

THE TRANSCULTURATION OF THOMAS MOFOLO'S  
*CHAKA*: SOUTHERN AFRICA AND FRANCOPHONE  
AFRICA IN DIALOGUE

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## ABSTRACT

Thomas Mofolo's novel *Chaka* was a key contributor to Shaka's mythical status. This thesis attempts to demonstrate the significance of this work in light of the author's intellectual education and development by the Paris Evangelical Mission Society in Lesotho and the subsequent exploitation of the novel by Léopold Sédar Senghor. In the figure of Shaka, whom Senghor posed as an intellectual challenge to the imperial cultural assumptions of the colonising powers, the Senegalese author created one of *Négritude's* most powerful symbols.

Following Senghor, a succession of Francophone African versions of Mofolo's story imbued the Zulu king with each author's cultural and political idiosyncrasies. These versions offered entirely new texts, which performed the simultaneous acts of deculturation and neoculturation of Mofolo's novel and Shaka/Chaka's life.

Traditionally, Anglophone and Francophone African literary cultures have been treated as separate intellectual spheres. This thesis seeks to understand the dialogue between them, and examines the evolving narrative of their cultural exchanges through the 'transculturation' of Mofolo's *Chaka*.

## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

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Ellas Alexia Vassilatos

14 day of February, 2007.

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“L’amour, on ne le discute pas, il est”, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

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