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NEW COUNTRY, NEW RACE, NEW MEN: WAR, GENDER AND MILLENARIANISM IN XHOSALAND, 1855-1857

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In 1856-7, a teenager who lived in Xhosaland (today's eastern Cape, South Africa), under the alias of Nongqawuse, prophesied that if peasants killed cattle and abandoned grain, the dead would appear. Some 200,000 peasants complied. About 40,000 died. It was 'probably the greatest self-inflicted immolation of a people in all history'. Nongqawuse, say Xhosa-speakers, 'killed our nation'.¹

The limitations of contemporary sources (overwhelmingly written by Englishmen), and the racialized legacy of conquest, have hampered explanations. According to Xhosa oral traditions, and some black scholars, the British Governor of the Cape initiated the prophecies. Nongqawuse disseminated them. The absence of evidence does not undermine the theory. The Governor 'would not...have left evidence to "prove" what "every Xhosa" believes'.²

The white view, as it has been termed, stresses the movement's Xhosa roots. Most white historians analyze it as a millenarian response to the dislocations of conquest. It was 'a religious solution', after militarism had failed.³ A cattle epidemic, its central cause, represented punishment by the spirit world; 'the desire to propitiate the ancestors...inspired the movement', generating sacrifice of cattle already doomed to die.⁴ Colonial authorities, 'reacting to crises rather than setting the pace', played but a minor role in this inward-looking movement, with its lunar rhythms, its female visionary accorded cultural legitimacy in Xhosa society, its class contradictions and political struggles internal to Xhosaland.⁵ 'The cattle-killing did not

¹ N. Mostert, *Frontiers* (New York, 1992), 1187; J.B. Peires, *The Dead Will Arise* (London, 1989), xvi.

² H. Jaffe, *European Colonial Despotism* (London, 1994), 93.

³ B. Keller, 'Millenarianism and Resistance: the Xhosa Cattle Killing', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 13, 1-2, 1978, 109. See also G. Sirayi, 'The African perspective of the 1856/1857 cattle-killing movement', *South African Languages* 11, 1, 1991, 40.

⁴ Peires, *Dead*, 104.

⁵ Peires, *Dead*, 238. See also M. Wilson, 'Co-operation and Conflict: the Eastern Cape Frontier', in M. Wilson and L. Thompson, eds., *A History of South Africa to 1870* (Cape Town, 1982), 257; J. Lewis, 'Materialism and Idealism in the

emphasize hostility to the Cape' or settlers, stresses J.B. Peires, its most influential historian. Instead, believers 'looked forward to a millennium in which their dead ancestors would return'.⁶

What follows pursues the suggestion that a gendered analysis would reshape our understanding.⁷ Firstly, most accounts of the 'Nongqawuse Cattle-Killing' focus on one female prophet, one male domain. Yet there were many prophets, many domains. Non-cultivation had existed for almost a year before Nongqawuse won support. Causation needs rethinking. Neither sacrifice of sick cattle, nor an *agent provocateur*, explain non-cultivation before her intervention.

Secondly, patriarchs monopolized the body politic and most property. Power - and collaboration - were tied to masculinity. Black male villains are conspicuously absent from oral traditions. Yet the single most significant individual commanding destruction of male property was the Xhosa king.

Thirdly, all accounts neglect a quintessential masculine domain. The movement mushroomed under the shadow of war: the 1850-3 frontier war, the 1853-6 Crimean war, looming war between the Orange Free State and Lesotho, frontier war panics every few months. In 1856, with sixty per cent of the Xhosa living in the empire's only military colony, the Governor, Sir George Grey, orchestrated a panic. Crimean veterans were rushed to the frontier. Abandonment of peasant practices occurred in the context of eight prior wars, a European war, constant war scares, and the biggest European army ever on the frontier. Since 'nationalism was almost indissolubly linked...with the idea of war', this, too, was more significant than normally conceded.⁸

Fourthly, although the apocalyptic tradition is 'militantly patriarchal', and gendered rhetoric saturates sources, the teenager's millennium is typically described in gender-neutral terms. 'The most important [expectation] obviously, was "that the

Historiography of the Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement 1856-7', *South African Historical Journal* (hereafter *SAHJ*) 25, 1991; T. Stapleton, 'Reluctant Slaughter: Rethinking Maqoma's Role in the Xhosa Cattle-Killing (1853-1857)', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26, 2, 1993.

⁶ J. Peires, 'The Late Great Plot: the Official Delusion concerning the Xhosa Cattle Killing 1856-57', *History in Africa* 12, 1985, 256.

⁷ J. Guy, 'A Landmark, not a Breakthrough', *SAHJ* 25, 1991, 231; H. Bradford, 'Women, Gender and Colonialism: Rethinking the History of the British Cape Colony and its Frontier Zones, c1806-1870', *Journal of African History* 37, 1996, 360-8.

⁸ M. Howard, *The Lessons of History* (New York, 1991), 39.

whole nation will rise from the dead".⁹ The whole nation would not arise. Only men would appear. Only certain men would appear: brave black men, in an army, under Chief Sifuba-sibanzi (Broad-Chested/Great Strength.) They would drive white men out of the land. The most important expectation was that masculine black men of old would - unlike living Xhosa men - get rid of Englishmen.

Finally, gender-biased accounts of warfare hinder understanding of this army. Prior warfare has been narrated as a *Boy's Own* romance: war demonstrated 'they were truly men'; this was a 'heroic age' for which chiefs 'deserve a salute'; 'the Xhosa were never defeated on the battlefield'. Yet a 'giant' wardoctor had led his followers into disaster.¹⁰ He had invoked the Broad-Chested One. He demanded cattle slaughter. He had dead warriors in his army. The teenager termed herself his prophetic descendant. Tales of men's heroic warfare and a woman's millenarianism could be told differently: as men's disastrous millenarianism, and a woman's warfare.

I am arguing, then, for a longer, broader, less gender-biased perspective. A woman, in a militarized context stretching way beyond Xhosaland, had gatecrashed into a male occupation. As a seer, communicating with an army, she spoke out of a tradition that had created male 'giants'. Rather than indigenous dynamics or an imperialist plot, a dialectic operated. Action sparked reaction in a vicious spiral, until the inflow of European troops created mass commitment to an invisible black army - and a holocaust. The catastrophe emerged, above all, from the cauldron of war.

'OUR FATHERS WERE MEN'

Between 1779 and 1853 - a lifespan - Xhosaland and the Cape clashed in eight wars. In the first two skirmishes, the Xhosa lost no land. When Britain seized the (Dutch) Cape Colony in 1795, 'the Xhosa nation was expanding, aggressive'.¹¹ After the third (1799-1802), fourth (1811-12), fifth (1818-19), sixth (1834-35), seventh (1846-47) and eighth (1850-53) wars, most of Xhosaland had been expropriated or colonized. 'British Kaffraria' existed west of the Kei river. Independent Xhosaland had been repeatedly invaded. Scorched earth tactics left a linguistic mark: the Xhosa word for infantry also meant locusts (*imiqikela*).

⁹ C. Keller, 'The Breast, the Apocalypse and the Colonial Journey', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 10, 1994, 68; Peires, *Dead*, 128.

¹⁰ J. B. Peires, *The House of Phalo* (Johannesburg, 1981), 139, 164; J. B. Peires, 'Suicide or Genocide? Xhosa Perceptions of the Nongqawuse Catastrophe', *Radical History Review* 46/7, 1990, 55; Peires, *Dead*, 1.

¹¹ Peires, *Phalo*, 161.

The warcry *ilizwe lifile* - war has broken out - meant, literally, the land is dead.

Peasants did not uphold death of the land as a masculine ideal. The stereotypical Xhosa man was 'decidedly...the herdsman, rather than the warrior'. But when a chief declared war, his men had to fight. The chief's wardoctor strengthened them and weakened enemies: 'magic affected every human activity but more particularly war'.¹²

Land/sea oppositions were central in this clash between a maritime empire and peasants dreading the sea. After the second confrontation with imperial troops, a nationalist prophet arose. Nxele told men to lay down their weapons; he was the son of God. His mother had allegedly emerged from *Uhlanga*: a vast underground cavern, from which the sun rose daily and the first people, the first stock, had emerged; all rivers potentially concealed openings to it. His Father, the Great Chief, had sent Nxele to earth from this cavern. The dead did not die: they went to the Chief and his eldest son, 'the broad-breasted (*Sifubasibanzi*) son', who both lived in water, potentially in all rivers. Whites, said Nxele, having murdered their God's son, had been condemned to inhabit the ocean, but were now emerging, seeking land. If Xhosa men killed all mud-coloured cattle, purified themselves, and called on the Broad-Chested One, men who had died, the 'underground people', would rise, armed. Whites would be returned to their country, the ocean.¹³

In 1819, Nxele prepared six thousand warriors to attack the region's military centre, Grahamstown. He had been sent to the Xhosa nation by uHlanga (God), who controlled lightning, peasants' answer to artillery; forefathers would aid them. When the cannons fired, many knelt, calling on the Broad-Chested One. They were massacred. The biggest Xhosa army ever mobilized was defeated by some 350 soldiers.¹⁴

The reputation of the son of God survived. Witchcraft was responsible. Most disasters, diseases, deaths, were ascribed to witchcraft, often practised with *ubuthi* (evil substances.) Nxele had rightly condemned witchcraft. He had rightly said that

¹² S. Kay, *Travels and Researches in Caffraria* (London 1833), 127; Peires, *Phalo*, 136.

¹³ A Native Minister, *The Natives and their Missionaries* (Lovedale, c1908), 34-5; W. Rubusana, *Zemk'iinkomo Magwalandini* (London, 1911), 190. See also South African Library, Grey collection, 10b10, W. Kaye, 'Kafir Legends and History'; A. Steedman, *Wanderings and Adventures in the Interior of Southern Africa* (Cape Town, 1966), 249.

¹⁴ J. Hodgson, 'Ntsikana: History and Symbol' (PhD, University of Cape Town, 1984), 209-214.

fathers' aid was crucial. 'Our fathers were *men*', one of his councillors told officers. They had fed their families from their cattle, fought for their possessions, driven Boers out. Sons' history was different. 'We failed - and you are here.'¹⁵

Sons continued to fail. Male privileges - land, cattle, political power - haemorrhaged away. Chiefs - 'bulls' ruling 'dogs', 'fathers' ruling 'children' - were subordinated to racialized, gendered power. By 1848, many a chief in British Kaffraria was regarded as '"an old wife"', bossed around by Englishmen. If a key cause of millenarian movements is the undermining of elites, they consisted here of patriarchs undergoing emasculation.¹⁶

Weakening of 'fathers' provided opportunities for 'children'. In 1850, a teenager displayed the abhorrence of pollution and spirituality that were signs of becoming an *igqirha* (prophet/doctor/witch-finder.) He virtually lived in a river, acquired the name Mlanjeni ('In the River'), and preached that the Xhosa had to forsake bloodshed, destroy *ubuthi* and worship the sun as God.¹⁷ As war again loomed, Sandile, the 'Great Bull' in British Kaffraria, descended on this frail teenager, to secure him as a wardoctor.

An order was issued. All mud- and cream-coloured cattle had to be killed. '[O]ld men would rise from the ground'; lightning would fall; white men 'would melt away', leaving their property to Xhosa men.¹⁸ Butchery erupted. Mlanjeni's war began, the biggest anti-colonial war in sub-Saharan Africa in the nineteenth century. It united Xhosa, Thembu and Khoi men against Englishmen; it had elements of a genocidal racial war. The imperial slogan was 'extermination'. Carnage was unprecedented: soldiers killed women with reaping hooks. Cultivation was pointless; many starved to death. The Riverman made his last promise before succumbing to tuberculosis. All killed in his war - about one in twelve Xhosa - would rise.¹⁹

The two greatest wardoctors had linked the concepts of war, cattle-killing and male resurrection - and had bequeathed disasters. But the sins of the living explained calamities; the

¹⁵ Mostert, *Frontiers*, 486. See also GH 8/26, Umnyungula vs Chief Toise, 10 May 1855.

¹⁶ A. du Toit, *The Earliest South African Documents on the Education and Civilization of the Bantu* (London, 1963), 80. See also M. Adas, *Prophets of Rebellion* (University of California Press, 1979), 47.

¹⁷ G. Brown, *Personal Adventure in South Africa* (London, 1855), 37: Peires, *Dead*, 2.

¹⁸ M. Berning, ed., *The Historical "Conversations" of Sir George Cory* (Grahamstown, 1989), 130; Brown, *Adventure*, 38.

¹⁹ Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1077; Peires, *Dead*, 12-30.

ability of dead and divine men to kill continued to be valorized. Both wardoctors had rejected bloodshed, rejected imperial gender norms, rejected remaking black men in the image of masters who practised brute force and western rationality. They retained popular support in a society undergoing conquest, where war was equated with death of the land.

BRITISH KAFFRARIA AND GOVERNOR GREY

In colonized Xhosaland, its populace awash with widows, orphans, and women, historic changes were occurring. Land shortage was crippling. Bridewealth, around ten oxen, was increasingly beyond reach. The Ngqika Xhosa under Sandile had borne the brunt of recent fighting; in 1848, the most common number of cattle possessed by a Ngqika man was two. Over one in three Ngqika women was unmarried or a widow. Numerous homesteads did not possess the half dozen cows needed for survival. Although fermented milk remained central in diets, many men began cultivating. Wage labour was no longer voluntary.²⁰

An army of occupation, and a state applying martial law, headed by Colonel John Maclean, oversaw these traumatic changes. Soldiers - whose redcoats terrified one child, who thought they were stained with the blood of those they had killed - manned nearly thirty military posts in and around British Kaffraria. War scares were endemic: fewer than 4,000 soldiers monitored some 105,000 Xhosa in British Kaffraria alone. A major panic erupted after Britain declared war on Russia in 1854. Settlers were agitated by troop exodus. Then Mfengu allies allegedly began peeling away. Redcoats rushed to the frontier simply raised political temperatures. The Government, said Sandile, clearly intended war.²¹

If blacks saw more 'locusts' as a sign of war, whites read sowing as an indicator of peace. If the Xhosa intended war, argued Charles Brownlee, monitoring Sandile's chiefdom, they would not be sowing: their crops could so easily be destroyed. Commander-in-Chief Grey, who arrived during this panic, fresh from subjugating the Maori, on whom he had honed his ruthless opportunism, had different ideas. The Xhosa were a 'military nation'. Each chiefdom had 'a standing army'. A 'grand confederacy against our power' supposedly existed. Since the

²⁰ Colonel Maclean, *A Compendium of Kafir Laws and Customs* (Mount Coke, 1858), 146, 152; J. Lewis, 'An Economic History of the Ciskei, 1848-1900' (PhD, University of Cape Town, 1984), 188, 287; Peires, *Phalo*, 106, 167.

²¹ GH 8/25, C. Brownlee to Maclean, 24 Nov. 1854; GH 36/1, Report by D. Bolton, 27 Feb. 1856; *King William's Town Gazette* (hereafter *KWTG*), 16 Oct. 1856; S. Cronwright-Schreiner, *The Life of Olive Schreiner* (London, 1924), 68.

empire was militarily stretched, British ex-soldiers and their families - some twenty-five thousand whites - should colonize British Kaffraria, and live in villages in defensible cottages. Indigenes should be pacified through religion, employment, and training in agriculture. £40,000 a year from Britain was required.²²

Officialdom's agrarian plans accelerated when an epidemic killed perhaps one in three cattle in Xhosaland between early 1855 and mid-1856. Lungsickness has attracted much academic attention; its impact on the gender balance of power has not. It bankrupted patriarchs, specifically, rendering many redundant as patrons. Female-dominated *amagqirha*, who had to uncover the witches who had inflicted lungsickness, were thrust to the fore. Men's forced march into women's domain accelerated. '[I]t is all corn now our cattle are nearly done', mourned men; 'this country is too small'.²³ Xhosaland, plagued with droughts and clay soils, with a population density in Ngqika chiefdoms about seven times higher than that deemed appropriate for meeting subsistence, was poorly suited to heavy reliance on grain. The crops of Sandile's Great Wife failed in 1854-5 due to soil exhaustion. Nonetheless, men could delay having to grapple with problems women had long faced. Cattle deaths generated enormous sales of hides and horns. King Sarhili owned some six thousand oxen. When the epidemic threatened them, he began arranging sale of hides. Patriarchs losing cattle typically owned cash.²⁴

For officialdom, however, the epidemic presented 'extraordinary advantages for the introduction of a new system, one main object of which is to teach them to rely upon agricultural pursuits'. Grey also thought lungsickness presented a 'most favourable opportunity for destroying...the Kaffir system of polity'.²⁵ Direct rule should be introduced. British officers would be injected into chiefdoms as magistrates. Chiefs were to become salaried employees. The legitimacy of 'bulls' was further eroded when they fell in with these plans. When Sandile, whose favourite daughter was called Victoria, promoted irrigation, he was contemptuously nicknamed 'Irrigation Ditch', and accused of

²² GH 23/26, G. Grey to Sir G. Grey Bart, 22 Dec. 1854, 7 March 1855; Grey to H. Labouchere, 18 Oct. 1856. See also GH 8/25, Brownlee to Maclean, 26 Oct. 1854; GH 30/4, Grey to Maclean, 7 Sept. 1855.

²³ BK 81, J. Gawler to Maclean, 29 May 1858. See also Maclean, *Compendium*, 140.

²⁴ GH 8/26, Brownlee to Maclean, 24 March 1855; GH 8/28, Brownlee to Maclean, 5 April 1856; J. Rutherford, *Sir George Grey* (London, 1961), 327-8; Lewis, 'History', 279; Peires, *Dead*, 278.

²⁵ GH 23/26, Grey to Lord Russell, 19 July 1855; *Imperial Blue Book* (hereafter *IBB*) 2096, 1856, Grey to Sir W. Molesworth, 18 Dec. 1855.

renouncing the struggle to regain expropriated land. The Ngqika 'had no Chief', one of his brothers declared. The Xhosa were 'eminently national', were unwilling 'to be civilized', noted officialdom uneasily of Grey's sweeping innovations.²⁶

Classic underpinnings of peasant millenarianism were now in place. There had been a natural disaster and accelerated change in a colony. Commoners whose cultural arrogance was renowned, who would not speak a word of Dutch or English 'if he thinks that you do not understand Kaffer Language', were being unwillingly propelled into colonizers' world.²⁷ Elites were not responding to adequately to crisis: black fathers were becoming white men's children; witch-finders could not control an epidemic; men were tumbling into women's work. But the ranks of peasant intellectuals were open to new recruits, talking of the enemies of their enemy - and of the 'men' of the past.

THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING

In mid-1855, an archdeacon visited chief Mhala, who had promised to abandon Xhosa customs, learn to plough, and had, like many 'bulls', adopted the dress codes of conquerors: a British soldier's uniform. He headed the second biggest British Kaffrarian chiefdom, neutral in the last three wars, stricken with lungsickness. Although Mhala apparently read British domination as evidence of masculine superiority, which he should emulate, other men were calling this superiority into question. His councillors wanted news about Russian artillery and skin colour. Asked why they were so interested in a war in which almost a quarter of British forces died, one piously declared they were afraid 'the poor English should be beaten and then the Russians might come'.²⁸ In independent Xhosaland, with some 70,000 Gcaleka Xhosa with little experience of fighting frontier wars, Sarhili told the archdeacon that he 'expected the Russians had beaten the English'. They would 'turn the English out of South

²⁶ GH 8/29, Brownlee to Maclean, 17 Oct. 1855; GH 8/27, Maclean to W. Liddle, 4 Aug. 1855. See also GH 8/26, Brownlee to Maclean, 30 May 1855; GH 8/27, Brownlee to Maclean, 14 July 1855, 15 Nov. 1855.

²⁷ U. Long, ed., *The Chronicle of Jeremiah Goldswain* (Cape Town, 1949), vol.II, 122. See also N. Cohn, 'Medieval Millenarism: its Bearing on the Comparative Study of Millenarian Movements' in S. Thrupp, ed., *Millennial Dreams in Action* (Hague, 1962), 40; K. Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth* (Oxford, 1980), 96; Adas, *Prophets*, 140, 183.

²⁸ D. Varley and H. Matthew, eds., *The Cape Journals of Archdeacon N.J.Merriman 1848-1855* (Cape Town, 1957), 215-6. See also *IBB 912, 1847-48*, Umhala to Governor, 29 Dec. 1847, 36; R. Gray, *Journal of a Visitation of the Diocese of Graham's Town in July and August, 1856* (London, 1857), 37-8.

Africa as well', predicted the king, whose father had been captured and killed in the sixth war.²⁹ Englishmen had scarcely paused for breath between fighting Mlanjeni's war and the biggest global war between 1815 and 1914. The Xhosa posited ever greater continuity. 'The Russians are black people like ourselves'. Mlanjeni's war had left gaping gaps in many homesteads; these were now explained. The Riverman, Nxele, and dead Xhosa warriors were in Russia. Nxele headed a 'black conquering Army', annihilating Englishmen. Other deaths were also on peasant minds. Many believed Mlanjeni could restore their cattle to life.³⁰

Until this occurred, alternative ways of feeding families loomed large. One migrant had a solution for those agitated by heavier reliance on crops. He returned from the Cape telling the Xhosa 'not to sow much, as the Russians were coming and would give them back the land'. As the spring sowing season approached, cultivation became an issue. Rumours spread: war was imminent. Prophets arose. Most were women, who have passed out of history's glare into obscurity. A woman 'offering any opinion at all was a source of astonishment' to many men - except when she did so on 'great occasions', as an *igqirha*, when her spiritual authority facilitated a challenge to gender norms.³¹

One was the subject of chief Kama, a Christian, revering Queen Victoria as his Great Chief, and boasting of being a 'black man' with a 'white heart'.³² He had collaborated in the eighth war; he and some three hundred men received expropriated land. Within a couple of years, as land-hungry peasants abandoned their own chiefs, some thirteen thousand people were nominally under his rule. The population density was impossibly high. Many were farm labourers. By the spring of 1855, cattle deaths had soared. A prophet began attracting attention.³³

She is identified only as a wife, living in her father-in-law's homestead, married to a man under chief Stokwe. Stokwe, weeping, had surrendered his arms in the seventh war, and been derided as

²⁹ Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1187.

³⁰ J. Chalmers, *Tiyo Soga* (Edinburgh, 1878), 102-3; GH 8/27, Maclean to General, 16 Oct. 1855; see also C. Canham to B. Nicholson, 30 Sept. 1855.

³¹ GH 8/49, Maclean to Grey, 30 Oct. 1856; Ward, *Kaffirland*, 260; see also GH 20/2/1, 'Information from a shrewd and trustworthy native', 14 Oct. 1855. These prophets have been noticed in passing - but claims are often inaccurate.

³² J. Hodgson, 'A Battle for Sacred Power: Christian Beginnings among the Xhosa', in R. Elphick and R. Davenport, eds., *Christianity in South Africa* (Oxford, 1997), 79.

³³ Maclean, *Compendium*, 166; C. Sadler, comp., *Never a Young Man* (Cape Town, 1967), 137.

a woman. He emerged from this conflict without one ox; his daughter entered domestic service. Stokwe's people, however, who had lost their land and many men in the next war, and loathed Christianity, had a reputation for ferocity.³⁴ The prophet said she was communicating with a victorious 'black nation across the seas', coming to 'assist the [Xhosa] against the English'. People were to dispose of cattle and not to cultivate, 'as when the war takes place, Cattle and Corn will be an encumbrance'. Men should make bigger cattle folds, where 'at the appointed time they would find Cattle.'³⁵

A woman, living among immigrants undergoing proletarianization, surrounded by dying cattle and expected to work overcrowded land, subject of one chief taunted for effeminacy and of another who had rejected Xhosa masculine norms, was proposing that a black nation would 'assist' the Xhosa, and that peasant attributes would undermine militarism. They had regularly done so in the past: 'men, instead of fighting, ran about looking after their cattle'.³⁶ In 1835, and again in 1846, martial fervour melted away when spring approached. In 1846, men sat down, *en masse*, in front of troops. They did not want to fight, they said; they wanted their women to sow. The war, temporarily, ended. In the next war, many civilians, terrified of having their grain destroyed, promised to try to negotiate surrender.³⁷ Men with cattle to herd, granaries to protect, and women who sowed, had patently not fought to the bitter end. This militant proposed remaking peasants in the image of proletarians, and relying on the black nation for cattle.

Warriors would arrive, she said, on New Year's Day. Sandile simultaneously became a state employee. This, a chief told him, had military implications. The English were fighting; was Sandile 'prepared to go with his men and help...I am ready.'³⁸ Having 'bulls' commit every 'dog' to fighting for the empire was not a popular dream. But New Year's Day came and went; the only new arrival was the officer-magistrate. He reported antagonism to 'white men as Chiefs', and avid interest in British deaths in the Crimea. People had been told 'they need not plant as the Russians would come and fight'. The "War Doctors" spread false reports

³⁴ H. Ward, *Five Years in Kaffirland* (London, 1848), vol.II, 34-35, 54; Brown, *Adventure*, 26; Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1049; Peires, *Dead*, 68; Peires, *Phalo*, 256; Long, ed., *Goldswain*, 190.

³⁵ GH 20/2/1, information from 'a shrewd and trustworthy native', 14 Oct. 1855; BK 70, Brownlee to Maclean, 11 May 1856.

³⁶ C. Brownlee, *Reminiscences of Kafir Life and History* (Pietermaritzburg, 1977), 141.

³⁷ Ward, *Kaffirland*, 64; Mostert, *Frontiers*, 903-4; Peires, *Dead*, 21-22; Peires, *Phalo*, 152-3.

³⁸ GH 8/27, Brownlee to Maclean, 6 Dec. 1855. See also GH 28/71, F. Reeve to Maclean, 2 Aug. 1856.

about this war'.³⁹

The first prophet was expelled; another promptly replaced her. Her husband, 'Bhulu', was Kama's councillor. She was hostile to his chief, his property, the entire order. She spoke of imminent Russian victory - and often echoed Nxele, allegedly leading the black conquerers. The Xhosa would be 'the favoured race' when 'white men are swept from the face of the earth', because God had cursed them, for crucifying His son. All Xhosa would renounce Christianity; game-skin karosses would arrive. She directed cattle-killing, non-cultivation and abandonment of witchcraft so that 'the good time may come': she dug a trench so that witches would tumble underground.⁴⁰ Men, not women, were pressurized to dust themselves over with English culture and ally with imperialists. Men reaped most benefits that androcentric colonialism offered. The gap between this female nationalist, and her husband and chief, represented a broader trend.

Many in Kama's chiefdom had ties to those under his brother, Phato. Lungsickness made worse inroads in Phato's country than perhaps anywhere else. Drought underscored the problems in transferring weight to an agrarian leg. The major prophet here assumed as his new name 'Sihele' (Assegai.) He called for non-cultivation and disposal of cattle; these would be encumbrances in war. Unusually, the chief was a convert to the cause. He was 'no longer a man', mourned Phato as he surrendered in the seventh war; 'an Englishman is like a stone so strong'.⁴¹ In his prime, he and many followers had called on Nxele's Broad-Chested One to raise forefathers. Now he was going blind; his cattle were evaporating; 'men' were even more appealing. Phato 'was amongst the first to listen to the War Doctors, who advised the people not to sow'. Most subjects followed his example.⁴²

A couple of miles beyond Phato's chiefdom, on the other side of the Kei, the only known prophet in independent Xhosaland existed. She spoke of Sifuba-sibanzi; she demanded cattle-killing and abandonment of witchcraft. But she prophesied for months before eliciting a reaction.⁴³ Migrants were more responsive, to rumour. Mlanjeni 'had sent word from the great war across the seas', reported the mother of one. There 'was to be a great war in the land'; 'they were to withdraw all their people from among the

³⁹ BK 86, Reeve to Maclean, 7 May 1856, 7 March 1856.

⁴⁰ BK 70, Brownlee to Maclean, 11 May 1856.

⁴¹ Ward, *Kaffirland*, 322; BK 14, Examination of Kwitchi, 14 Jan. 1858. See also GH 20/2/1, information from 'a shrewd and trustworthy native', 14 Oct. 1855.

⁴² BK 86, Reeve to Maclean, 4 June 1856. See also W. Hammond-Tooke, ed., *The Journal of William Shaw* (Cape Town, 1972), 103.

⁴³ BK 71, Brownlee to Maclean, 12 Dec. 1856; Berning, ed., "Conversations", 103.

white men'. The Riverman, said one group of deserters, had caused the Crimean war. Since all troops would be sent to Russia, there 'would be a good opportunity to fight the English'.⁴⁴

This year-long period of rumours and prophecies of war was the start of the movement. This, allegedly inspired by desires to appease Xhosa ancestors inflicting lungsickness, began instead with talk of British defeats and black Russians, of wardoctors and warriors, with a prophet called 'Assegai' and actions prescribed in the name of war. A movement with supposedly little nationalist content began with overt antagonism to imperialism. A movement rarely seen in terms of gender politics had women as the main prophets, challenging men, their male-only domains, suggesting how wars could be better fought. Leading 'bulls' in the chiefdoms where the movement erupted had departed from heroic masculine norms; these were all chiefdoms that had 'sat still' or were imperial allies in Mlanjeni's war; patriarchs were also often losing their cattle. Prophets stressed that those wanting a 'good time' should look primarily to other men. At the heart of nationalist movements, it has been argued, lies glorification of indigenous manpower. At the centre of millenarian movements, lies a new man, new criteria for measuring manhood.⁴⁵ The glorification here was not of living manpower, but of black Russians and dead Xhosa men. The masculine ideal was militarism. Class attributes were denounced in the name of a gender ideal.

A movement conceptualized as cattle-killing started, however, only with non-cultivation. Some eight hundred homesteads in Phato's chiefdom, a quarter of those in the colony, grew no crops. Many of Mhala's people, some of Kama's, some of two ardent pro-colonial chiefs, joined them, defying chiefs.⁴⁶ Regions hard hit by lungsickness were epicentres of non-cultivation, but there were no reports of cattle-killing in response to prophecies. Information on this phase is sparse precisely because patriarchs were not acting in alarming ways, and showed little if any desire to kill surviving cattle. Nothing is known of the dynamics of non-cultivation (which was probably facilitated by cash, by reluctance to assume the impossible burden of making crops central in diets.) All that is clear is that the only known prophet in independent Xhosaland did not call for non-cultivation. Agriculture proceeded here, and in Ngqika chiefdoms, free of lungsickness. Non-cultivation was confined to a military colony subjected to reforms intended to transform patriarchs losing their cattle into agriculturists. The response was refusal to sow, in the name of war.

⁴⁴ *IBB 2202 of 1857*, R. Giddy, 'Notes', 30; BK 10, statement by Jonas, 14 Feb. 1856.

⁴⁵ J. Breuilly, *Nation and State* (Manchester, 1985), 26; Burridge, *New Heaven*, 11, 13.

⁴⁶ BK 70, Brownlee to Grey, 11 May 1856.

Xhosa men had, in one way or another, been fighting Englishmen for almost a decade: in the 1846-7 war, the 1850-3 war, the 1853-6 Crimean war. Success, at last, seemed within reach. Look-outs were placed on hills, to signal the arrival of a black army on Xhosaland's coast.⁴⁷

THE BRITISH AND GERMANS ARE COMING

Whites, too, had war on their minds. 1856 opened with a scare, involving disaffected Khoi soldiers. The Xhosa were allegedly restless. He would request five thousand more soldiers, stated Lieutenant-General Jackson, commander of frontier troops, were it not for the Crimean war.⁴⁸ This, however, was almost over. London had an embarrassing problem: German mercenaries recruited too late to fight remained on the payroll. Since defensible cottages in British Kaffraria had appealed to few Englishmen, an alternative began emerging.

Barely had a European war ended when militarism in Africa began shaping frontier politics. This, absent from analyses of 'cattle-killing', was one of its most significant causes. Its origins lay in rising Boer-BaSotho tensions. In April, Grey was informed by the Orange Free State, newly independent, desperate for allies, that it was about to attack a chief linked to the BaSotho paramount, Moshoeshoe. Simultaneously, Jackson reported that the Xhosa were preparing for war and expected support from Moshoeshoe. He wanted more troops. Grey disagreed with his diagnosis but agreed with the solution. More troops were indeed needed, due to Free State complications.⁴⁹

Importing troops into a British colony, because a Boer state was about to attack a chief in Lesotho, appealed to Grey, who had aligned himself with Boers, and wanted them back under British rule. It made minimal sense domestically. Grey's outstanding record in military disinformation came to his aid. His army chief, he claimed, as he dispatched a warship to Mauritius, felt the Cape was about to be attacked by 'formidable masses of combined natives headed by Moshesh'. A regiment had to be obtained from Mauritius 'in the *shortest possible time*'. He also rushed Cape soldiers to the frontier. He then blandly informed London that 'we have no sufficient evidence that any combination has been entered into...'⁵⁰

⁴⁷ GH 8/29, Maclean to Grey, 3 July 1856; W. Scully, *Further Reminiscences of a South African Pioneer* (London, 1913), 310.

⁴⁸ GH 23/26, Grey to Grey, 8 Feb. 1856.

⁴⁹ GH 8/31, Maclean to Grey, 20 March 1857, enclosing extracts; GH 23/26, Grey to Labouchere, 24 April 1856; G. Theal, *Basutoland Records*, vol.II (Cape Town, 1964), 171-3.

⁵⁰ GH 30/11, Grey to Commodore Trotter, 22 April 1856; GH 36/1, H.

There was no evidence. But Grey had taken a fateful step. He was rushing redcoats to the frontier, because, allegedly, the Cape was about to be attacked. What has long been read as the deluded conclusion officialdom drew about the 'cattle-killing' - it was a war plot, orchestrated by Moshoeshoe - was not a conclusion. Grey presented this as a *premise*. A cascade of consequences followed.

Cape Town gentlemen were incredulous when warned of the imminent attack. On the frontier, however, Grey's fiction meshed with the extant movement. White men suddenly discovered the Russian-Xhosa alliance, looming war. Since 'the Kaffirs' wanted to 'drive the English into the sea', 'we are prepared to meet them in arms'.⁵¹ Within ten days of Grey's announcement of fresh troops, as employers' talk of conflict swelled the flow of deserting migrants, a new rumour was generating great excitement. '[O]ld men/warriors/ had arrived from beyond the Sea'. A new action was noticed in Phato's chiefdom: cattle-killing.⁵² Peasants already proselytized by 'Assegai' were not being bullied into submission. Men were also flexing their own muscles. Friction over Grey's pacification initiatives was flaring into violence. Mhala's officer-magistrate was trounced in an armed clash over theft: 'Government and Umhala might go and be hanged'. A new missionary unable to pay rent fled, after Sandile forcibly drove home that he was an unwanted intruder. The Xhosa, Sandile was informed by his magistrate, had rejoiced at the thought of expelling the English. Their hopes were ill-founded. Three hundred soldiers had arrived. A thousand more were imminent.⁵³

The king, his country allegedly awash with army deserters, spreading rumours about Russians, was then propelled into the charged situation. Maclean met him and demanded extradition. Sarhili declared he had almost been murdered. He 'had narrowly escaped the fate of his father - and that only through having more men'. Now he was expected to expel Khoi allies, sharpshooters. The colonel was 'seeking a cause of quarrel', he announced, causing tumult.⁵⁴

Trotter to Grey, 22 April 1856; GH 23/26, Grey to Labouchere, 30 April 1856.

⁵¹ *Cape Frontier Times* (hereafter *CFT*), 29 April 1856, see also 6 May 1856.

⁵² GH 28/71, 'Deposition of a Confidential Kaffir', 3 May 1856. See also BK 70, Brownlee to Maclean, 4 May 1856.

⁵³ BK 81, Gawler to Maclean, 19 April 1856. See also GH 8/28, statement by J. Allen, 20 May 1856; BK 70, Brownlee to Private Secretary of Grey, 16 May 1856.

⁵⁴ GH 8/49, T. Perks to Maclean, 11 June 1856; GH 8/29, Brownlee to Maclean, 19 June 1856. See also GH 8/27, Maclean to Jackson, 16 Oct. 1855; BK 79, interview with Kreli, 25 May 1856.

London then fuelled the flames: the German mercenaries could colonize British Kaffraria. Not a moment should be lost in dispatching them, declared Grey. The 'Kafirs from believing we have been defeated by the Russians, are threatening to become insolent'. Settlers exulted; Germans would end frontier wars, forever.⁵⁵ Prussians and black Russians: such were the cargo cults of maritime liberation on Africa's southern tip.

The new redcoats provided final confirmation of sinister intent. Some docked in June. 'Is there War' was almost the first signal sent to shore.⁵⁶ The seventh war had begun with under one thousand regular troops. The eighth war had started with fewer than two thousand in place. There were now over double this number on the frontier, under a Commander-in-Chief orchestrating a panic. More prophets were arising: 'all the English are to be destroyed.' 'The only excitement...among Kreli's [Sarhili's] people is the news of the arrival of many Soldiers and they imagine that the Govt will commence a war'.⁵⁷ Lung sickness had just broken out around the king's Great Place - but Sarhili seemingly lacked interest in his sick herds. Carcasses apparently paled before 'many reports of war', as, once more, '"great sea-waggons from the broad waters spit forth red men."' ⁵⁸

The teenager vainly prophesying in Sarhili's country, far from emerging as a *deus ex machina*, only attracted attention as this panic escalated. She lived close to the Kei, almost on the sea, on a river with a wide mouth. It was called the Gxarha: broad-chested. Her location was outstanding for straddling colonized and independent Xhosaland - and for invoking the cavern in the east, with its Broad-Chested One.

A BLACK ARMY

The adolescent was allegedly an 'orphan girl'.⁵⁹ More precisely, she was a fatherless woman, of marriageable age, who challenged patriarchal norms of feminine comportment by wearing no ochre and demanding cattle-killing. Since mothers had no claim on their children, she and her brother were interlopers in the homestead of her father's elder brothers and their sons. Colonial sources accorded her a medley of names: Nongowlie, Nongaule, Nonqaule,

⁵⁵ GH 23/26, Grey to Labouchere, 30 May 1856. See also LG 471, J. Burnet to R. Southey, 12 June 1856.

⁵⁶ GH 36/1, Illegible to Captain Wiseman, 6 June 1856.

⁵⁷ GH 8/28, J. Ayliff to Liddle, 22 May 1856; BK 89, interview with K. Klass, 24 June 1856. See also GH 40/1, monthly troop returns; Mostert, *Frontiers*, 869, 1011.

⁵⁸ IBB 2352, Chief Toise's statement, 3 June 1856, 81; Ward, *Kaffirland*, 67. See also BK 89, information received by Maclean, 20 June 1856.

⁵⁹ Peires, *Dead*, 79.

Nongqakule. They had connotations of violence: she who chopped down, broke off, hooked. Towards the end of her career, when she was about sixteen, she acquired another name: Nongqawuse (as it is spelt today.) A new name, an obsession with purity, seeing with new eyes, flouting of feminine norms: she was, like Nxele and Mlanjeni, called an *igogo* (*igqirha eliligogo*, a seer.)⁶⁰

While she worked her uncle's fields, she was saying in mid-1856, she had seen black men. They included her father. They had 'been fighting against the English', and had come from over the water. They were 'the people often spoken of...by Lynx [Nxele] and Umlanjeni, as being a strong people'. They came from a stronghold, had been sent by the Great Chief of all the Xhosa, Sifuba-sibanzi, and would provide assistance 'in driving all the white men out'. To obtain their aid, people had abandon *ubuthi*, and 'kill all their Cattle, so as to be stocked with others that are free from any disease.'⁶¹

Her promise was unoriginal. Her demands were comparatively modest. Historians who claim she demanded total destruction, and term her original prophecies 'startling', 'fantastic', 'far beyond anything spoken of before', 'among the most drastic' ever made, have relied heavily on a press report written over thirty years later.⁶² What one man recalled of her final prophecies was not present at the start.

Contrary, too, to conventional wisdom, she was not demanding cattle-killing to ensure 'resurrection of the ancestors'. Nor was she predicting that 'the dead will arise'.⁶³ She was claiming, like her contemporaries, that dead men had already arisen. Her distinctive post-Crimean contribution was that she could see them. The 'dead, though to remain invisible until such time as is appointed, have arisen'. She would look into 'a great hole' in the bush where she saw people 'long since dead quite alive and an incalculable number of new cattle', bellowing from their 'subterranean cave'.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *Isigidimi Samaxosa* (hereafter *IS*), 2 April 1888; Hodgson, 'Ntsikana', 103.

⁶¹ GH 8/29, Brownlee to Maclean, 19 June 1856; information communicated to Chief Commissioner, 4 July 1856.

⁶² J. Zarwan, 'The Xhosa Cattle Killings, 1856-57', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 63-64, XVI (3-4), 1976, 520; J. Peires, 'The Central Beliefs of the Xhosa Cattle-Killing', *Journal of African History* 28, 1987, 43; Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1191; Keller, 'Millenarianism', 105. The 1888 source collapses chronology.

⁶³ Zarwan, 'Cattle Killings', 525; Peires, 311 and title of *Dead*.

⁶⁴ *King William's Town Gazette* (hereafter *KWTG*), 11 Dec. 1856; GH 8/29, Gawler to Maclean, 25 July 1856; Brownlee, *Reminiscences*, 126.

The religious concepts through which the movement has typically been viewed - ancestral spirits, Christian resurrection - are, then, inappropriate for embodied underground people, who had but to perform a variation of what peasants did daily: *vuka* (rise, get out of bed.) Officialdom typically termed them a new people. The adjective derived from Xhosa usage. People, however, carried more weight in Xhosa. These were 'the "Uhlanga" (new people)', the '*uhlanga oluse gxara*' (the *uhlanga* at the Gxarha river.)⁶⁵

Uhlanga has been interpreted as referring not to a people but to a place, a God. The adolescent promised 'rebirth' from the place of 'wetness, uterine dampness' (the cavern.)⁶⁶ *Uhlanga*, however, had greater masculine content than these feminized formulations suggest. Black fathers (such as Khoi and muscular Xhosa) had emerged first from the cavern, from one opening. Their younger white brothers, with 'soft heads', had emerged from another. *Uhlanga*, consequently, also meant original progenitors, and hence people/chiefdom/race/nation, with connotations of pure, primordial male peculiarities. The belief that all 'white men [came] from one hole, and the black men from another', combined with the connotative resonance between race and nation, made '*uhlanga*' particularly appealing to Xhosa nationalists seeking greater black unity.⁶⁷

There was no doubt as to which 'great hole' had been found by adolescent, whose grandfather, Ham, bore the name of the Biblical progenitor of all blacks. She saw a 'black race', including black Russians, mingled with and headed by young, strong forefathers of the Xhosa nation.⁶⁸ Although others hoped or promised that Xhosa women were present, she had no interest in new women. Her people, as masculine as the myth, were brave men, 'heroes'. They wielded spears, wore black blankets and karosses, had horses, dogs, 'clean' cattle, and said only those 'who die by the Gun or assegai will rise again'.⁶⁹ They promised more death. The *uhlanga*

⁶⁵ LG 410, Warner to Southey, 6 Feb. 1857; Rubusana, *Zemk'iinkomo*, 474.

⁶⁶ C. Crais, *The Making of the Colonial Order* (Cambridge, 1992), 22, 206; Peires, *Dead*, 131.

⁶⁷ D. Williams, *The Journal and Selected Writings of the Reverend Tiyo Soga* (Cape Town, 1983), 124. See also *Indaba*, August 1862; A. Kropf, *A Kafir-English Dictionary* (Lovedale, 1915), 154; J. Hodgson, *The God of the Xhosa* (Cape Town, 1982), 19-26.

⁶⁸ GH 20/2/1, Maclean to Grey, 25 March 1857. See also GH 8/29, Maclean to Grey, 17 July 1856; Rubusana, *Zemk'iinkomo*, 124; J.H. Soga, *The South-Eastern Bantu* (Johannesburg, 1930), 247; Long, ed. *Goldswain*, 191.

⁶⁹ T. Soga, *Intlalo Ka Xosa* (Lovedale, nd), 177; *KWTG* 14 Aug. 1856; GH 8/29, information communicated to Maclean, 4 July 1856. See also GH 8/29, Gawler to Maclean, 30 June 1856, and information communicated to Maclean, 1 July 1856; BK 81,

of the Broad-Chested One was completely militarized: a "*yimpi emnyama*" (a black army), an army waging 'perpetual warfare' against Englishmen.⁷⁰ They offered, however, only 'assistance'. Unlike the wardoctors she invoked, she who chopped was not starting her career by delinking masculinity from killing. Women, victims of wars they did not fight, had already demonstrated that they could be more bloodthirsty than men, already celebrated violence as a form of male redemption.

To enlist the destructive powers of Russian and other black men, cattle did not have to be ritually sacrificed to appease Xhosa ancestors: they had to be butchered (*-xhela*.) Xhosa men had been 'wicked'; their possessions were 'therefore bad'. Their cattle were bewitched, unclean, 'reared by dirty hands handling *ubuthi* and other things such as incests and adulteries.' Sarhili had, in a society where incest was an abhorrent crime, contracted an incestuous marriage, already seemingly linked to the mysterious deaths of four sons. His very praises condemned his promiscuity.⁷¹ If incest and adultery polluted cattle, then the nominal owner of all herds was deeply suspect.

Male defilement also affected access to heroes. Before they would see her uncle, Mhlakaza, she told him, they said 'he must first kill a beast, wash his body clean'.⁷² Even after four days' purification, he and other men could not see them. Various women, said the seer, could. Men, however, normally had to wait while she withdrew into the bush, or follow far behind her to the sea, or shout questions to her and her female companion. What most men badly wanted - to see warriors and cattle, without female intermediaries - was denied them.⁷³ This ran alongside gendered cattle-ownership, gendered prophecies, gendered warfare. Wardoctors traditionally had to maintain warriors' purity. Men with unclean bodies, handling *ubuthi*, rearing dying cattle, could not mingle with heroes from the origin of life, with clean cattle, fighting perpetual war.

In all, re-examining a female intellectual, located within a male martial tradition, illuminates her alleged 'childish games' and

examinations of Nonkosi from 23 Oct. 1857.

⁷⁰ Soga, *Intlalo*, 174; GH 8/29, Brownlee to Maclean, 19 June 1856.

⁷¹ GH 8/29, Gawler to Maclean, 25 July 1856; IS 2 April 1888. See also GH 8/29, information conveyed to Maclean, 1 July 1856; *KWTG* 14 Aug. 1856; J. Opland, ed, *Words That Circle Words* (Johannesburg, 1992), 222; J. H. Soga, *The Ama-Xosa* (np, c1931), 104; Bradford, 'Women', 364.

⁷² GH 8/29, information conveyed to Maclean, 4 July 1856.

⁷³ GH 8/35, Examination of 'Nonqause', 27 April 1858; GH 8/29, Gawler to Maclean, 25 July 1856; BK 14, statement by Umjuza, 24 Feb. 1858; *Votes and Proceedings of Parliament, 1858*, vol.1, Appendix I, G38-58, 1.

'absurd' prophecies. 'Rising from the dead' was supposedly profoundly alien to the Xhosa, 'borrowed from Christians'. Much androcentric ink has consequently been spilt on asserting Mhlakaza's supposed Christian background, for which almost no evidence exists.⁷⁴ Rising from the source of life was, however, an indigenous belief. So was the notion that vast herds could be obtained if only an entrance were rediscovered. A myth of origin was now united with history, with what the greatest wardoctors, and prophets during the Crimean war, had already popularized. 'Old men/warriors' had already allegedly arrived from the 'black nation'. This prophet creatively located her cosmopolitan, well-travelled army in the cavernous source of life; she posited One of Great Strength, not the king, as their and the Xhosa Great Chief; she had preconditions for the defiled Xhosa to be infused with revitalized black masculinity. The men 'had arisen (Vuka) but were not yet visible because all the Cattle had not yet been killed...the Prophet had not yet given the word for the (Impi) Commando to go out because the people were not yet clean'.⁷⁵

Like her predecessors, she initially won minimal support for cattle-killing. Powerful men grumbled they would become 'nobody' if patriarchs returned. Key facets of her masculinist discourse were, however, attractive. Firstly, she was unique at this time in claiming sight of heroes and cattle. This proved highly attractive; ocular proof was central in peasant culture. Secondly, she addressed poverty, a crisis in masculinity. That 'finer Cattle' would 'rise out of the grownd' had great appeal. He was longing to 'see whether the men and cattle would "come up"', declared a chief in a region ravaged by lungsickness, where most possessed not one cow.⁷⁶ Thirdly, as a war panic escalated, she spoke of a new black race equated with male killers. Her heroes, whose inherent superiority over white men was inscribed in the very concept of *uhlanga*, appealed even to a pro-colonial chief. The Xhosa nation, he declared, believed it was 'the oldest, greatest and firstborn son'. The 'White man is his younger, smaller and later born brother'. Consequently, 'it is war...till the Brown man is great and the White man has been reduced to size.'⁷⁷ Black peasants (not only white intellectuals, as too many texts suggest), constructed master races. 'Bulls', 'dogs' and women could find common ground on the terrain of racialized, violent manhood, and invisible women.

⁷⁴ Peires, *Dead*, 311; N. Tisani, 'Peires, Pathbreaker', *SAHJ* 25, 1991, 233-4. For a critique of Mhlakaza's alleged career, see Bradford, 'Women', 365.

⁷⁵ GH 28/71, Illegible to His Excellency, 15 Oct. 1856.

⁷⁶ Gray, *Visitation*, 28; Long, ed., *Goldswain*, 189; LG 216, F. Stringfellow to Southey, 14 Aug. 1856. See also Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1190-1.

⁷⁷ G. Pakendorf, mss. translation of A. Kropf, *Die Lügenpropheten des Kafferlandes* (Berlin, c1897), 15.

Finally, although Bhulu's wife had been the most popular prophet when Grey inaugurated his panic, she suffered from a grave disadvantage. Wardoctors were traditionally men. But as troops landed and men flowed to the broad river, Mhlakaza ('Breaker-up') began disseminating his niece's visions. His own apprenticeship had begun.

A WAR PANIC

In mid-1856, men were flocking to Mhlakaza as they had to Mlanjeni, just prior to the last war. The parallels ran deeper. Invisible men were not problematic: wardoctors could render warriors invisible. The 'army had gone to attack...the English landing from the Sea.'⁷⁸ In Phato's destitute chiefdom, where killing had begun, the demands of 'people from the earth' had great resonance.⁷⁹ In Sarhili's country, too, many were slaughtering.

The teenager's demand allegedly implied 'literal sacrifice' of the Xhosa.⁸⁰ Yet most owned no cattle. Patriarchs largely decided they had to kill some, not all; they slaughtered male animals first. This improved diets. The Xhosa had 'to Kill and eat', recalled a female domestic servant. 'I youest to belive it and verey much liked to go to the feast'.⁸¹ Poor commoners with little to lose and much to gain - the traditional base of millenarianism - formed a crucial constituency welcoming cattle-killing. For the next few months, they dominated the movement.

The king also promoted it. 'His real name's He who enjoys ruling', ran his praises. Soon after Sarhili had announced that the colony was seeking a quarrel, his messengers fanned out to chiefs. A 'strong people' had appeared. Phalo, Sarhili's great-great-grandfather, a symbol of national unity, had been seen. Such men would assist 'in driving all the white faces out'.⁸² A movement that had started among colonized commoners was acquiring aristocratic overtones, spreading geographically, and being regendered. It now had a male prophet regarded in the same light as Mlanjeni, male action saturated with martial connotations, and royal support.

He had accepted a magistrate, responded Mhala; 'he did not think any notice ought to be taken of Krieli's message.' Mlanjeni had made similar promises 'and brought on a war of which they had had

⁷⁸ GH 8/29, information to Maclean, 4 July 1856.

⁷⁹ GH 8/29, Reeve to Maclean, 11 July 1856.

⁸⁰ Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1187.

⁸¹ Long, ed., *Goldswain*, 191.

⁸² Opland, *Words*, 223; GH 8/29, information communicated to Maclean, 1 July 1856; see also Gawler to Maclean, 9 July 1856.

enough', replied Ngqika chiefs.⁸³ Discontent, nonetheless, was bubbling up from below. Six thousand German soldiers were coming, chiefs were told in mid-1856, as Grey toured the frontier to arrange for their influx. To make space, many peasants now had their acreage and cattle permissable slashed. 'Govt...[was] doing what was equal to making war upon them', they complained.⁸⁴

In mid-July, the king descended on a teenager. He called out to the 'strange people', she reported, that he had not known 'what to do with the English, as they have been stronger than the [Xhosa]; you have come to strengthen us.'⁸⁵ Disregarding her words, her gendered practices, her militarized *uhlanga*, historians, conceding the paucity of evidence, have claimed she showed the king 'people dancing in the sea', and one of his prepubescent dead sons. He, in an 'emotional state', was 'captivated'. He 'issued formal commands (*imiyolelo*) to the Xhosa nation, ordering them to obey the instructions'. This - implausible, unanchored by evidence - was the turning point. The total destruction she allegedly demanded erupted.⁸⁶

There is another explanation for actions unrelated to her original prophecies. Sarhili's visit replayed the start of Mlanjeni's war. Maclean immediately asked the king to stop cattle slaughter - and threatened invasion if this did not occur. He had 'many men...I have some new men besides, and expect more'.⁸⁷ He boasted of his masculinist intimidation. He discussed his message with the Commander of British Kaffrarian forces. Rumours mushroomed. 'Government will dig into the Cavern...to get out the Russians', predicted Mhlakaza. 'War will ensue'.⁸⁸

During two invasions in the 1850-3 war alone, as men threw stones, infantry had plundered upwards of 19,000 goats, 40,000 cattle, emptied grain pits, destroyed crops. The movement now entered a new phase. Cattle-killing accelerated in independent Xhosaland. In addition, many were frantically selling, or, if

⁸³GH 8/29, information communicated to Maclean, 1 July 1856; Gawler to Maclean, 14 July 1856.

⁸⁴ GH 8/29, J. Laing to Maclean, 18 July 1856; see also *CFT* 16 Dec. 1856.

⁸⁵ *1858 Votes*, Appendix I, 2.

⁸⁶ Peires, 'Belief', 60; Peires, *Dead*, 87, 314, see also 94-5, and Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1189-90.

⁸⁷ GH 8/29, Maclean to Kreli, 15 July 1856.

⁸⁸ GH 28/71, Brownlee to Maclean, 30 July 1856, see also 5 Aug. 1856, and GH 8/29, Maclean to Grey, 17 July 1856; BK 1, Maclean to Grey, 21 July 1856; Brownlee, *Reminiscences*, 141. The section of his message threatening invasion, Maclean later claimed, was not delivered. Historians have believed him - but Brownlee and Grey's entourage did not. The damage was done as soon as rumours erupted.

this were impossible, destroying, resources. It 'was reported that the Governor was about to move a large force into Kreli's country', stated Sandile; 'the Galekas' were selling 'many cattle and goats and much corn'.⁸⁹ As thousands poured into British Kaffraria, besieging homesteads and traders, selling very cheaply, they spread the panic.

Prophets raced to catch up. Trade had formed no part of the original prophecies - but Mhlakaza now sanctioned sale of cattle. Selling goats, hens, ornaments, was equally alien - but the adolescent now adopted her classic millenarian stance. Their wickedness was such, men were told, that they should get rid of 'all earthly possessions'. Her men 'wish every thing in the country to be made new.' Granaries sometimes six foot deep in cattle folds should be opened, all stored grain cast away. 'We will find you something to eat', promised her men; all would 'come oute of the Ground.'⁹⁰

Agitated trans-Keian men insisted instead that Mhlakaza fulfil his original promises. Sarhili told him to produce the cattle and newcomers. They were at their stronghold, he replied. Reports circulated from 1 August that 'Breaker-up' had been discredited. New prophets tried to ride the wave. 'Fear not race of Black people', cried one. In the earth's bowels he saw 'a new race' and pure cattle. If contaminated cattle were swept off the earth, white men would be forced to leave.⁹¹ Kama's chiefdom threw up another female prophet. 'Bolo' (Gun-barrel), was not only disseminating the Gxarha message, but also 'washing' men. 'I am not talking about your killing, but of your being washed' by 'Gun-barrel', declared an incensed Kama to sullen armed men. Washing, a purification ritual, preceded combat.⁹²

If a woman had adopted martial practices, most men were not contemplating fighting. Like most millenarian supporters, they simply expected salvation to occur. Their calendar was lunar. Full moon - the moon joins together (-*hlangana*) - was particularly apposite for a new *uhlanga* to combine with those on earth. On the 'moon of "wonders and dangers"' (16 August), ran rumour, the sun rising from the cavern would collide with another sun. People should assemble, wearing white. Russians, forefathers

⁸⁹ GH 28/71, Brownlee to Maclean, 5 Aug. 1856. See also Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1128; Peires, *Dead*, 17; W.M. Macmillan, *Bantu, Boer, and Briton* (Oxford, 1963), 338.

⁹⁰ GH 8/29, Gawler to Maclean, 25 July 1856; *1858 Votes*, Appendix 1, 1; Long, ed., *Goldswain*, 191. See also H. Scheub, *The Tongue is Fire* (Wisconsin, 1996), 311.

⁹¹ LG 396, G. Cyrus to Southey, 4 Aug. 1856. See also GH 28/71, information communicated to Maclean, 2 Aug. 1856, 6 Aug. 1856, 10 Aug. 1856; LG 472, H. Calderwood to Southey 2 Aug. 1856.

⁹² BK 86, memorandum of meeting, 4 Aug. 1856.

and cattle would rise from a cave, rivers. Fields would sprout grain. The English and their black allies - Christians, the Mfengu, trousered men - would walk through the sea with remaining cattle to their *uhlanga*, where Satan awaited.⁹³

Settlers were not comforted when told they were safe until full moon. Xhosa men, thought many, intended a pre-emptive strike before the Germans came. '*All this means war*'.⁹⁴ Mfengu peasants begged soldiers to hide grain. Traders, missionaries and Boers fled. They were also killing stock: roads were littered with dead lambs, slaughtered because they delayed flight. In the spiral now developing, peasants, 'when they hear that the Farmers are moving, immediately say "it is war", and would then commence killing their cattle.' '[T]he Country "*is already dead*"', cried commoners. In other wars, said Phato, 'he was rich, and had reason for remaining at peace, but now being poor he wishes for a change'.⁹⁵ Migrants rushed home. Notions of what the future held fuelled wardances, making of spears, reckless sale, feasting. Commoners, told their chiefs disapproved, said 'they don't care for their chiefs'.⁹⁶

Pro-colonial chiefs responded violently, promising to fight for Englishmen. Both white and Khoi men living on ex-Xhosa land demanded weapons. Grey's fictitious war was fast materializing. He hoped not to be rushed into war before Germans arrived - but white men formed rifle corps, demanded artillery, declared 'the war might be considered as begun.' Troops and police moved to strategic positions. '[W]e ought to lick them in six months', boasted an Englishman. As 'we want land we shall have a good excuse for taking a lump to share amongst the German[s]'. That Grey was about to declare war was a common Xhosa belief.⁹⁷

⁹³ BK 70, Brownlee to Maclean, 25 Aug. 1856. See also *Graham's Town Journal*, 9 Aug., 16 Aug. 1856; GH 28/71, Brownlee to Maclean, 30 July 1856; 'General rumours in circulation', 4 Aug. 1856.

⁹⁴ LG 472, Meurant to Southey, 11 Aug. 1856, see also GH 8/29, P. Coetser *et al* to Grey, received 4 Sept. 1856; Gray, *Visitation*, 22.

⁹⁵ GH 8/29, statement of Maqoma, 27 Aug. 1856; Calderwood to Southey, 5 Aug. 1856; Brownlee to Maclean, 9 Aug. 1856. See also *CFT* 12 Aug. 1856; Gray, *Visitation*, 14, 21, 25, 43.

⁹⁶ Peires, *Dead*, 176. See also LG 216, CC Fort Beaufort to Southey, 3 Aug. 1856.

⁹⁷ Gray, *Visitation*, 20; LG 472, J. Bowker to Southey, 6 Aug. 1856. See also LG 472, Meurant to Southey, 11 Aug. 1856; J. Fichat to Southey, Monday [11 Aug. 1856]; GH 8/29, Reeve to Maclean, 6 Aug. 1856, 10 Aug. 1856; GH 28/71, statement of Chief Siwani, 8 Aug. 1856; BK 1, Grey to Maclean, 7 Aug. 1856; GH 23/26, Grey to Labouchere, 6 Aug. 1856; GH 28/71, H. Vigne to Maclean, 5 Aug. 1856.

Analyses, however, omit this intense panic. The two most significant warmongers also sidelined their own militarism. Lungsickness, insisted Maclean, who had been lambasted for threatening invasion, explained cattle-killing. The 'excitement' was confined to districts where the disease had impoverished people. Lungsickness, declared Grey, was killing cattle so mysteriously that the superstitious Xhosa might be swept up by a delusion. 'One of the main reasons for the Cattle-Killing was, of course, the ravages of lungsickness', historians have reiterated. 'Where there was no lungsickness, the words of Nongqawuse fell on deaf ears.' The 'greatest excitement was where the lung sickness...hit hardest.'⁹⁸

The epidemic was significant - but it spread through much of Africa without spawning a similar movement. It did not correlate well with 'excitement'. Independent Xhosaland, threatened with invasion, was the epicentre. It was less badly hit by lungsickness than British Kaffraria. Cattle were marketable only because they derived from disease-free zones. By August, in Sandile's chiefdom, the biggest in British Kaffraria, lungsickness was absent. Yet cattle and grain were being frantically cast away. War had in the past generated similar responses: 'the Xhosa would kill the animals rather than lose them to the colonists'.⁹⁹ Only as a war panic escalated did butchery - and much else besides - occur on a significant scale. Lungsickness is almost invisible in Xhosa sources; the main poet of the movement wrote instead of '*ilizwe limaxongo*' (the country is saturated with war rumours.)¹⁰⁰ Items being sold or laid waste were overwhelmingly what 'locusts' usually pillaged. Added to this were actions fuelled by what prophets foretold and peasants feared: armed combat.

The power of the king and his state was, however, about to be demonstrated. On 12 August, Sarhili ordered trans-Kei chiefs to stop cattle slaughter and sale. He urgently requested Brownlee to visit him. Why was it 'that the English should get ready for

⁹⁸ Crais, *Colonial Order*, 209; Peires, *Dead*, 168; Zarwan, 'Cattle Killings', 524. See also GH 28/71, Maclean to Liddle, 4 Aug. 1856; GH 8/49, Maclean to Grey, 21 July 1856; GH 23/26, Grey to Labouchere, 16 Aug. 1856, 20 Sept. 1856.

⁹⁹ B. Maclennan, *A Proper Degree of Terror* (Johannesburg, 1986), 180. See also GH 8/26, British Resident to Maclean, 3 April 1855; BK 89, information from person beyond the Kei, 12 Jan 1857; BK 70, Brownlee to Maclean, 18 Aug., 22 Aug., 1856; GH 28/71, Brownlee to Maclean, 5 August 1856. There is no evidence that lungsickness ever swept through Ngqika chiefdoms in the relevant period. By May 1857, when it erupted in one, most cattle had already been killed.

¹⁰⁰ J. Jolobe, *Ilitha* (Johannesburg, 1971), 48.

war'; he had no such intention.¹⁰¹ Slaughter and sale declined dramatically, or stopped, immediately. Cattle sales had considerably decreased, noted a trader on 12 August. Neither cattle, nor goats, nor grain, nor anything else had been brought for sale since the 12th, reported a magistrate. Labourers returned to work. Rumours subsided, although the moon of 'wonderful things' still pended.¹⁰² Historians, however, have been less willing to jettison lunar rhythms. 'No believer slept' on the night of the 16th's moon, it has been claimed; only after Nongqawuse's promised resurrection failed did the king ban slaughter. Yet there was no 'First Disappointment'.¹⁰³ From start to end, the king refused to let moons interfere with royal prerogatives. This, the movement's first peak, had been precipitated by his visit and a threat of invasion; it terminated on his order, as he fretted about war. Ultimately, male politics, not millenarian beliefs, were in command.

After the 'First Disappointment', runs academic orthodoxy, the movement subsided; it was still 'very fragile' in November.¹⁰⁴ Mhlakaza publicized that he, having simply voiced his niece's visions, was not a prophet. The female *igogo* was subjected to contemptuous age- and gender-based dismissal.¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless, in spring, far from subsiding, the movement rooted itself in almost every Xhosa homestead.

'LOCUSTS' AND AGRICULTURE

Sarhili's attempted *rapprochement* failed. On the day he forbade cattle-killing, Grey pardoned deserters, to enlarge his army. Frantic war preparations continued among whites. A 'Kaffir war-party', headed by Sarhili, remained a settler *idée fixe*. Brownlee informed the king he could not visit 'an enemy's country'.¹⁰⁶

Sarhili had been threatened with an invasion unless he stopped cattle-killing. He was repudiated as an enemy when he did. That

¹⁰¹ Gray, *Visitation*, 59. See also BK 89, J. Crouch to Maclean, 12 Aug. 1856; GH 28/71, Brownlee to Maclean, 15 Aug. 1856.

¹⁰² LG 472, Meurant to Southey, 14 Aug. 1856. See also BK 89, Crouch to Maclean, 12 Aug. 1856; BK 81, Gawler to Maclean, 22 Aug. 1856; GH 8/29, Lieut. Lamont to Maclean, 13 Aug. 1856.

¹⁰³ Peires, *Dead*, 98-9, 102, 104. See also Zarwan, 'Cattle Killings', 526; Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1192, 1198, 1200.

¹⁰⁴ Peires, *Dead*, 99, 121. See also Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1194, 1204; Zarwan, 'Cattle Killings', 526-7; Lewis, 'Historiography', 262.

¹⁰⁵ Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1190; GH 8/29, statement by Namba, 26 Aug. 1856; *CFT* 21 Aug. 1856.

¹⁰⁶ *KWTG* 11 Sept. 1856; BK 89, confidential information to Maclean, 18 Sept. 1856. See also GH 30/11, Grey to Jackson, 12 Aug. 1856; Gray, *Visitation*, 53.

war was intended was even more plausible. He returned to the *uhlanga oluse gxara*. An obdurate woman refused to let him see her warriors. She promised others only a militarized natural phenomenon. A new development occurred. The 'people who were formerly seen by Umhlakaza alone have now left their former place of concealment'. They had landed at a river where the king kept many cattle. This caused a sensation.¹⁰⁷ 'How could men disbelieve what they heard and saw for themselves', asked one. Male visions conformed more to British military norms than had a woman's: many 'horse and foot men well armed' had emerged from river mouths.¹⁰⁸ If they had any stock, it was horses.

Less than two weeks after Sarhili had forbidden cattle-killing, it recommenced, under his leadership. He began slaughtering his own, *en masse*, for the first time. He stepped into the vacuum of male prophetic authority, ordering butchery, and virtually forbidding sale to traders. Only after being scorned by white men preparing for war, after independent sightings, not after his first 'emotional' encounter with a woman, did the king decisively commit himself and his state to the movement. The newcomers had allegedly also appeared in British Kaffraria: Gcaleka men were flocking to a river mouth to try to glimpse the army. Some of the 'lower orders' here also recommenced butchery.¹⁰⁹

War fears and gender politics underpinned these sightings. A country disturbed by war reports - *ilizwe limehlo* - was, literally, all eyes. As Mhlakaza stepped back, men linked to an 'enemy's country' rushed forward, shouldering aside a woman whose army was not modern, not visible enough. They lent male authority to their visions: 'I have seen all these things: it is not Nongowlie now but I that tell you'. Gender-specific pressures and practices improved their sight. Men who saw nothing should 'kill a beast today to "clear their eyes"'.¹¹⁰ At a feast organized for sightseeing, 'some of the men run for their Horses' and galloped off to see 'old friends that had been dead'. The 'men had...drunk to much of Kaffir fear [beer] to know what they saw', reported a woman, in an unintended *double entendre*.¹¹¹

Regendering of sightings facilitated an expansion in the leadership of men's 'old friends'. By promoting the Broad-Chested

¹⁰⁷ BK 70, Brownlee to Maclean 25 Aug. 1856. See also GH 8/49, Maclean to Grey, 28 Aug. 1856; BK 81, Gawler to Maclean, 30 Aug. 1856, 7 Sept. 1856.

¹⁰⁸ GH 8/29, Brownlee to Maclean, 19 Oct. 1856; BK 81, Gawler to Maclean, 30 Aug. 1856.

¹⁰⁹ BK 81, Gawler to Maclean, 30 Aug. 1856, see also 7 Sept. 1856; GH 28/71, information to Maclean by 'a trustworthy man', 2 Aug. 1856; BK 70, Brownlee to Maclean, 25 Aug. 1856, 31 Aug. 1856.

¹¹⁰ BK 81, Gawler to Maclean, 21 Dec. 1856, and 7 Nov. 1856.

¹¹¹ Long, ed., *Goldswain*, 193.

One, a woman had linked herself to a wardoctor, and provided a national symbol of unity to people often disillusioned with their own leaders. But many had never heard of Sifuba-sibanzi. Talk of the Strong One generated male resentment: Mhlakaza 'has not a God of his own'.¹¹² When men began seeing the fraternity, more divinities appeared, including the more familiar uHlanga. Input from below was enhancing the appeal of the movement's religious nationalism, of its black Supreme Beings and hostility to colonizers' religion. Believing that a He led them, some called themselves 'the "chosen of God"'.¹¹³

The addition of male Gods, male visions, the king, his male-only state, fuelled the next great lurch forward. Agriculture ground to a halt among some 200,000 peasants in Xhosaland and the Thembu reserve near Queenstown. Gender has been introduced to explain this: women, dreaming of cornucopias, refused to cultivate.¹¹⁴ Yet men, in addition to being driven into tillage themselves, controlled agriculture's inauguration. If a chief banned cultivation on 'his' land, it was punishable. If men laid waste to granaries - as some continued to do - there was no seed to sow. This year, agriculture typically came to a full stop before women's work began.

Doubts as to whether to sow had existed during the panic. A 'girl' opposed cultivation; the region was drought-stricken; many were flush with cash. Non-cultivation, complained farmers, was a sign of war. Imperialists intensified their efforts to promote it. Seed was supplied. Farming 'like an Englishman' - with ploughs, in kilts, taught by soldiers - was promoted.¹¹⁵ Grey also accelerated what German influx had already encouraged: the creation of peasant villages. Traders, lured with as much land as they wished to farm, were to establish village nuclei, where Africans would be 'allowed' tiny plots, and monitored by 'village police' and headmen. Conquest, in Grey's view, legitimated this. The land was Crown Land. Peasants had no rights to the soil.¹¹⁶

¹¹² BK 86, memorandum of Kama's meeting, 4 Aug. 1856; see also *1858 Votes*, Appendix I, 2. Officialdom tracked down the connection to Nxele (GH 20/2/1, Maclean to Grey, 25 March 1857), but Sifuba-sibanzi was a praise name, not that more typically used.

¹¹³ Berning, ed., *"Conversations"*, 128. See also GH 8/29, Brownlee to Maclean, 22 Oct. 1856. Divinities included Napakade (the Eternal One), later claimed as referring to the indigenous God, Qamata, and 'Sipungupungu'.

¹¹⁴ Guy, 'Landmark', 230; Peires, *Dead*, 117, 173, 315; Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1205.

¹¹⁵ GH 8/29, R. Robertson to Maclean, 31 Aug. 1856. See also *CFT* 26 Aug. 1856.

¹¹⁶ *KWTG* 2 Oct. 1856. See also LG 645, Southey to J. Hoole, 8 Oct. 1856; GH 23/26, Grey to Labouchere, 4 Oct. 1856.

There was a chief, riding a grey horse, said the teenager. 'His name is Grey, otherwise known as Satan.' Every man retaining cattle was destined for 'the place of the Grey beast, whose other name is Satan.'¹¹⁷ Peasants expecting black cavalry under black gods spoke of Ngwevu (Grey, the colour), *Hash' elingwevu* (Grey horse), *uRwexu* (Grey beast, pockmarked person.) They were discussing racial politics, coded as talk of colours, religion, animals. An Englishman was like a tame, acquiescent horse, it was said at the Gxarha. Whites were *amagwangqa* (khaki animals).¹¹⁸

In early spring, as Grey toured what he termed 'the front', seeing British Kaffrarian chiefs, they opposed these views. If a child's words led to war, said one, his men would fight for the state. They would all sow when it rained. In Sandile's chiefdom, cattle-killing had been banned. On 11 September, some six hundred minor chiefs and councillors bought into Grey's headmen scheme, praising him for paying them for exercising male authority.¹¹⁹

The claim that introducing paid headmen was central in sparking non-cultivation is, then, problematic.¹²⁰ Of more interest is what historians of the movement have ignored. The day after this meeting, British soldiers began landing at a frontier port. London, grappling with a post-Crimean surplus, had reacted to Grey's April *cri de coeur* that war perhaps loomed. Four regiments, a warship and artillery were rushed to the Cape. During September alone, soldiers under Grey's command increased by over 40 per cent. There were soon more British regulars (9,400) than had ever fought a frontier war. The 'army on this frontier', exulted the press, 'has not been equalled...by any force stationed in peaceful times in Africa since its conquest by the British.'¹²¹

On the day 'locusts' began landing, Grey ordered a regiment to march to the only point where the Cape adjoined the trans-Kei: Queenstown, close to Sarhili's Great Place. It 'offers a tempting point of attack to the Kafirs of Kreli's Tribe', he stated, and 'an excellent point from which in the event of a war breaking out we could ourselves assume an aggressive position'. The press applauded as redcoats marched to Queenstown on 20 September: this

¹¹⁷ IS 1 March 1888; Soga, *Intlalo*, 174.

¹¹⁸ GH 8/29, Gawler to Maclean, 7 Sept. 1856; Rubusana, *Zemk'iinkomo*, 123-4, 232, 272, 391.

¹¹⁹ GH 23/26, Grey to Labouchere, 21 Aug. 1856; see also BK 70, Brownlee to Maclean, 11 Sept. 1856, and 28 Aug. 1856, 4 Sept. 1856; GH 8/29, H. Lucas to Maclean, 27 Aug. 1856, enclosing statement by Namba.

¹²⁰ Peires, *Dead*, 112, 218.

¹²¹ *KWTG* 16 Oct. 1856. See also GH 1/253, Labouchere to Grey, 14 July 1856; GH 40/1, monthly returns of troops.

would 'intimidate Kreli, whose anxiety for war is universally believed in'.¹²² One of Sarhili's men was soon trying to discover why soldiers had moved. The local Thembu populace, Xhosa-speaking, recently dispossessed and relocated, but hitherto hostile to the movement, did not bother to gather intelligence. As reports of garrisoning the district circulated, many began 'madly' killing cattle.¹²³ Pax Britannica was facilitating the movement's spread beyond ethnic boundaries.

As tidings 'of an alarming character as to the designs of the Government' burgeoned, the king returned to the *uhlanga oluse gxara*.¹²⁴ He had seen, he told a trader on 17 September, only a speck in the sea. Thembu men accompanying him had better vision: they had seen horsemen. On 19 - 20 September, as troops marched to Queenstown, all prominent trans-Keian men met at Sarhili's Great Place. Emissaries fanned out to Lesotho, Mpondoland, Thembuland, Xhosaland. Sarhili, they said, had seen 'a great host' of men. They had landed in boats. They lived in houses 'forced up like hills out of the earth', encircled by a trench. They 'had come to establish the independence of the black Tribes'. Cattle-killing and abandonment of *ubuthi* was to continue - and pits were to be cleared of grain, no cultivation was to occur. Any cultivator would be destroyed. No such fate was spelt out for men refusing to kill cattle. Effeminate agriculture, the desideratum of Englishmen seeking pacification, attracted the wrath of nationalist heroes.¹²⁵

The teenager was absent from messengers' homosocial tales; Mhlakaza was but a bit player. This did not originate from him or 'Nonqaule', said the king. They were but the 'mouths' of 'the new people', who wished to speak to the Xhosa nation.¹²⁶ He had allegedly seen, and acquired a spear from, his martyred father. God, said Sarhili's councillors, had appeared from the earth. He required no cultivation; a miracle would come from beneath.¹²⁷ The trend begun with Mhlakaza's defection was confirmed. Authority was passing higher up the chain of men. The shift from Xhosa to British masculine attributes was also accelerating. Heroes in karosses, with cattle, visible only to women, fighting

¹²² GH 30/11, Grey to Jackson, 12 Sept. 1856; *KWTG* 25 Sept. 1856.

¹²³ *KWTG* 25 Sept. 1856. See also *CFT* 16 Sept. 1856; GH 28/71, Warner to CC Queenstown, 16 Aug. 1856, 23 Sept. 1856; LG 473, Warner to Southey, 7 Oct. 1856.

¹²⁴ *CFT* 16 Sept 1856.

¹²⁵ BK 70, Brownlee to Maclean 24 Sept. 1856, 26 Sept. 1856; BK 81, Gawler to Maclean, 1 Oct. 1856; see also BK 89, confidential information to Maclean, 18 Sept. 1856.

¹²⁶ GH 8/30, information communicated to Maclean by 'trustworthy native', 8 Dec. 1856.

¹²⁷ Chalmers, *Soga*, 117-8. See also GH 8/29, Brownlee to Maclean, 20 Oct. 1856; Acc 793, Gawler to Maclean, 3 Nov. 1857.

Englishmen, were now men without cattle, with boats and houses, visible to men, doing what 'locusts' normally did: destroy cultivators.

As soldiers moved to their front line position, leading trans-Keian men endorsed the king's vision. The cultivation season was never opened. Forty per cent of the Xhosa had no right to sow. A burst of cattle-killing occurred. Cattle, said a chief, 'were all to be killed and then the white things (English) would disappear'.¹²⁸

In colonized Xhosaland, male politics were more complex. 'Government say we are to sow, that which is speaking to us through Umlakaya says we are not to sow, which are we to listen to.'¹²⁹ The contest was first played out in Sandile's chiefdom. During the week bracketed by the landing of troops and the trans-Kei meeting, with Sandile (notoriously suspicious of being kidnapped) declining to visit Grey in a military centre, most commoners declined to sow. Those who dug the land, they said, 'would be fixed to the ground', forever, as was already the fate of a Mfengu man. This belief, disseminated from the Gxarha, became widespread. Wardoctors could paralyze enemies; the black army was clearly capable of immobilizing cultivators.¹³⁰

This, decided Grey, was not superstition. Not only had Sarhili's word reinforced the decision in Sandile's chiefdom: it had been sent to Moshoeshe. Lesotho-Free State tensions were at another peak. History replayed itself, with higher stakes. The two paramount chiefs, declared Grey, had united their 'barbarians'. He reorganized his own bloated army into 'military columns ready to enter upon aggressive operations against an enemy at an hour's notice.'¹³¹

War was now more than a spectre haunting Xhosa imaginations. Troop arrival had already allegedly sent Phato's men rushing to arms. Cattle-killing had increased. Maclean descended on them on 26 September. Whites said 'Pato's people wished for war'. A 'large number of soldiers' had landed. The Government might have 'to make war'. Their country might be 'populated by white men'. Phato gave no word to till; his destitute chiefdom entered its second year of non-cultivation.¹³² Slaughter had also erupted

¹²⁸ GH 28/71, Illegible to Grey, 15 Oct. 1856.

¹²⁹ BK 82, Lucas to Maclean, 29 Nov. 1856.

¹³⁰ GH 8/29, Brownlee to Maclean, 21 Sept. 1856; see also communication to Maclean, 8 Oct. 1856; *CFT* 16 Sept. 1856; Ward, *Kaffirland*, 173.

¹³¹ GH 23/26, Grey to Labouchere, 27 Sept. 1856; GH 30/11, Grey to Jackson, 3 Oct. 1856.

¹³² BK 140, conversation at Pato's Great Place, Maclean and the Chief, 26 Sept. 1856. See also *CFT* 16 Sept. 1856; BK 89,

elsewhere. Leading men, on 26 September, were sullenly opposed to cultivation. This, a warrior-chief was to declare, was due to 'the land question'. His people would not again cultivate the ground to which they had been removed. He banned agriculture.¹³³

Grey tightened the military screws. On 27 September, he sent a message to Sarhili. If anything untoward occurred in British Kaffraria, Grey would punish him. What the Governor meant, stated the missionary-informer reading this to Sarhili, was that two thousand soldiers would soon be on the border. If any chief went 'to war, he will...make war upon you'. This only confirmed popular suspicions: 'the Governor intends to attack Krieli'. He saw no point in cultivating, stated the king. When war began, troops would cut down crops.¹³⁴

Grey simultaneously bullied Mhala's people. They, too, would become his enemies if they obeyed their king. Men had already embraced cattle-killing. Troops, thought Mhala, would soon invade his chieftom. He sent a son to 'see the new people...now common at the mouths of all the Rivers'.¹³⁵ His son saw them. The king had seen them. 'Dont you go backing up the Englishman, you are a [Xhosa]', exploded the king's messenger to a man favouring cultivation. They lived, he reminded them, on ground that was Phalo's, not Victoria's. A week after Grey's threat, Mhala forbade cultivation.¹³⁶

Within three weeks of Sandile's men thanking Grey for making them state functionaries, dramatic change had occurred. 'Red men' began landing the next day. Grey immediately threatened Sarhili's country - and the die was cast for a masculinist contest of strength. Chieftom after chieftom turned to the black *uhlanga*. Within nine days of troops landing, over half the Xhosa populace had been committed to non-cultivation or had so committed themselves. Within three weeks, this embraced about 80 per cent of the populace. That war was imminent was a common belief; every man in Kama's chieftom brandished spears. Around late October, as over a hundred thousand cattle grazed, there was hardly a cultivated blade in Sarhili's country. Matters were little better in British Kaffraria. Not only were peasants refusing to take

information from three different natives, 19 Sept. 1856.

¹³³ GH 8/49, Maclean to Grey, 30 Oct. 1856. See also GH 8/29, Lucas to Maclean, 27 Sept. 1856, 26 Oct. 1856.

¹³⁴ Gray, *Visitation*, 61; BK 70, Brownlee to Maclean, 13 Oct. 1856. See also BK 1, Grey to Kreli, 27 Sept. 1856; GH 8/30, information communicated to Maclean by 'trustworthy native', 8 Dec. 1856.

¹³⁵ GH 8/29, Gawler to Maclean, 7 Oct. 1856. See also BK 10, Grey to Umhala, 27 Sept, 1856; Acc 793, diary entry for 29 Oct. 1856.

¹³⁶ BK 81, Gawler to Maclean, 1 Oct. 1856. See also GH 8/29, Gawler to Maclean, 7 Oct. 1856.

care of the 'horse foode' Englishman planted: the anti-colonial challenge was spreading. Patients were deserting the new health programme of the Grey beast/pockmarked one. It allegedly supplied medicine 'made of the excrement of White People', which gave them smallpox.¹³⁷

Who sowed? Sarhili's effort to persuade non-Xhosa chiefs that 'all black people were one', Gxarha promises to help other ethnic groups, including the Khoi, who were also 'an oppressed people', failed to move those not directly threatened by Grey's army.¹³⁸ Mhlakaza, they replied, was a false prophet, like Nxele and Mlanjeni. As for the *uhlanga* without cattle at the Gxarha: '*Inkomo luhlanga, zifile luyakufa uhlanga*' (cattle are the *uhlanga*, they being dead the *uhlanga* will die.)¹³⁹ Non-cultivation affected only Xhosaland, over half the Thembu around Queenstown, and neighbouring settlers who feared war. Among blacks, cultivators were largely those already aligned with colonizers: the Mfengu, Christians, state employees. Chiefs who sowed constituted a roll-call of those with pronounced pro-colonial leanings.¹⁴⁰

Male agriculturists, however, often parted company from women. Rumours about being glued to the ground, it has been asserted, were particularly widespread among women, who, despite spousal pressure, often refused to till. Yet feminizing 'superstition' is of limited help: numberless men shared this fear. Women had already given notice of greater enthusiasm than pro-colonial men for heroes who killed Englishmen. There were many 'cheerful' peasants. They 'smiled' when told starvation pended. Women were singled out as particularly ardent believers.¹⁴¹ The subordinate sex dominates many millenarian movements. The attraction here was 'men', strong enough to paralyze enemies and throw off the imperial yoke.

In all, war fears, not women, were central in precipitating non-cultivation. Peasants were caught between 'locusts', ready to move at an hour's notice, and nationalists threatening destruction if the earth from which a miracle would come was worked. Chiefs' decisions meant about two-thirds of the Xhosa populace had no right to till. To this was added antagonism to

¹³⁷ Long, ed., *Goldswain*, 192; GH 8/30, Fitzgerald to Maclean, 6 Dec. 1856. See also GH 8/49, Reeve to Maclean, 29 Oct. 1856.

¹³⁸ GH 28/71, illegible to Grey, 15 Oct. 1856; LG 473, Warner to Southey, 7 Oct. 1856.

¹³⁹ Soga, *Ama-Xosa*, 122. See also Peires, *Dead*, 107, 121.

¹⁴⁰ GH 8/49, Maclean to Grey, 16 Oct. 1856, and 1 Dec. 1856; *KWTG* 23 Oct. 1856; Bandolier to Ed, *CFT* 24 March 1857; Peires, *Dead*, 118-121, 274.

¹⁴¹ GH 8/49, Maclean to Grey, 3 Nov. 1856. See also Peires, *Dead*, 117.

agriculture so strong that few but pro-colonial men dared cultivate. Only on a literal reading can the 'Cattle-Killing movement' be termed 'very fragile' at the start of summer. In any other terms, it was now a mass phenomenon: spilling over ethnic boundaries, incorporating most 'bulls', and creating palpable uniformity among some 200,000 peasants repudiating peasantry.

A WARSHIP

'Red men' had barely docked when Grey dispatched a warship to the Kei, to investigate the feasibility of landing troops there. The *Geyser*, absent from almost all accounts of the movement, anchored when Germans were expected. It did so at the Kei mouth, where Sarhili had allegedly seen his host of men. The day after it anchored (2 November), the king defiantly responded to Grey's prior threat of punishment. His people would obey 'the thing which speaks'. Sarhili, reported the trader transmitting this, 'beleave he Can doe wonders if the Goovaner shoud atack'.¹⁴²

The *Geyser's* commander and some sailors landed in a surf boat, then sailed up the Kei. Messengers were dispatched countrywide: Grey was landing troops. War cries sounded. Weaponry was frantically bought. Warriors assembled to prevent disembarkation. 'Wonders' occurred: the surf boat capsized. After its relaunch, the weather was so threatening that the *Geyser* retreated, abandoning trophies, including a gold-laced cap.¹⁴³

The tale spread like wildfire. The men who had arisen had destroyed the warship and its crew. The cap was exhibited around Xhosaland, as proof. '[U]niversal joy' greeted the news.¹⁴⁴ Cattle slaughter re-erupted, nationally. This has been previously noted: after the king's 'uncompromising declaration...the excitement advanced without faltering'. The cause was not the king. Men, stated a chief, thinking 'the English have Sustained a defeat', were 'madly' slaughtering.¹⁴⁵

In independent Xhosaland, where cattle-killing had been declining, some now butchered their cows. Sarhili claimed to have almost eliminated his six thousand oxen. Hearing people allegedly longing for another attack, he provocatively told informers that

¹⁴² GH 20/2/1, Sarhili's statement, 3 Nov. 1856, and J. Crouch to Maclean, undated. See also GH 30/11, Grey to Captain Wiseman, 17 Oct. 1856; *KWTG* 30 Oct. 1856; GH 8/29, Brownlee to Maclean, 22 Oct. 1856.

¹⁴³ GH 8/48, Maclean to Grey, 20 Nov. 1856; *KWTG* 13 Nov. 1856, 31 Jan. 1857; Brownlee, *Reminiscences*, 143.

¹⁴⁴ GH 8/30, Brownlee to Maclean, 7 Dec. 1856. See also Brownlee, *Reminiscences*, 143.

¹⁴⁵ Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1104; GH 8/30, Robertson to Maclean, 23 Nov. 1856.

he was ready for war. Sifuba-sibanzi, it was said, was at the Gxarha. Leading men had to be doctored for war and the millennium. Mhlakaza required them 'to be washed that they might thereby live for ever and become invulnerable to shot'.¹⁴⁶

On learning that the warship had been destroyed, Mhala, who had not yet sanctioned cattle-killing, began slaughtering on a large scale, and pressurizing his subjects to kill. '[S]how now whom you are for the English or me, I dont care for the Government'. When nearby infantry held a shooting practice, they were said to have been driven mad by Mhlakaza. They were firing away all their ammunition, and would be unable to resist his army.¹⁴⁷ Similar patterns were evident in other chiefdoms. A war victory transformed 'dormant' cattle-killing into mass butchery, sometimes of every cow. Women were of little relevance as violence surged to the fore: the female Thembu Regent 'is considered a mere cipher in this matter.'¹⁴⁸ The teenager, too, was but 'the Girl' whose 'Father [Mhlakaza] is a verey greait man'. Peasants, joyous, feasting on beef, spoke much 'of war in reference to the prevailing superstitions'.¹⁴⁹

Much more than slaughter was occurring. In Kama's chiefdom, where numerous men had become migrants in October, demand for employment after the Geyser tidings was nil. In British Kaffraria at large, a mere 219 women, children and men were registered for work with Cape colonists in November. In December, this fell to 31. Labourers on local public works fell by a third between October and December. Some sang war songs as they worked.¹⁵⁰ Not only did waverers stop cultivating: wild crops were now uprooted. Vast quantities of bread, sugar, rice and coffee were being bought: a wartime practice, urged from the Gxarha. Peasants, painting themselves with ochre and wearing ornaments to welcome heroes, were not only making nationalist statements, but also adopting wartime dress. The elderly, ran belief, would regain

¹⁴⁶ BK 89, unsigned information, 3 Dec. 1856; see also GH 8/30, Robertson to Maclean, 23 Nov. 1856, information from 'trustworthy native', 8 Dec. 1856.

¹⁴⁷ BK 81, Gawler to Maclean, 30 Nov. 1856; see also BK 81, Gawler to Maclean, 20 Nov. 1856.

¹⁴⁸ GH 8/30, Brownlee to Maclean, 7 Dec. 1856; CO 2935, Warner to Southey, 23 Dec. 1856.

¹⁴⁹ Long, ed., *Goldswain*, 191; BK 86, Reeve to Maclean, 8 Dec. 1856, see also 27 Nov. 1856; GH 8/30, Lucas to Maclean, 8 Dec. 1856; GH 8/49, Warner to Maclean, 29 Nov. 1856.

¹⁵⁰ GH 8/29, Reeve to Maclean, 25 Oct. 1856; BK 86, Reeve to Maclean, 27 Nov. 1856; BK 89, communication from Lamont, 2 Jan. 1857; GH 8/30, return of natives registered for public works, Oct. 1856; 'Natives registered and sent to serve', Nov. 1856; GH 8/31, schedule 378, 10 Jan. 1857.

youth if conflict occurred.¹⁵¹ Diet, dress, songs, the absence of crops, rejection of wage labour, the politicization of everyday life: all spoke as eloquently as cattle-killing of war.

In British Kaffraria, bursting with troops, few men wished to fight. The black army would destroy whites. This posed no threats to women's gender identity. After news of the warship's destruction, Ngqika women outstripped men in their enthusiasm for successful warriors. Having to rely on others, however, wounded veterans' pride. He was not going to fight, asserted a warrior-chief, but had enough provocation 'to throw assegais at Government.'¹⁵² Male combustibility existed. It was evident from mobilization in response to a surf boat.

It was feared, too, by the master race. As cattle-killing resumed, a scare occurred. Many longed for Germans, without whom Grey did not want to fight. Holding operations occurred. 'Kaffirs' entering the Cape at night, urged the commander of frontier troops, should be shot. Those found armed in the Cape, without passes, should 'be shot on the spot.' Developments in Xhosaland strengthened the hand of officials urging avoidance of violence: famine would humble the Xhosa.¹⁵³ Tactical differences meant believers hovered in tense expectation. The country was dying; it was not yet dead. This, again, fuelled reckless destruction.

Some held out: the *amagogotya* (the unyielding, disloyal ones, who disbelieved the *igogo*.) Spare the cattle, cried one. The stronghold did not exist; 'the earth has compacted...no person who has been dead will rise.'¹⁵⁴ Their background proved their words lies. These were largely men who had benefited from colonialism. Often deeply anxious about their property, those who 'manfully resisted the delusion' were being driven further into the colonial embrace.¹⁵⁵ Since they compounded refusal to aid the Xhosa war effort, by siding with white men talking of shooting 'Kaffirs', they were accorded wartime roles. They applied to the state for arms, slept in cattle folds, were called or called themselves a spy, 'a Govt soldier'. They incurred 'the odium of

¹⁵¹ BK 71, Brownlee to Maclean, 12 Dec. 1856; GH 8/30, Brownlee to Maclean, 7 Dec. 1856; *KWTG* 11 Dec. 1856, 28 Feb. 1857; Chalmers, *Soga*, 119.

¹⁵² BK 82, Lucas to Maclean, 29 Nov. 1856. See also GH 8/30, Brownlee to Maclean, 7 Dec. 1856.

¹⁵³ GH 36/1, Memorandum by Jackson, 4 Dec. 1856. See also GH 8/30, Maclean to Grey, 3 Nov. 1856; GH 8/49, Maclean to Grey, 24 Nov. 1856; *KWTG* 4 Dec. 1856.

¹⁵⁴ Rubusana, *Zenk'iinkomo*, 416.

¹⁵⁵ BK 71, Brownlee to Maclean, 12 Dec. 1856. See also Peires, *Dead*, 180.

being traitors'.¹⁵⁶ Sharp distinctions between the elect and the damned characterize millenarianism. In this case the black damned, emerging in a war context, consisting overwhelmingly of men, were regarded as a fifth column. Bitter antagonism existed; 'though this revolution has for its object the destruction of the white man, the feeling...[seems] stronger against the Kafirs who have opposed Umhlakaza'. Officialdom welcomed this. It ought to be possible to 'prevent anything beyond a civil war'.¹⁵⁷

Grey's dispatch of a warship was more than the 'laughable', 'farcical' fiasco amusing those male historians who have noticed it.¹⁵⁸ Unheroic though it was, it was done with martial intent: invasion. It revealed the depth of hatred for redcoats and black turncoats, belying the claim that the movement was not particularly hostile to anyone, that the 'worst outbreaks of anti-white sentiment always occurred during the periods of disappointment'.¹⁵⁹ This was a time of elation; the news that sailors were dead evoked jubilation. Moreover, when patriarchs emptied homesteads of cows, when youths would not work, when women uprooted wild crops, when cash ran out, then the famine that officialdom desired accelerated. Children, the elderly, ordinary peasants, were already dying.¹⁶⁰

The role of 'men' as providers now surged to the fore. He had eaten 'new mealies', one man told another. If one side of a cob that would rise were shelled, ran rumour, the other side would regrow.¹⁶¹ But the impoverished were instead often completely reliant on cattle slaughter by neighbours. The *spread* of cattle-killing postponed higher death rates. This was about to occur.

MOSHOESHOE'S ARMY

Up to late 1856, cattle-owners had upheld a convenient fiction: they did not have to obey a woman. War threats, military victory, the demands of men: these, not a teenager claiming they were defiled and all cattle had to go, moved them to action. The name emerging for believers - *amathamba* - had connotations of subordination to male, not female authority. It meant, literally,

¹⁵⁶ BK 81, Gawler to Maclean, 17 Nov. 1856; BK 71, Brownlee to Maclean, 21 March 1857; see also GH 8/30, Fitzgerald to Maclean, 16 Dec. 1856; BK 86, Reeve to Maclean, 29 Dec. 1856.

¹⁵⁷ BK 71, Brownlee to Maclean, 12 Dec. 1856; GH 8/49, Maclean to Grey, 22 Dec. 1856.

¹⁵⁸ Peires, *Dead*, 317; A. Manson, 'An Imaginative Exploration of the World of the Xhosa', *SAHJ* 25, 1991, 242.

¹⁵⁹ Peires, *Dead*, 316.

¹⁶⁰ BK 70, Brownlee to Maclean, 19 Dec. 1856; BK 89, communication from Lieut. Lamont, 2 Jan. 1857.

¹⁶¹ GH 8/30, information from person beyond the Kei, 25 Dec. 1856; see also Soga, *Intlalo*, 174-5.

young mealies, and, figuratively, flexible, soft people. Yet another meaning for *uhlanga* was old stock of maize. The *amathamba*, the younger generation of the all-male original stock, possessed the 'softness' of juniors to patriarchs.¹⁶²

Cattle-owners, however, now had to come to terms with a woman interposed between them and the *uhlanga*. The Gxarha group was being reorganized. Heroes, said the prophet, did not want to communicate through her uncle, a 'black bellied plebeian'. His senior chief, Nxito, replaced him. But Nxito was an unyielding one. He demanded ocular proof. He told a man to inspect the site where appearances were to occur. The seer exploded. Her warriors had quit. They would not communicate with a disobedient chief. They would not become visible at December's full moon. They would not provide cattle: 'the new cattle will not come out, while others are in existence'.¹⁶³ An *igogo*, communicating with men who had annihilated a warship, was invoking masculinist sins to explain delay.

The king backed her. He would kill any man who still owned cattle in the near future, ran rumour. He again filled the vacuum in male authority at the Gxarha. Pressurized by desperate men, he began setting days for the great change. His were not when patriarchs had killed all cattle. Nor did he chose the meeting of the moon (10 January), widely believed to be the day set at the Gxarha. A king set his own timetables. By Christmas Day, he was ordering men to kill because only six days remained.¹⁶⁴

Resistance mounted. Many *amathamba* were recalcitrant when ordered to slaughter *all* cattle. 'Kreli is but a child', declared a chief. He countermanded the order.¹⁶⁵ The king, it was rumoured, had been bewitched; he saw what no one else saw. If his vision and masculinity were suspect, then it was 'very childish' to obey 'a girl'.¹⁶⁶ Suspicious chiefs were transferring their allegiances; the *igogo* became ill. A name change was noted: she was now 'Nonquase [Nongqausi] alias Nonqakule'.¹⁶⁷ The new name derived from *iqausi*: a luminary, dazzlingly white. If the

¹⁶² Kropf, *Dictionary*, 402.

¹⁶³ GH 8/30, Brownlee to Maclean, 17 Dec. 1856. See also GH 8/31, Brownlee to Maclean, 4 Jan. 1857; BK 89, information from beyond the Kei, 7 Jan. 1857.

¹⁶⁴ BK 70, Brownlee to Maclean, 25 Dec. 1856; CO 2935, W. Shepstone to Resident Secretary, 17 Dec. 1856.

¹⁶⁵ BK 89, information to Maclean, 11 Jan. 1857.

¹⁶⁶ BK 85, Robertson to Maclean, 10 Jan. 1857. See also GH 8/49, Ayliff to Maclean, 22 Dec. 1856;

¹⁶⁷ GH 8/31, Brownlee to Maclean, 4 Jan. 1857, see also 11 Feb. 1857; GH 8/35, examination of 'Nonquase', 27 April 1858; BK 14, statement by Umjuza, 24 Feb. 1858; *Indaba*, Aug. 1862; Rubusana, *Zemk'inkomo*, 123.

symbolism of purity and enlightenment appealed to an *igogo* battling to establish her credentials, in a world of khaki animals and Grey, it backfired. 'She who professes to illuminate/make brilliantly white', it came to be said, 'glistened in her whiteness'. A black woman had been turned into a 'white thing', by whites.¹⁶⁸

The problem of an unreliable 'girl', however, had been solved before. But to this was added an infantile king - when the recent wave of slaughter testified to belief in 'men'. Just before Christmas, on which settler war anxieties centred, reassurances flooded Xhosaland. The prophecies had been fulfilled - in Lesotho.

This had everything to do with imminent war in Lesotho. The Free State had, finally, declared its intention of invading Lesotho in early 1857. In popular imagination, peasants threatened with war had similar responses. There was a widespread report that a prophet had ordered Mosheshoe to slaughter. Just before Christmas, the wife of a Lesotho man visited her father in the trans-Kei. 'Moshesh's army is already out', she declared. Why had he not killed? Her father - and many others - 'recommenced slaughtering at a fearful rate'.¹⁶⁹ Obedient BaSotho, ran the tidings among Ngqika men, had received 'the promise'. This, they thought, included ammunition. Men who destroyed old supplies would receive better powder. Ardent believers fired theirs away.¹⁷⁰ A wardoctor, it was postulated in Mhala's chiefdom, must have been involved. Helped by men dubious about the Gxarha circle, an extant prophet, Nonkosi, about nine years old, acquired a new message. She was talking to Mlanjeni. He had been to Lesotho; 'half of Moshesh's people were destroyed because they were not quick in believing'.¹⁷¹ The king, also frustrated with the Gxarha turmoil, seized upon these rumours. Since Lesotho's revolution had occurred, ran his New Year's message to British Kaffraria, and Xhosaland's time was at hand, all cattle and goats should be exterminated, immediately. Sarhili would then 'insist on the appearance of the people and cattle', in about two days time.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Scheub, *Tongue*, 310, 308; see also Kropf, *Dictionary*, 350.

¹⁶⁹ GH 8/30, information from person beyond the Kei, 25 Dec. 1856. See also L. Thompson, *Survival in Two Worlds* (Oxford, 1975), 219-20.

¹⁷⁰ GH 8/31, Brownlee to Maclean, 31 Dec. 1856; see also LG 474, R. Tainton to Southey, 12 Feb. 1857; BK 70, Brownlee to Maclean, 25 Dec. 1856.

¹⁷¹ BK 81, Gawler to Maclean, 15 Oct. 1857, enclosing examinations of Nonkosi; see also Gawler to Maclean, 30 Dec. 1856, and 12 Nov 1857; Acc 793, entry for 1 Oct. 1856.

¹⁷² GH 8/31, Brownlee to Maclean, 4 Jan. 1857.

Ferocious butchery occurred. Standard anxieties existed. A leading believer discussed war and anticipated German arrival with his magistrate. The Xhosa were afraid, concluded the magistrate. As punishment for transmitting the king's message, Sandile's chiefdom was threatened with death 'by war and starvation united'.¹⁷³ As pertinently, demise of the disobedient, from an apocalypse, was imminent. In some chiefdoms, slaughter greatly exceeded previous eruptions; the land stank of carrion. Homesteads also reeked of *amagogotya*, whose very existence endangered and polluted all who were 'clean'. '[Y]ou are unbelievers and unclean, dont come near and defile us', shouted some men to others; 'you may now ride your horses, but soon you will ride to the devil'.¹⁷⁴

Just after New Year, the king presided over a huge male meeting at his father's Great Place (Butterworth), convened to witness him order the appearance of the underground *uhlanga*. But an estimated half of all trans-Keian cattle still lived. Butchery had been less concerted here than in a military colony. The king still owned cattle. So did Mhlakaza. So did men in Nongqawuse's neighbourhood.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, the king had invoked Lesotho, and had set his own timetable. Nongqawuse's word to him had been that Sifuba-sibanzi was waiting to see him at her homestead. Her words clearly still meant little to men. A message was sent to the meeting. Last moon was the appointed time. This had been ruined by Nxito refusing to do as he was told. Stubborn, rebellious men still existed. Heroes had dispersed. Only if the meeting of the moon (10 January) was blood-red should people return. Should this not happen, they were to wait for the new moon.¹⁷⁶

Subjects of an impotent king, told to trust in a prophet's moons, despaired. The claim that 'believers were shattered' when 'the full moon failed to rise blood-red' has little substance.¹⁷⁷ A woman's promises counted for naught beside mass male disillusion. >From 6 January, in Sandile's chiefdom, goats and hides stopped being sold. Not a head of cattle was seen to be killed just before or on the day of the moon. Their hope, said many, was gone. In Butterworth, hides bought by traders plummeted

¹⁷³GH 8/31, Brownlee to Maclean, 4 Jan. 1857. See also GH 8/31, Vigne to Maclean, 3 Jan. 1857.

¹⁷⁴BK 70, Brownlee to Maclean, 25 Dec. 1856; see also GH 8/31, Brownlee to Maclean, 4 Jan. 1857, Lucas to Maclean, 7 Jan. 1857; Chalmers, *Soga*, 120.

¹⁷⁵BK 89, information to Maclean, 11 Jan. 1857; statement from person beyond the Kei, 12 Jan. 1857; statement by Vigne, 25 Jan. 1857; Peires, *Dead*, 151.

¹⁷⁶GH 8/30, information from a person beyond the Kei, 25 Dec. 1856; BK 89, information to Maclean from beyond the Kei, 7 Jan. 1857; *KWTG* 10 Jan. 1857.

¹⁷⁷Peires, *Dead*, 152.

immediately after the meeting. Mhlakaza, ran rumour, had 'vanished into space on the 7th'.¹⁷⁸ Sarhili, who left for home, declining to wait for a blood-red moon, attempted suicide. People, he said, were 'mad for following Mhlakaza'.¹⁷⁹

For the first time, Nongqawuse's original demands had been taken seriously. Her hostility to extant cattle and disobedient patriarchs was starkly revealed. Yet the 'fate of thousands' did not depend on her 'slightest word'.¹⁸⁰ This wave of killing, too, was sparked by talk of armies, a wardoctor, an apocalypse - and the dates, demands and promises of a king. Collapse occurred when his impotence was revealed. Once again, men called off a movement before a woman's prophecies could fail.

The 'lull' continued until after 24 January's new moon. But the greatest upheaval still pended. Believers allegedly had so few cattle that they had no option but to continue killing.¹⁸¹ There is another explanation for the single biggest wave of butchery.

NEW PEOPLE COME OUT

The millennial dream of many settlers was fulfilled as 1856 closed. Mercenaries docked in Cape Town. Yet frontiersmen, urging war rather than intolerable tension, had to wait two more months, for Major General Baron von Stutterheim, and Grey, to arrive in British Kaffraria.¹⁸²

Speaking of rumoured German arrival at his great meeting, Sarhili said redcoats were 'put into Ships...to make the [Xhosa] believe they are new people'. Germans were 'deception'.¹⁸³ Commoners learnt otherwise. Mercenaries aware of the satanic aura their all-black uniforms had, and conceptualizing Africans as cannibals, began landing days later, then marched to a tent laager. There was mass black flight from the port. The 'Germans shoot at [us] & carry large sticks...to get hold of women'. Belgians were called 'throat-slitters'. If soldiers were to enter their chiefdom, pleaded men, 'dont let them be Germans'.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁸ GH 8/50, Robertson to Maclean, 13 (15?) January 1857. See also GH 8/31, Brownlee to Maclean, 11 Jan. 1857; information to Maclean, 17-18 Jan. 1857; BK 71, Brownlee to Maclean, 13 Jan 1857.

¹⁷⁹ Peires, *Dead*, 152.

¹⁸⁰ Peires, *Dead*, 148.

¹⁸¹ Peires, *Dead*, 150-1, 277; Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1206.

¹⁸² A Sentinel, *Tired of Watching*, to Ed., *CFT* 30 Dec. 1856; Correspondent from immediate border, *CFT* 30 Dec. 1856; Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1204.

¹⁸³ GH 8/31, information to Maclean by 'trustworthy native', 14 Jan. 1857.

¹⁸⁴ GH 8/50, Vigne to Maclean, 1 Feb. 1857; Peires, *Dead*, 287; BK

Magistrates were ordered to spread the news. Sandile's men were informed that means now existed for 'crushing them'. They called their own meeting about Germans: 'it is very clear the English are going to fight.' *Amathamba* proposed war. *Amagogotya* said they would not join them. They would warn the English. Believers threatened to attack them first.¹⁸⁵ War was also discussed in the trans-Kei. Fighting without worrying about the encumbrance of stock was now possible, Sarhili told his councillors. Should Grey 'attempt anything against me, I have dogs that will bite'.¹⁸⁶

Alternatives existed. Mhala's people learnt that 'new people' had indeed abandoned the Gxarha, leaving a message: 'we said that all your cattle were to be killed, you have not done so - we leave you in disgust'. Simultaneously, the officer-magistrate gloatingly escorted *amagogotya* to the coast, to 'see "our new people come out"'.¹⁸⁷ 'Underground people' promptly appeared in Mhala's chiefdom. The prepubescent Nonkosi ('Female chief') had seen them rising from a river, had descended through a shaft into the 'country underneath'. Mhala, who so dreaded troops that he never slept at home, and had men posted to warn him of a surprise attack, began killing every day. So did many others. Neighbouring peasants poured in. Another female prophet arose. Novel injunctions emerged; cash was also taboo. There were, said Nonkosi, 'many things' in 'their country', including sugar and bread, which 'we did not possess'. Nonkosi, communicating with Mlanjeni, forsaken neither by the underground people nor by male stage-managers, rocketed to fame.¹⁸⁸

The arrival of white 'new people', and the departure of their black counterparts from the Gxarha, fuelled other local sightings. Eyes turned to the king. He had 'either to see the new people, or to put a stop to the whole thing.'¹⁸⁹ He had doubts,

81, Gawler to Maclean, 14 March 1857. See also BK 10, Maclean to Grey, 12 Jan. 1857; D. Schwär and R. Jardine, eds., *The Letters and Journal of Gustav Steinbart* (Port Elizabeth, 1975), vol.1, 17, 69.

¹⁸⁵ GH 8/31, Brownlee to Maclean, 13 Jan. 1857; GH 8/31, Substance of statement to Maclean, 20 Jan. 1857.

¹⁸⁶ BK 71, Brownlee to Maclean, 21 Jan. 1857. See also GH 8/31, information to Maclean by 'trustworthy native', 14 Jan. 1857.

¹⁸⁷ GH 8/31, Gawler to Maclean, 14 Jan. 1857; BK 81, Gawler to Maclean, 17 Jan. 1857.

¹⁸⁸ GH 8/48, Maclean's report on chiefs, 30 Sept. 1857; BK 81, Gawler to Maclean, 26 Jan. 1857, 15 Oct. 1857, enclosing examinations of Nonkosi. See also GH 8/31, information communicated to Maclean, 15 Jan. 1857, 16 Jan. 1857; comments on schedule 386, 29 Jan 1857.

¹⁸⁹ GH 8/31, substance of information to Maclean, 17-18 Jan 1857. See also GH 8/31, memorandum on information to Maclean, 29 Jan.

confessed Sarhili at the meeting where he discussed war, but was determined to proceed. He called another great meeting, after the new moon. As soon as this had passed, his word was disseminated: 'the *thing*' ordered cattle-killing. Butchery resumed.¹⁹⁰

Sarhili also ordered that the *amagogoty* be cast off; his was to be a nation consisting only of submissive ones. This had great resonance. Women eagerly defined men who were clinging to cattle - and clambering over troopships, betraying war plans - as abominations. Mothers abandoned children rather than live with such husbands. Pollution, segregation, death threats: even Mfengu *amagogoty* cracked.¹⁹¹

In late January, the greatest gathering of the political elite since the movement's start occurred at Butterworth. The king dispatched Nxito's son to tell 'the new men that all the chiefs are assembled'.¹⁹² Some *amathamba* were then viciously purged as infidels. Those remaining helped prove their credentials with hunger-sharpened visions. Water had become milk. Porridge had filled a pot. Tents were rising from the local river: German accoutrements could be accommodated into constructions of new warriors as readily as boats. These visions were disseminated: delegates sent a stream of messengers to their chiefdoms. Some heard that 'the people no longer converse with the "Uhlanga" (new people)' through Mhlakaza; 'they themselves now see them, and converse'.¹⁹³ Others heard that chiefs had seen vast herds and bridled horses, that the apocalypse was in two days time. In response to messages telling of the visions of the nation's elite, peasants began slaughtering immediately.¹⁹⁴

Nxito's son returned. Unlike his disgraced father, he had seen 'men horses guns' at the sea, 'horsemen with new saddles and armed with guns'.¹⁹⁵ This fraternity was awaiting Sarhili, who had first to seclude himself; everyone else was to go home. Men who had already passed male tests did not abide by a woman's notions of purity. Thousands poured into her homestead, concentrating the minds of chiefs free of witchcraft ultimately allowed to approach

1857; Long, ed., *Goldswain*, 192-3.

¹⁹⁰ GH 8/31, Vigne to Maclean, 25 Jan. 1857. See also BK 71, Brownlee to Maclean, 21 (25?) Jan. 1857.

¹⁹¹ BK 71, Brownlee to Maclean, 4 Feb. 1857; GH 8/31, memorandum by Vigne, 25 Jan. 1857; BK 86, Reeve to Maclean, 31 Jan. 1857; BK 10, information to Maclean, 2 Feb. 1857.

¹⁹² *KWTG* 31 Jan. 1857.

¹⁹³ LG 410, Warner to Southey, 6 Feb. 1857. See also BK 89, Crouch to Maclean, 3 Feb. 1857.

¹⁹⁴ GH 8/31, Brownlee to Maclean, 31 Jan. 1857; see also BK 71, Brownlee to Maclean, 2 Feb. 1857.

¹⁹⁵ BK 89, Crouch to Maclean, 3 Feb. 1857; information to Maclean, 25 April 1857.

the '*impi eyakuya e cwebeni*' (army coming from the river mouth.) They were still not allowed close to this '*mkosi uselwandle*' (army still in the sea), but 'all agreed that now their eyes were opened...they had themselves seen the new people in great numbers, both mounted and foot'. The 'new people were drilled' before Sarhili, ran rumour. The chiefs of this '*sibiba esimnyama*' (black, black mass) said that within eight days of the king returning home, homesteads should possess newly dug pits, old pits clean of grain, no cattle.¹⁹⁶ Once these preconditions for the mixing of people of different kinds existed, they would appear, and retake land. The two prophets in Mhala's chiefdom said the Xhosa would regain their country up to Grahamstown. Transkeian rumour had greater historical depth. Pre-British borders, beyond which Xhosaland had rarely extended, would be re-established: 'the new people are to take the Country from the Kei to Sundays River'.¹⁹⁷

The possibility remained that ordinary men might have to assist them. The Ngqika had been sent a message from the great meeting that 'they would *perhaps* find the English annihilated, but if not the new people would teach the [Xhosa] how to fight'. They would supply new guns, new ammunition, it was rumoured. Did extant weapons have to be destroyed? This had been commanded, it was reported. When few complied, the 'correct' order was disseminated: preserve weaponry.¹⁹⁸ Men liquidating or selling other masculine icons clung tenaciously to their arms. Little marketing of spears, guns, ammunition or horses occurred - until immediately after the great day.

If retaining arms and tightening hunger girdles aptly symbolized the entire movement, it also related to current expectations. White farmers were clustering in laagers. *Amagogoty*a were arming, calling for soldiers. 'Kaffirs' might invade the Cape at any moment, declared Grey; 'if War [occurs] I will do my best to give them a thorough licking'.¹⁹⁹ The Xhosa were 'sure the English intend to make war', it was reported from Grahamstown. 'It is a complete *mania* here.'²⁰⁰ Men clashed with troops. They plundered stock from the Mfengu and others because they were 'at war'. A

¹⁹⁶ IS 1 March 1888; BK 89, information communicated by 'a native', 11 Feb. 1857, and Crouch to Maclean, 9 Feb. 1857. See also BK 83, memorandum, 11 Feb. 1857.

¹⁹⁷ BK 89, Crouch to Maclean, 9 Feb. 1857. See also GH 8/31, information to Maclean by 'trustworthy native', 8 Feb. 1857.

¹⁹⁸ BK 71, Brownlee to Maclean, 2 Feb. 1857. See also GH 20/2/1, Maclean to Grey, 25 March 1857; GH 8/31, memorandum by Vigne, 25 Jan. 1857; BK 89, undated memorandum, c7 Feb. 1857; BK 71, Brownlee to Maclean, 13 Feb. 1857.

¹⁹⁹ GH 30/11, Grey to Lt. Gov. Scott, 16 Feb. 1857. See also Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1209.

²⁰⁰ *Graham's Town Journal*, 7 Feb. 1857.

trader reported on intense hostility towards white men.²⁰¹

Slaughter of surrogates was first required. Only three of Phato's herd of 2,500 cattle remained. Three was too many. Posses descended on homesteads to enforce bloodshed. Sarhili removed his sister from her husband, who had killed 580 of his 600 cattle, until he butchered them all. Some hid their stock, but during the eight allotted days, a country became an abattoir.²⁰² Xhosa dreams of horse and foot men were materializing as men butchered almost all stock but horses and dogs. Both in reality and in imagination, they were now closer approximations of imperial soldiers.

The mounting human death toll was allegedly 'all wright: they were only gon to fetch the others'. Nxito's son asked to be killed: he would *vuka* with the men. There were rumours, fuelled by famine, that the elderly, or women, or children, should be killed. Vultures, carcasses, corpses, untilled fields, talk of murder: 'The "country is dead"', said commoners.²⁰³

To survive the day when the sun would turn blood-red, then set where it rose, followed by blackness, a tornado, an earthquake, peasants gallantly fortified their homes. They cleared away grass, so that reptiles that would roam the land would be scorched. They made strong doors to keep out carnivores. They dug huge pits, painted themselves red. Then, at dawn on 18 February, '*uhlanga...lwavuka*': the nation arose, to stare at the sun. Its return to the cavern would signal that the *amathamba* were about enter the realm of the Broad-Chested One, the damned that of the Grey beast. Had the king's movements been wrongly reported? Days later, a traveller saw 'people sitting in rows watching the rising Sun...'²⁰⁴

Nongqawuse's prophecies had, for the first time, run their course. The movement's back was broken. Restraints imposed by

²⁰¹ BK 82, statement by Cheva et al, undated, c18 Feb. 1857. See also BK 89, Crouch to Maclean, 7 Feb. 1857; GH 8/50, Maclean to Grey, 9 Feb. 1857; *KWTG* 14 Feb. 1857; BK 95, R. Speedy to Lieut. Hornblowe, 15 Feb. 1857.

²⁰² GH 8/31, Brownlee to Maclean, 21 Feb. 1857; information to Maclean by person from beyond Kei, 24 Feb. 1857; BK 10, Maclean to Grey, 2 Feb. 1857; BK 14, examination of 'Kwitchie', 18 Jan. 1858.

²⁰³ Long, ed., *Goldswain*, 193; *CFT* 17 Feb. 1857. See also BK 89, memorandum, 28 April 1857; GH 8/30, Reeve to Maclean, 14 Jan. 1857; *KWTG* 10 Jan. 1857; GH 8/50, Reeve to Maclean, 8 Feb. 1857.

²⁰⁴ Soga, *Intlalo*, 178, see also 174; GH 8/31, information to Maclean from person returned from across the Kei, c24 Feb. 1857. See also Chalmers, *Soga*, 121; Brownlee, *Reminiscences*, 134; *IS* 1 March 1888.

'men' collapsed. *Amathamba* sounding war cries smashed into *amagogotya* homesteads. Soldiers were killed. Grey and von Stutterheim arrived. Germans, outraged by an officer's murder, hoped reprisals would start. It is Mhlakaza's war, said Xhosa men. '[W]ar has been already declared', cried the press.²⁰⁵

A movement born of war was not over. Cattle-killing re-erupted. New prophets arose. Rebellion in India and troop exodus re-ignited hope. 'Indians are the new people', it was prophesied in 1858. Indians were 'a black race'; '*their race is overpowering the English in India*'; 'the black nations of the East have nearly extirpated the English'. By 1860 news of war in China was allegedly feeding into prophecies that blacks had destroyed all 'the English "over the sea"; doom awaited all white men "on "this side of the sea"'; the Xhosa were to become 'masters of the world'.²⁰⁶ A movement starting with black Russians ended with the black nations of Asia - although this was not the end for those who still believed two decades later. But these phases, it is recognized, occurred in the context of war. What had loomed occurred: civil war, invasion of the trans-Kei, Free State-Lesotho war. It is the preceding period, I have argued, that of fictitious wars, imminent wars, panics, that needs rethinking. Men proving their manhood in combat have been accorded weight by scholars and in popular memory. But a movement embedded in wars that no Xhosa men fought generated catastrophe. Never had *ilizwe lifile* come more literally true.

CONCLUSION

Some 175,000 peasants lived in Xhosaland in 1855. About 26,000 did so in 1858. A nation had been decimated, scattered, dispossessed; it ceased to exist. Mobile skeletons initially provided macabre proof that the dead had indeed arisen. Frontiersmen had little mercy as some 40,000 died. Famine was, as ever, a military weapon. Every Xhosa 'saved from starvation...is just one more enemy fattened'.²⁰⁷

In the immediate aftermath, the king was widely blamed as the central instigator.²⁰⁸ God, chiefs, *amagogotya* and 'Breaker-up'

²⁰⁵ *KWTG* 28 Feb. 1857. See also GH 8/31, Minutes of meeting at Anta's Great Place, 4 March 1857; J. Schwär and R. Jardine, eds., *The Letters and Journal of Gustav Steinbart*, vol.2 (Port Elizabeth, 1978), 2; Peires, *Dead*, 204-5.

²⁰⁶ Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1234; BK 89, statement by Posse, 2 Feb. 1858; D. Williams, 'The Indian Mutiny of 1857 and the Cape Colony', *Historia* 32, 1987, 61-2.

²⁰⁷ Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1219. See also Peires, *Dead*, 267, 286, 319-21.

²⁰⁸ BK 82, Confession of chief Fadana, 24 Sept. 1857; Peires, *Dead*, 106, 278.

were indicted. But Mhlakaza starved to death. Sarhili lost his country. Chiefs were imprisoned for a decade or more. Nongqawuse and Nonkosi, due to gendered practices, were jailed separately from men. Scapegoats changed. The process of inventing a tradition, which exculpated black men, and indicted a Grey beast and his 'white thing', has yet to be traced. But as continuity with the past snapped, so Nongqawuse, prime representative of the 'new women' who had emerged, became an icon of evil. Patriarchs desperate for food bonded around gender with white men: 'they had been deceived by the false words of a female'. '[W]e are a broken nation', declared Sarhili and his brother, due to 'this girl.' Literate men, archetypal *amagogotya*, published sardonic accounts according Nongqawuse prime responsibility. By the early twentieth century, she of brilliant whiteness had been assimilated into 'a plan of the whites to break the neck of the amaXhosa because we had not been broken by all the wars.'²⁰⁹

Subsequent academic explanations retained a woman at the heart of the tale, but sought broader causes. This has been an attempt to demonstrate the difference that adding gendered men to the tale makes. Conventional wisdom almost completely neglects white male militarism. This, a quintessential masculine practice in an imperialist age, necessitates a history ranging beyond national boundaries: Britain, Mauritius, India, Russia, Germany, Belgium, Lesotho, the Free State and New Zealand all formed part of Xhosaland's tale. In response to this complicity of white masculinity with violent conquest, the movement infused Russian, Indian, Khoi, BaSotho, Mpondo, Thembu and underground men into the capacious concept of a new black *uhlanga*. This pan-black nationalism, drawing on empire as much as Africa, involved relentless pursuit of other men, and in turn requires rethinking Xhosa masculinity. Tales of men never defeated on battlefields, with giant wardoctors, impose imperial gender ideals on peasants, whose immediate interests conflicted with death of the land. Claims that the 'precolonial Xhosa social formation was still intact, right up to the time of Sir George Grey', obscure a prolonged crisis of masculinity, generating men who were 'old wives', cultivators, fathers of daughters called Victoria or in domestic service, migrants with barely a head of cattle, chiefs wearing army discards.²¹⁰ Gender had a history. That masculinity changed over time both enhanced the appeal of fathers - and allowed sons to dream of repudiating peasantry, of reinventing themselves and heroes as modern soldiers, the masculine apex of imperialists.

²⁰⁹ Peires, *Dead*, 210; Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1215; Peires, 'Suicide', 32. See also *Report and Proceedings, with Appendices, of the Government Commission on Native Laws and Customs*, G4-83 (Cape Town, 1883), 270.

²¹⁰ Peires, *Dead*, 54; see also Zarwan, 'Cattle Killings', 534.

The overarching gender bias of master narratives creates further problems. Explanations centred on cattle have seemed plausible due to marginalization of everything but this prime symbol of Xhosa masculinity. Yet non-cultivation initiated the movement, then gave it a mass base. Nongqawuse has been portrayed both as a child with 'absurd' instructions - and as a witch *ex machina*. Yet as an intellectual promoting a black political discourse, communicating with an army, she transgressed gender stereotypes. The power to sway 200,000 peasants was not, however, accorded her sex. The movement's non-lunar rhythms, the obscurity surrounding her name, symbolize the centrality of the king, Mhlakaza, male visions, male-only politics, male-only combat.

If these insights are included, causation and characterization change. The movement was not inward-looking, with little nationalist content, centred on ungendered Xhosa ancestors who would be resurrected, with white men playing but a minor role. It was outward-looking, sensible to a black diaspora, hungry for black men who had killed Englishmen. They were accorded masculine, secular, nationalist tasks: teaching Xhosa men how to fight, regaining land and independence, remaking the nation by injecting cattle and 'men'. The greatest wardoctors had popularized the ability of departed Xhosa men to rise from the ground. In 1855 - as a devastating war uniting blacks across ethnic boundaries gave way to the nineteenth century equivalent of World War I, as fresh blows, including a cattle epidemic, rained on patriarchs - predominantly female visionaries ranged beyond these wardoctors, beyond nation states, beyond Xhosa men. Excluded from men's parochial political terrain, female prophets (and rumour) spoke of black Russians, a black army, a black nation; of militarism as the new gender ideal, to which class had to be subordinated. Non-cultivation began. When the Commander-in-Chief imported British troops in response to Boer-BaSotho tensions, and British gentlemen promoted colonization by German mercenaries, another female prophet, telling of new black men and new cattle from the source of life, propelled her uncle into national notoriety. Cattle-killing erupted. As the master race sought to bludgeon peasants into submission, the movement was driven to new heights: with threatened invasion of the trans-Kei; the influx of redcoats into the largest frontier army ever; a warship garnering intelligence for invasion; threatened war against Lesotho; German mercenaries. The torque, the stress propelling the entire movement, was white male militarism. The sacrifices demanded of defiled southern Africans, to enable a black underground army to fight, escalated. Ultimately, the greatest ever upsurge of black nationalism, pursuing an elusive ideal of black masculinity, demanded class suicide. It bequeathed death.

Arguing that gender makes a difference renders explicit the implicit assumption of master narratives. Accounts of the

'Nongqawuse Cattle-Killing' are already highly gendered. Xhosa women generated emasculation. Prophets preceding Nongqawuse were allegedly all women. Nongqawuse, assert many Xhosa men today, was a female; one expected that behaviour of a female. As scholars express it, her conduct was 'peculiarly feminine'. She 'lured an entire people to death' with visions centred on 'uterine dampness', perhaps precipitated by 'unconscious sexual frustrations'.²¹¹ Women dominated 'soft' believers, men the 'hard' unbelievers. Practices coded feminine or effeminate dominate analyses ('emotionalism', non-military tactics, 'frenzy of religious excitement'.²¹²) Sarhili, a 'weakling' in his youth, was a 'very limited ruler', timid in war, credulous and emotional.²¹³ Grey was a duplicitous 'Artful Dodger', prone to fiascos, drugs and nervous collapse. His victory, relates Xhosa tradition, was achieved not 'fairly through military means but deviously', through a girl.²¹⁴

'[O]ne is still left asking why the cattle killing occurred'. Scholars have been urged to explore Xhosa psychology, Xhosa symbolism, the damp wombs and 'uterine hole' allegedly central in women's visions.²¹⁵ If, however, the parochial, peculiarly feminine tale preferred by history is infused with aggression so naked that its neglect seems extraordinary - an empire at war, 'licking Kaffirs', butchering cattle to vaporize whites, women with appetites for blood invading wardoctors' domains, a deadly battle between 'He who enjoys ruling' and a Commander-in-Chief, a black-and-white world of genocidal war between heroes and devils - it becomes instead a terrifying masculinist contest of strength. Implicating masculinity in a catastrophe is not, however, a vision that has captured imaginations.

ENDNOTES

²¹¹ Peires, *Dead*, 172-3, ix; Crais, *Colonial Order*, 206. See also Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1191.

²¹² Zarwan, 'Killings', 534; Peires, *Dead*, 220.

²¹³ Mostert, *Frontiers*, 1184; Peires, *Dead*, 86; see also Stapleton, 'Slaughter', 357.

²¹⁴ Peires, *Dead*, 45, see also 46-47, 52, 112, 187; Peires, 'Suicide', 36.

²¹⁵ R. Packard, 'Review of J.B. Peires, *The Dead Will Arise*', *American Historical Review* 96, 2, 1991, 577; Crais, *Order*, 207. See also Tisani, 'Peires', 233; Guy, 'Landmark', 228.