investigate intimate practices and behavior in the public spaces of ancient Greece while in other parts of the world, archaeologists speculate about intimate behavior in prewritten times on the basis of artifactual remains.[7]

## AFRICAN ENCOUNTERS WITH CHRISTIANITY

It is impossible to separate the shaping of Black intimacy from its connections to Christianity. As Africans encountered Protestant ecumenical Christianity, they encountered different and Christian thinking about proper masculine and feminine behavior, sexual morality, and beliefs about how marriages ought to look and function. While Christianity affected African society in diverse ways, its moral and gendered teachings produced some of its most lasting effects.

Nineteenth-century Britain almost seamlessly merged ideas in Protestant Christianity with the values of industrial capitalism. As the British middle class expanded in response to the growing importance of industrial capital, ideas about a separation of spheres—of women ideally placed to be mothers and wives and men suited to public life—folded smoothly into ideas about Christian religious life. By the middle of the century, it would have been almost impossible to separate what people understood as Christian piety and its requirements of behavior and belief from what they viewed as social convention and propriety. But religion did not merely offer ideas about proper gender roles; it fixed expectations about the role of faith in daily life that made faith essential to everyday life. "Church and chapel were central to the articulation and diffusion of new beliefs and practices related to manliness and femininity."[8]

Much attention has been paid to the intersection of these ideas with African ideas in the context of colonial conquest, which I discuss in later chapters. However, the imposition of new ideas about gendered practice and moral codes did not go unchallenged, not only among Africans who continued to practice traditional forms of marriage but also among Christian converts. While it is generally the former who are historically viewed as most resistant to moving away from traditional practices, I argue that few converts were uncritical in their acceptance of Christianity. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, African converts adopted, molded, and selectively appropriated many Christian ideals, both in daily life and in ritual, refashioning them as part of new intimate practices.

This first occurred among those educated Africans who aspired to middle-class status and belonged to the historic mission, or mainline, churches or those closely associated with them—Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Lutherans—as well as some of the larger of the independent

African churches, including the African Methodist Episcopal Church. These were first-, second-, and third-generation Christians who had early on aligned themselves with mission church procedures and practices, as well as with English literacy and education. As a group, they are described in the literature as a Black "petty bourgeoisie," an older term used less today; a Black "elite," by virtue of the group's relationship with other Black South Africans; or an emergent Black "middle class." The Black elite, or middle class (my preferred terms), was inseparable, historically, from its adherence to Christianity, and its members collectively shared an identity of being both Christian and educated. As Hlonipha Mokoena notes, for adherents—referred to as "amaKholwa" in isiZulu and "amaGqoboka" in isiXhosa—this was a political and social identity as much as it was a religious identity.[9]

While the literate and converted Africans who made up the Black elite were the first to experience and adopt intimate practices and a sexual morality rooted in Christianity, these ideas and practices soon spread to include most Black Christians, irrespective of denominational allegiance or membership in a mainline or independent church. By 1951, just under 5.1 million Black South Africans out of an enumerated Black population of just over 8.5 million identified themselves as Christian.[10]

But Christianity's sphere of influence in South Africa went beyond its institutional membership. It had what I refer to as "an institutional thickness," constituted through the relational connections it created among its adherents and their social worlds, which extended Christianity's footprint to include also traditional communities and structures. Especially after industrialization and urbanization had firmly linked countryside to city by the 1920s, sometimes supportive but often fractious debates around the relative merits of Christianity and custom were a characteristic of all sectors of Black society. The debates were always mutually constitutive. Although sexual morality and gendered roles were not the only sources of conflict between Black South Africans, these concerns populated and vitalized the contested zone that existed between Christianity and modernity, and tradition and custom. As a result of this contestation, by the 1950s, Black sexual modernity had gained extensive traction and legitimacy within Black society.

Chapter 4 shows, for instance, the tenacity with which Black Christians defended lobola. Christian support for lobola gradually became so widespread through the twentieth century that in postcolonial South Africa support for lobola emanated as much from its continued practice by successive generations of Black Christians as it did from so-called traditional practice. What Black South Africans regard today as tradition has been altered unequivocally by Christianity.

Moreover, Christianity and its imprint on Black intimacy is partly responsible for the ideal of family life that remains central to Black social aspirations, even in the twenty-first century. While the impact of migrant labor was a powerful vector in shifts in family life, the changes wrought by a Christian sexual modernity were at least as consequential. Migrant labor and the differences between city and country life dominate discussions of Black social change in South African history, a point I return to in a later subsection. The destabilizing effects of migrant labor wrenched families apart. By the 1960s and 1970s, Black marriage rates had declined and migrant labor patterns had resulted in the growth of female-headed households spatially stretched over country and city.

However, migrant labor was not the only source of social change in African life. While this book concerns itself with family and intimate life constituted through Christianity, I also need to make a more general argument for the impact of Christianity in South African history. The diverse impacts of Christianity are regularly overlooked in South African history, including in the literature on migrant labor. The large-scale oscillation of women between city and countryside might have been caused by the needs of migrant labor or, later on, by forced removals, but concerns around labor and how to generate income were not the total of people's daily lives. Christianity also has played a powerful role in how people understand their place in this world and the actions they take as a result.

## ANALYTICAL FIELDS IN PUBLIC INTIMACY, CHRISTIANITY, AND SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL HISTORY

In the next few sections I consider some of the analytical fields, theoretical directions, and historiographical writing that inform my larger argument about the constitution of Black intimacy in South Africa between 1919 and 1948. The first section details how ideas about Black intimacy gained a constituency and purchase through public discussion. This is followed by a reflection on current writing in relation to Christianity, including debates about its material and spiritual purchase on African imagination and practice. While African Christianity is not the primary focus of this book, some consideration of its larger appeal and constituency in South Africa is necessary to understand the book's argument. The final portions of this chapter consider the reasons for locating my argument in the period between 1910 and 1948 as well as describe my sources and chapter content.

### A Convention of Publics

New ideas about intimate life were possible because of the spread of mission-driven written literacy in South Africa, which provided both the forms

necessary to share these ideas and the spaces where these ideas could be shared—the "convening" of the title of this book.

The church constituted the first and most powerful of those spaces. Whatever else it did, church life provided people with the tools and a shared repertoire of experience to behave in ways legible to public life in the early twentieth century. This occurred at the level of people's daily lives but also in relation to how church institutions operated in conjunction with the state. The institutional life of the Christian church—its round of rituals and meetings and its ordering of time—facilitated the entry of Black men (not women) into the governmentality of colonial life. Institutional church life had a grammar that allowed Black and white Christians to share meeting spaces and, to a limited extent, the decision-making not open to Black South Africans in a racially divided society.

Further, men who worked as chiefs and headmen within the edifice of indirect rule had often served an organizational apprenticeship in a men's council in the church or worked as lay clergy. Indeed, many of the remunerated positions available to Africans within rural districts hinged upon either their possession of mission literacy or their status as a Christian.

The associational and bureaucratic experience that Africans gained through church structures was not limited to South African borders. Several notable figures among the Black elite attended international ecumenical conferences about the future of Christianity. The same status and experience in church governmentality benefited the early twentieth-century leaders of the African National Congress through rounds of conferences in London in the 1910s.

Magisterial courts were another space for the performance of Black modernity. All precolonial southern African societies had chiefly forums where senior men (and occasionally senior women) debated matters of relevance to the chiefdom, including succession and, by the nineteenth century, relations with the British colonial state. (These were the matters I previously described as external to the family.) When the British established district law courts in the nineteenth century, these chiefly courts largely lost their power, and the adjudication of both internal kin and external chiefly matters passed to the colonial courts.[11] Interpersonal relations and customary obligations thereafter came under the purview of these, including cases of seduction, lobola, and inheritance and succession disputes, establishing a precedent for the kinds of cases that shaped Black intimate life in the twentieth century.

While customary law applied across the whole southern African region, when Union occurred in 1910, the two provinces with the most extensive

customary court networks were the Cape and Natal. In the Eastern Cape, where the customary courts began operating much earlier than elsewhere in the later South Africa (and which correspondingly have a denser archival record), complex adjudications occurred around whether or not a person's status as a Christian affected their personal and intimate matters. The processes involved in bringing a case to court were similar to those that structured the operation of precolonial chiefly courts. The elders of a lineage were familiar with arguing cases of succession and disputes around the occupation of land, even if the setting had shifted from the kraal of a chief to the square brick structure that served to house a magisterial court. Like church proceedings, court cases were doubly formed—both oral and textual—first, because of their instance as a performance and, second, because every court case generated a written record. Indeed, many of the legal texts that subsequently acquired life through the action of a typewriter began as oral performance.

This double formation present in church and court proceedings is important. While some African history tends to privilege oral forms as more authentic than written, the impact of an oral performance is necessarily limited by its particular audience. Mission literacy took oral performances and re-created them for multiple audiences, not just those physically present. It allowed Africans to transform their considerable oral skill into words written on pages, increasing the accessibility of that content. It also made it possible for those whose voices were not usually heard in public—junior men and women—to be heard more extensively. Alec Ryrie would refer to this as one of the democratic outcomes of Protestant Christianity.[12]

Further, content captured on paper, as in the case of the Black press, became the joint property of a public, in a way that the words of a performed text, like an *izibongo* (a praise poem), could not.[13] This held particularly for newsprint agreement and discord over the content and shape of Black intimate life and sexual modernity. In articles and letters about the loss of parental authority, the importance of lobola, or the morality (or immorality) of polygamy, family life was rendered public in new ways, making its concerns national concerns.

### *African Christianity as a Field of Social Inquiry*

The mission literacy that embedded ideas about intimacy in the Black Christian imagination has a history that can be written as the spread and influence of Protestant Christianity in South Africa. However, since the early 1990s, with the publication of John and Jean Comaroff's two-volume history of Protestant nonconformism among the Sotho-Tswana, studies of African Christianity have moved from an exclusive focus on mission effort

to a greater understanding of the purchase and status of multiple forms of Christianity across sub-Saharan Africa.

The first of some of the more relevant and current debates in African Christianity concerns the relative importance of Christianity in contemporary South Africa. According to the 2001 census, 79.8 percent of South Africa's roughly forty-two million inhabitants were self-professing Christians.[14] In 2015, this figure was 86 percent, with 52.5 percent claiming some form of frequent religious observance and a further 22.5 percent claiming once- or twice-monthly church attendance.[15]

The self-profession of Christianity can mean many things. Africa is not reducible to one variant of Christian spirituality; all Africans who are Christian are not Christian in the same way. Indeed, more Africans have found practical strategies and ways of living in the diverse set of practices and beliefs tied to Christianity than in the century's only comparable nonpartisan and non-nationalist philosophy, socialism. But where socialism provided little practical assistance for the maintenance of structures like the family, which it regarded as a bourgeois myth, Christianity had a wealth to offer fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, and other sorts of kin. Much of the literature that accounts for the conversion of Africans to Christianity in the nineteenth century locates reasons for conversion in the material benefits associated with Christianity. Still, to leave the explanation for conversion at material reasons is a reductive assessment of Christianity's historical impact.

Most historians today, however, discount the historical impact that Christianity has had on South African lives. They find it difficult to consider experiences of faith, including the religious reasons people provide for their actions, as valid categories of historical evidence. As a result, rather than viewing belief or faith as historically causative, South African historians have underplayed the impact of Christianity on regional historical developments.

I shall return to this point later, but it is interesting to note that this idea is counter to the historical treatment of Christianity in other parts of the continent. David Gordon explains Zambian political developments in the twentieth century as crucially mediated by the visible effects of invisible spirits exerting "power in this world."[16] And Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar explain the way that the spirit world constitutes a motivating force behind African political life.[17] While some see an identification of spiritual agency in everyday life as an essentialization of African Christianity, this is not a sufficient criticism for discounting how belief, however we understand it, acts as a historical force.[18] As Ruth Marshall notes, it is important to "restore intelligibility to religion in its irreducibility, to make sense of the inherent rationality of its disciplines and practices, over and above its social, cultural, or political functions."[19]

Most South Africans (about 8.5 million of them) now belong to Zionist or Pentecostal churches, but many remain members of the mainline churches, where three denominations (Methodist, Anglican, and Presbyterian) account for approximately 5.5 million South Africans. Until the 1950s, most African Christians, about 59 percent of the total African population, were members of the mainline churches.[20] From the 1960s onward, more African Christians belonged to Pentecostal or Zionist churches than belonged to the mainline churches. This was both because of the expansion of South Africa's African population and because people were switching denominational allegiance.

Denominational allegiance is, though, something of a red herring in histories of South African Christianity. In 1948, Bengt Sundkler published his seminal work, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*. In it, he distinguished between mainline, or historic mission, churches and a variety of churches he identified as Ethiopianist or Zionist. The former includes African-founded and African-led churches similar in structure to the mainline churches, and the latter includes the churches theologically derivative of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century holy spirit revivals in the US. It is now commonplace to distinguish between mainline, African independent, and Pentecostal Christianity.

But there are issues with this typology that overstate the importance of denominational difference and that link authenticity and political virtue to the independent churches only. Africa's religiocultural heritage, according to the theologian Mercy Oduyoye, needs to be viewed as contributing to the shaping of world Christianities rather than being solely derived from Western Christianity.[21] Supporters of this position are uncomfortable with the term "African independent Christianity," preferring "African initiated/instituted Christianity," because the former implies that Africans were colonially dependent on the West to shape their beliefs.[22]

Secondly, an association is often drawn between colonially complicit historical mission congregations and colonially resistant independent churches. In 1986, Terence Ranger drew attention to how African religious movements were often assumed to represent a developmental state in a later more nationally driven politics of anticolonial resistance. His work points to the need to consider religious movements as sui generis, not as moments in a national teleology.[23]

An elaboration of this last point concerns a widely held distinction between Ethiopianism and Zionism, the former supposedly representative of a radical anticolonialism and the latter an antirevolutionary counterculturalism. The Zionist Christian Church, the largest Zionist church in southern African, is often written about as if complicit in apartheid.[24] A corollary of

this view positions mainline churches as irrelevant, institutionally rigid, and theologically homogeneous, at the same time suggesting that only independent churches are worthy of study.

More recently, in reaction to these views, scholars have noted the importance of moving away from a four-fold categorization of African Christianity as either mainline, independent, Zionist, or Pentecostal to an understanding of the practice of faith as denominationally fluid.[25] For example, the current Nigerian Anglican population is around twenty million, a significant number but probably only half the size of its Pentecostal population.[26] However, while the Anglican figure reflects the institutional strength of the former mission churches, it conceals internal variation. Many Nigerian Anglicans are Pentecostal in outlook, many practice polygyny, and almost all oppose homosexuality within the church. However, as Anglicans, they understand themselves to be part of a worldwide communion, even though the Western portion of the church advocates tolerance around sexual preference and orientation.[27] Anglicans in South Africa are split on the issue of offering an LGBTIQ ministry, but in practice, a more divisive issue is the ordination of Black women, because of a combination of patriarchal outlook and fear of sorcery. The point is this: denominational and sectarian allegiances can be fluid; people shift churches frequently, and while institutions and organizations may endure, their congregants are often more faithful to their own relationship to faith than they are to one form of it.[28] They may also hedge their spiritual bets by belonging to different churches simultaneously.

### Debating Custom and Tradition in South Africa

If one pole of this book lies in Christianity, the other lies in custom and tradition. In this part of the introduction, I examine some of the tensions inherent in using these terms as well as look more directly at debates about the relationship between Christianity and tradition.

The literature on missions and Christianity in South Africa has usually assumed that cultural innovation and syncretic practices have been the domain of the Ethiopianist and Zionist churches. According to the recent *Cambridge History of South Africa,* "Such churches were prime examples of African cultural reconfiguration, blending Christian practices with a variety of African practices and beliefs (e.g., witchcraft, ancestor worship, polygamy)."[29] For example, the Shembe, or the AmaNazaretha, the subject of Sundkler's work, are widely recognized as sanctioning polygamy and the veneration of ancestors.[30]

However, while Zionists and Ethiopianists are routinely described as being fluid in relation to customary practice, the corollary attributes to

mainline Christians a desire to abandon custom. This is a mistaken reading, as I demonstrate in the following chapters. Many of the mainline Protestant denominations tolerated and allowed practices like lobola, polygamy, or, as I discuss in chapter 6, multiple conjugality. Traditional rituals and practices associated with marriage were particularly tenacious, and most mainline Christians found it difficult to abandon them, even if first-generation Christian converts in the nineteenth century attempted to eschew them.

One place to begin the discussion of the role of tradition in mainline Christianity is with a statement about what being modern meant to African Christians.[31] Many Black South Africans, especially those who had converted, viewed Christianity as a route to "civilization," or being modern. T. B. Soga, however, was not convinced that the equation worked in such a neat fashion. "Xosa may be made similar to a whiteman through education & civilization, but he shall never be created a Whiteman for ever & ever." Anyone who argued differently was going against the word of God, or as he wrote, "God created what he has created."[32] He distrusted the teleological narrative that arranged Christianity, civilization, and being modern in the same bouquet. For Soga, Christianity was a claim to modernity that did not require sloughing off his African skin.

At the same time, though, T. B. Soga was an amateur newspaper correspondent firmly attached to the power of literacy, type, and the printing press. His paradoxical view of modernity was shared by many: convenient when it was beneficial, decried when it was not. Indeed, his and others' predicament around modernity should not overshadow the fact that it resonated (and still does) with its users, often precisely because of its orientation to the past.[33] Lynn Thomas describes this as the historicization of modernity, "demonstrating just how diverse and dynamic definitions of the modern have been, and how those definitions have emerged from specific material relations, strategies of rule, and social movements."[34] Her view draws upon Thomas Spear's beautifully succinct description of tradition as "one of the most contentious words in African historiography widely condemned for conveying a timeless, unchanging past and the evil twin of modernity. But it remains critically important in understanding historical processes of social change and representation."[35] Writing about the generation of Black men born around fifty years after T. B. Soga, Daniel Magaziner points to the ways that Steve Biko and other members of the South African Students' Organization grafted their understanding of being Black to the condition of being modern, an intellectual consciousness that considered the past carefully and of a qualified utility. "In their thought the categories of 'African' and 'adult', 'modern' and 'civilized' had been configured and reconfigured time and again."[36]

Part of this reconfiguration included careful attention to tradition, an interest T. B. Soga shared with numerous contemporaries. It was a subject that Soga returned to again and again during the 1920s and 1930s, in an attempt to work out what was distinctive, and modern, about the condition of being African, the "good that should be preserved for any intelligent, progressive people."[37] His exposition of Christianity in *Intlalo xa Xosa* was hybrid. As one of its readers for the Lovedale Press, which was less than enthusiastic about publishing the work, noted, "The writer personally confirms witchcraft to be true and goes on to back up his argument by a Biblical quotation when Eva befriends a serpentine devil."[38]

Despite the concerted efforts of an African elite to link Christianity and tradition—like James Calata, who drew explicit connections between biblical and traditional practice in his early 1920s essay in support of manhood circumcision and lobola—much contemporary academic writing delinks ritual and tradition from the world of Christianity.[39] Take Jacqueline Solway's recent excellent and insightful piece on "slow" versus "fast" *bogadi* (the Tswana word for "lobola") in Botswana.[40] It traces shifts in the tempo of marriage payments after the mid-twentieth century and relates a more contracted payment process to the phenomenon of lavish "white" weddings. Yet the erosion of bogadi is attributed to shifting patterns of consumerism resulting in debt, while Christianity is disregarded as a potential influence on wedding choices.

"Although they may have been Christians," Adam Kuper writes in a recent survey of kinship and marriage in southern Africa, "they often paid bridewealth, but this was not the bridewealth of tradition."[41] This view would not have sat well with T. B. Soga, whose understanding of tradition was capacious, oriented toward past and present. Soga would have felt discomforted by any suggestion that his support for lobola could not simultaneously be both the product of his Christianity and his tradition.

### Class, Race, Gender, and Christianity

Between the 1970s and the 1990s, South African history was characterized by race and class as modes of analysis. Social historians wrote about how precolonial societies lost independence as a result of colonialism, urbanization, industrialization, development of migrant labor, and histories of labor protest, in a welcome antidote to Afrikaner nationalist and liberal histories that had shaped history in the preceding decades.[42] This broad school has had a keen imprint on the production of history in South Africa. Among its many effects, a primary one has been to make historical events and processes visible as, and in relation to, Black resistance and state oppression.

A further effect of this work concerns its construction of the migrant laborer and migrant labor as staple subjects of South African history. In the older literature on the history of labor migration in South Africa, the normative labor migrant was a man who first moved temporarily to a city, and later more permanently, in order to work. As a result, a significant portion of South African social history privileges the experience of work over all others in people's lives, although this position has not gone undisputed.[43] Patrick Harries, for instance, has demonstrated the persistence of rural ideologies and practices in how men living in cities and working on the mines conducted their lives.[44]

Several developments helped to shift a focus on race and class and to blur the boundaries between urban and rural. Two are of relevance here. The first lies in the emergence of a significant set of works focusing on women's and gender history, which decentered many of the narratives that privileged men as the agents of history.[45] This includes the work of Belinda Bozzoli and others as part of the development of a literature on female labor migrants and the rise of female-headed households.[46] Deborah Gaitskell's work on Black women in urban areas demonstrated how women used their faith and faith-based networks to negotiate work and family life in hostile urban conditions and under the depersonalized gaze of the white state.[47]

The second development concerns the re-emergence of Christian missions as a significant element in South African history.[48] In 1991, Jean and John Comaroff published *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa,* the first in a projected three-volume series on missionaries.[49] The publication of these volumes reflects an important shift from a focus on missions as agents of colonialism to a focus on "the colonization of consciousness" in the "long conversation" between the Tswana and the missionaries.[50]

The most sustained and valid criticism of the first volume of the series lay in its treatment of African agency.[51] It is worthwhile considering this critique, because it represents an ongoing thread in African history.[52] Volume 1 is told mostly from the perspective of the missionaries, and its sources are missionary-produced accounts. The Comaroffs explain this by suggesting that the Tswana lacked narrative accounts of their past for use in the reproduction of their history (a view later tempered in volume 2). This means that the volume is strong in articulating mission agency but much less strong in attributing the shaping of the mission-Tswana encounter to Tswana intention.[53]

While the Comaroffs were completing the first volume, Elizabeth Elbourne was working on evangelical Christianity among the Khoikhoi in the Eastern Cape. Khoi evangelists had appropriated the Christianity impressed

upon them by a series of European missionaries and began itinerating through formerly independent Khoi communities as well as among the Xhosa to spread an indigenized Christian spirituality. In the context of growing impoverishment and lack of land, a Khoikhoi—or "pan-Hottentot"— nationalism developed, which drew initially on Christianity and the Bible, and later, on the notion of common land, or blood ground, as sources of authority. Part of the raison d'être of Elbourne's 2002 book was "to incorporate the study of religion more thoroughly into the mainstream of cultural, social and political history."[54]

Elbourne and the Comaroffs were plowing what became a popular furrow. The mid-1990s saw the publication of several edited collections and studies of individual mission societies.[55] Many of these were grounded in and incorporated Black Christian voices and perspectives and considered new thoughts on gendered mission authority and the mission-driven politics of colonialism.

Several of these also grounded African Christianity and African Christians into a politics of transnationalism. In 1995, James Campbell published on African Americans and African evangelical Methodism on different sides of the Atlantic. Working on similar themes, Robert Trent Vinson examined how Christianity infused networks and established political relationships across the world of the diaspora.[56]

One of the more important recent currents in the history of Christianity and the growth of the Black middle class lies in directing attention to intertextual and intergenre literacy mediated through Christianity. In *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of "The Pilgrim's Progress,"* Isabel Hofmeyr explains how Africans and missionaries understood the book as both fetish and parable, its linear narrative making for a translatability that allowed for deft indigenous uses of the text.[57] Joel Cabrita's work has challenged assumptions about the oral nature of African independent churches, showing how the AmaNazaretha in KwaZulu-Natal sustained their Christianity through a remarkable body of self-generated texts, including hymns and autobiographical writing, all carefully attuned to the dynamics of global Christianity.[58]

Together, these works challenge thinking that sees African literary and textual production as less authentically African than oral production and African Christianity as more authentic when steeped and expressed in local idioms and politics. These points relate critically to the context of this book. Denied access to standards of living that most white South Africans considered their right, educated Black Christians used their oratory, their ink, and their pens to channel their frustrations into a range of publications and petitions. In the debates around initiation, lobola, and pernicious urban life that

appeared in the Black press, African Christians showed a humorous and dexterous handling of a language few would have learned at their mothers' breast, shifting genres to appeal to wider audiences. These debates extended into fiction, some of which is visible in the quotes that begin many of my chapters. In writing, African Christians could display an intellectual prowess rooted in one of the most confusing yet universal of the Western world's texts, the Bible, to seed intellectual movements like Black consciousness.[59]

The tools provided through the Christian elevation of the self and literacy were equally comfortable in female and male hands, but it seems that men generally felt more comfortable demonstrating them in public. In South Africa, in the outpouring of writing from mission school graduates, in fiction, poetry, and plays, very little work was published by Black women before the late 1950s.[60] The exception is Nontsizi Mgqwetho, quoted elsewhere in this book.[61] The veneration of agency in some recent work has resulted in uneven and selective histories, rendering men more often than women the subjects of action by virtue of their greater literary output and their more prominent public lives.

## CHRONOLOGY, SOURCES, AND CONTENT

This book draws from material covering the nineteenth century but is primarily concerned with the period between 1900 and 1950. The chronology that tracks the constitution of Black sexual modernity, or Black intimacy, is roughly bookended by the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 and the rise to power of the National Party in 1948. At the turn of the twentieth century, discourses on the African family centered on the negative effects of the movement of men away from their families to South Africa's burgeoning urban areas, a phenomenon referred to at the time as "detribalization." By the 1940s, liberal white and Black attention had shifted firmly to the problems associated with urban family living. Up until sometime in the 1930s, with probably a generational lag of about twenty years, efforts to reverse detribalization were twofold. In urban areas, Christian and liberal concerns focused on demonizing and constraining African women's sexuality and on removing or returning them to rural areas, where they might once again fall under the authority of their male guardians. And in rural areas, magistrates and other officials colluded with senior men to prevent their daughters and female wards from leaving for urban areas. The 1927 Black Administration Act entrenched male authority over daughters and female wards by disallowing independent legal status to Black women.[62]

However, the Great Depression and its effects, coupled with impoverishment in the reserves and domestic labor shortages in urban areas,

# Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. T. B. was the brother's son of the more famous Tiyo Soga. I am working from a contemporary translation of *Intlalo xa Xosa.* All references in this book to *Intlalo xa Xosa* are to this manuscript. For more on this manuscript, see chap. 2. Grahamstown, Cory Library for Historical Research, MS16369b, trans. C. S. Papu. Soga, *Intlalo,* 32. Xosa was the ancestor of the amaXhosa.

2. My thinking about intimacy is influenced by Mark Hunter's work in Mark Hunter, *Love in the Time of AIDS: Inequality, Gender, and Rights in South Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

3. Belinda Bozzoli and Mmantho Nkotsoe, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy, and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900–1983* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1991), 113. Mokale was interviewed in 1982/3.

4. For similar rich detail of the intersection between Christianity and custom, see Phyllis Ntantala, *A Life's Mosaic: The Autobiography of Phyllis Ntantala* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1992). Ntantala's husband was A. C. Jordan, whose writing opens chap. 5.

5. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (1998): 552.

6. See also Berlant and Warner, "Sex in Public," 555.

7. For instance, Rebecca Flemming, "The Invention of Infertility in the Classical Greek World: Medicine, Divinity, and Gender," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 87, no. 4 (20 December 2013): 565–90; Nick Hopwood, Rebecca Flemming, and Lauren Kassell, "Reproduction in History," in *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present Day,* ed. Lauren Kassell, Nick Hopwood, and Rebecca Flemming (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 3–18; Moira Donald and Linda Hurcombe, *Gender and Material History in Archaeological Perspective* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000).

8. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (London: Routledge, 1987), 149.

9. Hlonipha Mokoena, *Magema Fuze: The Making of a Kholwa Intellectual* (Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011), 20.

10. South Africa, ed., *Union Statistics for 50 years, 1910–1960* (Pretoria: Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1960), A-29. I also discuss issues with the reliability of these statistics.

11. "Largely" is a generalization, I know, and depends on the extent of the introduction of indirect rule in a particular region. See, for instance, William David Hammond-Tooke, *Command or Consensus: The Development of Transkeian Local Government* (Cape Town: D. Philip, 1975); Inneke van Kessel and Barbara Oomen, "One Chief, One Vote: The Revival of Traditional Authorities in Post-apartheid South Africa," *African Affairs* 96 (1997): 561–85; J. B. Peires, "Traditional Leaders in Purgatory: Local Government in Tsolo, Qumbu and Port St Johns, 1990–2000," *African Studies* 59, no. 1 (2000): 97–114; Jill E. Kelly, "Bantu Authorities and Betterment in Natal: The Ambiguous Responses of Chiefs and Regents, 1955–1970," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41, no. 2 (4 March 2015): 273–97, https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2015.1012917.

12. Alec Ryrie, *Protestants: The Faith That Made the Modern World* (New York: Viking, 2017).

13. Karin Barber, *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics: Oral and Written Culture in Africa and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2.

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17. Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar, *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Gerrie ter Haar and Stephen Ellis, "The Occult Does Not Exist: A Response to Terence Ranger," *Africa* 79, no. 3 (2009): 399–412.

18. For the essentialization of African Christianity, see Maia Green, "Confronting Categorical Assumptions about the Power of Religion in Africa," *Review of African Political Economy* 33, no. 110 (2006): 635–50. For a larger discussion on the motive force of spirits in African life and a distinctive African spirituality, see also Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, "Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (1997): 4–23; Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, "Black and African Theologies in the New World Order: A Time to Drink from Our Own Wells," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 96 (1996): 3–19.

19. Ruth Marshall, *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 3.

20. South Africa, *Union Statistics for 50 years, 1910–1960.* The figures in this paragraph are from the opening pages of the census (Population Figures, Race and Sex, A-4–A.5), and the figures on religious affiliation are from Religion, A-26–A-29. Compare these to religious affiliation among white South Africans. In 1951, the white South African population numbered roughly 2.6 million. Of this number, 1.1 million declared themselves to be members of the Dutch Reformed Church; 416,472 were Anglicans; 219,021, Methodists; and 100,739, Presbyterian. While the census figures are open to speculation at various levels, the increase in the self-profession of Christianity is borne out by other sources and is likely accurate. A. J. Christopher, "The Union of South Africa Censuses 1911–1960: An Incomplete Record," *Historia* 56, no. 2 (2011): 1–18.

21. Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Re-imagining the World: A Global Perspective," *Church & Society* 84, no. 5 (1994): 82–93; Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Christianity and African Culture," *International Review of Mission* 84, no. 332/333 (1995): 78.

22. For a summary of this argument, see Joel E. Tishken and Andreas Heuser, "'Africa Always Brings Us Something New': A Historiography of African Zionist and Pentecostal Christianities," *Religion* 45, no. 2 (2015): 156.

23. Terence Ranger, "Religious Movements and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa," *African Studies Review* 29, no. 2 (1986): 1–69. See also James Campbell, "'Like Locusts in Pharoah's Palace': The Origins and Politics of African Methodism in the Orange Free State, 1895–1914," *African Studies* 53, no. 1 (1994): 39–69; Arianna Lissoni et al., eds., *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Histories Today,* 2012.

24. For more on the phrase "African independent" and a refutation of this position, see Barbara Bompani, "African Independent Churches in Post-apartheid South Africa: New Political Interpretations," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34, no. 3 (2008): 667. There is an interesting account of Zionist anti-apartheid protest in an interview with Jean Comaroff on her 1980s work on Zion Christianity: "We also had lots of friends in the black community, particularly people in the churches which were always a refuge for politics there. I was working on churches; I left the LSE assuming that I would study 'traditional religion,' because African Christianity was what scholars of comparative religion did at the time. When I got there, Christianity was a major idiom of local life, forms of Christianity made under local conditions, an integrated aspect of Tswana history and life. Several of the leaders of the various local denominations were extraordinary leaders, involved in everything from feeding the hungry to giving asylum to those on the run; one close friend had actually been the priest for Robert Sobukwe, and he took us to be ritually treated by a local healer to protect us against the security police. The most significant thing about all this was that the kind of structural-functionalist methods that we had learned at the LSE

were just totally inadequate when we got to this world, where you couldn't separate religion from politics, 'local' ethnography from the structure of the whole colonial, Apartheid state." Jean and John Comaroff, interview by Kalman Applbaum, *Alan MacFarlane,* 15 November 2008, http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/DO/filmshow/comaroff_fast.htm.

25. Birgit Meyer, "Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 447–74. Also Joel Cabrita and Natasha Erlank, "New Histories of Christianity in South Africa: Review and Introduction," *South African Historical Journal* 70, no. 2 (3 April 2018): 307–23, https://doi.org/10.1080/02582473.2018.1495753.

26. David Goodhew, "A Story of Growth and Decline," *Church Times,* 6 January 2017, https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2017/6-january/features/features/a-story-of-growth-and-decline; Marshall, *Political Spiritualities,* 2.

27. Anglican Ink, "Dear Gay Anglicans Letter," press release, 22 February 2021, https://anglican.ink/2021/02/22/dear-gay-anglicans-letter/.

28. Thomas Blom Hansen, Caroline Jeannerat, and Samadia Sadouni, "Introduction: Portable Spirits and Itinerant People: Religion and Migration in South Africa in a Comparative Perspective," *African Studies* 68, no. 2 (2009): 187–96.

29. Philip Bonner, "South African Society and Culture 1910–1948," in *The Cambridge History of South Africa. Volume 2: 1885–1994,* ed. Robert Ross, Anne Kelk Mager, and Bill Nasson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

30. Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1961).

31. For Africans viewing their Christianity as evidence of a contested modernity, see Paul la Hausse de Lalouviere, *Restless Identities: Signatures of Nationalism, Zulu Ethnicity and History in the Lives of Petros Lamula (c.1881–1948) and Lymon Maling (1889–c.1936)* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000); Lize Kriel, *The "Maláboch" Books: Kgaluši in the "Civilization of the Written Word"* (Stuttgart, Germany: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2009); Robert J. Houle, *Making African Christianity: Africans Reimagining Their Faith in Colonial South Africa* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2013).

32. Soga, *Intlalo xa Xosa,* 136.

33. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

34. Lynn M. Thomas, "Modernity's Failings, Political Claims, and Intermediate Concepts," *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011): 734.

35. Thomas Spear, "Neo-traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa," *Journal of African History* 44, no. 1 (2003): 5–6. Spear's article is an excellent summary of these trends. Similar overviews, including Derek Peterson's rather exasperated chronicling of the number of book

titles including "The Invention of," may be found in Derek R. Peterson, "Culture And Chronology In African History," *Historical Journal* 50, no. 2 (2007): 483–97; T. Ranger, "The Invention of Tribalism Revisited: The Case of Colonial Africa," in *Inventions and Boundaries: Historical and Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism,* ed. Preben Kaarsholm and Jan Hultin, IDS Roskilde Occasional Papers (Denmark: University of Roskilde, 1994).

36. Daniel Magaziner, "'Black Man, You Are on Your Own!': Making Race Consciousness in South African Thought, 1968–1972," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 42, no. 2 (2009): 226; Daniel R. Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets: Black Consciousness in South Africa, 1968–1977,* New African Histories Series, ed. Jean Allman and Allen Isaacman (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2010).

37. *Umteteli,* 11 May 1935, 7.

38. Soga, *Intlalo,* 34–36.

39. James Calata, "Ukudlelana kobu-Kristu namasiko olwaluko lwabantu abaNtsundu," in *Inkolo namasiko a-bantu: Bantu Beliefs and Customs,* ed. S. J. Wallis (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1930), 38–49.

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41. Adam Kuper, "Traditions of Kinship, Marriage and Bridewealth in Southern Africa," *Anthropology Southern Africa* 39, no. 4 (2016): 278.

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44. See Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c.1860–1910,* Social History of Africa (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991).

45. Some of this history includes Helen Bradford, "'We Are Now the Men': Women's Beer Hall Protests in the Natal Countryside, 1929," in *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives,* ed. Belinda Bozzoli (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1987); Kathy Eales, "Patriarchs, Passes and Privilege: Johannesburg's African Middle Class and the Question of Night Passes for African Women,

1920–1931," in *Holding Their Ground: Class, Locality, and Culture in 19th and 20th Century South Africa,* ed. Phillip Bonner et al. (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1989); Cherryl Walker, ed., *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945: An Overview* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990); Cherryl Walker, "Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945," in Walker, *Women and Gender;* Linzi Manicom, "Ruling Relations: Rethinking State and Gender in South African History," *Journal of African History* 33, no. 3 (1 January 1992): 441–65.

46. Belinda Bozzoli, "Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies," in *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa,* ed. William Beinart and Saul Dubow, (London: Routledge, [1983] 1995), 118–44; Pauline Peters, "Gender, Developmental Cycles and Historical Process: A Critique of Recent Research on Women in Botswana," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 10, no. 1 (1983); Bridget O'Laughlin, "Missing Men? The Debate Over Rural Poverty and Women-Headed Households in Southern Africa," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 25, no. 2 (1998): 1–48.

47. Deborah Gaitskell, "Female Mission Initiatives: Black and White Women in Three Witwatersand Churches, 1903–1939" (PhD thesis, University of London, 1981); Deborah Gaitskell, "Devout Domesticity? A Century of African Women's Christianity in South Africa," in *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945,* ed. Cherryl Walker (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990); Deborah Gaitskell, "'Praying and Preaching': The Distinctive Spirituality of African Women's Church Organizations," in *Missions and Christianity in South African History,* ed. Henry Bredenkamp and Robert Ross (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1995).

48. Norman Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants, and Politics in Southeast Africa, 1835–1880: African Christian Communities in Natal, Pondoland and Zululand,* Royal Historical Society Studies in History Series, no. 12 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978). These exceptions include Sheila M. Brock, "James Stewart and Lovedale: A Reappraisal of Missionary Attitudes and African Response in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, 1870–1905" (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1974); Jane Sales, "The Mission Station as an Agency of 'Civilization': The Development of a Christian Coloured Community in the Eastern Cape, 1800–1859" (PhD thesis, University of Chicago, 1972); Jane M. Sales, *Mission Stations and the Coloured Communities of the Eastern Cape, 1800–1852,* vol. 8 (Cape Town: Balkema, 1975); Bridget E. Seton, "Wesleyan Missionaries and the Sixth Frontier War, 1834–1835" (PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 1962); Donovan Williams, "Social and Economic Aspects of Christian Missions in Caffraria, 1816–1854, Part 1," *Historia* 30 (1985): 33–48 and "Social and Economic Aspects of Christian Missions in Caffraria 1816–1854, Part 2," *Historia* 31 (1986): 25–58. For the missionary interaction with African cosmologies, see Janet Hodgson, *The God of the Xhosa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Janet Hodgson, "A Battle for Sacred Power: Christian Beginnings among the Xhosa," in *Christianity*

*in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History,* ed. Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport (Cape Town: David Philip, 1997).

49. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution,* vol. 1, *Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991). An incomplete draft version of the third manuscript, reputedly about the mission-educated elite, is available in the John and Jean Comaroff Papers Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Chicago.

50. For some of the commentary and critique of these volumes, see Clifton C. Crais, "South Africa and the Pitfalls of Postmodernism," *South African Historical Journal* 31, no. 1 (1994): 274–79; Leon De Kock, "For and Against the Comaroffs: Postmodernist Puffery and Competing Conceptions of the 'Archive,'" *South African Historical Journal* 31, no. 1 (1994): 280–89; Johannes Du Bruyn, "Of Muffled Southern Tswana and Overwhelming Missionaries: The Comaroffs and the Colonial Encounter," *South African Historical Journal* 31, no. 1 (1994): 294–309.

51. It is difficult to think of a more exemplary and distilled example of comparative African historical scholarship than that produced in the wake of the publication of this volume and its companion, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination.* See Shula Marks, "From *Of Revelation and Revolution* to *From Revolution to Reconciliation?* A Comment," *Interventions* 3, no. 1 (2001): 55–64; Jan Vansina, review of *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination,* by John and Jean Comaroff, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26, no. 2 (1993): 417–20; Elizabeth Elbourne, "Word Made Flesh: Christianity, Modernity, and Cultural Colonialism in the Work of Jean and John Comaroff," *American Historical Review* 108, no. 2 (2003): 435–59.

52. For not only African history, see, for instance, Webb Keane, "From Fetishism to Sincerity: On Agency, the Speaking Subject, and Their Historicity in the Context of Religious Conversion," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, no. 4 (1997): 674–93; Sherry B. Ortner, "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no. 1 (1995): 173–93.

53. In one of the more biting considerations of the volume, John Peel drew a direct link between this failure to attribute narrative to the Tswana and "its consequences for the kind of accounts that can then be given of Tswana historical agency." John D. Y. Peel, "For Who Hath Despised the Day of Small Things? Missionary Narratives and Historical Anthropology," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no. 3 (1995): 586.

54. Elizabeth Elbourne, "Early Khoisan Uses of Mission Christianity," *Kronos: Journal of Cape History* 19, no. 1 (1992); Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799–1853,* ed. Donald Harman Akenson, McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Religion (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 17; Elbourne, "Word Made Flesh." This goal is present also in Les Switzer's

work on the history of the Ciskei, which draws on his work on the Black press in South Africa to examine the way in which educated African Christians used the tools at their disposal, more the pen than the sword, in their political efforts to resist white colonial power. See Les Switzer, *Power and Resistance in an African Society: The Ciskei Xhosa and the Making of South Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

55. Elphick and Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa;* Henry Bredekamp and Robert Ross, eds., *Missions and Christianity in South African History* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1995).

56. James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Amanda D. Kemp and Robert Trent Vinson, "'Poking Holes in the Sky': Professor James Thaele, American Negroes, and Modernity in 1920s Segregationist South Africa," *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (2000): 141; Robert Trent Vinson and Robert Edgar, "Zulus Abroad: Cultural Representations and Educational Experiences of Zulus in America, 1880–1945," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33, no. 1 (2007): 43–62; Robert Trent Vinson, *The Americans Are Coming! Dreams of African American Liberation in Segregationist South Africa,* New African Histories (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012).

57. Isabel Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of "The Pilgrim's Progress,"* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). In a similar vein, see Derek Peterson's examination of the aspirational, intellectual, and social lives of Christians in mid-twentieth century Kenya, especially their commitment to reading contemporary texts in heterogeneous ways. Derek R. Peterson, *Creative Writing: Translation, Bookkeeping, and the Work of Imagination in Colonial Kenya,* ed. Allen Isaacman and Jean Allman, Social History of Africa (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004).

58. Joel Cabrita, *Text and Authority in the South African Nazaretha Church* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan.*

59. Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets.*

60. For some of the earliest published work, see P. T. Mtuze, "A Preliminary Annotated Bibliography of Xhosa Prose, Drama and Poetry, 1909–1990," *South African Journal of African Languages* 13, no. sup2 (1 January 1993): 14–26; Noni Jabavu, *Drawn in Colour: African Contrasts* (London: Murray, 1960); Miriam Tlali, *Muriel at Metropolitan* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1975).

61. In addition to her work cited in Opland, see also Nontsizi Mgqwetho, *The Nation's Bounty: The Xhosa Poetry of Nontsizi Mgqwetho,* African Treasury Series 22 (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2007).

62. For a closer look at these debates see Katherine Anne Eales, "Gender Politics and the Administration of African Women in Johannesburg, 1903–1939" (master's thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 2009), http://wiredspace .wits.ac.za/handle/10539/7457; Kathy Eales, "'Jezebels,' Good Girls and Mine Married Quarters: Johannesburg, 1912" (working paper, African Studies