

1. Ntsikana, Xhosa seer, Hymnwriter and traditionally the first Xhosa convert to Christianity was born in about 1760. Son of one of Ngqika's councillors, he had a traditional upbringing undergoing circumcision and initiation and later becoming a polygamist. Between 1816 and 1818 his life underwent a fundamental change when he was converted to Christianity by the Reverend Joseph Williams of the London Missionary Society station near Fort Beaufort. The Bible made a great impression on Ntsikana. Deciding that polygamy contradicted his new faith he sent away his second wife, Nomanto giving her part of his possessions.

cartoon- Ntsikana, speaking to Rev Williams who is reading from a Bible
or Ntsikana sending away Nomanto with some of his possessions.

2. Ntsikana played many roles. He counselled the Ngqika not to embroil themselves with a neighbouring tribe the Ndlambe. His advice was not taken and Ngqika's regiments were disasterously defeated by the Ndlambe at the battle of Amalinde in 1818. Ntsikana who could neither read or write composed many hymns for which he is famous. He was also impressive as a preacher, many gathering to listen to him at the meetings he held under a tree at Thwathwa (Menziessberg) where he later settled.

cartoon- Ntsikana preaching to a crowd at Thwathwa under a tree.

3. He had many prophecies which were fulfilled. He prophesied that roads and planks would make their appearance in Ngqikaland, that an unknown people with pierced ears (the Mfengu) would enter it and that a war of races was inevitable and would lead to the division of families and much shedding of blood. He was the first Xhosa to have a coffin made for himself. Since his death in 1820 he has been held in increasing veneration by the Xhosas who hold an annual ceremony in his memory and refer to him as St Ntsikana.

cartoon - Ntsikana supervising the construction of his coffin.