

NTSIKANA

1. Ntsikana, Xhosa seer, hymnwriter, and believed to be the first Xhosa convert to Christianity, was born † 1760. His father was councillor to Chief Ngqika, and the boy was brought up traditionally, undergoing circumcision and initiation, and later becoming a palygamist. But about 1816 he became a Christian. With pain he sent away his second wife, Nomanto, giving her part of his possessions.

Cartoon: Ntsikana sending away Nomanto with part of his possessions

2. Ntsikana played many roles. He counselled the Ngqika not to fight the Ndlambe. They ignored him and were heavily defeated at Amalinde in 1818. He could not read or write, but composed many hymns for which he is famous. He was a great preacher, and many gathered under the big tree at Thurathwa where he settled.

Cartoon: Ntsikana preaching under the tree (I don't know how he would be dressed in those ancient days.)

3. Many of his prophecies were fulfilled - that roads would come to Ngqikaland, that wooden planks would be used, that people with pieced ears (Mfengu, refugees from Shaka) would come from the north. He prophesied the bloody Frontier wars. He was the first Xhosa to make use of the wooden planks to make a coffin. It was for himself. He died in 1820, and has since been held in increasing veneration by the Xhosas, who hold an annual memorial service, and call him Saint Ntsikana.

Cartoon: Ntsikana supervising the making of his coffin.