Chapter 3 explores the questions of authority faced by Tiyo Soga in his capacities as elite Xhosa man, ordained Christian minister, and a member of a stigmatised race in colonial South Africa. One of his strategies for dealing with his conflicted situation was to research his people’s history and traditions that would place them in a Christian context, while ceding nothing to racial prejudices of white South Africans. The target audience of the resulting text, which unfortunately he never completed, was his own people. This is a stark contrast to D.F. Wilberforce, whose defence tract was written for a colonial and mission readership, or the Rarotongans who had not been exposed to colonial racism, but recognised the Christian authority of missionaries. Thirty years after Soga’s effort at history Magema M. Fuze, who had acted as an assistant to the first Anglican Bishop of Natal, completed a book in Zulu for a Zulu audience. These are rare early examples of ethnographic writing by subject people for subject people.

Magema Fuze, a Zulu from a chiefly family, was one of the first to become Christian under the influence of Anglican Bishop John Colenso. He was born around 1840 moving to Colenso’s mission, Ekukhanyeni, in 1856 where he learned to read and write, was taught the printing trade and became a Christian. Although not strictly speaking an evangelist, his printing work involved him in the promulgation of Christianity. Fuze’s *Abantu Amnyama Lapa Bavela Ngakona*, published as a book in 1922, was eventually translated into English as *The Black People and Whence They Came: A Zulu View*.\(^1\) Several historians have written perceptively about Fuze’s book, highlighting the ways in which he incorporated his Christian understanding into his Zulu world turned upside down by both internal and colonial wars. His fusing of Zulu and Christian ideologies became a means to assert a Zulu and African autonomy against the colonial state. In particular, studies of Fuze by Karin Barber, Hlonipha Mokoena and J.A. Draper applied the concept of the invention of tradition developed by Benedict Anderson and Terence Ranger. They challenge the old view of new Christians as people living between two worlds.\(^2\)

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They recognise that Fuze, like so many indigenous evangelists, had no difficulty constructing his world from the knowledge available to him and his own life experience. In Barber’s words he ‘edits tradition’ in his writing which made possible a ‘sanitising of the “traditional.”’ Mokoena suggests Fuze attempted to construct an imagined community of Africans. Draper concurs. ‘[Fuze] produces a particular brand of prophetic nationalism infused by Christian symbolism.’ He goes on to observe that Fuze believed it was the abandonment of Zulu custom and the adoption of Western culture that resulted in God abandoning them because African culture is God’s creation. Fuze articulated his concern in rather similar terms to the Australian David Unaipon (see Chapter 11):

It does not mean to say that because you see civilised people and wish to become like them, that you should discard your own which is good. It may happen that in seeking to do so, you may suddenly find yourselves being cast into a bottomless pit.

Fuze was born about thirty years before Unaipon but they were both of an age to have been conversant with European science. His mentor Colenso introduced him to scientific as well as Christian concepts which he applied in his history. He speculates that the first person could have been created from a baboon and that people then dispersed around the world. His views were also influenced by racial thinking of the time as he reasons that the first man and woman must have been black as whites do not change colour so cannot be bred to become black, while miscegenation will result in black people becoming white. Although he viewed the Khoisan (Bushmen and Hottentots) as quite different people from Bantu-speaking people, he surmises that their physical features had enough in common with Zulus for these various peoples to have had a common ancestry. Fuze is thus adapting and adopting ideas

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3 Barber, Anthropology of Texts, p. 158.
6 Ibid., p. 11.
7 Ibid., pp. 2–4, 10.