), and the Afrikaner republics north of the Orange river. One can safely assume
that functional literacy rates were still very low—certainly less than five percent of the African population even in the Cape Colony. Thus there would be relatively fewer readers for each newspaper sold during this period, even though there may have been many more who heard the news read to them. In effect, the modernizers were the ‘organic intellectuals’ of their generation.\textsuperscript{15} They were the thinkers and organizers who concretized the ideas and attitudes of the social class to which they belonged.

As modernizers, they formed a nexus of bonded social and economic as well as political relationships in seeking to emulate the lifestyle of Victorian middle-class culture. The petty bourgeoisie were addicted to Victorian-model sports clubs, debating societies, sewing and singing groups, for example, especially in the towns. Temperance societies and various Church-related associations continued to be a powerful social as well as religious force in community life. These clubs and societies were well represented in the columns of \textit{Imvo}. The ‘old boy’ mission school networks, moreover, included increasing numbers of educated girls by the 1880s. Intermarriage between educated men and women was now the rule in African Christian communities. Personal and professional ties cemented in the rural areas were recreated when migrating to the urban areas.

African entrepreneurs became more common in the emerging towns of the eastern Cape in the 1880s and 1890s. Paul Xiniwe, a close friend of Jabavu and a member of several African political, religious and educational organizations, opened the first African hotel in the Colony (in Kingwilliamstown) in 1887. In 1894 he paid about 2,000 pounds for another hotel—a temperance hotel—that became a popular venue for the political and social gatherings of the local and regional petty bourgeoisie. Xiniwe has been described as ‘the leading entrepreneur among the eastern Cape modernizers’ (Odendaal 1983: 107) but he was by no means the only one. Shopkeepers, boarding-house operators, small traders, transport drivers, furniture makers and producers of other petty commodities were now beginning to establish themselves in the urban areas. \textit{Imvo} was a medium of mass communication for these entrepreneurs as well—a marketplace for information, ideas and attitudes.

On the other hand, \textit{Imvo} also sought to speak on behalf of all Africans throughout the subcontinent. Thus some representatives of the traditional African hierarchy—members of the royal families of various African chiefdoms—were part of the protest movement during this period. A few did use the newspapers, for example, to speak out against settler activities that were undermining their authority, taking away

\textsuperscript{15} For a discussion of this term, which was coined by Antonio Gramsci, see Hoare and Smith’s introduction to Gramsci’s chapter on ‘The Intellectuals’ (in Gramsci 1971: 3).
their land and impoverishing their people. At this level of protest, however, the interests of the traditional majority, even when mediated by the chiefs, were framed in terms of the interests of the modernizing élite.

Newspapers like *Imvo* would inform the masses of their rights and school them in the principles of parliamentary democracy. In effect, the grievances and aspirations of all Africans were to be expressed within a framework imposed on them by the petty bourgeoisie—'to tow these stragglers to the desired shore', as Jabavu himself put it (*Imvo*, Nov. 3, 1884).

Liberals in the Cape parliament—the so-called 'friends of the natives'—who had a political (and material) interest in cultivating African voters helped fund the newspaper. Jabavu was the election agent, for example, in a successful campaign to get James Rose-Innes, a prominent settler politician, a seat in the legislative assembly in 1884. It was Rose-Innes, his brother Richard and some liberal merchant-traders who furnished the capital and connections to enable Jabavu to launch *Imvo*. Richard Rose-Innes, one of the main attorneys involved in court disputes over registering Africans as voters in the eastern Cape, was the newspaper's first advertising manager.

Jabavu and his contemporaries sought to cultivate friendships with prominent white liberal politicians because they also saw themselves as liberals who wanted to harness the democratic institutions that formed the superstructure, as it were, of imperial rule. To men like Jabavu, the liberal settler élite seemed absolutely essential to the democratic process. These 'friends of the natives' could make parliamentary politics work on behalf of the African in the colony. Thus Jabavu became a principal mediator between the modernizing African and settler élites in the eastern Cape during the later Victorian period.

**Imperial Rule**

Jabavu also supported British supremacy in Southern Africa and, indeed, all the leaders of African political organizations in the eastern Cape preferred the indirect rule of metropolitan Britain to the direct rule of the Cape settlers. London was bombarded with letters and petitions from these and other groups during the later colonial period, seeking, among other things, imperial protection against land-grabbing colonists. Several attempts were made in the 1880s and 1890s, for example, to form African branches of the Empire League—launched by Cecil John Rhodes in a bid to mobilize public opinion in favor of a British takeover of the Afrikaner republic in the Transvaal (South African Republic). The Africans wanted to use the League not only against Afrikaner nationalism but also as a pressure group to lobby for the reintroduction of imperial rule at the Cape.
British trusteeship became one of the most cherished beliefs of the modernizing sector. The educated élite would continue to rely on imperial intervention on behalf of the African in the settler States—enshrined in solemn litanies of allegiance to a foreign monarch in a foreign country—until the 1930s.

Jabavu’s identification with the liberal settler tradition, moreover, meant that the politics of protest would be conducted strictly within the framework of the laws of the colony. Indeed, African politicians tended to take a narrow constructionist view of the political process in the Cape Colony. While qualified Africans could run for political office, for example, Jabavu and his contemporaries rejected this possibility because they didn’t want to antagonize the settler population or jeopardize the status of white liberal politicians who might represent their interests.

Like Dube and Plaatje (first president-general and secretary-general, respectively, of the African National Congress) and Mohandas K. Gandhi, who launched Indian Opinion in Natal in 1903, Jabavu was a master publicist. He maintained a wide-ranging correspondence with influential liberal lobbyists in and out of parliament in Cape Town and London. He believed in and relied on the tactics of constitutional protest—creating and legitimizing pressure groups, forming delegations and writing petitions to colonial authorities, and exploiting the printed word with letters, editorials and news stories in the black and, when possible, settler press.

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Publications edited or otherwise controlled by the African Christian community in Victorian South Africa are only beginning to be analyzed from the perspective of their ideological content. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the communicators and consumers of news and opinion in the African press were the prized products of a mission culture that overrode individual, denominational and even ethnic differences during this period. The printed word was a powerful unifying force in the Christian community and an enduring monument to the new lifestyle that mediated the form as well as the content of protest against colonial rule during the 19th century.

While the form of protest changed as the historical conditions giving rise to protest changed, the symbolic content of protest in the African press remained much the same. In the 20th century, the African press would continue to seek a reform of the institutions of colonial oppression that would allow some Africans, at least, a measure of economic, political and cultural accommodation in a white-dominated, racially stratified South Africa.

*University of Houston, School of Communication, 1985.*
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