

**Shembe religion's integration of African Traditional Religion and
Christianity: A sociological case study**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

of

Rhodes University

by

Nombulelo Shange

Supervisor: Michael Drewett

Department of Sociology

July 2013

Abstract

The Shembe Church's integration of African Traditional Religion and Christianity has been met by many challenges. This merger has been rejected by both African traditionalists and Christians. The Shembe Church has been met by intolerance even though the movement in some ways creates multiculturalism between different people and cultures.

This thesis documents the Shembe Church's ideas and practices; it discusses how the Shembe Church combines two ideologies that appear to be at odds with each other. In looking at Shembe ideas and practices, the thesis discusses African religion-inspired rituals like ukusina, ancestral honouring, animal sacrificing and virgin testing. The thesis also discusses the heavy Christian influence within the Shembe Church; this is done by looking at the Shembe Church's use of The Bible and Moses' Laws which play a crucial role in the Church. The challenges the Shembe Church faces are another main theme of the thesis. The thesis looks at cases of intolerance and human rights violations experienced by Shembe members. This is done in part by looking at the living conditions at eBuhleni, located at Inanda, KZN. The thesis also analyses individual Shembe member's experiences and discusses how some members of the Shembe church experience the acceptance of the Shembe religion in South African society. This thesis concludes by trying to make a distinction between intolerance and controversy. I try to highlight the idea that what many Shembe followers see as discrimination and intolerance towards them is sometimes a difference in opinion from other cultural groups. Sometimes these differences are not geared towards criticising other religious groups or perpetuating intolerance.

Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to thank my supervisor Michael Drewett, for his support, assistance and for being a great cheerleader. Thank you for constantly reminding me that I can do this, even when I thought I could not. I would also like to thank the friendliest and best department at Rhodes University. I would not have managed without the constant support and guidance from the Department of Sociology; thank you Prof Helliker, Mrs Fuller, Ms Madinda and to the post graduate students.

To my friends Qondile, Sisa, Tumi, Ashley and Charmaine, thank you for the love and support during the craziest two years of my life. Thank you for all the laughs, listening to all my crazy stories and keeping me sane.

Thank you to all the people who played a key role while I conducted my research. Thank you to my host family, Mr Mthembu, all my participants who opened up and shared their experiences and stories with me without expecting anything in return. Thank to Bab'Ngidi, Bab'Mpanza, Chief Vukile Shembe, Mr Ndlovu and Paul Weinberg for sharing their deep knowledge on the Shembe Church. Thank you to Mrs Rasaroka for introducing me to African text and ideas which proved to be very useful. Thank you to the CRL commission and CoGTA and their representitives Dr Ralarala and Dr Sibanda.

Finally I would like to thank my family for all the love and sacrifices that were made; none of this would have been possible without you guys. Thank you MaKutu, MaKhumbu, MaBongi, Sbu, Zee and Pinky. I would also like to acknowledge and thank my ancestors and the universe.

List of Abbreviations

- AIC: African Independent Churches.
- ATR: African Traditional Religion.
- KZN: KwaZulu-Natal.

Glossary

African Zionist: African churches organized around common ethnicity and culture.

Amadlozi: Ancestors.

EBuhleni: Inanda Shembe Village where the annual July and September gatherings take place.

Ekuphakameni: Inanda Shembe Village where the annual July and September gatherings take place.

Emsamo/ umsamo: Centre of the house, place communication with ancestors occurs.

Ethiopianist: African churches organized predominately around race, but include various cultures and ethnicities.

IBandla lamaNazaretha: Nazareth Baptist Church.

Imbongi: Poet who performs and composes praise calling/poems for Zulu kings and leaders such as Isaiah Shembe.

Impepho: African herb/plant burnt when awakening/communicating with the ancestors.

Inhlonipho: Respect.

Insimbi (bell): A morning and evening Shembe ritual/prayer performed to protect members.

Isiguqo (kneel): Shembe prayer performed during times of hardship.

Izibongo: Surnames or praise callings. A Zulu oral tradition that documents family origins, history and relatives.

Izihlabelelo ZamaNazaretha: Nazareth hymn book.

Iziphandla/isiphandla: Animal skin usually worn around the wrist, often worn for protection or after a rite of passage e.g.: death, birth and marriage.

Mt uNhlankazi: Sacred Shembe site where the annual January pilgrimage takes place.

Mvelinqangi (first to appear): God

Nkosi: King or chief.

Nkulunkulu (great one): God

Nomkhubulwane: Purity and fertility Goddess and believed to be daughter of God.

Onyaweni (foot): Sacred praying area, believed to have Isaiah Shembe's footprint on it.

Sangoma: Diviner.

Ubuntu: African social philosophy that promotes humanity, harmony and unity.

Ukugagu: A traditional Zulu practice, done as a sign of respect. It is to kneel and look away in the presence of a chief or king. This practice was adopted by the Shembe Church; it is what followers do when they are in the presence of a Shembe chief or priest.

Ukusina/umgidi: Traditional Zulu dance.

Ukuthwasa: Brooding or the process one goes through in order to become a sangoma/diviner.

Umfundisi: Priest.

Umkhokheli: A person in the Shembe Church who offers members spiritual guidance.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Context of research.....	11
1.2. Thesis outline	15

Chapter 2: Culture and Religion: A theoretical framework

2.1. Introduction.....	18
2.2. Making sense of culture.....	19
2.2.1. Bourdieu's contested fields.....	20
2.2.2. Habitus.....	23
2.3. Religion as culture defined	25
2.4. Critiquing Western religion	27
2.4.1. Fanon and Biko: Religion, colonialism and African consciousness	28
2.5. Conclusion and critiques	34

Chapter 3: Historical background

3.1. Introduction.....	36
3.1.1. African Independent Churches.....	36
3.2. Shembe History	38
3.3. Shembe ideology and practice	46
3.3.1. Izibongo and the undocumented role of women in the Shembe Church.....	48
3.4. Struggles within the Shembe Church	52
3.5. Critiquing Shembe polygamy practice	55
3.6. Conclusion	56

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Introduction.....	57
4.1.1. Qualitative Research.....	57
4.1.2. Data Collection methods.....	63
4.1.3. Ethical Considerations	64
4.2. Entering the field and challenges faced.....	64
4.3. CRL and CoGTA	69
4.4. Conclusion	69

Chapter 5: Life at eBuhleni

5.1. Introduction.....	70
------------------------	----

5.2. Daily rituals and routine	70
5.3. Living conditions	83
Chapter 6: African Traditional religion and the Shembe Church: differences and similarities	
6.1. Introduction.....	87
6.2. Shembe and African Traditional Religion.....	88
6.3. Communicating with God through mediators.....	95
6.4. Shembe rituals: practices that please God and the ancestors.....	103
6.4.1. Virginty testing.....	103
6.4.1.1. Solution and recommendations	107
6.4.2. Praise performances.....	108
6.5. Conclusion	118
Chapter 7: Christianity and the Shembe Church	
7.1. Introduction.....	120
7.2. African Independent Churches.....	120
7.3. Similarities between the Shembe Church and Christianity	121
7.4. Differences between the Shembe Church and Christianity	124
7.4.1. Animal sacrifice	124
7.4.2. Holy grounds.....	127
7.4.3. Moses' laws.....	128
7.4.4. Laws of Numbers	130
7.5. "Why I chose Shembe": people's testimonies and the move towards ATR	133
7.6. Conclusion	138
Chapter 8: Shembe Challenges: Cases of intolerance or controversies	
8.1. Introduction.....	140
8.2. Intolerance towards the Shembe Church.....	141
8.3. Conclusion	154
Chapter 9: Conclusion	
References.....	
	158

List of Photos

- Figure 1. Map of Inanda.....
- Figure 5.2.1. The early morning daily clean up. Shembe members collect and burn the litter they collect in the eBuhleni grounds.....
- Figure 5.2.2. Shembe members praying outside Mduduzi Shembe’s house.....
- Figure 5.2.3. People returning from Vimbeni Shembe’s house where they clean up and have a church service afterwards. Vimbeni Shembe’s house is the big green and white house in the distance.....
- .Figure 5.2.4. Shembe member praying and placing coins Onyaweni.....
- Figure 5.2.5. A priest and a female elder talk on the side of the road, close to the market area.....
- Figure 5.2.6. People bring offerings in the form of hay for building.....
- Figure 5.2.7. Non-Shembe members lined up, waiting their turn to pray and give offerings.....
- Figure 5.2.8. Like most Shembe ceremonies and rituals, this one is accompanied by music and performance.....
- Figure 5.2.9. People wait to have their food, water and oil blessed by priests.....
- Figure 5.2.10. People gathered outside Mduduzi Shembe’s house.....
- Figure 5.2.11. Mduduzi Shembe addresses the cheering people.....
- Figure 5.2.12. One of the many stalls selling traditional clothes, most of which are worn during the Sunday “umgidi”.....
- Figure 5.2.13. Traders making cowhide skirts worn by female elders during the Sunday “umgidi”.....
- Figure 5.2.14. Small building inside the temple that is close to Mduduzi Shembe’s house. This is where Mduduzi Shembe and some of his predecessors typically sit during church services.....
- Figure 5.2.15. Young girls lined up outside the temple, ready to perform one of the weekday dancing rituals.....
- Figure 5.2.16. Sacred statue of Isaiah Shembe.....
- Figure 5.2.17. Shembe children dressed and ready to go to the evening prayer, known as “insimbi”.....
- Figure 5.2.18. Saturday morning church service.....
- Figure 5.2.19. Shembe members relax before the 13:00 service.....

Figure 5.3.1. Some of the informal houses one might expect to find at eBuhleni.....

Figure 5.3.2. My home during my stay at eBuhleni.....

Figure 5.3.3. Nun’s housing.....

Figure 5.3.4. Young girls carrying buckets filled with water.....

Figure 5.3.5. Pollution at eBuhleni.....

Figure 6.4.2. Young Shembe girls wearing their daily Shembe attire.....

Figure 6.4.3. Young girls burn dirt during a daily clean up of eBuhleni. The girl on the far left wears “iBhayi” under her “umNazaretha”.....

Figure 6.4.4. Young Shembe girls returning from one of the weekday dance rituals during the July festival.....

Figure 6.4.5. ‘Iskotch’ for girls on the left and for boys on the right.....

Figure 6.4.6. Young virgin girls during one of the weekday July rituals, where they dance and sing.....

Figure 6.4.7. Indian inspired Shembe outfit.....

Figure 6.4.8. Young male members also wear a similar black and white uniform.....

Figure 6.4.9. Traditional Zulu inspired attire for young girls.....

Figure 6.4.10.1. Female elder wearing her Zulu inspired dancing attire.....

Figure 6.4.10.2. Dancing female elders.....

Figure 6.4.10.3. Dancing boys and men.....

Figure 6.4.10.4. Young boys dance wearing their ‘iskotch’ attire.....

Figure 6.4.10.5. Dancing young boys at the Sunday ‘umgidi’ at eBuhleni.....

Figure 7.4.2. Shembe followers eBuhleni walking barefoot as they go about their daily lives.....

Figure 7.4.4.1. Shembe men often grow their hair and beard long.....

Figure 7.4.4.2. Women also grow their hair but often wear head scarves or weave into hat-like structures.....

Figure 7.4.4.3. Married or elderly women cover their heads as a sign of respect; this is a common practice in most African cultures in South Africa.....

Map of Inanda

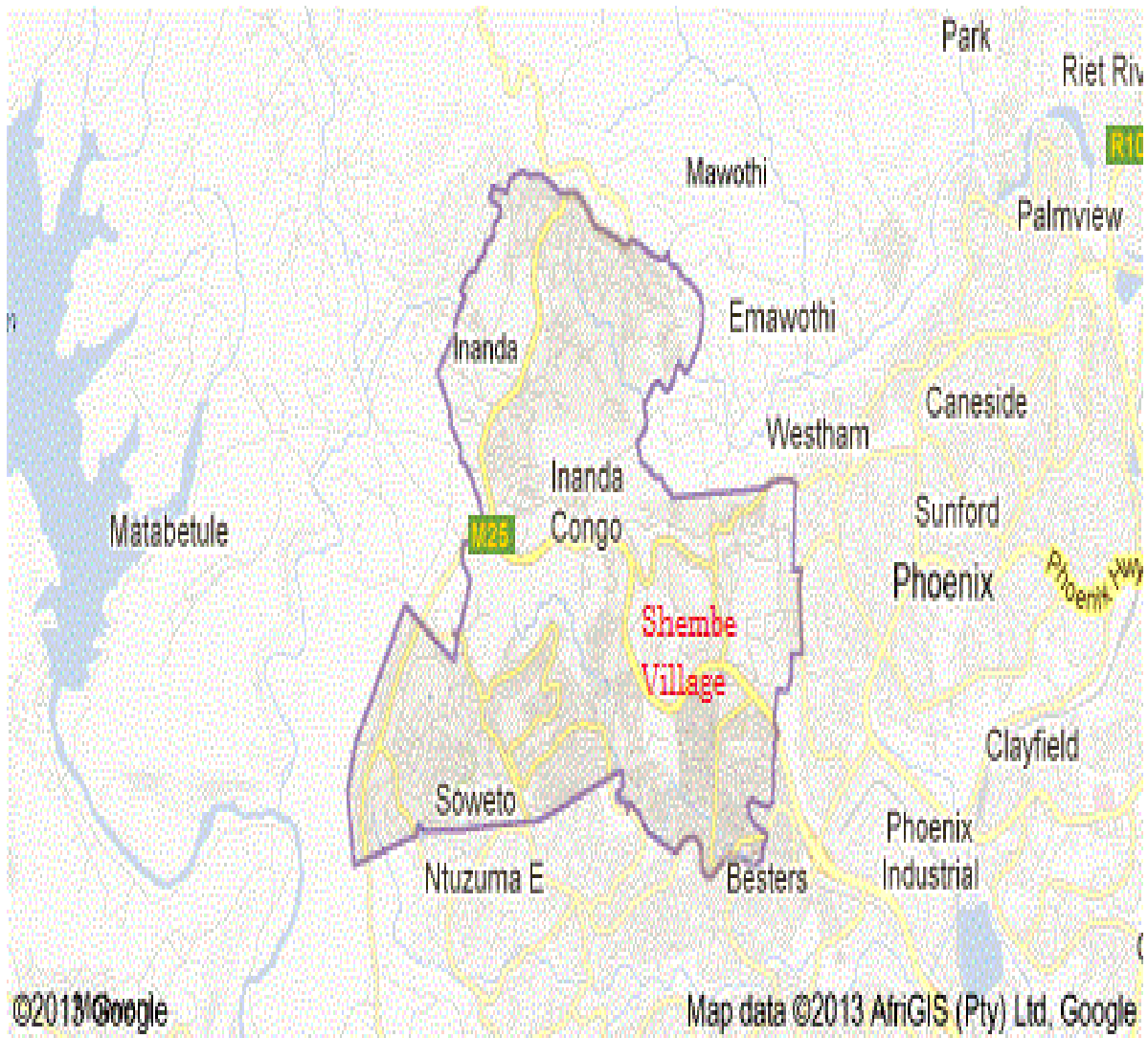


Figure 1. Map of Inanda: Research conducted at Shembe Village (eBuhleni and ekuPhakameni)

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Context of Research

The study of multiculturalism is very important in the post colonial context. Such studies highlight themes and challenges faced by Africans, given the history of colonialization. The Shembe church is one the earliest examples of multiculturalism incorporating Western and African culture. The Shembe Church mixes two seemingly conflicting cultures within its ideologies and practices. As such it provides an interesting case study in religious and cultural diversity in contemporary South African society. The combining of African Traditional Religion and Christianity is something that some Christians and African traditionalists contest. The Shembe Church is more formally known as *iBandla lamaNazaretha*. The founder of the Shembe Church Isaiah Shembe (1870-1935) believed that Christianity should be taught to indigenous people in order to better their lives but he also believed that this should be done without breaking down 'tribalism' and tradition. Isaiah Shembe believed that people's past played an important role and should therefore never be forgotten even as their lives, ideas and practices change. He believed that for Christianity to be meaningful for him it must be preached in the African idiom and must be indigenized.

Shembe made Christianity more meaningful for himself and many Africans by creating hymns that many could relate to. He did this by singing some hymns in a manner very similar to traditional Zulu oral tradition. The messages within the songs and the way the songs are sung are examples of how Shembe indigenized Christianity (Muller, 1994: 42). The hymn book also largely draws on the Bible; with edited versions of the Psalms of David and other Old Testament writers. Some hymns are also inspired by the Ten Commandments. The hymn book also refers to social arrangements as well as prayers for the Sabbath, morning prayers and evening prayers. The hymns almost always carry a message or some profound teaching (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 70; Muller, 1994: 42). Shembe challenged the notion of the holy trinity and the equal status given to the father and son. This is because within Zulu culture the father is always given higher social status and the son is seen as the extension of the father. In the hymn book there a number of songs and prayers that encourage the sons to fear and respect their mothers and fathers (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 73). Shembe also indigenized Christianity by introducing dance and other expressive performances such as drum playing which at the time were rejected by Christians (Muller, 1994: 42).

The Shembe religion's mixing of Christianity and African Traditional Religion has in some ways been met by opposition from both sides. Christians tend to see many African practices as evil and feel that they have no place within Christianity. African traditional religious writers like Nokuzola Mndende (2009: 1) feel that many African religions only incorporate Christianity and other Ibramic faiths to "justify" their own religion to the sceptics. According to Mndende, many African religions that do not fall under Ibramic faith are not considered at all within South African educational institutions and academia. Mndende believes that those religions (like the Shembe religion) that try to accommodate the Western mould by mimicking Western practices do African Traditional Religion and ideas a disservice. This largely relates to Fanon's idea of feared, hated and rejected "blackness/Africanness" by Africans themselves. Many Africans feel that they must reject all that is African and adopt Western ideas and practices. Fanon explains that the black "man's" customs were wiped out because they were in conflict with "civilisation". Africanness is often painted in a negative light by the colonizers/missionaries and the west at large (Fanon, 1952: 63). Fanon rejects the idea that all humans are treated equally in the world. This we can see within Mndende's observation on the exclusion of African Traditional Religion within South African society and knowledge systems within the country. Important indigenous knowledge which was previously suppressed is more recently being revived for various reasons. Some of these old methods have contributed in the growth and development of modern medicine, agriculture and environmental conversation (Ostergard, Tubin and Altman; 2001: 643). It is for this reason that it is important to accept alternative groups such as the Shembe Church and the various cultural groups that make up the church. Indigenous knowledge can do great things for the advancement of modern society. It is my belief that modern South African society can learn from the Shembe Church and groups similar to it. South Africans can progress by adopting Shembe ideas that they deem to be useful, things like simple yet holistic healing rituals and medicines, principles that emphasis the respecting of humankind and nature. This however is not to say the Shembe Church is perfect; many of its principles are not even followed by its own members. The recent divisions have seen many members and factions go against each other and break many of Isaiah Shembe's rules and important church principles. Isaiah Shembe founded the church in 1910. Johannes Galilee Shembe (Isaiah Shembe's third wife's son) took over the church after Isaiah's death. After Johannes's death in 1976 the church split into two factions; one led by Amos Shembe, one of Isaiah Shembe's younger sons, and the other was headed by Johannes Shembe's son Londa Shembe (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 43 and 51). Today there are four divisions within the church

and there is an ongoing battle for leadership. Amos Shembe's *eBhuhleni* faction is led by son of Vimbeni, Mduduzi, whose church has the largest membership. Vukile Shembe's faction of the religion is known as *ekuPhakameni* (Heuser, 2008: 41; Mthethwa, 2010: 1). The divisions within the church are a result of internal struggle for leadership within the family. The divisions have little to do with difference of opinions when it comes to religious ideas and practices within the church. The divisions within the church will not be a priority within this research as the proposed research is more concerned with Shembe ideas and the toleration and acceptances of different approaches in contemporary South Africa.

There are many movements similar to the Shembe Church in South Africa and Africa. The rise of African independent churches was fuelled by the desire to interpret the Bible in a way Africans could understand and apply in their daily lives. AIC can be categorized into two groups; African Zionists and the Ethiopianists. Theologically the African Zionists are now made up of different Nguni cultures, brought together by common ethnicity and identity (Muller, 1994: 36). African Zionist churches have no connection to Western religions such as Christianity (Madise, 2005: 3). In contrast the Ethiopianist churches are those which broke away from mission churches on racial grounds. They do however model the organization of their following and Biblical interpretation on that of the mission church (Muller, 1994: 36-37). It is not clear which category Isaiah Shembe and his iBandla lamaNazaretha (Nazareth Baptist Church) fall under as the religion has elements of both African Zionist and Ethiopianist practices. Though it is unclear which group the Shembe church falls under, what is clear is the shared history of oppression. Like Zionist and Ethiopianist churches, the Shembe Church was seen as a move away from religion. These groups were and often still are seen as encouraging hedonistic practices.

ATRs have been accused of being anti-God and have often been viewed as witchcraft or demon worship. This is not the case; witchcraft is not a universal practice amongst African religious groups. ATR is not based on demon worship, witchcraft or ancestral worship. Many ATR churches are proud of the fact that they honour their ancestors, but worshipping them is something they do not do, they only worship God. ATR groups are not godless hedonists; instead this social field is often made up of God fearing people. There is nothing more important than God or the Supreme Being in most African cultures. God is often glorified and worshiped even through daily mundane practices or when there is a celebration and so on. The Shembe system of theology, like most ATRs includes God, ancestral spirits and non-living members of society (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 76). Christians have

historically been and remain opposed to the combination of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, mostly because they view ideas of ancestral honouring as demon worship. What the Christian critics fail to realize is this process is in some ways almost inevitable. The notion of a pure culture or religion is almost foreign as a result of history, globalization and the mixing of different people (Harnack, 2005: 13). Bhabha (1994:36) refers to this process as a third space. The third space is an in between place where two social fields meet and coexist. "Fields are spheres of social action, a site of power games between individuals and social institutions." (Castle, 2007: 160). Struggles and conflict can exist between fields. Bhabha's third space can bring about a common identity and it is what is needed to heal and unite post colonial society.

The Shembe religion, like many other aspects of society, is not perfect, but as a communitarian organization, it is worth considering in the post colonial context. Individualistic ideas and practices that are largely accepted by South Africans and throughout the world have done little to solve society's social ills; instead many have been made worse. Western individualistic ideas have been successful in ensuring the protection and respect of individual human rights, but these sometimes come at the expense of the greater community. The problem with Western individualistic ideas is that they exclude the individual from the community, the community is also often not considered in Western humanist debates (Kymlicka, 1989: 22). Communitarians include both the individual and the community in their ideas of humanism (Kymlicka, 1989: 24).

Mbiti (1997: 98) in his definition of the self first defines and describes the community before moving onto detailed reference to the individual. This is because the individual only exists in relation to the community; the survival of the individual is dependent on the existence of the group or community. According to Mbiti (1997: 99), the community is made up of many different factors and elements, socially constructed and tangible, real and material. Mbiti (1997: 99), for example, refers to African society as having many communities or peoples. Each community according to Mbiti has its own distinct language. Some of these languages are related to one another and scholars have classified them into families and stocks. Mbiti (1997: 99) also mentions that communities are made up of indigenous people as well as foreign migrants. When these groups mix, so do their cultures, language and identity. An example of this would be the adoption of the Western language and way of life by many African indigenous people (Mbiti, 1997: 99).

Mbiti also includes living as well as “non living” beings in his conception of the self. According to Mbiti, the environment and ancestors are an integral part of African society and therefore cannot be removed from African identity (Mbiti, 1997: 100). Similarly Gyekye (1997: 36) argues that no one is an isolated individual, one’s uniqueness is secondary. What is primary is that one is an individual within a bigger group comprising many individuals. The term “I” is hardly ever used in public forums in the case of many African communities. The individual can say “I am because we are and we are because I am”. According to Gyekye (1997: 35) social roles and structures control and show the way an individual should relate and fit into society and how the society should receive and treat the individual. Similar to Mbiti’s idea here is Bourdieu’s concept of fields, which sees society as being made up of many different fields and settings interacting with each other. Religion is one example of such a field.

1.2. Thesis Outline

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical background, using Bourdieu’s concepts of contested fields and habitus. It makes a link between culture and religion, two very important terms within this research. It also defines culture using Pierre Bourdieu’s theoretical analysis. Bourdieu (1993: 72) explains culture and social relations through his concept of contested fields and habitus. According to Bourdieu, a field is a setting in which individuals and their social positions are situated. Fields interrelate with each other, but there can also be conflict and disagreement within and between fields (Peillion, 1998: 213). The Shembe Church is an interesting case study because it is a sub-culture to both Christian and ATR, two fields which differ and disagree on many things. Fields are also hierarchical; with many being subordinate to the greater field of power and class relations. The position of each agent in the field is a result of communication between the rules and norms of the field, agent’s habitus and agent’s capital (social, economic and cultural) (Peillion, 1998: 3). Bourdieu uses the concept of ‘habitus’ to explain the relationship between individuals and the social world. According to Bourdieu (1993: 64), social reality exists both inside and outside the individual. Individuals internalise learned external realities and the material world. The socialised body does not stand in opposition to society; instead it is one of its forms of existence (Swartz, 1997: 96-97). This chapter finally looks at conflict within African Traditional Religion as a social field. This is done in relation to Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko’s ideas on multiculturalism.

Chapter 3 discusses the rise of African Independent Churches and multicultural movements such as the Shembe Church. This chapter looks at the Shembe Church's incorporation of Western and African cultures. The Shembe Church also created unity and multiculturalism between black people. It did this by accepting different African cultures. It defines the Shembe Church as both an African Zionist and an Ethiopianist movement. The chapter discusses the strengths of the Shembe Church as well as the challenges and oppression that the church has faced. The Shembe Church was founded by Isaiah Shembe as a way of restoring African culture. Isaiah Shembe aimed to Africanize Christianity, but this idea was not well received by Christian missionaries. Christian missionaries and the apartheid government viewed the church as a political movement and tried to discredit it in many ways; myths were created about the church and its leader. This in some ways strengthened the church and inspired academics within in the church to write more about it in an effort to dispel the myths. The chapter concludes with a look at Shembe ideas and practices and more significantly, the importance of respecting the Holy Sabbath.

Chapter 4 focuses on the methodological underpinnings of this thesis. It deals primarily with my experience in the field, the challenges with which I was faced and how I dealt with them. This research made use of qualitative research methods. In-depth interviews and a focus group discussion were conducted with participants. Qualitative methods are most suitable for this research as it aims to document Shembe members' perceptions and experiences. The sample involved random selection using snowballing. This chapter also emphasizes the importance of following the proper channels when trying to enter the field. I faced many challenges because I entered the Shembe field incorrectly. Chapter 4 also introduces my strategic informants and discuss ethical considerations in this chapter.

Chapter 5 analyzes some of the daily rituals, routines and living conditions I observed at eBuhleni during the annual July gathering. This chapter outlines some important Shembe ideas and practices; it provides a background for the next chapter which deals with the similarities between the Shembe Church and ATR. Chapter 6 discusses some Shembe practices and ideas in detail. It considers practices the Shembe Church has in common with ATR and African cultural practices. This chapter discusses criticism the Shembe Church received from African traditionalists for its incorporation of ATR with Christianity. The chapter looks at the African concept of God and important religious figures such as ancestors and diviners. Finally I will discuss the usefulness of certain important African cultural

practices, ATR and Shembe practices. The chapter looks at virgin testing, “ukusina” (cultural/religious dancing), music and drum playing. It constantly discusses how these religious and cultural ideas and practices are viewed and accepted by society.

Chapter 7 discusses the similarities and differences between the Shembe Church and Christianity. It also discusses the rise of AIC and why black South Africans found Christianity alone to be insufficient. The chapter finally discusses some participants’ experiences and why they chose the Shembe Church. Many participants often referred to the feeling of belonging and acceptance when responding to why they chose the Shembe Church. Many members felt that the Shembe Church is accepting of their culture and accepts them as they are, regardless of ethnicity or physical appearance.

Chapter 8 deals with an underlying theme that appears throughout the thesis and that is the issue of intolerance. It analyses cases of intolerance and controversies. This chapter discusses how some members of the Shembe Church experience the acceptance of the Shembe religion in South African society. It also looks at documented cases of intolerance towards the Shembe Church and similar groups. The intolerance towards the Shembe Church is discussed in relation to Iris Young’s concept of oppression. Young’s ideas are juxtaposed with Bourdieu’s field and habitus theories.

The final chapter draws conclusions from the study. It mostly discusses the four main research goals and how they were met. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 address the first research goal, which is to document how the Shembe religion incorporates both African Traditional Religion and Christianity. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 address the second goal which aims to investigate how some members of the Shembe Church experience the acceptance of the Shembe religion in South African society. Chapter 8 also deals with documented cases of intolerance towards the Shembe Church.

Chapter 2: Culture and Religion- A theoretical framework

2.1. Introduction

Culture can be said to be the life of a society. It is the way people live and interact with each other, social systems and the environment (Eagleton, 2000: 1). Very importantly in the African context, culture is a tool that can be used in the pursuit of freedom and liberation. Culture is a mobilizing tool that can fight oppression and create new identities that people can be proud of (Cabral, 1966). It is important to understand culture in this context especially when discussing the Shembe Church, which used culture to unify Africans. This chapter defines religion as a component of culture. The religious social field is important because it influences people's ideas. Individuals however also have the ability to shape the religious fields they belong to. Bourdieu's concept of habitus deals with the former. Bourdieu (1993: 72) believes that culture provides the grounds for human communication and interaction, it is also however a source of domination. According to Bourdieu, society is made up of contested fields which interact with and are sometimes in conflict with each other. Fields are social settings in which individuals and their social positions are located. Agents interact with various fields. Bourdieu uses the concept of habitus to explain the relationship between humans and the social field (Pinto, 2000: 106). Habitus emphasizes the joint realities of individual subjectivity and social objectivity (Swartz, 1997: 96-97). The relationship between fields will be explained in relation to capitalism and the economy as a dominant field in the global community. Capitalism thrives as a result of colonialism which encouraged the oppression of African people and their culture. Colonialism and apartheid continue to affect South Africans. These oppressive regimes have left South Africans divided. Fanon and Biko believe that the intolerance and conflict that exists in post-colonial society can be fixed through adopting a kind of multiculturalism. For Fanon (1964: 50) resolving the colonial problem lies in the end to racial prejudice and the rejection of the colonial status and colonial ideas. The colonial status must be irreversibly excluded, therefore allowing for equal dignity and multiculturalism (Fanon, 1963: 106). The Shembe Church is made up of multicultural ideas similar to those encouraged by Biko, Fanon and Bhabha. The Shembe Church rejected the oppressive elements of Western culture and adopted those it deemed positive and useful. Founder of the Shembe Church, Isaiah Shembe went a step further by reviving African culture. Isaiah Shembe encouraged people to embrace and practice their culture without shame or fear.

2.2. Making sense of culture

Culture is core to social life. It is a set of principles and practices that regulate people or society. There are certain rules, norms and values that are entrenched within cultures. It may include beliefs, knowledge, artefacts, language and laws. Culture does not exist in a vacuum, it shapes as much as it can be shaped, meaning that culture is socially constructed by people within a community. Society transforms and evolves when two or more cultures come into contact (Momoti, 2002: 15). Raymond Williams takes the definition of culture further by saying it is a form of self or collective expression. Culture is often expressed through rituals and customs (Street, 1997: 127).

It is important to know that culture is also a concept with a history. According to Jenks (1993: 7) the idea of culture in Western society emerged at the end of the 18th century into the 19th century. This concept came about as a reaction against the social change that was currently occurring. This era was the birth of the Industrial Revolution and it was characterized by chaos, disorder and confusion. These changes occurred in the social field, political field and at individual/personal levels, and were very controversial and contested. The changes were expansionist, exploitive and consumptive; they were legitimated through the ideology of progress, development and growth. The new changes were brought about by technology and industrialization encouraged inequality and created huge gaps between the rich and poor. These changes also encouraged the exploitation of people and the environment for profit and growth. The Industrial Revolution was leading society into what Marcuse calls “one-dimensionality”. Culture worked as a mediator between people, nature and the new changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. It stopped the move towards one-dimensionality and insured that society remained multifaceted and diverse (Jenks, 1993: 8). The Shembe Church played a similar role, during a time when African culture and ideas were undermined. Isiah Shembe showed that there is more value in honouring different cultural fields, instead of censoring and oppressing them. He went a step further by encouraging people to share their ideas and by celebrating the different dimensions and fields in a culturally diverse society.

Culture has many dimensions and even though it is largely shaped by capitalism there are still other factors and what Bourdieu (1993) calls social fields at play. There is therefore a lot of diversity at play, not just between cultures but also within cultures and their fields. There exist differences even within cultures. A culture may have different subcultures within it. The

term subculture is used to define different interests of a group of people within the larger culture (Jenks, 1993: 10). For example the Ndebele, Zulu, Xhosa and Tsonga are just some of the subcultures that make up the larger Nguni culture and even within these subcultures there are further divisions and groupings. For example the Xhosa culture is made up of Mpondo people, Mfengu people and so on (Wilson, Kaplan, Maki and Walton, 1992: 199). Subcultures often come from people breaking away from the wider cultural group due to conflict and disagreements as in the case of the Shembe church. There are a number of “sub-cultures” within the Shembe religion as the religion gets divided into smaller factions due to disagreements over leadership (Heuser, 2008: 41). The Shembe religion is also a sub-culture of both ATR and Christianity. The Shembe religion draws from Christian and African cultural fields, two fields which appear to be in constant conflict with each other (Muller, 1994: 42).

2.2.1. Bourdieu’s contested fields

For Bourdieu it is not uncommon to find division and conflict within what he calls fields. Conflict often arises within fields such as cultural fields when people ignore or downplay certain rituals, traditions or beliefs (Peillion, 1998: 213). This in many ways explains the hostility that some African traditionalists and Christians feel towards the Shembe Church and others like it. The Shembe Church downplayed and rejected many African cultural rules and used Christianity to “fill the gaps” within African cultural rules. Mndende (2009) believes that groups who do this, do so to gain acceptance from western religious groups. Traditional beer brewing is one practice that comes to mind. Many African traditionalists believe the brewing and drinking of tradition beer is an important religious and cultural practice. Shembe on the other hand rejected this practice and even blamed it for some of society’s social ills (Tishken, 2006: 83). This angered and still angers many traditionalists who see this practice as important for the role it plays in uniting people, especially during celebrations. It is also a practice that pleases the ancestors and is therefore seen as crucial. Shembe also encouraged ancestral honouring, something which angered many Christians. He also challenged the idea of the Sabbath being on a Sunday (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 42 &76). Though his ideas were met with some conflict, he still managed to create a new setting in which individuals and groups could feel accepted. He created a new religious field which tried to encourage people to embrace their shared identity, as well as their diversity.

A field is a setting in which agents and their social positions are located. The position of each individual in the field is a result of interaction between the specific rules of the field, the

agent's habitus and the agent's capital. Fields interact with each other, and are hierarchical. Most fields are subordinate of the larger field of power and class relations (Nooy, 2003: 317). The theory of habitus encourages one to think in terms of relations, relations to other individuals and social fields. To be in the social world means to be situated; one individual can be positioned within many different social fields (Pinto, 2000: 104). Many Shembe followers find themselves situated within their cultural and religious fields; this can sometimes create conflict, as these fields are both different and interlinked. For example Zulu culture encourages the brewing and drinking of beer. It is believed that this practice appeases the ancestors. Beer brewing and drinking is however forbidden within the Shembe Church, even though many of the church rules are based on Zulu and other African ideas and practices. Many members might feel conflicted as these are two fields that are very important to them.

Fields often interlink, we can use what we learn about the operation of each field to question and interpret other fields. For example when we study African Traditional Religion, it might be useful for one to look into the group's history, culture and traditions (Bourdieu, 1993: 72). When studying church movements like the Shembe or Zionist churches it may be even more useful to analyse Western religious fields as both movements have had heavy Christian missionary influences (Madise, 2005: 3). Most fields are characterized by a struggle; newcomers often challenge the dominant actors within a field, for example dominant Christianity versus diverse religious fields such as the Shembe church (Bourdieu, 1993: 74). In this instance the Shembe Church would be seen as the newcomer who the dominant actors fear because they threaten the "purity" of the religion. The dominant actors must reject and discredit the newcomer's ideas or risk having a total revolution and shift in power. Such a revolution would interrupt what was once the natural flow of the field and the habitus (Bourdieu, 1993: 74) The Mission Christians therefore reject the Shembe religion and they deny the Christian element within the religion. One way they are able to do this is by dominating and reducing political choice. Politics ends up being reduced to morality which is not always based on religious ideas, but which is rather based on Western culture (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2005: 181; Dougall, 1963: 60). In order for a field to exist there have to be actors willing to participate, to do this they have to understand and follow the laws of the field (Bourdieu, 1993: 73). All agents involved in a field share a certain number of core interests, namely everything that is linked to the existence of the field. "Agreements are the things that go without say; they are core rules and norms that make up the field" (Bourdieu, 1993: 73). Agreements allow the field to function and not collapse, the partial reforms which

constantly take place in a field do not call into question the core norms of the field (Bourdieu, 1993: 74). Fields have properties derived from history both national and international. The position in hierarchy of a field is also essential, both the history and hierarchy of the field contribute to the functioning of the field. The hierarchy of the field is often determined by the popularity of the field or the capital and resources the field might possess (Bourdieu, 1993: 73).

Even though Bourdieu is opposed to Weber's theory of symbolic interactionism, he shares Weber's view, contrary to traditional Marxism, that society cannot be analyzed simply in terms of economic classes and ideologies (Nooy, 2003: 317). Much of his work is concerned with the independent role of educational and cultural factors. Instead of analyzing societies in terms of classes, Bourdieu uses the idea of 'field' (Maton, 2005: 688). After having shown that the external nature of the field, Bourdieu tries to show the degree to which the field is adopted and internalised by agents. (Pinto, 2000: 106). Bourdieu goes as far as raising the notion of a "cultural unconscious" which, taken as an aspect of habitus, presented the advantage of seeming to reconcile opposing terms such as; exterior and interior, collective and individual" (Pinto, 2000: 106). Each field however has operational capital in the form of resources, capital being whatever is taken as significant for social agents, the most common example being monetary capital (Coudry, 2007: 210). The resources are used by organizations and individuals in order to gain an advantage within or between fields. Therefore capital is a by-product of the field and cannot survive outside of it (Nooy, 2003: 19 and 20). In most cases the strength of a particular field is determined by its capital or its economic positioning. As the world Westernizes, capital and economics become more important as a field and within other fields in society. As a result it becomes increasingly hard to use other fields to explain and analyze societies as they too depend on the economic field. The economic field dominates and influences even the fields that it is at odds with (Nooy, 2003: 19; Bourdieu and Wacquant: 1992: 101). Bourdieu is naive in undermining the power and influence of the economic field and those linked to it. The economic field controls many aspects of society; for example, it can determine what is culturally acceptable (Schatzki, 2000: 280). Capitalism has the power to build societies, end wars and clashes such as the conflict in South Africa during the Apartheid era. However it also exploits other fields, people, situations and anything that might stand in the way of profit making (Teoh, Welch, Wazzan, 1999: 37).

In Bourdieu's work, a field is a system of social positions structured internally in terms of powerrelationships. Fields are organized both vertically and horizontally. This means that fields are not strictly equivalent to classes, and are often independent. The field of power is strange in that it exists "horizontally" through all of the fields and the struggles within it control the "exchange rate" of the forms of cultural, symbolic, or physical capital between the fields themselves (Couldry, 2007: 210). Different fields can be either independent or interconnected. The Shembe Church is an interesting case, in that it is interconnected with both Christainity and ATR, but it also stands independently from them because it is neither one nor the other. More complex societies tend to be those that have more fields within which they work, learn and communicate (Peillion, 1998: 215).

2.2.2. *Habitus*

According to Bourdieu (1993: 72), culture provides the grounds for human communication and interaction, it is also however a source of domination. There exist dominant fields within and between cultures. In terms of culture, the Western cultural field for example has been the dominating field globally for centuries now. The west's domination began largely as a result of their economic and military power and also because of their imperial expansion (Swartz, 1997: 1). Cultural imperialism rests upon the power to universalize particular cultures and their traditions; this process of de-historicizing is often perpetuated by allegedly neutral actors like international organizations (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2005: 178). Globalization also has the effects of economic imperialism in cultural ecumenism or economic fatalism and of making transnational relationships appear to be equal and natural necessities (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2005: 180). "Domination has been imposed by conservative think tanks and the allies in political and journalistic fields" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2005: 180). Many societies are de-historicized and re-fashioned to imitate Western culture. The slow transformation of history and culture into universal common sense can in the end make one forget that they have their roots in the complex reality of a particular historical society (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2005: 179). Ayisi (1979: 1-2) calls culture humans' trace of achievement during their struggle for survival and their journey to find their place in the universe and exist with nature. For Ayisi (1979: 3) culture is "...everything that contributes to the survival of humans; from biological factors to social fields and history. Culture is there to set certain rules and norms". It is learned through experience, religion, education, socialisation and interaction with other people as well as different fields and social structures.

Certain behaviour and prescribed ways end up becoming part of the social and legal fields, these fields are there to ensure that order is not disrupted; they are also often used as vehicles for change. Change often occurs within these fields and trickles down to the people, but people also have the power to shape and change social fields, people exist within social fields but have the power to think independently (Ayisi, 1979: 3).

According to Bourdieu (1993: 64), social reality exists both inside and outside the individual. Individuals internalise learned external realities and the material world. Individuals can be largely shaped by society and the cultures that surround them. Individuals however are more than sponges that absorb external realities; they also have their own internal ideas that determine how they act and how they relate to society. Bourdieu uses the concept of habitus to explain the relationship between humans and the social field (Pinto, 2000: 106). According to Bourdieu (1993: 4), the socialised agent does not stand in opposition to society. Bourdieu realises that the individual and society are two separate entities, but he constructs them and explains their relationship as if they were two dimensions of the same social reality or two sides of the same coin (Brubaker, 2000: 40). Habitus emphasizes the joint realities of individual subjectivity and social objectivity (Swartz, 1997: 96-97). The social world is seen to be made up of important binary oppositions; dominant and dominated, male and female, internal and external etc. “Habitus enables Bourdieu to transcend a set of basic intellectual oppositions between structure and action, determinism and freedom, social and individual, subjectivism and objectivism” (Brubaker, 2000: 41). Habitus is the ‘past which survives in the present’; the ideas passed on to each individual from their earliest upbringing. Although modified by newer experiences and events, it is dominated by the earliest experiences, norms and values (Brubaker, 2000: 44). The most influential power in the social field is the habitus, the ‘socialized subjectivity’ of an active individual in the world whose characteristics (skills and capability gained in a particular social field) are the mark of social status (Castle, 2007: 44). “The limits and rules that structure the social field, in which the social agent achieves distinction, are neither arbitrary nor external but are constituted by the aggregate of successful social experiences (or mores) that constitute the field” (Castle, 2007: 44). For Bourdieu, structuralism lacks agency, the concept of habitus builds on the idea that people act strategically and practically rather than as conformists to external sets of formal rules. People are not simple conformists to cultural norms or external limitations such as income. Actors respond to their situation in terms of deeply ingrained past experiences to the opportunities and the constraints offered by the present situations. Bourdieu also argues against the

subjectivism of Sartre's philosophical existentialism according to which people are individuals who have the freedom to shape their lives as they please. Sartre's idea undermines the role people and social fields play in the life of an agent. Bourdieu rejects equally all internal or voluntarist views of human action that depict individual choice as arising from some form of human subjectivity independent of any social influence (Swartz, 2002: 625). For Bourdieu human choices are made up of both the external objective reality and the internal subjectivity that exists in every individual.

2.3. Religion as culture defined

The religious field is very important as it often shapes and influences people's ideas and experiences. Religious people however are not just passive followers; they too have the power to influence the religious field. Based on the discussion on culture one can deduce that religion, like many other fields, is a component of culture. "Religion can be briefly defined as a cultural system of commonly shared beliefs and rituals that provide a sense of ultimate meaning and purpose by creating an idea of reality that is sacred and supernatural" (Harrison, 2006: 133). Many studies have been conducted on religion and theorists have come up with many different and sometimes conflicting definitions of what religion is. The three different definitions that will be discussed here are as follows; intellectual, functional and affective definitions of religion. James Martineau (1890: 304) uses the intellectual definition when defining religion. Accordingly, religion is defined as a belief in an ever living God or super being. This definition highlights something very important about religion, that most religions involve the belief in some intangible force. This intangible force often exists in the spiritual realm. The intellectual definition is insufficient because it does not take into account other equally vital characteristics of religion. This definition fails to recognize things like the importance of religious emotion, the importance of both faith and traditional practices (Harrison, 2006: 134). Another problem with this intellectual definition is that it excludes religions like Buddhism. Buddhism places more emphasis on the power of nature and puts forward the idea that all living things have a spiritual element and therefore should be protected and respected (Harrison, 2006: 134; Woodhead, 2002: 45).

The functional definitions of religion focus on the function of religion as a core or essential feature of religion. Anthropologist J.G Frazer (1890: 354) defined religion as a merciful conciliation of powers superior to humans. Frazer defines religion in terms of its forgiving

and merciful function. But not all religions serve or prioritize the same function. Religions are as diverse as the people who practice them; religious functions will therefore never be the same (Harrison, 2006: 136). Modern Protestant theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher adopts an affective definition of religion. He believes that the essence of religion consists in the feeling of absolute dependence. This definition is a product of Schleiermacher's own conception of religion as primarily a way of experiencing reality rather than as a set of doctrinal formulations. By defining religion in terms of certain feelings, Schleiermacher undermines the key role played by religious teachings, doctrines and creeds. His definition also seems to be biased towards his own religious tradition. However such feelings may not be central to other religions. The feeling of "absolute dependence" is also one that can be felt by non-religious and religious people towards non-religious things, meaning that "absolute dependence" is not a defining key feature of religion (Harrison, 2006: 135).

Many theorists believe that religion (like other fields in society) is a social construct. The likes of Girard (1988), Hobbes (1889: 53) and Durkheim (1965: 9) believe that religion, the state, laws and culture are social constructs there to ensure that society is less chaotic and runs smoothly. For Hobbes, religion would make up part of the social contract that the human race entered into when ending the state of nature. The state of nature is the term used to describe the hypothetical condition that preceded social contracts that came in the form of governments and social structures such as religion and culture. Hobbes believes that the state of nature was a time of violence and chaos. Cultural and religious systems therefore created much needed order. Hobbes (1889: 5) believes that the natural state of humans is one of chaos and violence. Hobbes's contract narrative tells a story of the creation or birth of order and structure from confusion and disorder. Religion is just one of the many structures in society that help bring about order (Praeg, 2000: 1). For Durkheim (1965: 10), religion is a system of symbols by means of which society becomes conscious and aware of itself. It is the characteristic way of thinking about collective existence. According to Durkheim, the social field also creates religious ideas; religious sentiment is produced by people meeting and social life itself. Like culture and other fields in society, religion gives individuals a sense of belonging; it is also a very important part of people's identity (Pickering, 1984: 193-194).

2.4. Critiquing Western religion

The history of European religion has been an important factor in promoting domination of the “other”; be it women, colonial citizens, poor people or the environment (Kee 1986: 3). From the moment missionaries set foot in African, South America and Asia, their aim was to indoctrinate the indigenous people and manipulated them into adopting Western ideas and Christianity. Doing this would allow Christianity and the west to thrive. The missionaries often turned to morality and religious dogma when trying to control colonies. Many of the ideas the missionaries spread were based less on religious ideas and more on Western cultural ideas and their interpretation of the religion (Dougall, 1963: 60). As time went on these ideas spread by missionaries also allowed white business owners to create cheap non competitive work forces made up of oppressed black people (Christie and Collins 1984: 163). These ideas continued long after the arrival of missionaries and many were even used to prolong oppressive regimes such as Apartheid in South Africa. The Western missionaries believed that their interpretation of Christianity was the “correct” and “universal” interpretations. Indigenized versions of Christianity and African Traditional Religion were strongly rejected; those who partook in these practices were often accused of being devil worshipers. White missionaries wanted Africans to reject their traditional beliefs; they often portrayed them as being fundamentally at odds with Christianity (Pauw, 1963: 34). African converts were therefore strongly encouraged to reject their ancestors, cultural ideas and rituals.

The hidden agenda behind Mission Christianity as already mentioned was to allow the west control over colonies, land and labour. Indigenous people were convinced that being idle was a sin and the only way one could prove one was not guilty of this sin was by working in businesses owned by the colonizers (Christie and Collins, 1984: 163). A good Christian would work in a mine or farms, shops, factories, white owned homes and so on. When indigenous people were not being manipulated into adopting Western practices, they were often forced and coerced. As a result their livelihood was threatened. Many people gave up useful African practices in exchange for earning a living wage which was often insufficient and not enough to maintain whole families. These ideas were often spread in schools and churches. People were made to believe that the lazy struggled because God only rewards the hard working. Those who did work hard and still struggled were made to believe that this was God’s will or that they were not working hard enough (Douglas, 1979: 51). The Western mission often used the idea of religious determinism in order to maintain their hold and

control. Determinism assumes that there are external factors acting upon an individual, the idea is that the external factors are active while the individual is passive and powerless (Douglas, 1979: 51; O'Connor, 2010). Missionaries convinced Africans that this external force was God and that they were there to carry out God's will. God's will could not be questioned because the missionaries convinced Africans that God was all knowing and all powerful (Zagzebski, 2004: 1).

Western missionaries even went as far as convincing Africans to give up animal sacrifices. Animal sacrifice was a form of respectful killing for food, but it was reinterpreted by missionaries as wasting food resources (Bigger, 2009: 5). Africans were made to believe that they were making sacrifices to fake Gods, therefore making the practice of animal sacrifice a sin in the eyes of God and Western churches. Africans were even convinced that the practice of animal sacrifice was cruelty towards animals; as a result many people turned to Western owned butchers and ate meat only killed in abattoirs. Today the South African government regulates this practice. Laws have been put passed that dictate the way this practice should be carried out and even places where it should be done (CRL Rights Commission, 2009: 12). These laws in many ways are necessary in preventing animal cruelty but they also limit the religious practices of many people who still perform animal sacrifices within ATR.

2.4.1. Fanon and Biko: Religion, colonialism and African consciousness

Fanon argues there is a mutual link between culture and racism, both for the people who practice racism and for those who become victims of it. The connection between racism and culture can even be explained according to the different phases of colonialism. Fanon makes a distinction between two types of colonial racism. The first is vulgar racism; here the inferiority of the indigenous people is proven by citing physiological science, with claims like Africans have smaller brains than Europeans (McCulloch, 1983: 119). The second is ethnocentrism; ethnocentrism is more sophisticated than racism, here the aims shifts from objectifying the physiology of the individual to objectifying the cultural style of a group. Vulgar racism became embarrassing after the brutal way in which it was used in NAZI Germany; it also became increasingly hard to defend in the colonising countries owing to the growing anti-colonial consciousness (McCulloch, 1983: 120). Ethnocentrism is more complex, subtle and often harder to identify. It relies more on cultural difference rather than biological differences. The cultural differences can be real, imagined, or constructed. Ethnocentrism is another discourse that the powerful use to justify domination. Stereotypes

help in creating and perpetuating ethnocentrism (Blaut, 1992: 289). One can therefore conclude that ethnocentrism is broad and it manifests itself in many different ways and different fields in society. This makes it harder to identify and therefore more difficult to alter. Ethnocentrism can be an individual or group's refusal to acknowledge another individual or group's ideas and practices or structural oppression that leads to one or more groups being denied resources and opportunities on the basis of their race, culture, ethnicity, religion and so on.

Fanon (1964: 44) believes that racism is just one way in which colonial oppression discredited people's entire way of life; from their language, religion, culture, dress, food and all aspects of society. The racist colonialists had no interest in the indigenous cultures; their main concern was to establish complete control over a given territory (McCulloch, 1983: 122). Racism was one tool which helped the colonialists achieve this goal. Fanon and Biko have very similar ideas on the subject of colonial discourse and the impact imperialism had on the indigenous people. According to Biko (2004: 54) "The system has allowed so dangerous an anti-black attitude to build up amongst whites that it is taken as almost a sin to be black". This anti-black attitude exists beyond Western society; it has been so ingrained into people's mindsets that even indigenous people (black people in the case of Biko's writings on South Africa) start to believe it. According to Biko (2004:111), the "black man" internally develops a certain state of alienation and hate. Indigenous people reject themselves and everything they stand for, from the biological level like the colour of their skin and texture of their hair, to social make up including culture, religion, language. The colonized reject their own identity because they attach the meaning of white/Western to all that is good (Biko, 2004: 111). The hate that people often feel towards themselves and all which resembles their identity comes from the way they live and the ways in which they were socialised as children. This situation applies today as working class black people in post-apartheid South Africa are still deprived of resources, opportunities and recognition.

Black South Africans during apartheid found themselves in a state of alienation, they found themselves feeling inferior and less than human. The inferiority which most many black people felt stemmed from observing their surroundings and making comparisons between predominantly black areas and predominately white/black middle class areas. Most black people looked at their surroundings and found that their schools were not the same as white schools. The education many black people received was inferior to that of white people. The black individual saw that homes were different, streets and neighbourhoods were different,

with white neighbourhoods being better and superior (Biko, 1998: 362). All this observation led the black individual to one conclusion; that something is incomplete or missing within black humanity. “The black individual then began to attribute completeness to whiteness. This idea was then carried through to adulthood and was often passed down to the next generation” (Biko, 2004: 111).

Colonial oppression is sophisticated in that it changes in order to maintain its control, which today comes in the form of less direct neo-colonialism. Kwame Nkrumah (1965: 69) believed that neo-colonialism is a kind of “recolonization”. Neo-colonialism represents the last and most dangerous stage of imperialism. Like ethnocentrism; it is complex, sophisticated and harder to identify (Nkrumah, 1965: 69; Hook, 2004: 87). Colonial oppression is always changing its face; from colonialism to neo-colonialism, vulgar racism to ethnocentrism. The more colonial oppression changes, the harder it is to identify, making it harder to eliminate. Colonialists even go as far as creating differences between people, this way they are able to maintain control while people quarrel amongst themselves (Posnock, 1997: 327). Biko states that people were divided into two camps- the converted “amagqobheka” and the pagans “amaqaba” (which also means uneducated or backwards). The differences in clothes, beliefs and practices sometimes led to conflict (Biko, 2004: 60).

African culture has had to sustain severe blows and has had to deal with major obstacles. Many African cultures have been battered beyond recognition (Biko, 2004: 45). South African cultures have experienced a process of acculturation since 1652. “It is however presumptuous to call it ‘acculturation’ because this term implies a fusion of two or more different cultures” (Biko, 2004: 44). In this case the fusion is extremely one-sided. The two major cultures ‘fused’ were African and Anglo-Boer culture. African culture was seen as unsophisticated and simple, while the Anglo-Boer culture had all the characteristics of a colonialist culture. The Boer conquered by persuasion, using a highly exclusive religion that denounced all other Gods and established a strict code of behaviour when it comes to dress, education, ritual and customs. When it was impossible to convert, the Boers easily turned to weapons in order to further their agenda (Biko, 2004: 45). Anglo-Boer culture was the most powerful in every way and the indigenous people began to lose a grip on their identity, practices, culture, religion, surroundings and overall way of life. The ‘superior’ culture bestowed an ‘inferior’ status to all cultural aspects of Africans in order to maintain domination and legitimise its exploitive nature (Biko, 2004: 45). Fanon (1964: 44) calls this process cultural assimilation. According to Fanon the oppressive power legitimizes its

domination by using scientific evidence to illustrate that the “inferior race” is indeed inferior. The “inferior race” then denies being different. The “inferior race sets out to prove that it shares with the “superior race” the same convictions, ideas and attitudes important to it (Fanon, 1964: 44). The oppressors impose on the “inferior race” a new way of seeing. Because no other solutions exist, the “inferior race” tries to imitate the so called “superior race”. The “inferior race” does this by deracializing itself. The “inferior race” adopts the oppressor’s culture because they have nothing left after rejecting their own culture, identity and everything that makes them who they are, everything that makes them different (Posnock, 1997: 331).

It has been the pattern throughout history that whoever brings forward a new order knows it best and is therefore bestowed the honour to be the perpetual all-knowing tutor. If the white missionaries were right about their God, then the indigenous people who this “new” order was brought to had no choice but to listen and passively follow (Biko, 2004: 60). Christianity in South Africa was used by the missionaries and colonial leaders to justify unjust practices. This new order was committed to the practice of oppression, intolerance and deliberate cruelty because of racial bias. “Christianity was used to make black people feel like the unwanted stepchildren of a God whose presence could not be felt (Biko, 2004: 61). The church further added to their insecurity by its inward directed definitions of sin. Ministers placed a lot of blame on black people in townships for their thieving, burglaries, stabbing, murdering and adultery. These sins were never related to unemployment, lack of school, overcrowding and poverty; instead they were associated with blackness. It is clear that linking these vices to the deep problems that created them would require that the missionaries and colonial leaders take some blame, this would therefore taint the superior idea of whiteness they had built (Biko, 2004: 61) . The acceptance of the colonialist-contaminated version of Christianity led to the turning point in the resistance of African people (Biko, 2004: 60).

African resistance and liberation movements have not changed the negative perceptions of blackness that Biko and Fanon discuss. There is still great intolerance towards African ideas, even by Africans themselves. Biko believes that one way to right these wrongs is through Black Consciousness. Biko (2004: 45) opposed the belief that African culture is time bound; the idea that with the conquest of Africa, all African ideas died. African culture has been dealt several severe blows, but even today we still find fundamental aspects of African culture (Biko, 2004: 45). One way in which we see the strength and resilience of African

culture is through many people's honouring of their ancestors. Many Africans believe that all people who die have a special place next to God and that communication with God can only be done through ancestors (Biko, 2004: 49). Black Consciousness is needed to build onto African culture and pride. Black Consciousness corrects false images of Africans in terms of culture, education, religion and economics (Biko, 2004: 57). Black Consciousness refers to black people and their situation. It aims to restore the self-worth of black people oppressed by the external world (Biko, 2004: 110). A slogan like "black is beautiful" is in line with Black Consciousness ideas, it says; "You are okay as you are, begin to look at yourself as a human" (Biko, 2004; 115). It is also a message to black women who in their daily beauty rituals use products that make them look "whiter". Such products are skin lighteners, red lipsticks, pink nail polishes and chemicals and appliances to straighten hair (Biko, 2004: 115).

Bhabha (2000: 355) also puts forward a solution for the post-colonial problem of intolerance and the unwillingness to accept diversity. Bhabha (2000: 367) conceives of a situation where two social groups come together to engage in a special kind of conversation. These social groups/fields have different cultural traditions and potentials for power. This negotiation takes place in the Third Space of enunciation. The aim of this conversation is to bring about a common identity, one that is new in its hybrid form. This new identity is neither the one nor the other culture's identity, instead it is a mix of both cultures (Ikas and Wagner, 2009: 2). The Third Space is an in-between space where the marginalized build a community of resistance in order to be heard by the powerful. Bhabha believes the solution is to go beyond colonialism; difference which dominated during the colonial period should be stripped of their validity (Kalscheuer, 2009: 37). Bhabha also believes the appointment of self-appointed authorities should be questioned. These authorities often treat culture as something "natural" and "normal". This is done so that they can maintain power and control. The idea that culture is unchanging or "pure" is an irrational and false idea (Kalscheuer, 2009: 37). It is only when we realise that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space (the Third Space), that we begin to understand why historical claims of innate originality or "purity" of culture are invalid (Kalscheuer, 2009: 37). Bhabha instead stresses the hybrid nature of culture. For Bhabha hybridity is a core characteristic of culture, new ideas are constantly entering the world. These new ideas question existing structures, ideas, authorities and politics. This establishes the preconditions for a modified relationship between the colonizer and the (oppressed) colonized (Kalscheuer, 2009: 38). Bhabha aims to point out ways which allow the marginalized to become more powerful. Bhabha's hybridity

suggestion is similar to Bourdieu's discuss on social fields and their interconnectedness (Bourdieu, 1993: 72). Bhabha's hybridity calls for greater connections and communication between social fields, especially fields that might be at odds with each (Bhabha, 2000: 367). In this instance Bhabha calls for greater unity and communication between Western and African social fields. This kind of union can end post colonial effects such as intolerance, oppression and so on (Bhabha, 2000: 360)

Fanon puts forward a similar solution to that of Bhabha's Third Space negotiation. For Fanon (1964: 50) resolving the colonial problem lies in the end of racial prejudice and the rejection of colonial status and ideas. Once the oppressor's rigid culture is altered, it finally opens up to the culture of people who have really become united. The two cultures can confront each other, enrich each other and accept the reciprocal relativism of different cultures. The colonial status must be irreversibly excluded, therefore allowing for equal dignity and multiculturalism (Fanon, 1963: 106).

The problem with Fanon's reflections is that they dwell too narrowly on race. Doing this is in some ways necessary and doing otherwise would deflect from the real issues and make it hard to change the status quo. But Fanon reflections could potentially lead to white guilt. Modern society has a long way to go in destroying colonial racist and oppressive ideas. But the way to do it is not through purely racialising these issues. Some Africans also contributed to the oppression of other Africans and many white people have tried to right these wrongs. The sins of the parents should not be passed on to the children (Hook, 2004: 111). People who did not contribute to the oppression of Africans should not carry the burden of being "white perpetrators"; this however is not to say redistribution should not take place. Many indigenous people have turned a blind eye to or perpetuated the oppression of others because they stand to gain from the exploitation of others. Fanon and Biko's ideas are also gender insensitive (Hook, 2004: 109). Both theories speak of the oppressed "black man" and "his" struggles against the oppression created by the "white man". Women's role as victims and in the struggle against oppression is not recognised. Not recognising women is no different to black people not being recognised. Not recognising women is just as dangerous as the racist, oppressive ideas Biko and Fanon fought to challenge (Hook, 2004: 109).

Even though Bhabha and Fanon's solutions are optimistic, there is evidence that shows that this kind of move towards multiculturalism could work. Indigenous Christian movements have been showing for years now the value of multiculturalism. Religious movements like

the Shembe and African Zionist churches look beyond Western oppression to find what they perceive to be valuable ideas within Western cultural and religious fields. Doing this allows people to accept and forgive their oppressor, while they oppressors might learn to give up their irrational hate by looking into the colonized people's cultural fields and identifying things of value. Bhabha and Fanon's solutions are not without flaws. Cultures are different and have different ways of communicating with each other. Even when rival cultures have a lot in common the two cultures often stress the difference between them, making it hard to rise above the difference even when they are minimal. Kalscheuer (2009: 29) believes that cultures hide more than they reveal, each culture has hidden codes of behaviour that can be understood without a code breaker. For example it is rude to make eye contact with someone who has authority within the Shembe church, but eye contact is considered important within Western culture. As long as people are not confronted with members of a different culture, their own culture seems natural and unquestioned. The arrival of a different culture may make one or both cultures feel threatened, thus making it hard to reach a level of multiculturalism with which everyone is comfortable and happy (Kalscheuer: 2009: 29).

Globalization and the mixing of different cultures leads to great opportunities, but it can also lead to the potential for conflict. One may perceive the foreign as a threat to one's own identity, which therefore needs to be defended and protected. This is why intercultural communication becomes important; its main task is to make sure that the cultural differences do not become an obstacle to achieving mutual understanding (Kalscheuer, 2009: 26). Globalization has made communication between members of different cultures an easier and important affair. The world however still lacks substantial insight as to which social conditions are required to make such communication work. The question of how to communicate across cultures is primarily approached from an interpersonal point of view. Hardly any consideration is given to the social and political circumstances in which that communication occurs (Ikas and Wagner, 2009: 1).

2.5. Conclusion and critiques

Even though the world today is organized less around religion than in the past, religion still strongly influences Western society and many other cultures. Even centuries later, the oppressive anti-black ideas of mission Christians still remains strong in society. This just goes to show the major role religion, culture and other institutions play in individual lives and

groups. Fanon's, Bhabha's and Biko's theories of multiculturalism discussed in this chapter also show the importance of social fields like culture and religion. Religion and culture can play both a constructive and destructive role in the struggle for liberation and tolerance.

Fanon and Biko exposed the colonialist legacy of intolerance; they show that Africans are not the monsters they are often made out to be. The vices attached to being black are often stereotypes, untrue or true as a result of centuries of oppression. Africans are not backward or primitive, they have been denied education and their ideas have been ignored or written off as inferior.

Lately there has been a move towards painting the poor (often black) as powerless victims with no agency. Even though this idea does not intend to, it further weakens black people. Bourdieu, Biko and Fanon's theories challenge this idea and show people as being able to reject or accept their social realities. Biko and Fanon show black people as active agents who have the power to create and shape their own future through accepting themselves and their culture. For Biko this idea is clear even in his own life. Biko had many projects and ideas that were aimed at empowering black people. Having discussed, in this chapter, the concept of culture was discussed through Bourdieu's concepts of social fields and habitus, and having discussed Bhabha, Biko and Fanon's liberation theories which view culture as a tool that can be used to create unity and end post-colonial problem, the next chapter will discuss the rise of African Independent Churches. The focus will be on the Shembe Church, and in particular on multicultural Shembe ideas and practices as well as the challenges that the Church has faced over the past century.

Chapter 3: Historical Background.

3.1.Introduction

This chapter provides an important background to the Shembe Church as well as the African Independent Churches' movement. It aims to discuss the formation of the Shembe Church and the political atmosphere that led to the rise of AIC. The rise of African independent churches was fuelled by the desire to interpret the Bible in a way Africans could understand and apply to their daily lives. The Shembe Church was just one of many African movements that sought to do just that. This chapter will discuss the history of the Shembe religion. It will also look into Shembe ideology, most of which strongly relates to the concept of ubuntu. Ibandla lamaNazaretha like most religions has its own set of religious doctrine, ideas and practices. These create uniformity and consensus; they act as guidelines as to how people should conduct themselves, they also act as a way of strengthening one's relationship with God and others within the church and society as a whole. Like many marginalized groups in society, the Shembe Church has had to deal with many struggles, from misinformation about the church's history and prophet to rejection and discrimination by others towards members of the church. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the relationship between the Shembe Church and Christian missionaries. It looks at the oppression of the Shembe Church under missionaries, the colonial government and the apartheid government. The chapter discusses the inferior way in which African movements like the Shembe Church were treated. The Shembe Church was at some point seen as a political organization; the church's religious expression was therefore restricted. This chapter will discuss some of these struggles and some of the ways in which members of the church have handled them.

3.1.1. African Independent Churches

Africans almost always celebrate and worship God in groups, both large and small. African independent churches have not been and are still not always accepted by other groups. African independent churches are criticized by black and white people. They have been accused of being purely politically motivated by white people, especially in South Africa during the Apartheid era. Black people on the other hand criticized African independent churches for not being sufficiently political. They have been judged as not being Christian at all; instead they are seen as being bridges back to paganism. The "educated" see them as "uneducated", the "sophisticated" see them as "primitive" (West, 1975: 1). Most African independent churches represented a narrow and exclusive image to many outsiders. Non-

members were likely to be misinformed about their beliefs and activities and they were sometimes confused by the external appearance of the followers. Within Soweto the bright colours, sticks, robes and symbols of some of the churches were well known, but in suburban areas or what West (1975) calls “white city”, this was not the case. The African church’s uniform in urban areas was relatively unusual and unexplained, Westernised individuals had little or no knowledge of these different independent church movements (West, 1975: 1). The reason for this is partly that these churches/movements were usually made up of small groups of people; it was for this reason that these movements were not strongly organized. A lot has changed since West’s (1975) observation but many things remain the same. People in South Africa tend to be more aware of the existence of alternative religious groups and movements such as AIC but they remain intolerant towards them. Dominant religious groups often see smaller groups as inferior; this idea has been passed down from colonialism and apartheid (Gouw and du Plessis, 2000: 658). AIC tend not to make that much of an impact in society because they are so small and as a result have been unsuccessful in changing the misconceptions people have towards them. There are many churches for example that fall under the Zionist religion, yet they often do not have enough in common to make them one strong united organization. They are often divided along ethnic and cultural lines and they themselves tend to focus more on their differences rather than their similarities (Muller, 1994: 36).

The Shembe Church is unique in that it overlooks differences and ethnic and cultural divisions. It is one of the largest African religious movements in South Africa. The Shembe Church is more popular and much larger in comparison to most African independent churches because it is Ethiopianist and welcomes people from different walks of life regardless of culture, ethnicity, history or even race (it is believed that during its conception, the Shembe Church even had Indian followers) (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986). Word of the Shembe Church also spread rapidly as a result of many Shembe Zulus moving to Johannesburg to work in the mines in the 1900s. The strong Christian element within the Shembe religion also “legitimises” it and gives it a little more recognition Zionist movements, therefore making it more popular and appealing than those purely traditional churches who do not combine African religion with Ibramic faiths. Some writers on African traditional religions, like Nokuzola Mndende (2009: 1), feel that many African religions only incorporate Christianity and other Ibramic faiths to “justify” their own religion to the sceptics and gain popularity. However it was the publishing of their hymn book and other religious

text makes the Shembe Church easier to access than most African independent churches (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 70). The Shembe Church is more organized and bureaucratic than other smaller African churches that might in addition have less access to money and resources due to the fact that they are small. The Shembe Church in many ways displays several classical characteristics of organizations such as having secretaries, security, ministers, lawyers, administration staff and people occupying different hierarchical positions within the church. The church is powerful and well known because it is wealthy. Lately however the Shembe Church's recognition comes from the in-house legal battles for power which have torn apart the church and continue to do so (S.A.B.C, 2011). It might be useful in this instance for the Shembe Church to look within its own principles for solutions and harness the ideas of peace, unity, community and "ubuntu" which it preaches. Isiah Shembe founded this movement as a way to unite Africans and celebrate African ideas. He did this during a time when he felt Africans had been failed by orthodox Christianity.

3.2. Shembe History

The Shembe Church and many other independent movements like it, is characterized as what Anthony Wallace (1956: 265) calls a revitalization movement. Wallace believed that such movements go through several stages, starting with the pre-movement stage. During the pre-movement stage, the society feels the need for radical change and the creation of a satisfying culture (Wallace, 1956: 265). This is what happened in South Africa and throughout Africa when the colonisers exerted their dominance on the people, land and culture. This forced acculturation created many psychological issues for Africans (Browne, 2005: 93). The result was that many turned to crime, alcohol abuse and lawlessness. Culture proved no guidance for struggling individuals and communities, African ideas and practices were rejected and many could not relate to western ideology. This created anomie and normlessness (Browne, 2005: 94). At this point multicultural movements sprung all over Africa. These movements created what Dallas Browne (2005: 94) calls "a new code of living". Isiah Shembe gained this enlightenment after being struck by lightning, a sign in Zulu tradition, that a person has been chosen by God to be a prophet. Isiah Shembe received baptism from the African Baptist Church in 1906. By then he was already a well known preacher and healer (Johns, 2004: 403). Isiah Shembe however encountered problems with the African Baptist church; as a fundamentalist Isiah Shembe believed implicitly in the Bible. Shembe gathered that the Sabbath was on Saturday and not Sunday. This was the issue that led him to break away from the Baptist Church (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 42). The Shembe Church is more

formally known as iBandla lamaNazaretha. Shembe began this movement in 1910 (Hausse, 1996: 332). Nazarite myth claims that Isaiah Shembe had a dream in the early 1900s, in this dream Shembe saw men dressed in traditional Zulu ceremonial dress. The men were singing traditional songs; these songs were without notes in the style of Zulu oral tradition. Shembe was then instructed to heal and evangelize Zulu-speaking people in the Zululand region. He aimed to do so in religious forms consistent with the cultural traditions of Africans (Hausse, 1996: 332). Soon after the formation of the church Isaiah began to buy property, the first land he bought is known as ekuPhakameni, which was to be the headquarters of the Shembe Church. He acquired over 50 acres of land over time. Shembe invited all his followers to come and live with him. EkuPhakameni then became the Mecca of all the Nazarites. By the time of his death in 1935 Shembe owned 40 properties, most of which he left to the church, while some went to his sons (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 43 and 51).

Isaiah Shembe however was not alone in his mission to articulate religious belief within his own cultural frame. The formation of the first indigenous religious group in Southern Africa took place in 1872. This religious formation can be traced back to a group from the Paris mission in what is now the Kingdom of Lesotho (Muller, 1994: 36). The first major secession from the dominance of the Western mission in South Africa was led by Nehemiah Tile, a Wesleyan preacher with a strong sense of his own cultural identity. Tile left the Wesleyan mission in 1882 when his aim to attach Christianity onto the template of his own culture was rejected by the Wesleyan mission (Saunders, 1970: 555). Tile then moved on to form the Thembu Church amongst the Xhosas in 1884 (Saunders, 1970: 553). There were similar kinds of movements by African people in South Africa, with Mangena Mokone forming the Ethiopia Church (Madise, 2005: 2; Muller, 1994: 36). This was an important organization because it appealed to a diversity of cultural groupings, rather than focusing on an individual tribe. There are three categories of black South African Christianity which emerged in the late 19th century: those who made up the traditional mainline European and American denominations, the African Zionists and the Ethiopianists. The Zionists were indigenous Christian groups who traced their historical roots to Zion City Illinois. They claim to come from the Mount of Zion in Jerusalem. Theologically the African Zionists are now made up of different Nguni cultural fields, brought together by common ethnicity and identity (Muller, 1994: 36). African Zionist churches have very little connection to Western religions such as Christianity (Madise, 2005: 3). The movement allegedly has healing powers, speaking in tongues, purification rites and taboos as the main expressions of their faith. In contrast the

Ethiopianist churches are those which broke away from mission churches on racial grounds, using slogans of “Africa for Africans”. They do however model the organization of their following and Biblical interpretation on that of the mission church (Muller, 1994: 36-37). It is not clear which category Isaiah Shembe and his iBandla lamaNazaretha fall under as the religion has elements of both African Zionist and Ethiopianist practices. The Shembe religion is African Zionist in the sense that it draws many of its practices and ideas from Zulu culture. The sermons during the gatherings of July, September and January are also often given in isiZulu. But the religion is also Ethiopianist in its ideals and the promotion of a united Africa. The Shembe religion is Ethiopianist because it encourages and welcomes members from many different cultures all over Africa. It is for this reason that the Shembe religion is one of the largest organised African church movements. The likes of Muller (1994: 37 and 137) however believes that Shembe is strongly Ethiopianist. Shembe hymns are even written in mostly old Zulu and Xhosa, with a small incorporation of other languages like Sotho. This goes to show the inclusiveness and Ethiopianist nature of the Shembe religion. Many of these are Christian hymns translated into vernacular so that black people can relate more to the hymns and the message behind them.

Isaiah Shembe believed that Christianity should be taught to indigenous people in order to better their lives; however he believed this should be done without breaking down “tribalism” and tradition. Isaiah Shembe believed that people’s past played an important role and should therefore never be forgotten even as their lives, ideas and practices change. One of the aspects of Nazarite religious culture which sets it apart from Christian mission churches is the emphasis on religious dance often accompanied with the drum. The dancing is better known as “ukusina/umgidi” in isiZulu. Hymns and singing are also important; Isaiah Shembe taught new hymns to his followers by first teaching the dance rhythm which underpinned the hymn text and tune (Muller, 1994: 42). Another dimension of Nazarite religious culture which was adopted from Zulu cultural tradition is the integral role of dreams and visions as communication from and with the cosmological realm. Dreams intervened and guided the life of Isaiah Shembe and continue play the same role in Nazarite daily experience (Maxwell, 2001: 514). Linked to dreams and dance is the realm of the ancestors who intervene in and watch over the living. Ritualized worship of the ancestors was strongly criticized by missionaries, even though indigenous religious groups in South Africa cited several biblical references to justify their acknowledgement of the ancestral line (Oosthuizen, 1968: 4; Tishken, 2006: 82). Dreaming is important in Zulu and most African culture because it is

through dreams that communication with ancestors is possible (Oosthuizen, 1968: 3). In addition the Nazarites believe that religious dance was created by the ancestors, and because of this it should be performed and never altered in order to maintain the goodwill of the residents of the cosmology (Muller, 1994: 43). In constructing his own religious epistemology, Isaiah Shembe placed young women as the central performers and heroines in Nazarite religious ritual, history and discourse. The Princess of the Sky, Nomkhubulwane had played an important role in granting fertility to both the land and the female body in traditional Zulu mythology (Scorgie, 2002: 57). The wellbeing of the community was located in the maintenance of sexual and ritual purity of young female virgins; this was the case in Isaiah's community as well as the general Zulu culture and many other African cultures. Married women although 'defiled' by sexual intercourse in marriage were portrayed as the 'brides of Christ'; they were elevated to the position of 'royal wives' of the Nazarite king Shembe and therefore always given 'royal' treatment by Nazarite men. "The physical landscape, traditional culture and the female body were all sacralised by Isaiah Shembe at a historical moment of extreme social disruption and bodily violation amongst the African people of South Africa" (Muller, 1994: 44)

Isaiah Shembe in his formation of the Shembe religion aimed to reconstitute a sense of community and collective identity among the African people in the province of Natal, neighbouring Zululand and Africa as whole (Muller, 1994: 45). Isaiah Shembe's ideas emerged in the early 1900s after a century of social transformation, domination and fragmentation of the African people through internal cultural warfare, colonization, Western missionization, increased industrialization and environmental factors of drought and disease. The initial community provided religious, economic, cultural and moral space for his early followers, most of whom were the marginalized: young girls, orphans and women (Johns, 2004: 403). Isaiah Shembe and his followers created a discourse of 'cultural truth' which was set to challenge the ideologies of the state and Christian missionaries (Muller, 1994: 45). Song, dance and dream narratives were seen as cultural treasures and were used to convey the message of cultural truth. The performance and cultural messages embedded within it are collectively re-enacted by the social body. These cultural performances serve a number of purposes; they communicate both daily and historical experiences of Isaiah Shembe and his followers, and this is done through written and spoken language. The language however is often veiled in symbolism as a way of retaining traditional cultural memories in multiple contexts. Shembe and his followers also inscribe historical encounters between the African

Self and the Colonizing Other. These traditional methods of expressing culture also reinstated a further element of cultural truth of the omnipresence of the cosmology in the everyday lives of Shembe and his followers. The cosmology comprised the African notion of the Supreme Being/God and the ancestors of the living. After the death of both Isaiah Shembe and his successor Johannes Galilee Shembe, it came to include these two men as well (Muller, 1994: 47).

Johannes Galilee Shembe (Isaiah Shembe's third wife's son) took over the church after Isaiah Shembe's death. After Johannes's death in 1976 the church split into two factions; one led by Amos Shembe, one of Isaiah Shembe's younger sons, and the other faction was headed by Johannes Shembe's son Londa Shembe (Hausse, 1996: 333; Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 43 and 51). Everytime a leader dies, the church is faced with even more uncertainty over who the next leader should. As a result this creates more tensions and conflict. We saw this with the recent death of Vimbeni Shembe as well as the death of Amos Shembe in 1995 (Memela, 2011; Arde, 1995). Today there are more than four divisions within the church and an ongoing battle for leadership. Amos Shembe's eBhuhleni faction is led by his son Vimbeni whose church has the largest membership. The eBhuhleni faction appointed Mduduzi Shembe as the new leader after the recent death of Vimbeni. Londa Shembe's ekuPhakameni is now led by Vukile Shembe (Heuser, 2008: 41; Mthethwa, 2010: 1).

A division within the church was not the only hardship the church had to face. The Shembe Church like many other black South African groups and individuals went through a lot of hardship and experienced a lot of conflict with the Apartheid government. Unlike many black resistance movements, the Shembe Church's response was not one of defiance and conflict. This is because the church preaches respect towards all authority and leaders. Shembe, like Mahatma Gandhi, adopted a philosophy of non-violence. Isaiah Shembe knew of the ruthlessness and cruelty demonstrated by the British during the First and Second Anglo-Boer Wars. This led him to believe that armed resistance would be crushed; instead he took the path of non-violence. He encouraged people to continue practicing their culture despite missionary efforts to eradicate practices like *lobola*, polygamy or ancestral honouring. Shembe encouraged his followers to continue practicing their culture as a sign of their independence of thought and action (Browne, 2005: 97). Many of these ideas came to him as messages from God and from his interaction with the likes of John Dube and Gandhi. Shembe, Dube and Gandhi had a close relationship; both Dube and Shembe adopted a

philosophy of passive resistance or *satyagraha* (Browne, 2005: 101). Isaiah Shembe based much of Shembe ideas on Gandhi's teachings by encouraging his followers to always respect authority. He encouraged them to pray for change when faced with leaders who abuse their power. Gandhi also donated land to the Shembe Church and lived among the Zulu at Shembe Inandi mecca (Browne, 2005: 97 & 103). Mpanza (1999) stated in his speech addressed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, that Isaiah Shembe taught his people to respect authorities. But Isaiah Shembe promised his people that through constant prayer and pleas to God, their prayers would one day be answered. Whenever the Shembe Church was confronted with the Government or missionaries, Shembe followers went on their knees and performed a special prayer called "Isiguqa" (kneel) as a congregation, a prayer performed during times of hardship (Mpanza, 1999).

The animosity directed at the Shembe Church by the missionaries had negative impacts on the growth and progress of the church. Laws were passed in Natal, restricting Isaiah Shembe from entering the Black Reserves without special permission from the Durban Municipality or the magistrate. All of Shembe's moves were monitored closely because his organisation was deemed a political group and not a church or religious movement. The missionaries and government believed that the Shembe Church posed as a church in order to hide its political agenda (Mpanza, 1999). The missionaries were determined to crush the Shembe Church and end its very existence. In 1931 Shembe was summoned to Pietermaritzburg where he was told to destroy his entire church infrastructure. He was also told that he was no longer allowed to build any church houses or use the church bells to call people before church services. As a result the Nazareth church came up with a culture of worshipping outdoors under trees and calling people to church services by shouting loudly. Shembe Churches can be identified by a circle of white rocks, these define the outdoor open-air sacred space where many gather to worship (Browne: 2005: 104). In 1950 successor Johannes Shembe attempted to build a church house with a bell but was confronted by local missionaries and the government who reminded him that his actions were forbidden (Mpanza, 1999). The Land Act of 1913 as well as the Group Areas Act of 1950 put restrictions on where minorities could live. The Land Act also made it impossible for black people to own land. These acts made it difficult for Shembe leaders to acquire land (Gunner, 1988: 214). Acquiring land and security for his members was very important to Isaiah Shembe. The Shembe Church's ability to acquire and keep land during these times of oppression is seen as one of the church's many successes. Christian missionaries felt threatened by the Shembe Church as they believed it

was taking people away from their churches (Gunner, 1988: 215). One of their many solutions to this problem was to evict new Shembe converts living on Mission Reserves. Anglican ministers at Isipingo evicted anyone who was found to have joined the Shembe Church (Gunner, 1988: 217). The Shembe mecca at Inanda became a safe haven for those who had been kicked out of their homes by missionaries and family members. Many of those who were evicted from their homes were women. Women played a key role in the formation of the Shembe Church. They suffered a lot of abuse from husbands and fathers who beat them or reported them to church ministers when they joined the Shembe Church. Women would leave their homes without permission from their husbands or fathers. They would listen to Shembe's teachings and sometimes travel with him, spreading his philosophy. When they would return to their homes, they would be met by beatings, abuse and further restrictions. Men would even go as far as reporting sisters, wives and daughters to the police for their participation in the Shembe Church. Women, however, still joined the church in large numbers (Gunner, 1988: 216, 224 & 226).

Johannes Shembe, like his father, saw value in education, even though the education system seemed to be against the Shembe Church. Johannes was himself educated and demonstrated the importance of education and literacy by documenting Shembe oral tradition and hymns. As a result Shembe membership grew rapidly and many myths about the church were dispelled (Becken, 1978: 162). James Fernandez (1973: 33) believes that membership usually grows in independent religious movements during the second generation of leadership. The fact that a religious movement is able to survive during the transfer of leadership from one generation to another, shows strength in the one who is able to take up the throne and maintain the unity of the movement. Fernandez (1973: 33) also states that the second generation leader is often more educated, thus giving him/her more credibility. Often the second generation leader is less radical and more willing to interact with and negotiate with outsiders and foreign worldly views. This was the case with Johannes Shembe, who was believed to have not been very religious. He battled with the thought of taking leadership of the church because he had never felt as close to it as his father did. In the end he agreed to take on leadership out of a sense of duty to his father and his people (Fernandez, 1973: 34). Johannes Shembe was very anxious after his father's funeral because he felt like he could not stay Ekuphakameni and lead his father's followers. While he was there he had a dream, he saw his mother and father having a family meal together. Johannes Shembe hardly knew his mother because she had died when he was very young but in the dream he recognized her. In

his dream Isaiah Shembe gets up to leave. Johannes Shembe's remarks: "Do you allow your father to leave without blessing me?" Isaiah Shembe then turned and entered into Johannes Shembe's chest, disappearing into his chest. From that moment on, Johannes Shembe felt the compulsion to pray and spread the word of God. Shembe members who had doubted him also began to believe he was a true leader. From that moment on he also gained the power to heal (Fernandez, 1973: 35).

Johannes Shembe himself also faced many challenges; missionaries believed targeting him would be a good way of destroying the church. Johannes Shembe was encouraged by many (black and white, including prominent black leader and close friend of Isiah Shembe; Dr L Dube) to abandon his church and pursue his education which would eventually land him a position as a priest in the Wesleyan Church or the American Board. Johannes Shembe was promised money to study overseas. He was told that his father's movement was wrong and that it was taking people away from God (Fernandez, 1973: 41). He was also told that his congregation would give him trouble and would be hard to lead because they were black and uneducated (Mpanza, 1999). When the missionaries realised that they had failed in convincing Johannes Shembe to leave the Shembe Church, they turned to a new plan. This is when the story of Isaiah Shembe flying off a mountain to his death was strategically concocted. This story was created to prove that Isaiah Shembe was an impostor and a fake; this would therefore discredit the whole religious movement. According to the story, Isaiah Shembe told his followers to go to Mount iNhlankakazi (this is the mountain where the annual January pilgrimage takes place) where they would see him fly to heaven. He allegedly attached feathers to his back and when he jumped of the mount he hit the rocks and died (Meersman, 2012). Shembe's actual death was caused by salt fever; his body was reabsorbing its own perspiration. Johannes Shembe told Fernandez (1973: 44) that his father literally worked himself to death. Isaiah Shembe often walked very long distances to baptize new members of the church. Isaiah Shembe often shared the details of how he was going to die. Johannes Shembe mentioned that he never believed his father when he spoke of how he would die. Johannes Shembe mentions that his father was so strong and healthy; he never believed that his father could die from an illness like salt fever (Fernandez, 1973: 44). This story was printed in newspapers, told in churches and taught in schools as part of South African history. The story created a lot of conflict and uncertainty within the Shembe Church as many followers were unsure if it was true or false. The everyday insults and discrimination led many members to leave the church or drop out of school. Education was then seen as

being in conflict with the Shembe religion and many of the youth felt pressure to choose between church and an education. As a result the church became known as the church of the uneducated (Mpanza, 1999).

Another challenge that the Shembe Church faced was the rejection of polygamy. The state and missionaries did not recognise polygamy. In order to get married Shembe people had to follow a long three stage process. The first marriage ceremony had to take place in the church with a priest, but that wedding would not be recognised by the government. The second stage is a traditional wedding which is ceremonised by the chief's witness who had no interest in the wedding. These outsiders sometimes came drunk, making the wedding nothing more than a mockery and undermining the Church's anti-alcohol rule. The third phase was that the bride, the bridegroom, their parents and the chief's witness had to go to the Magistrate office to have the marriage registered. The priest from the Shembe Church was completely irrelevant in this entire process (Mpanza, 1999). Shembe priests, hymns and ideas were regarded as illegitimate because the religion itself was not recognized.

3.3. Shembe Ideology and Practice

The Shembe Church largely relies on their hymn book of prayers, a book made up of Christian and African ideas, prayers and hymns. *Izihlabelelo ZamaNazaretha* (Nazareth Hymns) is a source of doctrinal teachings. This hymn book was published in 1940 by J Galilee Shembe and contains hymns written by both Isaiah and Galilee Shembe (Fernandez, 1973: 43). The hymn book also largely draws on the Bible; with edited versions of the Psalms of David and other Old Testament writers, some hymns are also inspired by the Ten Commandments. The hymn book and other forms of written accounts were important to both Isaiah Shembe and Johannes Shembe, who later on put the hymn book together. Isaiah Shembe encouraged his literate members to record things they observed. He also often traveled with someone he would share his testimonies with. Sangiwe Magwaza was a young girl with whom Shembe sometimes travelled, especially during the early years of the formation of the church. She would record Shembe's experiences and testimonies at his request. Isaiah Shembe also often asked school children to document his dreams and new hymns (Gunner, 1988: 205). Most of Isaiah Shembe's hymns did not exist in a single collective copy or document. Different families and individuals possessed different copies and recollections of Shembe's hymns and experiences. Most of the early recordings were more in the form of personal diaries by church members (Gunner, 1988: 206). Johannes

Shembe began to ask members to come forward with any written records in the early 1950s. He also encouraged people who had witnessed amazing experiences to come forward and have them recorded as part of the church's history. Written recordings, personal experiences and audio recordings were then typed. In 1987 Amos Shembe selected testimonies which were printed and distributed among church members (Gunner, 1988: 208). Another important piece of Shembe written record is John Dube's book. Isaiah Shembe gave Dube many testimonies about his life and church, Shembe asked Dube to write a book about him. Dube's book was published in Pietermaritzburg by Shutter and Shooter, in 1936, after Isaiah Shembe's death (Gunner, 1988: 210). The book was not welcomed by many Shembe members. Johannes Shembe and many others felt some of the accounts were inaccurate and misleading. Even though the book is seen as incorrect by many Shembe members, it is still an important record of Shembe history (Gunner, 1988: 210).

The most important and accurate written record is the Shembe hymn book. It has often been referred to as the Shembe Bible. The hymn book refers to social arrangements as well as prayers for the Sabbath, morning prayers and evening prayers. The hymns almost always carry a message or some profound teaching (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 70). Shembe the man always believed that for Christianity to be meaningful to him it must be preached in the African idiom and must be indigenized, the Shembe hymn book is one of many things that do this. As indicated Shembe also indigenized Christianity by introducing dance and other expressive performances such as drum playing which were rejected by Christians (Muller, 1994: 42). Shembe Church theology is based on the Old Testament with a strong combination of Zulu beliefs. Certain Zulu customs like traditional beer drinking went against his vision based on social and biblical reasons. He believed that alcohol created dysfunctional, divided societies and families. To Shembe, alcohol only contributed to the existing social issues (Tishken, 2006: 83). There were also certain inconsistencies he found within Christianity. Shembe challenged the notion of the holy trinity and the equal status given to the father and son. This is because within Zulu culture the father is always given higher social status and the son is seen as the extension of the father. In the hymn book there are a number of songs and prayers that encourage the sons to respect their mothers and fathers (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 73). The general idea behind the Shembe religion is that God sends all his people a Saviour; a saviour who people can relate to, a saviour who shares similar cultural ideas and practices with people. God does not for example send a black Saviour to deliver white people. God sent Buddha to the East,

Mohammed to the Arabs, Africa is no different. God revealed himself to Shembe and made a covenant with him, Shembe's role was to save God's people. Shembe like other messiahs had a duty to fulfill; bring people closer to God by preaching the gospel in a manner which people could relate to. He did this by intergrating important cultural ideas and practices with Christianity, ideas like honouring and acknowledging ancestral spirits (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 75).

Johannes Shembe agreed with many of his father's principles, but they did not see eye to eye on everything. Isaiah Shembe did not believe in western medicine, he believed in prayer as a remedy for illness. Johannes Shembe, however, did not share the same view as his father in this respect. Johannes Shembe advised people who were physically sick or had disorders to seek medical attention (Fernandez, 1973: 44). Johannes and Isaiah Shembe both had the power to heal. Johannes Shembe believed that this power was not his own, he had the power to pray, God and Jesus did the rest. He also believes his power was not as powerful as his father's. He recalled that his father could heal people without even laying hands on them (Fernandez, 1973: 42). Isaiah Shembe's healing rituals also relied on water as well as *impepho*. *Impempho* is usually burnt in rituals to awaken the ancestors. Sangomas also eat this herb to keep themselves holy and help them to see the future. *Imphepho* is also often used in rituals that take place in Shembe gatherings such as the Nhlangazi annual pilgrimage. The herb is often burnt on the last day and members have to inhale the smoke. This is also another practice adopted from Zulu and other South African cultures (Becken, 1967: 141).

3.3.1. Izibongo and the undocumented role of women in the Shembe Church

The Shembe church honors the ancestral spirits in various ways, for example; animal sacrifices, dancing and very importantly through *izibongo/ izithakazelo*. This practice is an old Zulu oral tradition adopted by the Shembe Church. It was and still is people's way of sharing knowledge and recording important historical events. *Izibongo* or praise poems/praises are a family's history. They include a list of other relatives, important places and events (Gunner, 2004: 99). This tradition also records changing social and political conditions. Zulu oral tradition represents stability as well as continuity. *Izibongo* change, but the change is never radical (Gunner, 2004: 100).

The Shembe praise poem is fashioned on the pattern of Zulu royalty. The Shembe family does not come from royalty but as Nazaretha chiefs, they are treated as such (Gunner, 1988: 213; Gunner, 2004: 99). The *imbongi* or poet who composes and performs royal poems often

refers to important places where the king was victorious in battle. The Shembe oral history is composed in a similar way. But instead of battlefields, the poet refers to places Shembe travelled to and important places like ekuPhakameni, the first Shembe mecca (Gunner, 2004: 101). Instead of listing battlefield victims, Shembe's poem refers to new converts and successful evangelistic missions (Gunner, 1988: 211; Gunner, 2004: 104). Royal praises are different in that they refer to earlier royal ancestors. Shembe however did not come from a royal family. Poets compensate for this by using metaphors that stress royalty and greatness. They also associated Shembe with other kings in order to fill the gap created by Isaiah Shembe's lack of royal lineage. Shembe poets have also used praise names used to describe powerful Zulu kings such as; Shaka, Dingane and Cetshwayo. An important metaphor in Shembe's poem is that of an eagle. An eagle is believed to have the potential for protection and destruction. He is personified as a great protective bird (Gunner, 2004: 103). Shembe's praise poem incorporates different oral traditions from other cultures such as the Sotho. But poets also make it distinctively Zulu in some instances (Gunner, 2004: 106).

Izibongo are a historical account. They include people, place and events, but there is one very important thing poets exclude in Shembe praise poetry. The important role women played in the formation of the church is absent in Shembe praise poetry (Gunner, 1988: 223). The role of women is important because they were amongst the first to join the Church. Without women, the Shembe Church may have never grown into what it is today. Women still make up a large majority of the Shembe. Women like Sangiwe Magwaza were important in the recording of Shembe history but their roles are not acknowledged. Many women travelled with Isaiah Shembe while he delivered his message to people. Some women even held independent Shembe services in their homes and travelled to other places, spreading the word (Gunner, 1988: 217 & 224). An important part of early history has been lost because women's roles are not included in the Shembe praise poem (Gunner, 1988: 223). The Shembe Church places a lot of importance on ancestral honouring but it does not honour female ancestors who were crucial to the formation of the church.

As already mentioned, the Shembe system of theology also includes ancestral spirits and non-living members of society. Commemorations services are held to honour the dead because they form part of the community of believers Christians call 'the Communion of Saints' (Oosthuizen, 1968: 10; Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 76). Also important to the Shembe Church is the keeping of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is on a Saturday, cooking, cleaning and preparations for the Sabbath are done the day before. Work and the use of

energy are not permitted during the Sabbath, meaning even food is served cold. Many go to church on the Sabbath (Oosthuizen, 1968: 25). Marriage is also another important factor; it is also seen as a kind of rite of passage. Polygamy is accepted as a kind of reaction against the mission's view that it is "unchristian". The Shembe Church also places great importance on hard work, independence, self determination and the creation of one's own destiny. Also linked to Zulu beliefs, the Shembe Church believes in sexual purity; with virgin youths being given a high social status within society. Young girls often go for virgin testing; umgidi (traditional dancing) and celebrations follow after the girls have undergone the test (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 76-78).

The Shembe Church has a policy on women which is derived from traditional Zulu attitudes. Women in the church do not share the power or control of the church with men. Women's role is seen as equally important as the running of the church, if not more so. Women are the educators within the church, they also provide guidance to children, and they are "abakhokheli" (counsellors) (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 127). The Shembe Church has been criticized for this, as the church comes across as not recognizing women as equal to men. However Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza (1986: 128) note that as a result of modernization and the education of women, it is not inconceivable that the role of women within the Shembe Church can change and grow. Sadly this change has been a very slow one. Isiah Shembe's goal was to empower the members of his church, including woman. Mthethwa (1992: 8) tells a story of women struggling to survive, who went to seek Isiah Shembe's counsel in the 1920s. The women wanted to work as domestic workers for white people in order to make more money. Shembe disagreed with this idea, he advised the women to do something that they could be proud of, something that celebrates their culture and talent. Shembe also wanted the women to do something that empowered them. He believed that domestic work would strip them of their power to choose to respect the holy Sabbath. Shembe suggested that it is better if the women profit from their own education and talent. He encouraged the women to make a living using their ability in arts and crafts; making mats, baskets, beads, or whatever the women could make. These goods were often sold to tourists. This idea started a trend that still exists even today. Shembe women would sell on the Durban beach front, roadside markets and in rural areas. They also sold goods to other members during Shembe festivals and gatherings (Griffin, 1995: 11). Shembe extended this advice to all his followers; he encouraged families who owned small pieces of land and other resources to use them for profit. He encouraged them to grow fruit and vegetables to be sold in the

roadside markets (Mthethwa, 1992: 8) Shembe believed that empowering women created empowered communities. So much of the church's ideology is based on respecting and honouring women but in practice this is often not the case. This is a sad reality considering that the church was made up almost solely of women during its formation. Even today most Shembe followers are women (Griffin, 1995: 4). Women still, however, only play the role of counsellors even today, the most powerful leadership positions are still held by men. Very little has changed since 1986 when Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza (1986: 127) wrote of a transformation within the church that would lead to more female priests and leaders. There is a contradiction between Shembe ideas geared to empower women and practices that do the opposite. Women are not seen in leadership positions even though the most powerful Shembe character, Nomkhubulwane is in fact a woman. Another issue concerning women in the church is the negative outlook the Shembe church has on a women's menstrual cycles. This view creates a challenge for women. Menstrual blood and semen are seen as polluting substances. Menstruating women are not allowed to shake hands with the church officials and priests nor can they touch their clothes or food (Browne, 2005: 99). This is every ironic considering that the church places so much importance on fertility. The female menstrual cycle is for fertility and should not be rejected. They church prides itself in accepting diverse people, yet it rejects a very important part of a woman's body. The Shembe Church often uses important mythical characters to symbolize and encourage fertility, yet it rejects the very thing that shows fertility in a woman. Nomkhubulwane is an important character in Shembe ideology. She is the virgin goddess, believed to be the daughter of God. Nomkhubulwane is also prominent in Zulu cosmology (Scorgie, 2002: 57) uNomkhubulwane is a very important character within the Shembe Church because she promotes sexual purity, an idea which is a central theme in most Shembe rituals and gatherings (Kaarsholm, 2006: 5). She is believed to be the mother of all virgin girls, she is also known as the fertility goddess. It is believed that she fertilizes both the land and women. She protects young girls and the community and has also been known to give advice to young virgin girls, especially when selecting a husband (Ngalwa, 2004). uNomkhubulwane was believed to live on a mountain, where only virgins were allowed to go and communicate with the Goddess. Nomkhubulwane encouraged purity; girls had to remain virgins in order to retain this ritual purity. The reward for maintaining this ritual purity would be the protection of all Shembe people, especial those living in the Nazareth Mecca (Muller, 1999: 161). The messages Isaiah Shembe received from God were communicated to him through uNomkhubulwane. Isaiah Shembe often heard the voice of a young girl when he wrote his hymns, this young girl was said to be uNomkhubulwane. Many

virgin girls today believe that uNomkhubulwane protects them from contracting HIV/AIDS, therefore making her more than just an important religious character (Scorgie, 2002: 68).

3.4.Struggles within the Shembe Church

Christian theologians and missionaries were and still are opposed to the combination of Christianity and African ideas and practices. What the Christian critics fail to realize is this process is in some ways almost inevitable. Globalization and the mixing of different people mean that the notion of a pure culture or religion is not possible. Christianity itself is far from being a pure religion, as it was influenced by Judaism, paganism and even Greek methodology (Harnack, 2005: 13). Even today, Christianity still continues to be influenced by the diversity that is modern society. The Shembe Church is no different to Christianity when it comes to the lack of purity. Both these religious movements have a variety of different influences and still continue to be influenced as well as influence others even in today's modern world. If anything, the influences and mixing of different cultures and ideas are even greater today as a result of globalization. Bhabha (1994:36) refers to this process as the third space. The third space is an in-between space where cultures meet (Kalscheuer, 2009: 37). The third space is when social fields with different cultural traditions come together in negotiation. This negotiation brings about a common identity, a new hybrid culture that is neither the one nor the other (Ikas and Wagner, 2009: 2). The third space leads to corporation and an acceptance of diversity.

Christian scholars have also ignored the choice of the word 'Nazareth' for the identification of the church. Nazareth is not a term invented by Shembe himself. The word is suggestive of the birth place of Jesus. This once again is further proof the Shembe has close links with Christianity. The Shembe church and the man for the most part, support the Christian faith. This also shows that the idea that Shembe ignored Christ is a misguided one (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 96). Shembe has also been accused of trying to take on the role of God. Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza (1986: 97) state that this idea came about partly as a result of altered meanings when translating certain Zulu terms into English. The English translation for the word "*nkosi*" for example could be chief, head, king or even God. Shembe is referred to as *nkosi* by his followers, meaning chief, king or head in this context, but never God. This title, however, has been misinterpreted by scholars who believe and have written that Shembe is God of the Nazarite Church. The Shembe Church does make a distinction between Shembe and God. As already mentioned, Shembe is referred to as "*nkosi*" while

God is referred to as “*Nkosi yamakhosi*” which translates to “king of kings” and refers to God (Fernandez, 1973: 52; Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 97).

The Shembe Church had a strong attraction for the traditionalists in Zulu society, those who were neither converts into the mission church nor “educated” people. The reason for this is partly that Shembe himself was illiterate (Johns, 2004: 403). Shembe accepted the Zulu converts as they were, in their traditional attire; he used their metaphors in his teachings and sermons. Shembe, while declaring a new faith, still evoked traditional values and sentiments. This was done in the same way Christianity adopted religions like Judaism in order to enhance its acceptability. Black Christians, however, were warned away from the Shembe Church and taught to reject their Africanness. To be Christian was (and still largely is) “*ukuphenduka*”, or to turn away/transform, black people turned away from their “primitive” pasts and traditions (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 117-118).

The late 1940s saw an influx of educated Shembe Church members, this came with its own problems. Most of the educated members were converts from the old mission churches. During the rise of apartheid many mission schools were also taken over by the government, meaning that children from Shembe families could now attend school without fear of discrimination. At school the children learnt many new things which set them apart within their home environment. The new teachings were not always consistent with their culture, religion and the way in which they had been brought up. What followed was a societal split between the older, uneducated traditionalists and the educated youth, as both were faced with social and ethical contradictions. Many children stopped going to church and started engaging in activities that were forbidden in the church, like smoking and drinking (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 118). Others left the church altogether, but many of those who stayed were confused and were in some ways embarrassed about their religious ideas and feared publicly confessing them. All of this put a lot of youths in serious conflict with their families and with church members. Many adults also started to seriously question the worth of having an education. Earlier Shembe ideas started to re-emerge; members felt that Christianity, modernization and education were corrupting their children and encouraging parental disrespect. Many started to believe that those children who had not gone to school had stronger morals than those who had. Meanwhile, the children who had gone to school were struggling to fit into their own environment as well as school. In school they were seen as strange, while at home they were thought to be rebelling. Certain prescriptions and practices of the Shembe Church were seen as odd by people who were not members of the

church. The acknowledgement of the Sabbath day as a day of rest meant that many Shembe youths could not get involved in extra activities and sports planned by schools if they fell on a Saturday (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 119). The fact that Shembe members were forbidden to cut their hair or beards also put the youth in conflict with schools (Tishken, 2006: 82). The law that forbids Shembe members from cutting their hair was derived from the Bible, Numbers 6: 1-8; which is a passage where God is addressing Moses and informing him what he expects from his people. The emphasis the Shembe Church places on culture and tradition also embarrassed the youth when they were around their Westernized peers (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 121). These rules started to feel like burdens on many Shembe youths and the ridicule they got from their peers did not make life any less confusing for them.

The Shembe religion and other African independent churches like the Zionists were seen as deviations from Christianity. This resulted in children from these churches being ridiculed even by their teachers, as most schools had a strong Christian foundation with scripture classes. Shembe youth were also confronted with rumours about their church and leader and were expected to defend or deny them (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 119). They were asked about Isaiah Shembe making human sacrifices and his attempt to fly off a mountain which allegedly led to his death (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 120).

All the issues brought on by education also created serious problems for Shembe intellectuals whose roles were now also being brought into question. But they were determined to solve this problem in the church. The intellectuals felt it would be a good idea to have youth organizations within the church, in the same way that Christian churches have choirs, Sunday school groups and so on. This kind of organization would allow members of the youth going through similar problems to engage with each other and help each other and create some form of social cohesion and unity. This is how the idea of youth meetings came to be introduced into the church. The Shembe Church created youth meetings similar to Christian Sunday school, which take place on a Saturday after church. Saturday youth meetings would act as a tool to strengthen the youths' faith as well as teach them about their religion and give them a sense of pride and belonging (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 121). Some good came out of the dilemma the Shembe church had with education. Shembe intellectuals began to realise the need to write about the church and expose the lies and rumours being spread about it, in addition to showing what the church has to offer and teach people about Shembe beliefs, history and practices. Dr Mthembeni Mpanza and Bongani Mthethwa are just some of the

Shembe intellectuals who tried to teach members and outsiders about the religion. The need to have more writings about the church also became more important as the church grew and spread to other parts of South Africa and Africa. Writings are also important for keeping certain cultural and religious practices alive. Many African ideas are threatened by modernity; but oral tradition is no longer enough to keep traditional ideas alive (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986:123).

3.5.Critiquing Shembe polygamy practice

Many African cultural practices and ideas are on the verge of extinction or are highly criticized and portrayed in a negative way by modern society. Many people become more attached to their cultural practices, even those that many no longer make sense in the modern world. Polygamy is one such practice. Polygamy made sense traditionally as it was an effective way to increase the population and productivity within the community or within a family. This however makes less sense in today's economically driven world. Maintaining and looking after a family has become very expensive as a result of modern needs like children going to school. People are also more dependent on the market for their basic survival than they ever were before. People are at the mercy of capitalism and big companies who make all the decisions on how certain things should be priced and what is valuable and what is not (Schnaiberg, 1987: 220). A practice like polygamy made more sense when people had more agency and control of their own lives. Today only the rich or those few who might still live in rural traditional settings and those who can financially afford to practise polygamy.

Polygamy has also come under the scrutiny of feminists who challenge the double standard that exists within this principle. Cultures/religions like the Shembe Church allow men to have more than one wife, but the same principle does not apply to women. Polygamy today seems to be nothing more than another form of male domination (Van Wichelen, 2009: 174). Culturally and historically, the decision to have a second or third wife had to be introduced or supported by the existing wife/wives. Today this is not always the case. Some men take on second wivies without seeking the approval of the first wife. These woman stay for the sake of the family unit, which is very important in African culture. Many women also stay because they depend on their husbands for financial support (Browne, 2005: 99). The final and possibly the most important issue is that as a result of sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS, polygamy no longer has a place in modern society. Having more than one sexual

partner in this day and age is too dangerous and can be a death sentence. As Ayisi (1979: 3) claims, culture is everything that contributes to our way of life as humans, so when culture starts to do the opposite, it needs to be revisited and altered. Polygamy is a practice that needs to be reconsidered and altered within the Shembe Church.

3.6.Conclusion

The Shembe Church has seen many challenges and victories and through it all the church has moved from strength to strength. This chapter has involved a discussion of Shembe history from its formation in 1910 to where it is today. The Shembe Church survived colonial and apartheid oppression and in many ways came out victorious, stronger and with more members. The Shembe Church played a crucial role during the years of oppression; it united people, and often continues to do so in the post-apartheid/ post-colonial context. Revitalization movements like the Shembe Church acted as the glue that held cultures and communities together. It did this by drawing on rituals and ideas people could respond to and identify with. Even today, many black people coping with post-apartheid economies and social challenges find comfort in the Shembe Church. The church often provides newly urbanized workers with social support set-ups needed to earn low wages without submitting to the temptations of alcohol abuse, crime and so on (Browne, 2005: 107). “The Shembe Church revitalizes many of the downtrodden masses and gives them the self-confidence to go forward and continue to struggle for a living. Without it, many would turn to alcohol, drugs, crime or, worse, suicide- a rising trend in the townships” (Browne, 2005: 107-108). The chapter has also discussed the church’s ideas, practices and the unique way in which it celebrates Africanness and culture. Movements such as this were and are important for restoring African pride, history and dispelling Western misconceptions. However, the church is not without its flaws. Women in the church are still given inferior roles to those of men. The church still holds on to practices that no longer make sense in modern times. This is done in some ways as a defence mechanism, as the church is constantly under scrutiny. The following chapter will discuss my experience as a researcher in the Shembe Church. It will look at challenges I encountered as well as how the data was collected.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Introduction

The Shembe Church has received a lot of scrutiny and criticism over the years. There has been a lot of false information and propaganda spread about the church. As a result the church has mostly closed itself off to outsiders, the media and academics looking to research this field. The hostility towards the media and academics has served as a sort of defence mechanism which prevents outsiders from spreading more false information about the church. There is however a negative side to doing this; the less that people know about the church, the more likely they are to believe the propaganda that already exists. Even today many people still believe that Isaiah Shembe tried to fly off a mountain, and there is a misconception that Shembe children do not go to school. The media's excessive coverage of the battles for power has also made the church very sceptical of outsiders. The media coverage is often poorly researched; it makes the church look bad in the eyes of the public. This made it difficult to enter the field and as a result I faced many challenges while in the field. These challenges led me to broaden my sample to include more than just one faction. Some of the challenges discussed in this chapter were people's reluctance to speak with the recorder on. Most people were worried about their opinions being misinterpreted or saying something that would put them at odds with the church. This meant I had to assure people that they would remain anonymous and would therefore remain protected. I often had to take notes at the end of an interview, after switching off my recorder. It is at this point that people would start to talk more freely. Some would elaborate on questions they avoided earlier. Many would talk in detail about the conflict in the church and how it made them feel. This information however, had to be excluded from the research because the research does not aim to explore the conflict within the Shembe Church. Most interviews were conducted outdoors and in noisy places which made transcribing very difficult to do. In this chapter I will discuss some of the problems I encountered in the field, as well as the research process in general. Qualitative research methods were used because they are better suited at capturing people's perceptions and opinions.

4.1.1. Qualitative Research

Every research undertaking starts with a philosophical assumption or a paradigm, epistemologies or broadly conceived research methodologies. Paradigms are a way of looking at life, they allow us to see things that otherwise would be hidden. There are various kinds of

paradigms, some relate to research methods and the way information is gathered. Paradigms are very useful in that they offer powerful insights into the nature of social life, but none of them represent one whole truth (Babbie, 1990: 529; Creswell, 2003: 6). One of the major assumptions made in this research is that the Shembe Church is still faced with controversies and intolerance coming from modern society and orthodox Christianity. One of the aims of the research is to document a few members' perceptions of how they feel their religion is treated in society. Because I was trying to document people's opinions and experiences, it was necessary to use qualitative methods, as these cannot be quantified into numbers or placed on scales (Silverman, 1997: 13). Qualitative research is important when studying society, it helps us explain certain patterns that are created by more than just an individual's actions. Quantitative research often provides facts, number and statistics; while qualitative research helps us understand the story behind the numbers (Babbie, 1990: 526). Quantitative research might be able to provide the population of Shembe followers and the rate at which they grow. Whereas qualitative research will explain why the movement still continues to grow. It might do this by looking at social, economic and historical factors, as well as through analysing individuals' testimonies. Qualitative research goes beyond just stating the facts. It is useful when it comes to finding solutions to social problems. Different methods and paradigms are used, these yield different outcomes and results, all provide greater insight but there often is no one solution or truth (Babbie, 1990: 528). The unstructured, flexible nature of qualitative research was most appropriate for this research because the participants were not representative of all diverse groups within the Shembe Church. Most of the participants interviewed were Zulu Inanda and Kwa-Mashu residents. My sample therefore did not represent the overall Shembe population. The Shembe Church comprises of many individuals with diverse cultures and different ethnicities. The sample was randomly selected; I mostly relied on snowballing to find my participants. Many of the people I interviewed led me to further potential participants and this continued until my sample got bigger and bigger. All interviews were audio recorded. The interviews were done with male and female youth members of the church as well as male and female elder members of the church. This number would not include priests and other strategic informants. Fourteen one-on-one interviews were done with male and female elders, with seven people being interviewed in each category. The following were strategic informants interviewed for the purposes of this research:

- eBuhleni priest, umfundisi Ngidi. Ngidi is also a principle at a local school that many Shembe youths attend.
- Paul Weinberg, who has worked closely with and studied the Shembe Church as an academic, photographer and filmmaker.
- umfundisi Mthembeni Mpanza, who is also an academic who has written extensively on the Shembe Church. He is an ex-member of eBuhleni and founder of the New Nazareth Baptist Church.
- ekuPhakameni chief Vukile Shembe, Vukile took over from his father, Inkosi Londa Shembe. Vukile Shembe is Londa Shembe's youngest son (Miya: 2012).
- Senzo Ndlovu ekuPhakameni Sabbath school youth teacher. He was born into the church. The interview with Mr Ndlovu was conducted at ekuPhakameni.

The following is the list of Shembe followers who were interviewed. Here I provide a brief background of the participants interviewed. I still protect their anonymity by referring to them by their pseudonyms:

- Sophia: Is a female strategic informant, she advises and counsels other members of the church, especially women. She lives outside of Inanda and was interviewed at a Shembe temple in Kwa Mashu. She was born into the church but later converted to Catholicism when she married a Catholic man. She returned to the Shembe Church because she was sick. Her illness was caused by brooding, a process that many people go through when they get the calling. She is now a sangoma and has a leadership position in the Shembe Church. She and her husband attend separate churches.
- Margret: Is a female elder in the church, she is a mother and a grandmother. Her whole family attends the Shembe Church. She was interview at eBuhleni during the July festival but she lives outside of Inanda. She is also a sangoma and healer.
- Mntu: Is a female elder in the church. She lives in Berea and was interviewed in Pietermaritzburg. She has been a member for a few years. She was raised as Catholic but converted when she was faced with some challenges in her life. She had reoccurring health problems and was unemployed; she turned to the Shembe Church after she felt like she had tried everything else. She turned to the church for guidance, she officially joined the church and got baptized after all her prayers were answered.

- Pinky: Is a female elder in the church, she is a mother, wife and an occasional youth group teacher and mentor. She was born into the church. Her reasons for remaining a member are that; she has witnessed many miracles in the Shembe Church and the church has helped her family a great deal over the years. She was interviewed at ekuPhakameni where she lives.
- Gugu: Is a female elder in the church. She is a mother and grandmother. She joined the church because of Shembe's miracles, individual prayer requests that were answered and because it accepts her culture. She likes the fact that the church encourages her to respect and honour her ancestors. This interview was done in Gugu's Kwa Mashu home. She was one of the first Kwa Mashu participants to be interviewed and she introduced me to many others. One of the Shembe followers she introduced me to is a closet member who comes from a Christian household. Her husband and children (most of whom are grown up and working) are unaware that she is a member of the Shembe Church. Her family is strongly against ancestral honouring and believes that the church is for 'primitive' and uneducated people. She refused to be interviewed for fear of being exposed as a Shembe follower. She refused even after I explained that her identity would remain hidden. She strongly believes that her husband would abandon her if he found out, she also thinks that her children would not support her financial or otherwise. She is the only unemployed member of her family; she relies on her children and husband for financial support. She also fears that she would never see her grandchildren whom she babysits while everyone is at work.
- Mbali: Is a successful, self-made woman and business owner. She was interviewed in a Durban office. She was born into the church. For the most part she is considered a woman and therefore an elder in the Shembe Church. But the reality is she is still transitioning from being seen as a girl to being seen as a woman. She is not fully recognized as an elder because she broke the rules when she was younger; she had premarital sex and had a child out of wedlock. Being in transition and not being fully seen as a woman makes her sad, but she accepts her fate. Mbali believes that every action has a consequence. For her this is important because this is how people learn and grow. Certain rituals have to be performed before she can be fully seen as a woman. Some of these include atonement rituals.

- Mpume: Married to David (research participant). She joined the church because it helped her through some challenges she was facing. The church reunited her with her long lost father, who abandoned her family after her mother's death. She also prayed about being reunited with her brother, who was taken by distant relatives when they were young. Her prayers were answered through a Shembe miracle. She later took her father and brother to the church; they both converted and became members of the Shembe Church.
- David: Married to Mpume (research participant). Interviewed at his and Mpume's home in Kwa Mashu. He joined the church while in prison, his sentence was shortened and when he came out he became an active Shembe follower. David believes the shortening of his sentence was a Shembe miracle. The Shembe Church saved him from a life of crime and alcohol abuse.
- Sihle: Is a female youth member. She was interviewed at ekuPhakameni but is from Kwa Mashu. She is a student studying at the tertiary level. Sihle joined the Shembe Church during her late teenage years. She joined the church because it accepted her culture and Africanness, something which she never felt in her previous church. The church also provided her with answers to many problems (modern day problems of youth peer pressure and issues of self acceptance) she faced. The church also provided her with a good support system, something she felt she lacked in her previous church and in her family.
- Thandi: Interviewed at eBuhleni during the July festival. She lives eFolweni. She is a female youth member of the church. She was born into the Shembe Church, but remains a member because the church has helped her family in many ways over the years.
- Limo: Is a female youth member of the Shembe Church. She was interviewed at ekuPhakameni. She was born into the church but decided to remain a member because she felt she fit in, she felt accepted.
- Sbu: Is a male youth member of the Shembe Church. He was interviewed at the Rhodes University library. He is a student at the university. He was born into the Shembe Church. He was his parents' miracle baby. His mother could not conceive any boys;

all her pregnancies would result in still borns. Their prayers were answered after seeking help from the Shembe Church. Sbu was very sick when he was born and his parents worried he would also die. They continued to make prayer requests at the Shembe Church. The older Sbu got, the healthier he got. It is for this reason that his parents joined the church and it is for this reason Sbu remains a member.

- Mandla: Is a male youth member of the Shembe Church. He is studying at the tertiary level. He was interviewed at ekuPhakameni. He was born into the church. He decided to be a more active member after dreaming about Shembe. He also rededicated himself when he received financial assistance from the church for his studies.
- Dumisani: Is a high school, male youth member of the Shembe Church. Dumisani is one of Margret's older children. He was born into the Shembe Church. He was interviewed at eBuhleni during the July festival, but he and his family live outside of Inanda.

Focus group discussion participants: The group was made up of male and female participants. They are considered youth members because they are still young and because they have not gone through the rites of passage that qualify members to be seen as men and woman. Most of these include coming of age ceremonies and rituals, life's 'achievements' like having a job, a husband/ wife and children. Most of these participants were in their late teens and early adulthood. The group was made up of students (most of which were in tertiary level study) and workers (most of whom were working their first full time jobs). Most of the positions they occupy are unskilled or semi-skilled positions. The interview was done at ekuPhakameni on a Saturday, after their weekling youth gathering. The participants were made up of people who live ekuPhakameni and those who do not.

Two female strategic informants were also interviewed, but both chose to remain anonymous. The female strategic informants both played the role of *abakhokheli* for female members of their church. The strategic informants were able to share important information about the church as well as their own experiences as members and leaders. Only a few one-on-one interviews were done with youth members of the Shembe Church. The bulk of the youth opinion and perceptions came from a focus group discussions conducted at ekuPhakameni. A focus group is an environment where participants can share their ideas, as well as their individual and shared social realities (Kitzinger, 1994: 105). This research project used focus

group discussion and the interview process as data collection tools. The difference between in-depth interviews and focus group discussions is that the former is done with an individual, while the latter is done with a group of people. Focus group discussions usually comprise between 8 and 12 people (Kitzinger, 1994: 105). The focus group discussion for this case consisted of 12 people. As a facilitator I found it important to restrict my intervention, I tried to do this without being too passive. I limited my intervention in the beginning because some of the the participants were intimidated by my presence. I became more involved in the discussion when the participants became more comfortable. Common themes came up as I asked my questions. Most of these related to my research, but sometimes they did not. I still encouraged them to share their opinions even if they went a little off topic; this gave them more confidence in me and encouraged them to share more. It also encouraged those who had not responded to any questions; it made them feel safe enough to share their own views. The responses in the beginning were very brief. As I went down the list of questions, the participants gained confidence and started to give more detailed answers. Some participants would even request to share their opinions on issues and questions that had already been dealt with. I encouraged them to do this. The issues would be reopened and new outlooks would be shared, with many elaborating on what they or their friends had previously said.

4.1.2. Data collection methods

It is important in a focus group discussion to have a facilitator. This is the person who asks the questions and makes sure the discussion runs smoothly. The questionnaire used as a guide by the facilitator is a written list of questions regarding the research topic. The facilitator should not be limited to just the questions in the questionnaire; but is welcome to ask more questions depending on the direction the interview is taking. The facilitator explains and reinterprets the questions if there is any confusion on the respondents' part. The facilitator also makes sure that everyone has a fair chance to speak; s/he is also there to chair the discussion (Kumar, 2005: 124). In the case of this research, the facilitator was the researcher.

With both the in-depth interview and the focus group interview, the researcher explores the perceptions, experiences and understandings of a group of people or individuals regarding a certain topic or event. In in-depth interviews and focus group interviews broad questions regarding the topic are drawn up by the researcher or the group itself (in the case of a focus group discussion) (Marshall, 1999: 21). In this research project, this task was left to the researcher. These questions help to establish the direction the discussion will take. Members

of the focus group express their opinions while the researcher records the discussion by taking notes of everything that happens (Bloor, 1997: 29 and 47). It is important with both the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to pick up on significant events within the life stories of the people being interviewed. In the course of the interview or focus group discussion, respondents may mention an important event or time in their lives. It is important to go back to these (because they are often mentioned in passing) and discuss them. It may be important to find out how the participants experienced these events, for example how they felt, where they were and so on. Where possible it is also important for the researcher to go back and do more research on the historical events if they can, to check the accuracy especially when it comes to things like the year or date of the event (details that people might forget or mix up) (Creswell & Miller, 2000: 124; Kumar, 2005: 125). Most of the interviews were done in Zulu and translated into English during the transcribing process.

4.1.3. Ethical considerations

This research project addressed ethical issues by getting the participants to sign consent forms, which were agreements allowing the researcher to publish or share the findings with other people. The subjects were also to be kept anonymous and pseudonyms were used during the interviews. The participants were also made aware of the risks involved in partaking in the research. They were made aware of their right to terminate their contract/agreement at any point during the research (Altheide and Johnson, 1997: 178). Those who were considered strategic informants were not given pseudonyms except in those instances when they expressed their wish to remain anonymous. Where pseudonyms are used in this thesis, it will be noted in the first instance.

4.2. Entering the field and challenges faced

There were many different rounds of interviews done for this research. The interviews were done with various Shembe members from different temples. There was a two-fold focus to my research:

- Document how the Shembe religion incorporates both African Traditional Religion and Christianity and;

- Investigate how some members of the Shembe Church experience the acceptance of the Shembe religion in South African society, taking into account the constitution according to which diversity of religious beliefs in South Africa is protected.

The first round of interviews took place during the annual July meeting in 2011. I entered the field on the 11th July and left on the 18th July. The first round of interviews was the most challenging, as it was my first time entering the field. I was required to wear the religious attire just like the members of the church. I was required to wear *umnazareth* which is a white tunic everyone wears over their clothes. Women are also required to wear *inantsuka* which is a white scarf-like cloth to be worn over the head and shoulders. I was also instructed to take off my shoes and walk barefoot at all times. EkuPhakameni and eBuhleni are holy places and people show their respect by removing their shoes; everyone who enters the gates is required to do so.

My first entry into the field was perhaps the most important, as I was there to observe as well as conduct interviews. It was important for me to find out how much of what I had read up on the church was fact and how much of it was myth. Observations and informal conversations with people helped me do just that. Most people I met were very friendly, willing to help and excited to hear that I was interested in their religion even though I was not a member of their church. The problem was that most people did not want to talk with the recorder on and were sceptical even when I tried to assure them that they would remain anonymous. This was the case even when talking to priests or people occupying authoritative positions. Many priests agreed to talk to me, but took back the offer when they realized that I would be recording. They then refused to talk to me even when I put the recorder away. My need to record the interviews made many people think that I was a journalist and as a result they would grow hostile towards me. This is because, as indicated earlier, the Shembe Church has had a very bad relationship with the media; a lot of false information has been published on the church. Many people informed me that I would have faced fewer challenges if I was already a member of the Shembe Church. The fact that my host family were established and well-known members of the church did not always ease the situation. This is because I was nevertheless an outsider and, given that the church is going through some hardship, members are encouraged not to discuss certain matters with outsiders. However, what often did help and make people open up to me was the fact that my own culture is in many ways similar to their religion. When I would ask people to elaborate on certain points they would say; “*Nawe*

uyazi; izindlela zethu zesintu lezi”, meaning “You know these things; it is the way we do things in our culture”.

One of the biggest problems I encountered during my first round of interviews was that some priests refused to talk to me because they felt I had used the wrong channels of communication in my attempt to enter the field. The correct channel would have been for me to have gone to the main office at eBuhleni and request access. This request would have been taken up to the highest power Mduzuzi Shembe, who would then make the final decision. Another way would have been for Ngidi, the first priest I interviewed, to introduce me to other Shembe members and priests in the church. My request might have been better received had it come from an authoritative figure like Ngidi. Some of the priests also had issues with some questions I asked that dealt with eBuhleni specifically and with the divisions within the church. They were concerned that questions on eBuhleni would make the faction look like it is separating itself from the overall Shembe movement. As a consequence, some of these questions were removed or generalized to include all factions. At this point I decided to conduct interviews with members of other factions as well. Conducting interviews with other factions did not change the focus of my research, because the different factions share the same ideas and practices and my research was not concerned with the divisions within the church. Furthermore, I did not speak to enough people at eBuhleni, so it became necessary for me to broaden my sample to include members from other factions. I also decided to include Shembe members who do not live at Inanda.

The second round of interviews took place at ekuPhakameni, which is also in Inanda. These interviews were held during one of the weekly youth meetings which takes place after church during the Sabbath. I conducted a number of one-on-one interviews with the youth as well as some elders. I also decided to conduct a focus group discussion because there were so many youth members and I only had one afternoon to do the interviews. The focus group discussion helped capture the opinions of most of the youth members without having one-on-one interviews with all the participants. I was fortunate enough to be there while inkosi yasekuPhakameni uVukile Shembe was visiting. I got the opportunity to interview Vukile Shembe. I was instructed to be on my knees at all times when in the presence of the *nkosi*. I was also not to make eye contact. This is a practice adopted from Zulu tradition. This is the way people addressed a king. Even though the Shembe family does not come from royal lines, they were and still are given this honor as chiefs of their respective factions (Gunner, 2004: 99). “Shembe, like traditional Zulu kings, is the object of intense respect (*inhlonipho*) on the

part of his followers” (Fernandez, 1973: 36). Shembe followers practice *ukugagu* when in a Shembe chief’s presence. They kneel and they look away, they approach only at a crouch or crawling (Fernandez, 1973: 36).

The rest of the interviews were done outside of Inanda. I started by looking for Shembites who I knew lived in my own neighbourhood of Kwa-Mashu. From then I relied on the snowballing technique; people I interviewed would introduce me to other possible participants. I also visited the eBuhleni Livukanathi temple in Kwa-Mashu where I managed to interview more people. I was fortunate enough to find a female strategic informant at the Livukanathi temple. Finding women who held leadership positions in the Shembe Church was generally difficult and most of those I did find refused to be interviewed. My female strategic informant asked to use a pseudonym and to remain anonymous like the rest of my participants. More participants were found in my other hometown of Pietermaritzburg. Family members and family friends who are part of the Shembe Church were also interviewed. Many of the interviews done in Inanda and Livukanathi temple were done outdoors. There were no quiet places to conduct the interviews due to lack of church infrastructure and buildings. I attended many Shembe sermons while in the field. Many of the sermons (even those in temples outside of Inanda) had a common message that was preached to the followers. The sermons emphasized the value of working hard. Some priests even equated the receiving of hand-outs to theft. They would say: “If you are an able body person, you have all your limbs and you struggle from no mental disabilities, then you have a duty to work hard to support yourself and your family. If you accept support from your neighbours and rewards for work you have not done, then you are no different to a man that steals.” The sermons would often encourage empowerment over charity. The priests would encourage people to help each other, but only in ways that are long lasting. They would talk about how giving a person food only helps a person for a day and sometimes creates a relationship of dependency, where your neighbour expects you to support them. Instead people are encouraged to help each other by sharing opportunities and skills. Priests often said: “Do not give your neighbour food to feed them for the night. Share with them a skill or a job opportunity so that they many be able to feed themselves.” They would encourage self-reliance, self-help and empathy. The priests encourage people to ask themselves how they would feel if they were in the needy person’s situation. Would they want others to pity them, give them hand-outs and create a situation that makes them dependent on others assistance? Or would they want the freedom and independence that comes with being able to support

yourself. Those who do not follow these principles are labelled as sinners. The priests would also define as sinners, those who try to help but disempower through giving hand-outs.

The sermons also often revolved around the theme of self-love. Shembe followers would be encouraged to accept and celebrate the things that make them black, or African. The priests would discuss everything from respecting one's culture and language, to embracing physical appearance. Members were encouraged to reject things that europeanise them; things like hair relaxers, hair extensions, skin lighteners and so on. They would encourage people to never forget their ancestors, but remind them that ancestors were also once human and are therefore not perfect. People would be reminded that God is the superpower. The issue of Jesus and Isaiah Shembe was also another common theme that came up in many sermons. The priests would often remind the congregation that Shembeism is an Africanized Christianity. Members were encouraged to read their Bible, *Izihlabelelo ZamaNazaretha* (the Shembe hymn book which draws largely from the Bible), and pray to God, just as other Christians do. The priests would remind the followers that the only difference between orthodox Christianity and Shembeism, is that the Shembe Church encourages Zulus and all those who choose to join, to accept their Africanness. People would be reminded the Isaiah Shembe was not against Jesus; that Shembe aimed to remind people of Jesus's laws, restore African pride and create an environment of peaceful coexistence between Africans and Europeans. This idea of Shembeism and Christianity being the same is one that is rejected by some Shembe followers I came across in the field. Some people feel uncomfortable calling themselves Christian or identifying with a religion that has historically marginalised them and rejects their faith. They often added that many Christians still refuse to acknowledge Shembeism as a part of the Christian faith. Because of this, some Shembe members stop trying to see themselves as Christian. People would often admit this once the recorder was switched off. Some would say: "How can I call myself Christian, when they say my ancestors are demons?" For some members, the differences between them and Christians are too major and too important to overlook. Respecting the Sabbath, honouring ancestors and culture are uniquely Shembe ideas and are very important to the members. But they are also ideas that create tensions between Christianity and the Shembe Church. For some members, these differences are more important than the similarities they share with Christianity.

4.3. CRL and CoGTA

Documenting the Shembe people's experiences and opinions was just one part of my research. The second half of my research required that I interview Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs national and provincial officials, a representative of the Cultural Religious and Linguistics Commission and analyse reports and case studies released by all three offices. I interviewed Dr Masenjana Sibanda of the national CoGTA office. He is the deputy director general and is responsible for research, policy and legislation development within the department of Traditional Affairs. Dr Monwabisi Ralarala of the CRL Rights Commission was also interviewed. Dr Ralarala is part of the research division within the CRL Rights Commission. KZN MEC of CoGTA, Nomusa Dube initially agreed to meet with me, but this offer was later withdrawn and I was referred to Mr Ntokozo Chonco who I was told would be able to assist me. I liaised with Mr Chonco's office for months, until they finally informed me that they were unwilling to assist me. I later managed to get access to KZN CoGTA through the help of a family friend. I interviewed Nathi Mpongose who works for Traditional Affairs. The section on the CRL rights commission and CoGTA were later on removed from me research. I was advised to so as it took the focus away from the main argument of the thesis. It was in some ways poorly researched due to lack of cooperation from the CoGTA office and representatives.

4.4. Conclusion

It was very important for me to conduct most of my interviews with Shembe participants in Zulu. This helped participants feel more comfortable and confident to share their experiences and ideas, this was especially the case when I was doing interviews with older members who did not speak or understand English. It was also important for me to show respect by bowing or kneeling during interviews done with priests and leaders of the church. It was also important for me to avoid discussing the divisions especially after my encounter with eBuhleni priests. It is important for researchers to avoid this topic or to be very careful when bringing this matter up. I ended up avoiding questions about the division in the church, because they were not the focus of my research; they angered people and threatened my research. This next chapter discusses Shembe rituals and practices. Some of these were discussed in the methodology section but Chapter 5 goes into greater detail. Chapter 5 discusses Shembe routines and living conditions I observed while I was doing fieldwork at eBuhleni.

Chapter 5: Life at eBuhleni

5.1.Introduction

Isaiah Shembe offered more than religious solutions to his followers; he also offered many of his followers a place to live. This created much needed security and helped the marginalized members of society. Ekuphakameni and eBuhleni were one of the first properties to be acquired by the Shembe Church. Isaiah Shembe bought these properties and invited his followers to live with him (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 43). Shembe's Mecca is believed to be God's Promised Land for Nazareth members. This space was created for the weak and marginalized. The initial community provided religious, economic, cultural and moral space for Isaiah Shembe's early followers, most of whom were the marginalized: young girls, orphans and women (Johns, 2004: 403). This community was created to help and empower people. Over 100 years later the people who occupy Shembe's Mecca are still the disempowered and marginalized members of society. And Isaiah Shembe's vision for this place has still not been achieved.

This chapter will discuss the experiences and practices of Shembe members living in eBuhleni during their sacred religious gatherings. It provides a background to Chapters 6 and 7, which discuss the ways in which the Shembe Church incorporates both ATR and Christianity. The chapter will discuss the context of people's daily routines to special rituals and living conditions. Important rituals like virgin testing will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. I will look at what it is like to live inside Shembe's Mecca.

5.2.Daily rituals and routine

Most people wake up as early as 5am. People clean their shacks, wash their clothes and clean the whole of eBuhleni. People clean the streets, public toilets and trading areas. People clean all the way up to the highest hill where Vimbeni Shembe's house sits. The dirt collected is burnt; cleaning the Mecca is seen as a kind of sacrifice or offering for which God will reward them. People pass the house of Mduduzi Shembe (Vimbeni Shembe's successor) on the way to Vimbeni Shembe's house. They sing and pray outside Mduduzi Shembe's house and every now and then the gates are opened, people kneel and one of the priests prays and blesses the people.



Figure 5.2.1. The early morning daily clean up. Shembe members collect and burn the litter they collect in the eBuhleni grounds (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 5.2.2. Shembe members praying outside Mduduzi Shembe's house (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

When eBuhleni is clean, people prepare for the 9am church service which often takes place outside Vimbeni Shembe's house. Those who do not go to the service continue with household chores, preparing breakfast and bathing the children. Many other church services follow after the morning service. People attend the 6pm service in the evening, and the final service takes place at midnight.



Figure 5.2.3. People returning from Vimbeni Shembe's house where they clean up and have a church service afterwards. Vimbeni Shembe's house is the big green and white house in the distance (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

People often walk to a sacred area called “Onyaweni” (at the foot); here you find a rock with a footprint on it. The footprint is believed to have been Isaiah Shembe's. People come here to pray and make offerings in the form of silver coins. The sacred rock is surrounded by smaller white rocks. All sacred areas and temples in the Shembe Church are marked by these white rocks. People have to humble themselves when they enter a sacred place, meaning they must bow or kneel before they enter. Often each coin offered represents a burden the person prays for; the same is the case for blessings. People give one coin for each blessing they wish to thank Shembe for. Each coin is placed on the footprint. People pray at Onyaweni because it is believed to be one of the most sacred areas in eBuhleni. It is believed that the more sacred the area, the more likely that one's prayers will be heard and answered. However, Onyaweni has had problems with theft in recent years. Some people attribute this problem to the extreme poverty that many Shembe members experience. Many people still pray here even though there is a risk of their money being stolen and their prayers not being answered as a result. The theft angers many people; it is believed that stolen money constitutes stolen blessings. Those who steal money from Onyaweni are stealing other people's blessings. The same is the case for burdens. Some of the money is given as offerings made by people who are trying to get rid of their burdens and curses, those who take this money also take with them the burdens that accompany the money. This is why so many Shembe members believe that stealing from Onyaweni should never be an option. You never know if you are stealing

someone's burden or blessing and you could find yourself faced with bigger problems than you had before.



Figure 5.2.4. Shembe member praying and placing coins Onyaweni (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

There are other similar places all around eBuhleni where people can make offerings. Often there are even priests kneeling on pavements waiting to hear people's confessions and collect offerings. The priests pray with and bless members.



Figure 5.2.5. A priest and a female elder talk on the side of the road, close to the market area (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

Offerings are also made after each church service. The priests walk to where the members sit. People in the church sit according to their sex and status in the church. Men and women are separated. Young girls have their own area; next to them are the female elders who comprise married women and women who have children. The male youth sit next to the female elders; next to the male youth members are the male elders, who are made up of married men. There is a small gap between the different sexes and age groups (youth and elders). The priests collect money from every member who is able to make an offering. The priests and the members making an offering kneel down. The members say a short prayer and the priest responds by saying; “*Inkosi ikubusise*” (God bless you) and the member replies “*Ameni, ongcwele, ameni*” (amen, holy one, amen). There is a lot of this kind of interacting even during the service: people kneel every time a prayer is being said. They sit while hymns are sung or when a priest preaches. There is also a lot of collective response to certain things the priest says and to hymns sung. People also make offerings in the form of goods such as building materials and services such as cleaning and small maintenance jobs like painting walls and so on. Shembe members are not the only ones who bring offerings to the church. Troubled people from other churches and religions also come to give offerings and have their prayers heard. People who are not members of the Shembe Church are not required to wear the white Shembe tunic, but they should look presentable. Women are required to wear long skirts and their shoulders and heads must also be covered.



Figure 5.2.6. People bring offerings in the form of hay for building (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 5.2.7. Non-Shembe members lined up, waiting their turn to pray and give offerings (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

People also bring personal items that they wish to have blessed to this post-church offering ceremony. People bring things like food, Vaseline, water, oil, soap and so on. The idea is that one brings something that one often uses, so that every time one uses or consumes this product, one is blessed. This collection procedure typically takes place on a weekday close to one of the temples at Mduduzi Shembe's house. Young girls are the first to be allowed in to make their offerings and receive their blessings. Men and women use separate gates to enter Mduduzi Shembe's yard.



Figure 5.2.8. Like most Shembe ceremonies and rituals, this one is accompanied by music and performance (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 5.2.9. People wait to have their food, water and oil blessed by priests (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 5.2.10. People gathered outside Mduzuzi Shembe's house (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 5.2.11. Mduduzi Shembe addresses the cheering people (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

Another one of the daily routines during the July festival is the dance ritual. Young virgin girls dance every afternoon from Monday to Friday. They wear different uniforms on different days, these are called *izingubo zesilungu* (Western clothes). These uniforms represent the historical encounters in the 1930s between Europeans and Africans (Muller, 1994: 222). The final dance ritual that takes place on Sundays involves everyone; members predominately wear traditional clothes to this religious dance. People buy the different religious clothes from the trading area. People set up shops during the July festival; they sell everything from food, to modern clothes and religious/cultural attire. Traders make most of the religious and traditional clothes themselves.



Figure 5.2.12. One of the many stalls selling traditional clothes, most of which are worn during the Sunday “umgidi” (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 5.2.13.Traders making cowhide skirts worn by female elders during the Sunday “umgidi” (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

The traditional clothes are very expensive and people make many sacrifices in order to buy them. The cowhide skirts roughly cost around R1500, various beads range from R100 to R800, so one can spend roughly R3000 in putting together one traditional outfit. People value their traditional attire and are very proud of it; they take care in putting it together. Many of the weekday dance rituals performed by young virgin girls take place in the temple close to Mduduzi Shembe’s house.



Figure 5.2.14.Small building inside the temple that is close to Mduduzi Shembe’s house. This is where Mduduzi Shembe and some of his predecessors typically sit during church services (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 5.2.15. Young girls lined up outside the temple, ready to perform one of the weekday dancing rituals (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

The area surrounding the temple and Mduduzi Shembe's house is considered to be very sacred; this is also where the Isaiah Shembe statue sits. Everyone who passes the statue is required to do a little bow.



Figure 5.2.16. Sacred statue of Isaiah Shembe (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

The temple outside Mduduzi Shembe's house is also where the daily *insimbi* (bell) takes place. *Insimbi* is a daily ritual that takes place every morning and evening; this is when the children who have not reached puberty go to the temple and sing a hymn. They sing a hymn titled "*Isiqalo somthandazo wokuvuka*" (The beginning of the morning prayer) in the mornings. This hymn is a plea to God to guide and protect the Shembe people as they go about their daily routine. In the evening the children sing a hymn titled "*Isiqalo somthandazo wokulala*" (The beginning of the evening prayer), they sing "*Lala nathi namhlanje, usigcine ngomusa wakho*" (Sleep with us today, keep us in your mercy), a plea for protection at night. This ritual is very short; lasting only a few minutes. On Saturdays the evening ritual marks the end of the Sabbath. Everyone close to the temple is required to stop what they are doing and go on their knees. Even traders stop selling for a moment to honour this ritual. Children wear different attire on the different days that the ritual is performed. The following are just some of the things that the children wear to the *insimbi* ritual;





Figure 5.2.17. Shembe children dressed and ready to go to the evening prayer, known as “insimbi” (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

Honouring the Sabbath is a very important part of the Shembe Church. People start preparing for the Sabbath on Friday afternoon; they cook, clean and perform all the tasks that they cannot perform during the Sabbath. The Sabbath starts on a Friday evening at 6pm and ends the following evening at 6pm. People are forbidden to work during this time, people do not trade, children are even forbidden to play. Members are not allowed to cook, eat hot food or anything prepared after 6pm on a Friday. Members are not allowed to use any form of heat or energy. They take cold baths before attending the 9am service on a Saturday. The Sabbath service takes place at the bigger temple outside Vimbeni Shembe’s house on one of the highest hills at eBuhleni. Those who do not go to the church service remain at home and remain very quiet. Even loud noise or yelling is forbidden during the Sabbath. People often pack lunch before attending the 9am service. Many go to the 9am service which lasts roughly two hours. They then sit just outside the temple to enjoy their lunch and relax for an hour or so before attending the 1pm service. People return to their homes after the 1pm service. The Sabbath ends a few hours later and hot meals are prepared for supper. At this time people also prepare for the following day’s religious dance.



Figure 5.2.18. Saturday morning church service (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 5.2.19. Shembe members relax before the 13:00 service (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

The Shembe Church is an interesting mixture of African tradition and Western ideas. It is diverse in its mixing of different ideas, but also in its playing different roles in people's lives. The Shembe Church is more than just a religion for its followers: it is a way of life, and it guides people through their daily struggles and challenges. The following section will discuss

the differences and similarities that the Shembe Church has with both ATR and Christianity. It will also discuss Shembe rituals and some of the solutions the church provides when it comes to dealing with modern issues such as HIV/AIDS.

5.3.Living conditions

Many Shembe members who attend the religious festivals at eBuhleni often have to erect shack houses at the start of every gathering. People use plastic, cardboard and wood to build their houses, while other members live in camp tents for the entire month. There are more permanent shacks that last longer than just one or two religious gatherings. These are often made out of tin, mud and other stronger building materials. Members who can afford to often build small, square one- or two-room brick houses. These, however, are often insufficient, because people come with their families and each shack can end up being occupied by five or more people. Members with some authority in the church often have better dwellings. The nuns, for example, share a white brick house provided by the church.



Figure 5.3.1. Some of the informal houses one might expect to find at eBuhleni (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 5.3.2. My home during my stay at eBuhleni (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 5.3.3. Nun's housing (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

Most of the members of eBuhleni have no access to running water or electricity during this time. People have to walk long distances to get water. Free water is available, but it is too far away for most people so many people opt to get water from some of the nearby places that charge for water. Trucks carrying water arrive during different times of the day and people collect the water using buckets. Queues often get every long. Water is a very scarce resource and people are careful not to waste it.



Figure 5.3.4. Young girls carrying buckets filled with water (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

Linked to the issues relating to water is general hygiene and sanitation. In order to save water people often do a kind of sponge “bath”, often only using heated water from one small kettle or pot. People take their ‘baths’ in their houses, which have very little privacy, because there are no public showers or bath areas. The toilets at eBuhleni are also in a very bad condition. Most of them are in the form of long drops, which also have no privacy, as there are no divisions between each toilet, just rows and rows of toilets. At night people rely on the bucket system, because there are not enough communal toilets around the area. Those toilets that exist are often also very far away for most people. They use the bucket system at night, because it is dark and there is no electricity and it is thus not safe to walk to the toilet at night. People who live far away from the toilets dispose of the previous night’s human waste by digging a deep hole and filling it with the waste. This is how people dispose of their bath, washing and dish water, and bones and peels from fruits and vegetables. The lack of water also often means that people cannot wash their hands every time after using the toilet. This can increase the spread of diseases and illnesses. In most cases, people are also unable to drink the required daily amount of water.

People often have to use gas stoves to prepare meals due to lack of electricity. This is very dangerous as most people live in highly inflammable informal structures which are built very

close to each other, meaning a fire could start very easily and spread rapidly. The most recent case of a fire breaking out at eBuhleni was during the 2010 July gatherings. Seventeen shacks were destroyed in the fire, but no one was hurt. The fire was never reported to the police, so it is unclear what caused the fire. The fire was believed to have been an accident. It is unclear how often fires like these start, as some cases go unreported (News24: 2010). People also often have to shop daily for things like fruits, vegetables and meat. Most people cannot keep perishable goods in their homes due to lack of electricity. Many of those who do have electricity do not have fridges and electrical appliances. Most of the traders who sell food have electricity in their shacks, but most of their electrical cords are exposed. This becomes especially dangerous when it rains or when the cords are damaged. People's houses get very cold at night because they are poorly built structures and often have gaps and holes that let in cold air. This is made worse by the fact that many people sleep on the floor.

There is almost no service delivery in eBuhleni. This area has virtually no bins, which means that people have to find alternative ways of disposing of their waste. Some people burn their waste, other dump it in public "dumping areas". This, however, is also dangerous because children often play close to these areas, and animals end up eating the waste. Dumping in these public areas is also dangerous because everyone walks barefoot; people run the risk of getting hurt or picking up infections. Both the dumping and the burning also have very negative effects on the environment, on animals and on people living at eBuhleni.



Figure 5.3.5. Pollution at eBuhleni (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

Chapter 6: African Traditional Religion and the Shembe Church: differences and similarities

6.1. Introduction

The likes of Fanon (1963:106) and Bhabha (2000: 355) have suggested that the coming together of two or more conflicting cultures might create some kind of unity in diverse societies. Post-colonial writers have even gone as far as to suggest that this kind of multiculturalism is needed to end oppression and intolerance (Fanon, 1963: 106; Kalscheuer, 2009: 38). However, this is not always the case, and it certainly has not been the case for the Shembe Church. The Shembe Church's move towards multiculturalism has seen its fair share of rejection. In some ways, the move towards multiculturalism created even more division between the Shembe Church and anti-Christian/ anti-Western African religious movements. The Shembe Church and many other Ethiopianist movements were rejected by ATR and Christianity. African religious groups rejected the Shembe Church and other Ethiopianist churches because many were founded during a time when black people were being oppressed by Christian missionaries. Adopting Christianity therefore seemed like a betrayal. African religious groups felt that adopting Christianity weakened the anti-Western oppression resistance. African Traditional Religionists like Mdende (2009: 1) feel that many African religions only incorporated Christianity and other Ibramic faiths to "justify" their own religion to the sceptics. The similarities between the Shembe Church and other African religious movements remained despite their differences when it came to dealing with Christianity and Western ideology. This chapter aims to discuss some of the similarities and differences between the Shembe religion and ATR, with the main focus being on understanding Shembe practices and ideas.

Defining ATR is problematic because there are many diverse cultures that fall under this category. The different cultures follow different religious practices based on their own culture, environment and history. The lack of documentation by Africans coupled with Western propaganda also makes it harder to understand ATR (Lawson, 1985: 15). The portrayal of ATRs as godless faiths has also made it hard to understand different cultures' conceptions and understandings of God. This chapter aims to discuss how God is worshipped by the Shembe Church; it will also show how ancestors and "sangomas" fit in. This will be done by highlighting similarities between the Shembe Church and other African religions and cultures. This chapter shows how Isaiah Shembe incorporated valuable African ideas into the

Shembe Church. Isaiah Shembe rejected the idea that African cultures and ideas were inferior. Instead, he believed people should celebrate their unique cultures. In this sense, the Shembe Church can be seen to have contributed towards the revival of African culture. Finally, I will discuss the usefulness of certain important ATR and Shembe practices. The chapter will look at virginity testing, *ukusina* (cultural/religious dancing), and music and drum playing.

6.2. Shembe and African Traditional Religion

It is hard to say how ATR came about, but African writers believe that African religious ideas and practices sprang up concurrently in different parts of the continent. It is believed that religious ideas spread through different cultures interacting with each other as populations increased and dispersed. This is why we often find many similarities between African cultures and religions (Mbiti, 1975: 14). African tradition is therefore not just a reaction to colonialism and Christianity. The idea that African religious groups exist only as anti-west political movements takes away from the long history of ATR. ATR is old, existing even before the Western occupation of Africa. Most African religions are a product of the thinking and experiences passed down from generation to generation (Mbiti, 1975: 12). Religion for the Shembe Church is more than just going to church or reading religious texts. Vukile Shembe (interview with author, 2012) explains that for him and his movement, religion is a way of life. He explained the origins and usefulness of religion for Africans:

When humans were created God left them rules and laws to live by. Many of these laws were there to protect people from certain things. Many rules are not there to show how powerful God is, they also aren't there to oppress us, they're there to protect us. As time went on people started to move away from these laws.

Ngidi, a priest in the Shembe Church, and Mpume, a member of the youth believe that the Shembe religion is very old. Many Shembe followers believe that Shembe ideas are forgotten ideas that existed long before Isaiah Shembe was born. Isaiah Shembe was just the leader chosen to revive and spread these ideas. As Ngidi explained (interview with author, 2011):

“Our cross has a circle around it, meaning *ubuNazareth* is never-ending.”

Mpume (interview with author, 2012) went on to say that:

Our religion draws a lot from the Bible; the Bible shows that we are not that different from Christianity. This religion is not something that just came with Shembe. *UbuNazareth* has always existed, even since the times of prophets like Moses and Jesus the King of the Sabbath. This *ubuNazareth* continued until it got to Shembe.

Mpume, Ngidi and Vukile Shembe explain that the Shembe religion has always existed and will always exist. Isaiah Shembe as a saviour was just brought to earth to remind people of that which they had forgotten or somehow lost. Followers of the Shembe religion believe that God sent down Jesus for the Christians, Mohammad for the Muslims and Shembe for the Africans. God sent different messiahs because people needed leaders who they could relate to; someone with similar culture, identity and so on. God would not have sent a foreign saviour, God sent Africans a saviour they could communicate with and understand, not just in words, but in practice. Mpume explains the Shembe Church's belief in different cultures having different messiahs. Mpume uses the term Nazareth, which is another name for the Shembe church. Nazareth is suggestive of the birth place of Jesus (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 96): Mpume (interview with author, 2012) explained that:

“The Nazareth faith says each person must follow their own prophet from their own nation or culture.”

The Shembe Church's belief in a messiah is one of the few things that separate it from most African Traditional Religions. Religions like Christianity and Islam have founders or leaders who started the movement. This is usually not the case for many African religions. African religions often evolve through centuries as people respond to their history and current experiences (Idowu, 1973: 207).

There are many factors that come into play as African religions develop and reinvent themselves, for example: the environment, war, questions of origin, death and so on. Most African religions are not static, they transform over time, with many ideas and practices being rejected when they are no longer found to be relevant (Mbiti, 1975: 14). The Shembe Church differs because it did not start out like most African religions: the church had a founder and saviour who they believed was there to deliver the word of God. Members of the Shembe Church believe that “*ubuNazaretha*” (God's word) has always existed. The idea behind their religion was not created by Isaiah Shembe; it was God working through Isaiah Shembe. Shembe restored forgotten ideas and traditions that existed since the times of Moses and Abraham and were continued by Jesus and later on by Shembe. Isaiah Shembe went a step further than Jesus by presenting these ideas in a way that was relevant to Africans. Sihle explains the way in which God sends laws and rules to people through messiahs such as Jesus and Shembe. These messiahs are just some of the ways that God has appeared to people and nations:

People think we worship a man. UbuNazaretha is not a new thing. It has always been there, and this religion doesn't just begin with Shembe. God brought *ubuNazaretha* (saviour/ God's word) even to the Jews at one point, this saviour was Jesus. But the Jews' hearts were closed off and they were unwilling to obey God's word and they killed their messiah. *UbuNazaretha* shows itself in different ways in different nations and cultures. God brings us our own messiah who we can relate to. Expecting Africans to follow a non-African messiah is like expecting a cat to communicate with a dog - it doesn't work. Matthew 2:2 says God came down to earth and became a person amongst people. This shows also that people's saviours must be human so that people many relate to them, but they must also have Godliness. Shembe is no different. God has come down to earth in many forms; Jesus and Shembe are just two of the ways God has shown himself to people (Sihle, interview with author, 2012).

Youth teacher and mentor Senzo believes modern South African society does not fully understand Shembe ideas. Those who believe that the Shembe Church is a human invention are wrong; Senzo believes that the religion is God's word. The religion comes from more than just Isaiah Shembe; it comes from a higher supreme power:

“No...They do not understand our religion. *UmNazaretha* is God's word; it is a way of life. *UbuNazaretha* is God's love, God's trophy; we are just people that uphold God's law” (Senzo, interview with author, 2012).

The use of documentation and scripture is another factor the makes the Shembe Church different from other African religions. Many African religions have adopted the Bible or Quran. The Shembe Church also does this through its adoption of the Bible, but they also have scripture which is uniquely Shembe. The Shembe Church has a hymn book *Izihlabelelo zamaNazretha* and a Shembe Bible *Incwadi yomlando*, both of which document ancient Shembe practices and ideas. John Dube was said to have written Isaiah Shembe's dreams down, and helped Shembe write the Nazareth Bible so that he could teach his mission and spread the word of God (Ohlange Institute, 2011). The hymn book was published in 1940 by J Galilee Shembe and contains hymns written by both Isaiah and Galilee Shembe. The hymn book also largely draws on the Bible; with edited versions of the Psalms of David and other Old Testament writers. Some hymns are also inspired by the Ten Commandments. The hymn book also refers to social arrangements as well as prayers for the Sabbath, morning prayers and evening prayers. The hymns almost always carry a message or some profound teaching (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 70). The Shembe Bible and hymn book might have Christian influences, but for Ngidi it is still an African invention, one which he is very proud of:

The other thing that makes this church unique is that we have our own hymn book. It doesn't come from the west or from the east; it's from right here in Africa. We are unique because our

practices are different, even our cross is different. Our cross has a circle around it, meaning *ubuNazaretha* is never-ending (Ngidi, interview with author, 2011).

The origins and meanings of many Shembe practices drawn from African religion and cultural practices still remain a mystery. This is because most African cultures passed down their ideas through oral tradition. Most of what is documented is relatively new and is often done in reaction to Western propaganda and misconceptions about African cultures. There is no way of knowing what ATR was 500 years ago, so it would be almost impossible to compare ancient ATR to what it is today. We cannot speak of the purity of African religion/s. African religion is passed down from generation to generation with the new generation changing whatever is necessary in order to suit their current experiences. There are many ideas and practices that are forgotten forever as ideas are passed down (Lawson, 1985: 15; Mbiti, 1975: 15-16). The Shembe Church still makes use of oral tradition and the old ways of passing down knowledge, even though they have scripture. Members of the church are often grouped based on age and sex. The different groups have meetings where they are taught about their religion as well as how to live godly lives. Limo and Mbali discuss the monthly gatherings organized for women by the Shembe Church. They are named according to the days of the month they usually fall on. The female youth meetings are called *i25* because they usually take place on the 25th of every month. The female elder meetings are called *i13* or *i14* because they take place on the 13th or 14th of every month. As Limo (interview with author, 2012) describes:

We as youth women are treated in a decent manner. We have gatherings like *i25* where we are taught life skills and how to behave as young girls of ekuPhakameni. At these meetings we are encouraged to celebrate who we are by staying pure and natural and avoiding things like extensions and straightened hair. We are protected from the bad things that happen out there.

Mbali (interview with author, 2012) elaborated:

There are gatherings for women; we call these *i13* and *i14*, because they usually take place on the 13th and 14th of every month. We all gather and learn from each other regardless of whether you are married or not. I am very happy with the way we are treated. But the most important thing and what applies to everyone is respect.

Dumisani and Pinky discuss why they believe Shembe oral tradition is useful and the importance of learning from the elders of the Shembe Church:

We are taught life lessons, like respecting the home and our families and our future families when we are older. We also taught the ways in which we can further the important Shembe values when we are older, then we are the ones leading the church as priests and counsellors (Dumisani, interview with author, 2011).

For Pinky, the Shembe religion is important because it teaches respect:

We teach our children how to be respectful and humble people and to respect their elders. We teach them to understand that it is important to respect people because God is in people; God is in each and every single one of us. We teach children to be respectful in their mannerisms, their language and the way they address people. We teach them to be respectful in what they choose to wear; they have to respect themselves and their bodies. It is this way that Nazareth children are different from most, they understand and value respect (Pinky, interview with author, 2012).

These gatherings create a sense of community and unity. ATR often places the community over the individual. Ceremonies and rituals are mostly performed in groups, for example by family or by one or more cultural groups who have similar ideas and practices. Most African religions provide their followers with a sense of security and certainty in life (Mbiti, 1975: 13). People are often taught who they are; their origins, history and how they fit into their environment and society. They are advised on how to conduct themselves in different situations and how to solve their problems. Many African religions attempt to provide solutions to life's challenges, even though these may not been the right answers in every case (Mbiti, 1975: 13). The Sabbath prayer is just one of the many things that instruct Shembe followers how to relate to other people and to treat the environment with respect. Vukile Shembe (interview with author, 2012) explained:

This is the prayer of the Sabbath; it speaks of people honouring laws that praise God. 'May God give you the heart and patience to teach your son and respect his mother. Let the sin of not respecting his parents not be upon you the father.' So you see the laws begin in the home, they show how parents and children should relate to each other. These laws are followed to honour God as well as manage people's relations in the home or in society. These laws go on to say never disrupt your neighbour's life or progress and never be jealous of or want your neighbours achievements. The third law is about managing the relationship between people and the environment. I'm sure you know the challenges that face the world today when it comes to global warming. The reason why there is global warming is because people have broken this third law. People no longer respect the environment; they put their own selfish needs over those of the environment.

ATRs such as the Shembe Church provide answers to life's complex issues. These answers are often found through interactions with other members and sometimes even through rituals. Youth member Thandi feels protected and secure because of these gatherings:

There are preventative rules and events that we as girls have to attend and follow. I cannot attend these if I am a young woman who does not worship at *iBandla LamaNazareth...* as a member of the youth in the Shembe Church, we have special meetings throughout the year and there are often performances, it is fun. I like the way we are treated as the youth and I see the importance of it (Thandi, interview with author, 2011).

ATR provides answers and direction so people are usually not willing to abandon it quickly, unless it is for something that they deem to be more valuable. When Africans convert they

often mix their new religion and ATR. This way they think and feel like they are not losing something valuable. There is often a sense that they are gaining something valuable from both religious systems (Mbiti, 1975: 13). But there are cases where converts are ashamed to admit that they still practice ATR and so they secretly perform their cultural and religious rituals. Mbali (interview with author, 2012) explains how many Christian converts still find value in honouring their ancestors and culture:

“Many black Catholic or Methodist Christians still honour and respect their ancestors in the same way we do.”

Marget (interview with author, 2011) who is also a sangoma, shares some of the experiences she has had with Christian converts who still secretly practice ATR:

Those who are saved often publicly reject their cultural heritage and ancestors. They are also the first to seek advice from sangomas when things go badly in their lives. I know a Christian priest who only consults with me after midnight because he is ashamed of the fact that he practices and believes in ATR. Once he came to me complaining that his congregation is fading because his followers were slowly losing faith in him. His ancestors took away his followers because they were against his anti-ATR sentiment. We performed a ritual and I gave him some herbs he must use when he cleans his house (which was also his church). He came back to my house days later to thank me because his congregation was restored and it was bigger and better than ever. There was also an incident when I came across an accident while going to the Eastern Cape. My church members and I were the first to arrive at the scene so we tried to help some people. The taxi that was involved in the accident was transporting a church choir or something. We found the priest in very bad shape. We tried to take off his robes so he could breathe properly but he protested, eventually he was too weak to fight so we took his robes off. When we de-robed the priest we saw that he was wearing *iziphandla* [animal skin usually worn on wrist, worn for protection or after some kind of rite of passage, for example birth, death, traditional 21st, etc.] on his upper arms. He wore them there to hide them from his congregation. His congregation became very upset at him when they saw this because these are the things he as a priest rejected and called demon worship.

Indeed, many African converts do not abandon their traditional religion. ATR has values they grew up with and often find it hard to relinquish these. Traditional religion often remains amongst African converts for several generations or even centuries (Idowu, 1973: 206). Religion and culture are almost inseparable in most African cultures. Sbu, Gugu and Sophia discuss the similarities in practices and ideas between the Shembe Church and their cultures:

Well, like in the Zulu culture, you can't really separate culture from religion. When we slaughter a cow culturally, it's also religious. We also wear traditional clothes as the Zulu culture does. So I think my religion and my culture are related; we do acknowledge our ancestors in both (Sbu, interview with author, 2012).

Gugu (interview with author, 2012) adds: “Traditional cultural practices are what we prioritise as Nazareths. We honour our ancestors and keep our culture.”

Sophia (interview with author, 2012) explains:

The thing that I like about eBuhleni is that as a religion we see the importance of culture as well as the belief in God. This church also encourages mothers to be self-respecting mothers and for them to raise their children with a strict moral code. We also encourage each other and advise each other on how to live godly lives. Like I said, we have also kept our culture, we burn *impepho* [a kind of herb used in rituals to awaken the ancestors], we speak to our ancestors at *emsamo* (where people communicate with the ancestors, usually at the centre of the house).

Culture and religion are often so intertwined that it is not uncommon to find groups who practise the same religion but do so in different ways. Xhosa Shembe members might place more importance on circumcision for boys as an important practice that pleases God, while Zulu members focus more on virgin testing for girls. The Shembe Church still encourages the honouring and respecting of culture and history, even though it has evangelised and adopted Christianity. In most cases “a person must be born to a particular African people in order to be able to follow African religion in that particular group” (Mbiti, 1975: 12). It is therefore often meaningless to convert, because converts might feel lost and displaced in their new religion, as their new religion might ask them to reject their old cultural ideas, practices, dress, etc. Some of the practices that people reject are necessary for their survival as individuals and the community as a whole. The community suffers when individuals convert, because often there is no one to perform the new convert’s old social duties (Somé, 1997: 91). The Shembe Church shows that Christianity and ATR can coexist. Christianity often encourages people to reject their cultural ways in order to be a ‘good’ Christian. The Shembe church does the opposite. People are encouraged to celebrate their culture, and the only cultural practices that people are encouraged to reject are those that disrupt society and order. Sihle (interview with author, 2012) discusses some of the destructive practices; Isaiah Shembe encouraged his followers to reject these practices:

We are taught how to conduct ourselves, respect ourselves and others. We avoid worldly evils, such as premarital sex and drinking, which protects us from diseases. I understand the reasons why we as young women are treated differently here at ekuPhakameni. Young women are important in society because they create and shape the future generation. This is why we have to look after ourselves, be respectful and adopt good values so that one day we may pass them on to our children and our children’s children. This is how society is built; the church teaches us these values as young women at ekuPhakameni.

Celebrating culture is very important in ATR; it is what most African religions have in common. People worship God in a way with which they are familiar and comfortable. This might mean engaging with the ancestors or kneeling when praying. Religious figures like God, Shembe and Jesus are very important; this is why people kneel when they pray. People

kneel as a way of humbling themselves when communicating with God, messiahs or ancestors. Kneeling or bowing when talking to elders or authoritative figures is also a Zulu practice, this is done out of respect (Ndlovu, 2013).

Yes, there is an element of ancestral honouring, because even the Chief encourages us to respect our ancestors. We also make offering and pray for our ancestors, so that wherever they are, whatever problems they face; they may be protected by God. By doing this we take them out of their struggles.(Gugu interview with author, 2012).

6.3. Communicating with God through mediators

The idea of God might be an old one for many African religions. One can find many similarities in the definition of God across many different African cultures. Many cultures believe the spirit world is real and near and that its forces are always working together, intertwining with and inspiring the visible world (Parrinder, 1974: 10). There are many similarities amongst different cultural fields when it comes to the African conception of God. The uniformity and resemblance within African society is more evident in the religious fields. For many Africans the spirit world is so close that its forces link and connect with the visible world (Parrinder, 1974:11).

In 1871 Edward Tylor put forward the idea of ‘animism’ or the theory of souls as the fundamental concept of religion. For Tylor, belief in spiritual beings or souls is the root of all religious faith. He saw animism as the minimum definition of religion (Parrinder, 1974: 20). Edward Evans Prichard adopts a similar minimalist Tylorian definition of religion. Evans-Prichard believes that religion can be defined as “a concern of man in society with basic human ends and standards of value, seen in relation to non-human entities or powers” (Evans-Prichard, 1956: 131). Humans and supernatural forces such as spirits, ancestors and God are all interconnected (Goody, 1961: 151). The spiritual realm is so real and near, some religious practices are even said to be related to social structure and order. These practices please God and the ancestors and better the community at the same time (Goody, 1961: 161). For the Shembe church such practices might be the dance rituals that are performed by members. Shembe members believe they please God, but they also create unity and solidarity between members who practice the performance for weeks (Muller, 1994: 42). The idea of a soul is an old one - Tylor thought it to be derived from the breath, and also from dreams in which dead people appear, and so came the idea that their souls must still be alive. From this people believe that animals and even inanimate objects (the sun, stars, wind, rivers, rocks and trees) have souls. Life and divinity are attributed to nature, perhaps as a way to protect and

conserve the environment (Bird-David, 1999: s67; Parrinder, 1974: 21). This kind of conservation is clear in Shembe ideas that promote a triangular continuous relationship between God and ancestors, people, and finally the environment. The Shembe Church encourages the protection of the natural environment, but there are objects and places they attribute more importance to. For example, the rock situated at eBuhleni is believed to have Isaiah Shembe's footprint on it. A similar sacred place is the holy Mount iNhlankazi where the Shembe Church has their annual January religious pilgrimage (Meersman, 2012). This mountain is sacred because it is the place where God communicated with Isaiah Shembe. The pilgrimage is done to re-enact and retrace the journey Isaiah Shembe once took (Meersman, 2012).

Tylor's theory has been criticized for being too academic; his theory is based too much on an abstract intangible idea of religion. Tylor's definition does not fit those people who believe in gods which have no apparent relationship with ghosts or spirits. In 1899, R.R. Marett refined Tylor's theory of animism and coined the term 'animatism'. Animatism represents the belief in impersonal spiritual power or a life-force pervading all things. Both theories can be easily linked with the African belief in ancestors and the notion that the dead are in many ways living spirits in a different realm from ours (Parrinder, 1974: 21). Margret and Mntu talk about ancestral honouring within the Shembe religion. Mntu (interview with author, 2012) explains how this practice is mostly derived from old African practices:

EkuPhakameni brings back the old African beliefs and instructions that were set out by God and not missionaries. Christians are more concerned with their own lives here on earth. We have a deeper history than that ekuPhakameni because we honour the living and the dead ancestors.

Margret (interview with author, 2011) adds:

“All of us as here [referring to the July gathering] and those who are at home respect and honour our culture and ancestors; our beliefs are the same when it comes to that.”

In many parts of West Africa, the term used is *nyama*, which means energy, power or force. From Sudan to Guinea Coast, one can find variants of this word, in some cases used as God or to describe human and animal strength. The term can also be used to describe the mysterious forces in medicines (Kamara, 2000: 508). *Nyama* is often conceived of as impersonal, unconscious energy, found in humans, animals, Gods, nature and other material things” (Parrinder, 1974: 22). *Nyama* is not the outward appearance, but the inner spirit. The

following words have similar meanings in different cultures; *Baraka*, *kofi*, *ire* and *ashe*. In East and Central Africa we find the concept of *bwanga* which has been described as the power for healing or for destroying, for protecting or for hurting. This kind of dynamism is found in the power of charms, medicine, ancestral rituals and in the secret forces of witches. More than 20 African languages use the term *bwanga* (Parrinder, 1974: 22).

The Kikuyu of Kenya believe in a Supreme God called *Murungu*. He is believed to live on four sacred mountains, even though he is also all-pervading and invisible. He is also called “Possessor of Whiteness” because of his association with the sky. One finds in many parts of Africa this association of the Supreme God and his priests with whiteness. God is the creator of all things. He shows his power in sun, moon, star, storms, rain and the rainbow (Thorpe, 1991: 35). The name *Murungu* or *Mulungu* is found among 25 different cultural groups in East Africa (Thorpe, 1991: 35). The word *mulungu* is used to mean ‘white person’ in Zulu and many other South African languages. Attaching whiteness to godliness has some problems of its own. It is an idea mostly likely brought on by the missionaries and their depiction of God and other religious figures (Wilson, 2004). This further helped the colonizers maintain control of Africa; because God was “white” and they are white they must be closer to godliness and must therefore be obeyed.

Lezais another favourite East African name for God; this term is used in Zambia, Tanzania and upper Congo. This word many come from a verb meaning “to cherish”, as a mother does her child or a chief does his people. The Basuto call their Supreme Being *Molimo* which could either mean light, father or protector. In Botswana they use a similar name *Morimo* for God. The Zulu word for God is *Nkulunkulu*; the direct translation of which is “great, great one” or “old, old one”. The word also means “Lord of heaven” or “Chief in the sky”. The word also implies great wisdom. Other Zulu words referring to God are; *uMvelinqangi* which means “first to appear or exist”; while *uMpande* or *uNsondo* both imply “one who causes growth in plants, originally and continually”. Finally, *uSomandla* means almighty, omniscient, omnipotent creator (Thorpe, 1991: 36). Ngidi believes that there is no appropriate English translation for *Nkulunkulu* or *uMvelinqangi*. For him Shembe, members only worship *Mvelinqangi*. Ngidi (interview with author, 2011) explains:

“What I am talking about here is *uMvelinqangi*, not God: that is not *Nkulunkulu*’s name. The word God was coined by heretics. We praise *Mvelinqangi*.”

As already mentioned, the Zulus believe that the most powerful spirit is the one who was the first to exist, the one who created all things. This is the spirit many Zulus believe in. “uMvelinqangi” uses other less powerful spirits to communicate with people. These spirits are the mediators, who help link humans with God. “In the system of connected forces comes the idea of spirits in which many Africans believe. Some of them are personified as gods in animistic fashion” (Parrinder, 1974: 24). Above all the forces is the Supreme Being or God. The power of God is supreme: all flows from God (Parrinder, 1974: 24). Ancestors are mediators: prayers and offerings made to them may be passed on to the source of all life and things (Kamara, 2000: 508). The relationship between these spiritual powers can be represented by a triangle, with the sky at the top, which symbolises God or supreme power, while the material and spiritual are intertwined with the former as a vehicle of the latter. One side of the triangle is life; the opposite side are the ancestors and the spirits. The living and the dead ancestors are narrowly divided by death, but they are still connected (Parrinder, 1974: 25 and 27). There are many ancestors, forces and spirits that fall under God. Many of these forces are even connected to God, but there is only one God (Wiredu, 1998: 37; McVeigh, 1974: 35).

There are many theories of the origin of the belief in God in Africa, none of which are conclusive. Many African cultures believe that God is omnipresent, all-knowing and eternal. There is a belief that God judges, gives long life and takes care. Even though God lives in the sky, people can appeal to God for justice, while God also punishes, rewards and forgives (Parrinder, 1974: 32). God is also often portrayed as dual sex, with certain female and male characteristics. For example, Mother Nature is seen as an extension of God. In Shembe religion, Nomkhubulwane represents nature and fertility; she is a very powerful figure in Shembe and Zulu mythology (Scorgie, 2002: 57). Nature’s forces such as the sun, rivers and the sky are often attributed to God. God is also sometimes seen as a spirit or formless and without a sex, even though God is often attributed humanlike characteristics. Another female characteristic of God comes from the idea of “Lord of the sky” which is what many Africans call God. The sky makes one think of rain, spring and therefore growth and fertility. A male characteristic is when God is often referred to as “father”. God is also often described as “mighty” and “powerful”, which are terms often associated with men and masculinity (Parrinder, 1974: 33 and 34; Thorpe, 1991: 37).

Many Nguni cultures believe that God was the first ancestor and that God existed before the arrival of missionaries (Parrinder, 1974: 35; Thorpe, 1991: 36). Many Africans also believe that because God is so powerful, one has to go through certain channels in order to approach him. For Catholics this might be the Virgin Mary, for Protestants this might be Jesus or the Holy Spirit and for Africans this is done through the ancestors (Thorpe, 1991: 36). Sihle and Vukile Shembe explain the role ancestors play within the Shembe Church. Sihle rejects the false idea people have about Shembe members worshiping their ancestors. Sihle believes that ancestors are just mediators between people and God:

We don't worship our ancestors, but there is a small connection between Nazareth religion and ancestral honouring. One of the priests was saying yesterday that when we pray we must remember those family members and loved ones that are no longer with us. He encouraged us to ask God to remember them and help them with whatever struggles they may be facing in their different realms so that they too may be able to enter heaven. Ancestors are important, because we are often not pure or awakened enough to be in the presences of God. God then often communicates with us through ancestors. Things that have to be said to me have to come from my family members who have passed, so that I may relate to the message better. God therefore uses ancestors to communicate with people and answer their prayers (Sihle, interview with author, 2012).

Vukile Shembe (interview with author, 2012) explains further:

Once a good person enters the spiritual realm we trust that they continue being good and the spirit becomes an angel we can call upon when we want to communicate with God. We acknowledge that God is too powerful and pure for us to speak to directly. The good spirits become good representatives, because they understand our struggles and imperfections, because they have been here, but they are now holy. There is evidence of this in the Bible, although the Bible is problematic because it accords to the culture of a certain nation, and as a result omits certain events for political reasons. When God was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, God made Abraham aware of this. God sent Abraham an angel. It is my belief that it is not possible that this angel had no association with Abraham; he couldn't have known that this was an angel if it was someone he hadn't once known. Abraham recognised that it was someone he once knew but who is no longer on earth. It could've been a family member, or so on.

Older people in the community are on their way to ancestorhood and are given the respect they deserve; they are called *amadlozi* (meaning ancestors) even before their death. Some African religions see physical separation from the visible community as just one more step on the journey of life (Okwu, 1979: 19). An old person is not mourned excessively at death, because death in old age is considered normal and is expected. The body is buried in the earth where the *amadlozi* are said to reside (Thorpe, 1991: 39). The mere fact of death and burial does not enable a person to become an ancestor: additional ritual actions must be conducted. In Zulu culture, the *ukubuyisa idlozi* ceremony (bringing home of the spirit) is held a year or

two after death. An ox is sacrificed and the deceased's name is added in the praise list along with the other ancestors (Thorpe, 1991: 37; Okwu, 1979: 21). Vukile Shembe describes good ancestors as angels and explains the role they play in mediating between the living and God:

The thing with ancestors is that the way we acknowledge and relate to ancestors is different. We at ekuPhakameni relate to ancestors differently from Zulus or people engaging with them for cultural reasons. Culturally speaking, people acknowledge all dead family members. They have to honour all of them and have a relationship with all of them, irrespective of how they lived their lives here on earth. It doesn't acknowledge that fact that the person might be a bad spirit and not be in heaven with God because of the way they lived on earth. We acknowledge that not all people are good. The people who die and lived good lives we see as angels, which is why we involve them when we perform our religious practices. We rank them in the same way we have rankings in society. In the same way a child could not approach their father, they had to speak to their mother first. This has obviously changed. Similar rankings exist even in heaven, the things we do on earth determine the positions we will occupy in heaven or in the spiritual realm. We are here on earth as students. When we graduate we will go to heaven and be ranked based on how well we did here on earth. Some people do return to earth as reincarnates, this is usually because they failed the first time and were brought back by God. Some people do try and breach these laws of reincarnation. They do this by trying to enter into bodies they were not assigned to and this is how we enter demons and evil spirits. We as people do open the window to these evil spirits and demons. The more you associate with similar bad things the spirit used to do, the more you create a bond between yourself and the spirit. We have a ritual here when someone converts to Nazareth faith. We acknowledge the special bond we have with those that are dead. So we ask God to remember those people so that they too may enter into the light. We ask God to forgive their sins. We call it baptism for the dead. This is a lengthy process. We are also agents here on earth, not only for our own cause, but also for those who are gone. Through faith the things that happen here on earth affect what happens in the spiritual realm. God sees our attempts to save those ancestors who led bad lives here on earth. God is all merciful and he accepts the things we do for the dead. When the rituals are complete, the spirit then becomes an angel and joins the other people who lived good lives here on earth. Just to go back to making the distinction between cultural and Nazareth ancestral honouring... Culturally, people ask their ancestors for luck and so on, this doesn't always work. The reason for this being that one can't start being an agent of peace just because they are now in the spiritual realm. It begins here on earth, and you have to pass that class here on earth or through an earthly representative. Once a good person enters the spiritual realm we trust that they continue being good and the spirit becomes an angel we can call upon when we want to communicate with God (Vukile Shembe, interview with author, 2012).

The Shembe Church believes that ancestors like to be remembered and honoured. Ancestors are dependent upon the living for their happiness, while the living need the help of ancestors in their struggle against the evils of life. The dead are important because they are more powerful and know more than the living (McVeigh, 1974: 29 and 34). As Vukile Shembe explained, some ancestors take possession of living humans' and animals' bodies. Therefore, many ATRs respect nature and living things because they want to honour and project the spirits that reside in them (McVeigh, 1974: 30). Many make the mistake of saying ATR

encourages the worshipping of ancestors. Some see ancestral honouring as demon worshipping. Mbali and other interview participants explain how they feel about this issue:

We don't worship the ancestors. Our ancestors are our fathers, our mothers, sisters. They are your mother, his sister, and their grandparents and so on. Ancestors are just people, like you and me; they are people who used to live. To honour them is to thank God for their lives and to acknowledged that they once lived. We have to honour them because we owe them our lives, as we sit here. We are products of our ancestors, the fruits of their labour. Our families thanked God when we were born. Honouring the ancestors is no different, it's thanking God that I was born into this family, it's saying I appreciate the fact that you are/were my father or mother. The dead may disappear from our sight, but their spirits live on. We don't worship them, we only worship God. We can't forget our ancestors because we are their blood, bones and flesh. Ancestral honour is just a way of showing your love and joy to your family and God. I thank God for giving me the children that I have. One day when I die they will do the same if they felt I was a good mother... I think the problem lies in the definition of what an ancestor is. Most people love and appreciate their parents. So when I speak of ancestors I speak of these people that raised me, that I love and that I looked up to. It doesn't make sense to me how people can suddenly be against ancestors, how can you be against your father, your grandfather or your mother? These sacrifices we make are just a way of connecting with them. If Christians saw ancestors in this light, I believe they wouldn't be at odds with them. The problem is the way they define ancestors and the fact that they distance themselves from ancestors. They need to understand that these are their family members and your family history; it helps us understand where we came from. I'm sure if the dead pray, they carry on praying for their loved ones in the manner they once did when they were living. We, too, here on earth pray for them in the same way we once did when they were living. If we neglect them, it would imply we never loved them when they were alive (Mbali, interview with author, 2012).

Dumisani draws similarities between his cultural and his religious practices. Both place importance on ancestral honouring:

A lot of my religion has to do with ancestral honouring. Culturally we burn *imphehpo* to communicate certain things with the ancestors and at the church we do the same. And other things as well. Many priests often say our presence here is as representatives for our forefathers (Dumisani, interview with author, 2011).

Like God, ancestors have powers and they can make their approval and disapproval felt. Ancestors however are not as powerful as the Supreme Being. When the ancestors are upset, they can bring sickness to an individual, barrenness on women, or misfortune such as the loss of a job or a poor harvest (Wiredu, 1998: 32). When they are happy, they can show their approval by sending prosperity and fertility to both fields and people. When unpleasant events or signs occur, it is necessary to consult a diviner to establish which ancestral shade is responsible so as to determine what sacrifice is expected. One can also offer a sacrifice directly to the ancestor assumed to be responsible, without consulting a diviner, as the ancestor/s responsible might reveal themselves through a dream. The latter way is risky, because one could make the ancestor responsible for the misfortune angrier if the sacrifice is

made to the wrong ancestor (Thorpe, 1991: 40). Sacrifices are offered in honour of the spirits of the dead. The ancestors are included in all actions where the well-being of the community is an issue. Beliefs concerning the ancestral shades are closely connected with those concerning the diviners, known as *izangoma*. *Izangoma* are the mediators between people and the ancestors (Janzen, 1995: 147). People have to maintain a safe and respectful distance from the ancestors. The only exception is in special circumstances when one's very close presence is required. When an individual's presence is required by the ancestors, that individual has to enter into a state called 'brooding'. Brooding changes the person into a different individual. A person may become mentally deranged through excessive brooding, or that person may become a diviner (Thorpe, 1991: 41).

Diviners teach humankind about the existence and proper care of ancestors. At the same time, diviners are believed to have received their calling from the ancestral spirits. The calling comes in the form of an illness characterised by body pains, uncontrollable nervous twitching and periods of dissociation or trance (Janzen, 1995: 149). The person is awakened at night by ancestral shades; this is because the ancestors communicate best at night or early in the morning when it is quiet. If the person rejects the calling they may never recover and possibly die (Thorpe, 1991: 42). The first step of accepting the calling is for the sufferer to go to a practicing *sangoma*. The *sangoma* should then determine which ancestral spirits are responsible for the call. If the sickness is diagnosed as *ukuthwasa*, it must be decided whether to attempt to expel the spirit or to accept it (Janzen, 1995: 146). If the person accepts the spirit, s/he undergoes training; making and using medicine and inducing trances especially by means of dancing. The *thwasa* has to learn to adjust to the condition known as brooding without becoming mentally ill. The *thwasamust* also acquire the knowledge and skills needed to become a diviner. *Izinyanga* (doctors/herbalists) and *izangoma* (diviners) are two distinct professions; however nowadays the line is often blurred. Both *izangoma* and *izinyanga* play a very important role within the religious field because of the role they play during the calling. They also have a close relationship with ancestors, nature, people and the spirit world as a whole (Thorpe, 1991: 42). *Izangoma* and *izinyanga* are also important mediators who often build the necessary interaction between all living things (nature, ancestors and people). In so doing they create a strong ubuntu bond (McVeigh, 1974: 33).

6.4. Shembe rituals: practices that please God and the ancestors

6.4.1. *Virginity testing*

There are many rituals the Shembe Church performs in an attempt to please and worship God. These rituals regularly have other functions and are important because they often create some form of social order and strengthen the *ubuntu* bond. These rituals also celebrate Africanness, cultural history, unity, the community and assist in passing down knowledge. Virginity testing, the importance of *ukusina* (traditional/cultural dance) and hymns are just some of the practices that do this.

The practice of virgin testing has been surrounded by controversy. However, it is important to discuss the history and origins of this practice before getting into the debate that surrounds it. Virginity testing is most common amongst Zulus in South Africa and has been since pre-colonial times (Hugo, 2012). The test was usually administered by a carefully selected elderly woman. The elderly woman would perform the test at the local chief's homestead at his request. More private tests were also performed in households by mothers and grandmothers (Scorgie, 2002: 61). "The regulation of pre-marital sex behaviour was to control fertility to ensure that children were born within the boundaries of the patrilineal" (Hugo, 2012: unpagued). A man's family would pay more in *lobola* negotiations if the girl he wished to marry was a virgin. This practice is still largely carried out even today.

Colonialism, Christianity and apartheid almost led to the end of virginity testing. Christian Missionaries labelled many African beliefs and practices as evil. The Unlawful Organizations Act under the apartheid government made it illegal for many cultural and religious groups to meet and practice their religious and cultural beliefs. This made it almost impossible for many black people to continue virginity testing and many other religious and cultural rituals (Stanford, 2012: unpagued). The end of apartheid in 1994 marked the re-emergence of virginity testing. This old practice started to reappear in townships like Kwa-Mashu, where local women would organise small events. The aim of these events was to publically test girls and bring back the importance this practice once had. This practice became very popular and it began to spread to other townships. The testing also grew into big-scale monthly testing events. The girls tested would range from 8 to 25 years old (Hugo, 2012: unpagued). When a girl is confirmed a virgin, a celebration would take place in the form of dancing, singing and

ulations. When a girl fails, she is taken aside so that testers may enquire about the reason for her lost virginity (Scorgie, 2002: 58).

The birth of democracy in South Africa led to a kind of African Renaissance discourse, with many exercising their right to practice their culture. The aim was to restore and regenerate cultural pride (Ngalwa, 2004; Scorgie, 2002: 55). However, this new change was met with some resistance and was challenged by the media, the new government and modern society as a whole. Many felt that practices such as virginity testing had no place in modern society and were deemed to be human rights violations. In 2005 the South African government banned the testing of girls younger than 16 (Vincent, 2006: 17). The government received criticism for this ban, as many black South Africans felt that they were too heavily influenced by Western society. Many black South Africans also felt that this new ban was a violation of their cultural and religious rights, which were protected by the constitution. This ban was therefore seen to be at odds with the constitution (Medical News Today, 2008: unpagged).

This cultural and religious practice has been rejected by government and Western society, who have given little recognition to its positive side. This practice was not revived just to celebrate African culture; it also serves a very important function in modern society. Virginity testing was readopted as a solution to the growing problem of HIV/AIDS, STIs and unwanted pregnancy (George, 2008: 1447). Many people feel that the government has not done enough to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. Supporters of virginity testing believe that the government places too much emphasis on prevention in the form of condom use and not enough emphasis on abstinence (Ngalwa, 2004: unpagged). Virginity testing is most common among Zulus in South Africa. The test is usually performed by elderly women and it involves examining the genitals of the girl for torn hymens (Medical News Today, 2008: unpagged). Shembe female youths Thandi and Sihle believe that virginity testing is important. They explain that this practice encourages girls to abstain. Thandi (interview with author, 2011) believes that they are therefore protected from the risks associated with sex and sexual activity:

There is this custom that we practice as Zulu girls. We as Zulu girls undergo virginity testing. The same practice is performed here ekuPhakameni. But you get outsiders who belittle our custom and refer to it as abuse. So yeah, there are clashes in ideas... It is important because it saves you from illness such as HIV and STIs. You won't get HIV if you abstain and go for virginity testing, and these tests help us abstain.

Sihle (interview with author, 2012) elaborates:

Young girls are taught to look after themselves and preserve their sexual purity, but government does not promote abstinence. We also believe that if a young girl happens to fall pregnant they should keep the baby because all life is precious; government on the other hand encourages our young girls to have abortions.

This practice also educates girls, teaches them new skills and brings the community together. Virgin testing is not just about inspecting girls. Women who organise the tests also aim to share cultural knowledge with young girls. Girls are taught traditional crafts, cultural performances, agricultural practices, preparation of traditional foods and general life lessons, morals and values. People form new bonds and networks. This creates unity and solidarity in the community and more importantly, amongst women. The women who are involved have similar interests and have the same goal in mind; they teach each other new skills and encourage one another to abstain from sex (Hugo, 2012: unpagged). Testing also helps to reveal incidents of abuse and rape. Abused girls who feared exposing their abusers receive the help and support they need. Girls who are sexually active are also often encouraged to abstain and focus their attention on other things (Hugo, 2012: unpagged). The virgin testing also helps to restore parental control over the youth and fading moral standards (Scorgie, 2002: 61).

Virginity testing has been encouraged and practised by various African religious groups, including the Shembe Church. The Shembe church believes that Zulu Goddess Nomkhubulwane keeps girls away from dangers associated with sex (Ngalwa, 2004: unpagged). Shembe young women Sihle and Thandi had the following to say about the practice and why they think it is important:

I feel free and at ease because my coming to worship here limits and saves me from many things... There are preventative rules and events that we as girls have to attend and follow. I cannot attend these if I am a young woman who does not worship at iBandla lamaNazaretha... it saves me from bad things, many bad things (Thandi, interview with author, 2011).

Sihle (interview with author, 2012) agrees with Thandi, adding that she is protected by the abstinence rule:

I feel welcomed and accepted here at ekuPhakameni. We are taught how to conduct ourselves, respect ourselves and others. We avoid worldly evils, such as premarital sex and drinking, which protects us from diseases. I understand the reasons why we as young women are treated differently here at ekuPhakameni. Young women are important in society because they end up creating and shaping the future generation. This is why we have to look after ourselves, be respectful and adopt good values so that one day we may pass them on to our children and our children's children. This is how society is built; the church teaches us these values as young women at ekuPhakameni.

The Goddess Nomkhubulwane is believed to be the daughter of God. She is also a rain and fertility Goddess who fertilises women and the earth. Zulus often call upon Nomkhubulwane during times of droughts and give her thanks when the harvest has been good. UNomkhubulwane was believed to live on a mountain. Only virgins were allowed to go this mountain and communicate with the Goddess. The girls representing the community had to be pure so that their pleas could be heard and their prayers answered (Ngalwa, 2004: unpagged). Nomkhubulwane encouraged purity: girls had to remain virgins in order to retain this ritual purity. The reward for maintaining this ritual purity would be the protection of all Shembe people, especial those living in the Nazareth Mecca (Muller, 1999: 161). A further reward would be “the privilege of a continuing special relationship with the Nazarite Prophet” (Muller, 1999: 161). Nomkhubulwane is depicted as a virgin; she is often associated with young girls ready for marriage, with spring, rain, animals and agriculture. She acts as an adviser to girls on issues of personal behaviour and selection of marriage companions (Muller, 1999: 162). Rituals linked to uNomkhubulwane are often performed by naked virgin girls (Muller, 1999: 163). The ritual purity of the dancing bodies of virgin girls can heal by bringing rain and fertility to the land (Muller, 1999: 160). “Failure to observe moral rules connected with sex is believed to cause evil to befall over the community” (Muller, 1999: 163).

Although the virgin testing ritual is very useful to those who practice it, it has a negative side. It is often a one-sided practice as it encourages only girls to maintain their sexual purity (Ngalwa, 2004: unpagged). This practice needs to go further by encouraging boys to abstain. Another issue with this practice is that many see it as an invasion of privacy and a violation of an individual’s right to control her own body (Scorgie, 2002: 55). However, those who are for it say banning this practice is a violation of cultural and religious rights (Medical News Today, 2008: unpagged). This practice has also been criticised because girls who are found not to be virgins are sometimes isolated by their community and as a result become emotionally damaged (Medical News Today, 2008: unpagged). The commercialisation of African culture has taken the custom of virginity testing of young girls out of the private sphere where it belongs. Tests now take place at big stadiums and sports grounds, prominent politicians often attend and give speeches and support the practice. The practice has also been corrupted over the years, with people sometimes bribing testers (Hugo, 2012: unpagged). Girls who pass their virginity test also face the risk of being raped. Some people believe that sex with a virgin can cure HIV/AIDS. Girls who pass their virginity test therefore run the risk of being targeted,

raped and contracting HIV (Medical News Today, 2008: unpagged). This practice is also dangerous because girls are taught to open their legs for authorities wishing to inspect them; this could increase the girl's vulnerability to sexual abuse. It also helps abusers gain access to the girls; this can spread rather than curb the spread of HIV (Hugo, 2012: unpagged). Virginitv testers sometime unintentionally contribute to the spread of HIV and STIs when they inspect one girl after another at mass virgin testing events. Health authorities in KwaZulu-Natal have started distributing latex gloves in response to this problem. Testers are also taught how to use the gloves properly (Medical News Today, 2008: unpagged).

Virginitv testing is often voluntary (Ngalwa, 2004: unpagged), but girls often feel indirect pressure from the community. The decision to abstain from sex is not always the individual's choice. Tests evoke shame and fear of stigmatisation. As a result, girls who are not virgins take extreme measures to avoid failing the test. Some try to create the appearance of an unbroken hymen by inserting foreign objects into their genitals (Hugo, 2012: unpagged). Other girls agree to anal sex in fear of failing their virginitv tests. Doctors in areas where virginitv testing has become common, report an increase in physical traumas associated with anal sex activity amongst young women. Girls end up engaging in sexual practices that increase, rather than decrease, their risk of contracting HIV (Hugo, 2012: unpagged).

6.4.1.1. Solutions and recommendations

There are many problems with virginitv testing, but most of the critiques come from people who observe and judge this practice through a Western lens. "Using a universal rights perspective on morality can result in such a practice being understood as sexist or abusive, especially if one considers the form this practice sometimes takes" (Hugo, 2012: unpagged). The solution to fixing the problems arising from this practice is to not attack it in the same way colonisers and missionaries attacked and rejected African culture. Society also needs to understand that the best solutions for many problems lie in the ability to collaborate and work together. Many Western solutions to the spread of HIV/AIDS have seen little success, as one in ten South Africans is infected with the virus (Hugo, 2012: unpagged). Virginitv testing offers an alternative solution, one that is uniquely African, to which Africans can better relate. This is not to say the practice is not flawed, which is why collaboration between African and Western ideas is important. The girls who take part in this practice also need to receive sex education, so that they know the various ways (including unprotected anal and oral sex) one can be infected with HIV. Young girls who get tested can and should also be accompanied by

their mothers, older sister or friends; this is to ensure that girls are not sexually abused during testing. Official schools or testing centres can also be created, so that girls do not find themselves being abused by posers.

Working towards removing the non-virgin stigmas or pressure is also important and necessary. Banning or rejecting is not the solution; this only angers people and makes them very defensive. This could lead to people illegally performing virginity tests in an improper way. Many black South Africans feel that their culture is lost or is on the verge of extinction as a result of modernity and Western influences. People often end up holding on to “bad” cultural practices and ideas in an attempt to hold on to their identity. This is done to an even greater extent when people feel that their culture is under threat. It is better to find ways in which cultural practices can be improved.

6.4.2. Praise performances

Praise performances are a crucial part of most Shembe rituals and rites of passage. Shembe forms of expression (music and dance) are very important during the virgin testing ritual. These praise performances revive old African forms of expression, but more importantly members believe they please God and the ancestors. One way the Shembe Church keeps its cultural and religious identity alive is through performances and various forms of expression and even ‘normal’ daily activities. All aspects of life are religious in most African cultures/religions. Things like building a house, agriculture and marriage are all transactions between people, ancestors and God. Art and various forms of expression are no different (Nyirongo, 1997: 195). *Ukusina* is largely led and controlled by virgin girls, unlike *inkhonz*o(church service) which is often led by men. The young girls signal the time of its beginning and ending. Young virgin girls play an important role in the structuring of *ukusina* dance festivals (Muller, 1994: 157 and 239). Muller suggests that the reason for this

“Lies in the articulation of musical/dance time through mechanisms of repetition and cyclicity, which are metaphors of larger patterns of re-enactment. These are believed to play a central role in the natural and biological cycles of production and reproduction” (Muller, 1994: 158).

Women’s bodies have to be strong and healthy for the ritual dance; because the dance can last up to five or six hours. The girls must also be pure, because the dance is seen as a form of

religious praise; it is not just for entertainment and leisure. The idea that dance is religious is at odds with Christian missionary ideology. Isaiah Shembe believed that the sacred dance is no different to a prayer. The dance festival begins with communication with the ancestors and ends with Shembe saying 'amen' (Muller, 1994: 220). Some festivals are not just for young girls, but young girls still play the most important role, they still determine the structure of the *umgidi* or dance festival. The girls are the first to be blessed by Shembe at the beginning of the event (Muller, 1994: 221). The Shembe *umgidi* borrows from the Zulu traditional dance style (Tishken, 2006: 82). The ritual dance also links the living and the dead. The ancestors gave Isaiah Shembe the gift of the hymns and sacred dance; he passed on the gift to his followers who return the gift to the ancestor through performance (Tishken, 2006: 82; Muller, 2002: 417). As already mentioned, art forms are used as prayer or communication with ancestors and God. Shembe performances often highlight social issues of the time, such as loss of community, culture, morals and other issues. Many of these issues are still relevant today. The dance and performances therefore also serve the purpose of uniting the community; they are also pleas to God to intervene (Nyirongo, 1997: 198). Paul Weinberg explains the importance of worshiping God through performance. He also believes that many people are converting back to African religions like the Shembe Church because they are similar to their culture and can better relate to them:

Post-apartheid didn't bring poor people more wealth; in fact people are poorer, there's more inequality. As a result, people are still in search of answers and not just in Africa, but throughout the third world and Africa in particular. People look for spiritual answers to these unanswered contradictions that don't go away. So there's also been a rise in the traditional route. But I think there are also cultural reasons: people feel more comfortable with Shembe because you know, it's Zulu and the dance. People love the dance; it's a huge, big part of their culture. The dances are very beautiful, very slow... People said; when we dance, we dance for God, that's why we love to dance. That takes you to very deep African sentiment and way of life, cultural practice through dance and you express yourself through body form. The dance, the drum and music and the whole spectacle, brings up and raises up the spirit (Paul Weinberg, interview with author, 2012).

Isaiah Shembe saw *ukusina* as holy and sacred; he therefore created rules for the dance festival. These rules appear in a letter Shembe wrote to his congregation. The rules are as follows (Muller, 1994: 220):

- Only ritually pure girls may perform the sacred dance, meaning girls who are menstruating or pregnant are forbidden to participate (Muller, 1994: 220). Girls who are pregnant are no longer viewed as young girls. Having babies and marriage are rites of passage into womanhood. Having a baby outside of wedlock is not the

accepted transition into womanhood. But those who do have babies outside of wedlock are thought to be transitioning into womanhood. Rituals must be performed and the girl must one day marry in order to complete the rite of passage in a way that is acceptable to the church (Muller, 1999: 201).

- Girls must also pray before dancing. This is also another way to achieve ritual purity (Muller, 1994: 220).
- The girls must treat the dancing like a prayer. Once the dancing has started, no one may talk or misbehave (Muller, 1994: 220).
- Girls who arrive late for the sacred dance are forbidden from joining the dance; Isaiah Shembe saw punctuality as religious discipline (Muller, 1994: 220).
- Girls who partake in the dance are required to use their own attire; if a girl uses someone else's attire it will be as if the other person is dancing (Muller, 1994: 220).

Isaiah Shembe used music, rituals, dance and ways of dress as an archive, to tell a story of a certain time and to save Shembe history and ideas so that they are never forgotten. Shembe went beyond just recording Shembe practices and ideas on paper. He incorporated them into everyday life and different forms of expression (Muller, 2002: 410). Some of the dance festival's attire worn by the Shembe Church members imitates a range of European fashions. These uniforms represent the historical encounters in the 1930s between Europeans and Africans. Isaiah Shembe attempted to combine the material power of the European colonizer and the moral power of Zulu cultural tradition through these outfits (Muller, 1994: 222). The historical encounters were more successfully documented in the series of uniforms Isaiah Shembe introduced for young virgin girls (Muller, 1994: 223). There are eight different uniforms and they are as follows:

6.4.2. *Umnazaretha* (white tunic) and *inancuka*(white head scarf) are worn to all church services and religious events (Muller, 1994: 224).



Figure 6.4.2. Young Shembe girls wearing their daily Shembe attire (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

6.4.3. Zulu traditional *ibhayi* which is also worn on a more regular basis compared to other outfits, *ibhayi* is also often worn under *umnazaretha* (Muller, 1994: 224).



Figure 6.4.3. Young girls burn dirt during a daily clean up of eBuhleni. The girl on the far left wears *ibhayi* under her *umnazaretha* (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

6.4.4. Pink dress with white head band, white gloves and white waist band (Muller, 1994: 225).



Figure 6.4.4. Young Shembe girls returning from one of the weekday dance rituals during the July festival (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

6.4.5. *Iskotch*- pleated skirt, red blouse and beads around the arms, knees and ankles. Young boys wear a similar outfit, which consists of red and white skirts for dancing (Muller, 1994: 225).



Figure 6.4.5. 'Iskotch' for girls on the left and for boys on the right (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

6.4.6. Pink voile blouse with tassels, black skirt and white head band (Muller, 1994: 225).



Figure 6.4.6. Young virgin girls during one of the weekday July rituals, where they dance and sing (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

6.4.7. The sixth outfit has been said to be inspired by the traditional Indian way of dressing because the colours are so bright. This attire consists of a royal blue blouse, red skirt with black tassels and a lilac veil (Muller, 1994: 226).



Figure 6.4.7. Indian inspired Shembe outfit (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

6.4.8. Black skirt and white blouse, black hairnet and white beads on arms, knees and ankles (Muller, 1994: 226).



Figure 6.4.8. Young male members also wear a similar black and white uniform (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

6.4.9. Traditional Zulu attire, used in dancing festivals by young girls. Pre-puberty girls wear red skirts and post puberty girls wear black skirts. There after the outfit is the same. The torso, arms, head, legs and ankles are covered with beadwork (Muller, 1994: 226).



Figure 6.4.9. Traditional Zulu inspired attire for young girls (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 6.4.10.1. Female elder wearing her Zulu inspired dancing attire (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 6.4.10.2. Dancing female elders (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 6.4.10.3. Dancing boys and men (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 6.4.10.4. Young boys dance wearing their 'iskotch' attire (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 6.4.10.5. Dancing young boys at the Sunday 'umgidi' at eBuhleni (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

Attires 6.4.4- 6.4.8 are often referred to as *izingubo zesilungu* (Western clothes). The uniforms in some ways represent the main actors at the time, for example; the missionary convert, the domestic worker, the Indian woman, military men wearing kilts and finally the cultural people who knew their culture and were proud of it. Isaiah Shembe used the body to retell history and depict various diverse cultures, mainly Western, African and Eastern (Muller, 2002: 410).

There is a close connection between dance and hymn singing rituals. Isaiah Shembe taught new hymns to his followers by first teaching them the rhythms of the dance movements that went with the hymn (Muller, 1994: 417). Isaiah Shembe created a new way of singing. He believed that one could adopt Christian beliefs and practices without rejecting African traditional beliefs and culture. This is why he incorporated a sort of Africanness into his own version of the Christian hymns. The hymns are also hybrid and multicultural in that they mix African experiences in the late 19th century, with the Bible and Zulu poetic tradition or rather praise poetry (Muller, 2002: 415 and 416). Shembe hymns have a slow tempo and include collective improvisation (Muller, 2002: 15). Hymns that have European styled characteristics usually have a clearly identifiable melody; this however is not the case with Shembe hymns. The rhythms are articulated through drum accompaniment and the feet of members performing the sacred dance (Muller, 2002: 416). The style of singing is highly valued and sacred and it never changes, this is the way Shembe taught the hymns, the way that pleases the ancestors and God. Altering the way the hymns are sung is believed to be a sin. Performances of Shembe hymns happen in a call-and-response structure. A low-voiced leader calls out the first part of the melody and the congregation repeats collectively. The call-and-response is especially useful for those members who cannot read (Muller, 2002: 416).

6.5. Conclusion

Many Shembe practices and rituals have been met by intolerance and criticism. Some of these practices do appear to have some flaws and seem to have made more sense in pre-modern society. This, however, is not to say practices like virgin testing should be rejected or banned. Rejecting these practices alienates those who practice them and believe in them. Perhaps the solution is to adopt Isaiah Shembe's thinking and have a kind of multiculturalism or merging of African and Western ideas. It is important to maintain African identity, but Western critiques should be considered, especially when it comes to human rights violations and curbing the spread of illnesses and diseases like HIV/AIDS. Western critiques of African

practice, however, should not reinforce colonial ideas of Western superiority. African ideas should not be analysed purely from a Western point of view. Weber coined the theory of *Verstehen*, which involves an outside observer of a culture attempting to relate to it and understand others (Lachmann, 2007: 9). Weber believed that for outsiders to truly understand a foreign culture they had to walk in the shoes of their participants. Weber believes researchers who do this produce truly accurate and valid findings (Lachmann, 2007: 10).

Chapter 7: Christianity and the Shembe Church

7.1. Introduction

The Shembe Church, like most African religions, has been criticised for being non-Christian and encouraging ‘demon worship’. The Shembe Church, however, has more in common with Christianity than most Christians realize. Practices like polygamy and maintaining sexual purity are not just African practices, they are also found in the Bible. Heuser (2008: 40) describes the Shembe religion as a kind of Africanized Christianity. This chapter will discuss the differences and similarities between the Shembe Church and Christianity. This chapter will show some of the ways in which Isaiah Shembe incorporated Christianity into the Shembe religion. As with ATR religion, Isaiah Shembe selected Christian ideas he believed to be useful. Many black Christian converts found Christianity alone to be insufficient; this is why Isaiah Shembe and many others practiced Christianity alongside their traditional culture. The chapter will also discuss why more and more Africans are moving towards multicultural churches that combine African religion and Christianity. I will finally discuss documented testimonies of Shembe members interviewed and the reasons why they decided to join the church. These testimonies deal with some of the reasons some people find Christianity alone to be insufficient

7.2. African Independent Churches

The first generations of black Christian converts in Southern Africa went through an agonizing process of critical examination and experimentation as they struggled to adopt the new economic, social, and religious values. “These values were presented to them mainly by white missionaries and were based largely on European models,” (Cobley, 1991: 356). Sundkler (1948: 181) stated that Christianity was thought to be a Western religion, which should be carried out in the Western way. An independent black churches movement began to emerge as a result of the oppression many black Christians felt. These churches were labelled the Ethiopian Movement and they surfaced at the end of the nineteenth century. The independent black churches spread and multiplied quickly throughout South Africa. By 1919 there were 76 recognized factions; however, there were many more which were not officially recognized (Cobley, 1991: 356).

African Independent Churches merged Christianity and ATR; they offered a genuine African expression of Christianity. AIC sprung up as a solution to how to be Christian and African at

the same time. The movement rejected the idea that Christianity and African cultures were fundamentally at odds with each other (Meyer, 2004: 454). The 1980s saw a rise in the number of people joining AIC and the number has grown since then. People found AIC to be more welcoming and accepting of their diverse cultures than orthodox Christian churches. AIC like Biko's Black Consciousness encouraged ancestral honouring and worked towards restoring African pride and culture (Biko, 2004: 49). Christian churches often rejected African practices and identity, while AIC embraced them and incorporated them into their various religions (Meyer, 2004: 448). The Shembe Church, for example, incorporates things like dancing, drum playing, circumcision, polygamy, virgin testing and, most importantly, ancestral honouring.

7.3. Similarities between the Shembe Church and Christianity

The Shembe Church has received much criticism for Africanizing Christianity and making it a religion that even traditionalists can relate to and understand. Some Christians have distanced themselves from the Shembe Church and have accused it of being anti-God and anti-Jesus (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 96). Shembe followers agree that there is a difference between their religion and Christianity, but deny the allegation that they are anti-God or Jesus. The Shembe Church's integration of Christianity and ATR can largely be linked to Frantz Fanon's idea of reciprocal relativism, this is, when two cultures confront each other and enrich each other. The Shembe church does this by rejecting colonial status and ideas that African culture is inferior. The church then goes a step further by adopting colonial ideas it deems valuable. The Shembe Church creates a kind of multiculturalism by rejecting colonial oppression and adopting the positive, valuable ideas that make up Western society (Fanon, 1963: 106). Isaiah Shembe created a much needed multiculturalism by integrating what he believed to be the best of African and Western ideas. Many participants felt that their religion had more in common with old Christianity. They also felt that they have more in common with religious practices and teachings practiced during the times of Moses and Jesus. Shembe members believe that they have more in common with historical Christian practice:

There is a difference now, but if you look at Christianity historically, their laws were the same as ours; they were those that we see in the Bible. Christianity is no longer what it used to be: people have changed the faith and it is no longer what God intended it to be. The Sabbath is God's law. When God created the earth, God worked all the days and decided to rest on the Sabbath. God then blessed this day and said no one should ever work on the day of the Sabbath, this is the day to worship God, and prophets in the Bible even honoured this law. Even when Jesus came to earth he said he was here to obey the laws of previous prophets,

even Jesus honoured the Sabbath, but Christians today do not, (Cliff, interview with author, 2012).

Sisa (interview with author, 2012) explains:

Christianity is not what it used to be. People started to do as they please when Jesus was killed; today they no longer even respect the Sabbath. Christians today believe that you only have to accept Jesus as your messiah in order to make it into heaven. This is not true; even Jesus was against this idea; people have to carry on obeying God's laws even after they have accepted Jesus. This does not happen today.

Cliff and Sisa believe that Christianity today is very different to what it used to be and is at odds with God's, Moses' and Jesus' laws. Strategic informant and founder of the New Nazareth Baptist Church, Mthembeni Mpanza, had the following to say about the relationship the Shembe Church has with Christianity and the Bible:

UbuNazareth originated from the Bible, it is the religion of Moses. It has some Zulu cultural origin. As Shembe was a Zulu person, in his religion you will get elements of the Zulu culture, it is natural. In same way you will find elements of Mohammad's culture in his religion, it is the same with Jesus, Moses and Shembe. But the point I am trying to make here is that *ubuNazaretha* is built out of Moses' teachings. When you read Numbers Chapter 6 you will see that Nazareths are there. There were people who were Nazareths like Samson, in fact even Jesus was a Nazareth, if you read Matthew 2 verse 23, if I am not mistaken. Even the so-called Christian church used to be the Nazareth church. If you read Acts 24 verse 5, it will indicate that the Jesus church was in fact first the Nazareth church. Our principle is that *ubuNazaretha* is founded on the laws of Moses, as well as the teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles. The elements of our culture that you find in the Shembe Church are not repugnant to the laws of Moses. Parts of our culture that go against the laws of Moses should not form part of the Shembe religion. Jesus endorsed the laws of Moses. Jesus says in Matthew 5 from verse 17, 'I have not come here to undo the law; I am here to add on to them.' Jesus also said in Matthew 7 verse 18 'The laws shall not change', in other words, Jesus was disallowing any amendments of the laws. By verse 19 he starts to give penalty to any person who changes the laws or teaches the wrong laws to people. And in Matthew 7 verse 21 he says; 'Not everyone who calls on the Lord will see heaven, it is only those who obey the Laws of God in heaven who will see heaven.' For those who do not obey God's laws Jesus will say to them, 'Away from me evildoers, I do not know you,' (Mpanza, interview with author, 2012).

The following Bible verse which is also cited by Mpanza, explains how Jesus came to be known as Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus spent most of his childhood life in Nazareth. Joseph took Jesus to Nazareth to keep him safe; this is why the name and place is so important to the Shembe Church. Shembe members like Jesus turn to the Nazareth Church when in need of so kind of safety and protection:

¹⁹After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt²⁰ and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."

²¹ So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee,²³ and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene” (Matthew 2 v 19-23, Bible Gateway, 2011).

The passage explains how Jesus came to be known Jesus of Nazareth; the same name which Isaiah Shembe chosen to label his followers. This in many ways disproves the idea that Isaiah Shembe and the Shembe Church are at odds with Jesus or try to replace Jesus as the messiah (Vilakazi, Mthethwa and Mpanza, 1986: 96). As already mentioned, the Shembe Church has many things in common with Christian laws and follows the Bible as the Christians do. The African culture within the church exists because Isaiah Shembe was African and as Mpanza explains above, one will find elements of one culture in many religions. Isaiah Shembe also incorporated Africanness in the religion in order to boost African and more specifically Zulu morale which had been destroyed by Christian missionaries and the colonizers. Isaiah Shembe combined Western and African ideas to create some kind of peace and harmony during a time of conflict and instability (Johns, 2004: 403). He tried to create a ‘better’ hybrid cultural religion which merged the best of African and Western ideas and rejected the worst of each culture (Tishken, 2006: 83). Isaiah Shembe did this during a time when there was intense conflict between Africans and Western colonizers. This was a much-needed multiculturalism and a kind of solution to the conflict. This marriage of the two cultures was not always welcomed.

Paul Weinberg explains how this hybrid was sometimes rejected by both Africans and Westerners during the colonial period. Weinberg, however, believes that the mixing of African religion and Western ideas is an interesting meeting point. He explains what this union entails and its popularity in more recent post-colonial times:

Well, I think they’re a by-product of colonial and post-colonial society. I think what’s interesting in post-colonial society is that they almost become an accepted hybrid, an accepted creolization. Whereas in colonial times there was a tendency to see the traditional Christianity as one paradigm and African Traditional Religion as another and this in-between was sort of rejected from both sides... I rather put it like this; it’s a meeting point between African Traditional Religion and colonial expansion or as some people like to call it; Western civilisation. I think what’s particularly interesting is how it’s the meeting point. So while Shembe is often understood as an African Christianity, it also has a strong reference to the Old Testament (Paul Weinberg, interview with author, 2012).

The Shembe Church, just like Christianity, defines idleness as a sin. This idea has some good and bad consequences. The positive side to it is that it recognises people's agency. People are not viewed as just passive victims who are unable to change their oppressive social structures (Swartz, 2002: 625). Instead people are encouraged to help themselves. This is an idea that Isaiah Shembe adopted from Gandhi's concept of *sarvodaya* "welfare for all" with a communal culture of self-help which also offers poor members support (Browne, 2005: 101). Shembe priest Ngidi explains his belief in the idea that working hard creates independent individuals:

We also encourage people to work hard so that they may be able to look after themselves and not have to turn to crime. We believe that uNkulunkulu gave us all hands so that we may all work and better our lives and not just receive hand-outs from other people (Ngidi, interview with author, 2011).

The Shembe Church encourages a strong work ethic, with begging often seen as both degrading and a sin. Members are encouraged to avoid accepting rewards which they have not worked hard for (Browne, 2005: 102). Shembe youth Sbu shares the same idea as Ngidi. He believes that people need to work hard and use their God-given talents and skills:

It's a sin to expect other people to give you something whereas you haven't worked for it. I can say without fear of contradiction that amaNazareth are among like the most hard-working and trust-worthy and reliable people in the black society. They do not rely on others; they work hard to enrich themselves (Sbu, interview with author, 2012).

The negative side of this principle is that it does not consider external forces and structural oppression. There is a danger of viewing poor people as lazy, or not hard-working enough. This idea also allows those in power to maintain their position, because it is "God's will" and therefore should not be changed or challenged (Douglas, 1979: 51). The Christian missionaries used a similar principle in order to maintain control and to force Africans to work in white-owned farms. Those who refused to work in farms and mines were portrayed as lazy and therefore sinners. Those who challenged these ideas were also painted as sinners, because they were challenging "God's will" (Zagzebski, 2004: 1).

7.4.Differences between the Shembe Church and Christianity

7.4.1. Animal Sacrifice

There are many similarities between the Shembe Church and Christians, but most participants mentioned more differences than similarities. Both share the same laws and even the same

religious book, but the way the Bible is interpreted by the two religions is not the same. The ways in which they praise and worship God are also very different. Shembe youth member Viwe had the following to say about the difference and similarities between the Shembe Church and Christian:

We have very little in common with Christianity; the only thing that does connect us is that both faiths read the Bible. But the laws we abide by and follow are not the same; we keep the Sabbath, but they do not, we make animal sacrifices to God through our ancestors, but they do not. Christians do not honour their ancestors; they call them demons (Viwe, interview with author, 2012).

Christians often reject animal sacrifices, even though they are endorsed and encouraged in the Bible. Many Shembe members perform animal sacrifices for both cultural and religious reasons. Vukile Shembe believes that animal sacrifice is a symbolic gesture, one that shows an individual's willingness to serve God:

When God was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, God made Abraham aware of this. God sent Abraham an angel... Abraham tells the angel to wait while he prepares something to eat for them. Some people may argue angels don't eat and maybe they don't, but this was about the welcoming gesture. With God it is all about willingness and gesture, which is why we make offerings in church. It's not about the money when we make offerings; it's about the gesture showing that we are willing to part with certain belongings and items in order to honour God. So this was Abraham's offering; he slaughtered an animal for this angel and offered the angel food. This is not different from the things we do for our ancestors. We are not forming another God; these people are part of the heavenly realm so we need to nurture and appreciate that ranking (Vukile Shembe, interview with author, 2012)

An animal offering is cited in the Bible in Exodus 24. Moses and the Israelites sacrifice a young bull after God had given Moses the laws that they should live by. Another example of the endorsement of animal sacrifices in the Bible is in Genesis 22. Abraham performs an animal sacrifice to God after spares his son's life (Bible Gateway, 2011). Offerings are often performed when the community or individual wish to thank God or when they make requests or ask for blessings. Sacrifices are also often made to ancestors who communicate with God and pass on people's pleas and requests (Thorpe, 1991: 40). Sbu and Qondile discuss some of the reasons why they believe there are differences between Christianity and the Church Shembe, two faiths that are said to have many things in common:

I think the problem with our own philosophy and Christianity is that Christianity itself, it's separated. Like there are others who believe ancestors must not be honoured, there are others who believe ancestors must be honoured. Earlier I said you can't separate religion and culture. I don't see how they worship God by separating ancestors and God. I think the two are interrelated. In a way we believe that through slaughtering cows and goats we sort of

communicate through our ancestors to God. So our ancestors are sort of a medium between us and God (Sbu, interview with author, 2012).

Qonidile (interview with author, 2012) elaborates:

Christians do not honour their ancestors or perform animal sacrifices, we do. When they worship God they do so wearing shoes. We do not do that. Temples where we worship God are holy places, so we cannot wear shoes. Even when God spoke to Moses he said, "Moses take off your shoes because this is a holy place."

There are many reasons why Western Christian missionaries rejected animal offerings. They themselves had stopped performing the ritual; it no longer formed part of their culture and therefore did not recognize animal slaughtering even in its religious capacity. Animal sacrifice was a form of respectful killing for food, but it was reinterpreted by missionaries as wasting food resources (Bigger, 2009: 5). Africans were made to believe that they were making sacrifices to fake Gods, therefore making the practice of animal sacrifice a sin in the eyes of God and Western churches. Africans were even convinced that the practice of animal sacrifice constituted cruelty towards animals. As a result, many people turned to Western-owned butchers and ate meat only killed in abattoirs. Animal sacrificing is still frowned upon today for similar reasons to those missionaries put forward (Cockburn and St Clair, 2012). On a theological level, many Christians reject animal sacrifices because they believed that Jesus was the final ultimate sacrifice. Christians believe that Jesus came to die on the cross and take away the sins of the world. God therefore no longer required people to perform animal sacrifices because Jesus sacrificed himself (Bible Gateway, 2011).

Many ATRs practice this ritual for more than just religious reasons. Most rituals are performed by groups, be they families or communities, and animal offerings are no different. Rituals like animal slaughtering do more than just glorify God; they also bring communities and families together and create unity and solidarity. Rituals are often aimed at producing healing; loss of such healing in the modern world might be responsible for the loss of community and unity that we see (Somè, 1997: 22). Rituals involve a collective action performed by the community; the action is usually spontaneous and has gestures, touch, sound, melody and sometimes dance (Somè, 1997: 23). "This partnership replenishes each person by restoring his or her relationship to nature," (Somè, 1997: 23). This is necessary because for many ATRs the natural world and spirit world are closely linked (Somè, 1997: 23). Rituals link humans to God. They have visible and invisible outcomes (Somè, 1996: 42). The visible outcomes are usually the reason the ritual is performed; for example, to heal the

sick or praising and pleasing God. The unintended outcome is that rituals restore stability and create solidarity in families and communities. This happens through working together and cooperating in preparation for the ritual. Dancing, singing and feasting during and after the ritual also help to create unity and a sense of community (Somè, 1996: 43).

7.4.2. Holy Grounds

Most rituals are performed in holy places. Often the place the ritual is performed, even if it is not a holy place, becomes viewed as a holy place because God's presence is requested and believed to be there. People often remove their shoes as a sign of respect. This act is another thing that separates the Shembe Church from Christianity. The Shembe Church forbids the wearing of shoes in Shembe's Mecca (eBuhleni and ekuPhakameni), or in temples, or during any religious ritual where God's or the ancestors' presence is believed to be near. Sihle and Thembi believe that Shembe temples are sacred places:

The two religions are different. Christianity does not respect Nazareth beliefs. Christians see our religion as a new thing; they don't understand that ubuNazaretha has always existed. Christians look down on our religion. The way we do things and the way we worship are even different. When they pray, they pray standing or sitting. We, on the other hand, always kneel. Shoes don't come anywhere near temples or holy spaces within our religion; we also cover our heads as a sign of respect to God. Christians, on the other hand, do not follow any of these rules. Christians also say the dead are demons, we don't see it that way, to us they are ancestors (Sihle, interview with author, 2012).

Thembi (interview with author, 2012) agrees with Sihle, Thembe mentions some of the differences between Christianity and the Shembe Church.

To me, Christianity and Shembe religion are not the same. Christians worship differently from us. When they praise God, they do it standing or sitting with their hands raised in the air. When we pray or praise God we kneel and keep our hands to ourselves. We do not wear shoes when we enter a temple or holy place, so the two are different.



Figure 7.4.2. Shembe followers eBuhleni walking barefoot as they go about their daily lives (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

Just like animal slaughtering, walking barefoot in holy places is something that is mentioned in the Bible, but is no longer practised by Christians. The following passage from Exodus 24 cites an example of this being done:

³ Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.² There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.³ So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”

⁴ When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!”

And Moses said, “Here I am.”

⁵ “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”⁶ Then he said, “I am the God of your father, ^[a] the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God” (Bible Gateway, 2011).

7.4.3. *Moses’ Laws*

According to the Bible, Moses’ laws were created by God and Moses recorded them for the Israelites. Shembe followers claim to live by all of Moses’ laws but the laws that were mentioned the most in interviews were the Sabbath and respecting of elders. Exodus 24 instructs believers to respect the Sabbath because it is a holy day. No one should work or use

heat on the Sabbath, because this is a day that is preserved solely for the purpose of worshipping God. People are instructed to rest on the Sabbath because God created heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath (Bible Gateway, 2011). Shembe members believe that the Sabbath is no longer respected by many Christians. This practice is another thing that separates them from the Christian faith. Mpanza, Ngidi and Mntu highlight some of the differences between Christianity and the Shembe Church, citing the Sabbath as one of the main differences between the two churches:

Christians are not following the laws of Moses. Most Christians do not keep the Sabbath. How can you say you are bound by the laws of God if you are not keeping the Sabbath? Christians eat pork; they shave and are left with no hair. The Bible is very clear that if you want to be pure and holy you cannot just shave all your hair. There is just no law, even when you get to the church service you will find women wearing pants and that is not a question of choice. The Bible is very clear on that if you are a male you do not wear female clothes and vice versa. There is just no respect, when you get into the church there is nothing that tells you that you are in a church, it is too informal. The church is something that is supposed to be very formal; you cannot just do informal things in the church (Mpanza, interview with author, 2012).

Ngidi (interview with author, 2011) elaborates by highlighting more differences between the Shembe religion and Christianity:

There is no connection. We differ from Christianity in many ways. Often Christians pray standing, we kneel. Christians worship on a Sunday and we do it on the Sabbath. The Bible does not say people should worship on a Sunday, this was an agreement made by people on earth. We also don't have a trinity; we have Mvelinqangi, creator of heaven and earth.

Mntu (interview with author, 2012) discusses more differences between Christianity and the Shembe religion, She talks about the importance of honouring the Sabbath.

I believe the Shembe religion is very different from Christianity. EkuPhakameni brings back the old African beliefs and instructions that were set out by God and not missionaries. Christians are more concerned with their own lives here on earth. We have a deeper history than that ekuPhakameni because we honour the living and the dead ancestors. Plus we honour the Sabbath and Christians don't. The reason we believe in honouring the Sabbath is that everyone is freed during this day: those who are no longer with us, those who are in hell, those who have struggles are all given second chances during the Sabbath and are allowed to go home. If your ancestors were in the fire and they find you using fire, they don't get help and they carry on burning because they are confronted with the same fire at home.

In the following quote, Vukile Shembe discusses God's laws which were documented by Moses. Some of the laws he mentions are: The respecting and honouring of elders, and not being envious of your neighbours' achievement and protecting the environment:

The Sabbath has nothing to do with humans, it's to praise God. We acknowledge the God created the world and rested on the Sabbath, we have to praise that. The other law is the law that promotes peace and unity between people. This is the prayer of the Sabbath; it speaks of people honouring laws that praise God. May God give you the heart and patience to teach

your son and respect his mother. Let the sin of not respecting his parents not be upon you the father. So you see the laws begin in the home, they show how parents and children should relate to each other. These laws are followed to honour God as well as manage people's relations in the home or in society. These laws go on to say never disrupt your neighbour's life or progress and never be jealous of or want your neighbours' achievements. The third law is about managing the relationship between people and the environment (Vukile Shembe, interview with author, 2012).

Shembe members still follow Moses' laws even though many Christians pay little attention to them. Shembe members believe that Jesus came to endorse and promote Moses' laws, not to challenge them.

I have a problem personally with Christianity and how it has been interpreted and how it has been addressed and applied to the society. Our church is different from Christianity that we now see. We follow Paul's teaching from the Bible and we follow Moses' and Jesus' teachings. And I don't think Christianity today addresses what Moses taught before, so I think it's different from Christianity, the Christianity that we see today (Sbu, interview with author, 2012).

7.4.4. *Laws of Numbers*

Numbers Chapter 6 in the Bible consists of laws that should be followed by Nazareth. Verse 3 in this chapter talks about abstaining from wine or any fermented drinks (Bible Gateway, 2011). Shembe forbids his followers from drinking alcohol, consuming cooking oil, smoking, etc, for more than just religious reasons. Shembe placed these laws to preserve the individuals and the community's health and wellbeing. Isaiah Shembe believed that alcohol could destroy individuals and the social fibre of a community (Tishken, 2006: 83). Shembe members, Bonga and Andile cite even more differences between Christianity and their religion. Bonga believes that the body should be kept pure and unaltered:

The Nazareth church worships God who created heaven and earth; Christians on the other hand worship the son Jesus Christ. Even the laws we live under are not the same. Christians do not always follow the Bible. The Bible says do not shave your hair but Christians do. Women should not dress like men. When we return to God we have to return in our most natural, unaltered, purest state, the way God created us (Bonga, interview with author, 2012).

Andile stresses the importance of staying pure, meaning people should not shave or drink:

Christianity is also different because they also say they worship the Holy Spirit, but they actually do not even understand the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will never come to someone who drinks alcohol and shaves; the Holy Spirit only comes to those who uphold God's laws (Andile, interview with author, 2012).

The second law in Numbers 6 that Andile and Bonga refer to is the law of shaving. God explains to Moses that people who wish to worship God should take a Nazarite vow. Part of

this vow includes agreeing to follow God’s laws. In verse 5, God informs Moses that for as long as an individual wishes to remain a Nazarite, they should never shave (Bible Gateway, 2011). “They must be holy until the period of their dedication to the LORD is over; they must let their hair grow long” (Bible Gateway, 2011). Vukile Shembe attempts to explain the ‘no shaving’ law, but also explains that God’s laws should sometimes be followed without question or objection:

The hair growing and beard thing is another one of God’s laws. Some of God’s laws say “Do this” and don’t explain why: you just have to follow that. Some people associate this instruction with the Samson story that there was power in his hair. I don’t believe that is entirely the reason. God could’ve placed power anywhere. But it is God’s instruction, a test of faith. I’m not sure whether there is a reason or not. There are other laws like this that are hard to explain, but we must listen because that is the way God wants things to be (Vukile Shembe, interview with author, 2012).



Figure 7.4.4.1. Shembe men often grow their hair and beard long (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 7.4.4.2. Women also grow their hair but often wear head scarves or weave into hat-like structures (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).



Figure 7.4.4.3. Married or elderly women cover their heads as a sign of respect; this is a common practice in most African cultures in South Africa (photograph by Nombulelo Shange).

7.5. *“Why I chose Shembe”: people’s Testimonies and the move towards ATR*

The rapid spread of AIC in the 1980s many have come about as a result of the political environment at the time. Christianity alone was insufficient for many Africans; this resulted in many converts opting for AIC (Meyer, 2004: 448). “Black politics in South Africa changed dramatically after 1976” (Hirschmann, 1990: 1). Black organizations strengthened and multiplied at all level. Political parties grew stronger, social movements such as the UDF (United Democratic Front) grew in size and in popularity. The UDF encouraged the participation of diverse social groups, from political parties, to student movements and even religious groups. Black Consciousness and the acceptance of African culture grew because people were frustrated with the idea that people black was inferior, people felt the need to reject Western control and oppression (Hirschmann, 1990: 3). Black Consciousness rejected colonial ideas that encouraged the oppression of black people; it encouraged people to embrace their culture, religion and Africanness (Hirschmann, 1990: 4). AIC were no different: they encouraged people to be proud of their African culture.

African converts found value in Christianity, but felt that it did not provide enough guidance for daily experiences and problems with which people were faced. More and more people started to find greater value in combining ATR with Christianity. Christianity alone has been unsuccessful in providing solutions for post-colonial issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, intolerance, etc. Many converts as a result found themselves looking into old cultural ideas for solutions. African ideas often encourage *ubuntu* (McVeigh, 1974: 33). Religions such as the Shembe religion restore cultural pride and encourage people to accept the things that make them uniquely African (Somé, 1997: 91). The Shembe church also encourages people seek solutions to modern issues within their own culture. Paul Weinberg explains why so many South Africans turn to AIC like the Shembe Church. People can relate to the Shembe Church because it incorporates culture with religion. AIC sometimes provide solutions to problems people face, solutions they might not find within Christianity:

Post-apartheid didn’t bring poor people more wealth, in fact people are poorer, there’s more inequality. As a result, people are still in search of answers and not just in Africa but throughout the third world and Africa in particular. People look for spiritual answers to these unanswered contradictions that don’t go away. So there’s also been a rise in the traditional route. But I think there are also cultural reasons. People feel more comfortable with Shembe because you know, it’s Zulu and the dance. People love the dance; it’s a huge big part of their culture (Paul Weinberg, interview with author, 2012).

Africans have experienced colonialism, missionary activity and the slave trade which all left structures which have produced poverty. Many people have redirected their attention to ATR in an attempt to find solutions. Traditional Religion focuses on wholeness, the wellbeing of individuals and the community at large (Amoah, 2009: 111). Traditional African concepts of wellbeing consist of everything that makes life worth living. Wellbeing involves good health and peace and harmony within individuals, with the spirits, the entire society and the material and physical resources. Wellbeing therefore has both internal (psychological and spiritual) and external (material) dimensions (Amoah, 2009: 113). For many Africans, religion is more than just an abstract concept. Many Africans act out and practice their faith daily. ATR often provides solutions for life's challenges through rituals. Religion therefore becomes a tool for survival, dealing with and solving simple and complex human needs and problems (Amoah, 2009: 114). David explains that the wellbeing that the Shembe Church provides for its members comes from respecting God's laws. David believes that God protects those who respect the laws:

People do not obey God's laws and that is why we see so many problems in the world, from natural disasters to violence and conflict between people. People no longer even keep the Sabbath. Shembe ideas are not given enough recognition by people. When people seek solutions for their problems Shembe is often the last resort, people will seek answers from Christianity, doctors and other religions first. Shembe's solutions are also often simple and holistic, Shembe has helped cripples walk but people still think Jesus is the only messiah (David, interview with author, 2012).

Many Shembe followers praise the Shembe Church's ability to heal and guide individuals and communities. The members interviewed cited many reasons for choosing the Shembe Church. Some spoke of Shembe's ability to heal. Sbu in his interview spoke of the Shembe miracle that helped his parents to conceive a baby boy:

Well, my parents were members of the church and I grew up in the church. But my parents joined the church because my parents were trying to have a boy, but every time my mother had a boy they would die. Then I was born but I was very sick and my parents were worried that I would die too. They went to the church hoping to find help and I survived. That is what led them to join the church (Sbu, interview with author, 2012).

Pinky discusses more of Shembe's miracles; she tells the story of how Shembe saved a dying woman:

Many people say we worship a human. Which is not true: no person can fill the space of God, we at ekuPhakameni only believe in and worship God. Vukile Shembe, the man you just met, is our chief... I want to tell you a story about the kinds of miracles that take place here. There is a girl from the Manqele family who worked at Jacob Zuma's office here in Durban. This young lady was very sick and ended up in a coma. This child had been in a coma for three months and was now being taken off life support. And as she was dying, she found herself on

the 'other' side walking down a beautiful garden. She then came across a beautiful 'ibhungu' (young virgin teenage boy) dressed in white clothes. The *ibhungu* then asked her why she was there and she responded saying she doesn't know. The *ibhungu* then told her soul to return back to earth before her body gets cold and stiff. She was told by the *ibhungu* that she should go to ekuPhakameni once she is back on earth. The *ibhungu* promised that he would drop everything and tend to her on the day she arrives. Then this young lady woke up from her death bed and told people this story. The counsellor in her area heard of this story and he also happened to be a member of our church. The counsellor put her in touch with some of the priests who then request from the chief that she be allowed to visit and meet him. When she did finally come she was accompanied by uBab Zuma, there were soldiers and police accompanying them. She then requested to see the Chief and as promised the Chief stopped everything - and this was in the middle of a service. The Chief then went to meet with the girl and she rejoiced and proclaimed that this is the person she saw while she was in heaven, this is the Chief (Pinky, interview with author, 2012).

Mpume discusses an event she believes to have been a Shembe miracle. This is one of the many reasons she joined the church and why she remains a member even till this day:

My father left home after the death of my mother. I begged my father to come back home for a very long time but he always refused. I finally went to Shembe, he was the third Shembe, and I told him the problem that I was faced with. I explained to him that he was my last hope. Shembe promised me that my father would return. That was October. I then decided not to visit my father and to stop trying to get him to come back home; I wanted to see if Shembe's prophecy would really come true. And as Shembe had predicted, my father did return. It was December 24 and I had come home early from work. My neighbours told me that my father had returned, that he had dropped some things of in the unlocked outside building. When I opened the room I found furniture, clothes and so on. My father returned later on that evening and never left home again. That year was 1991 and he stayed a home until his death...There are many things...Again my brother was taken by relatives when we were young. These relatives are from eNquthu, when they came back again for Easters they came back without my brother and they told us he liked it there and that he didn't want to return. These boys manipulated and tricked my father every time he tried to discuss my brother's return, they would give him alcohol and he would even forget the reasons for his visit. It started to become very clear that my brother wouldn't return. I then went to inkosi yasekuPhakameni, I made an offering and prayed to God for the safe return of my brother. Many years had passed at this point and we didn't even know where he was. One day a friend of mine came to visit and told me about a lady who lives cost to where she lives but is originally from eNquthu. My friend thought this lady might be able to help me and suggested I visit her and so I did. This lady told me how to get to eMathambo which is in eNquthu and this is where we believed my brother to be. I went back to ekuPhakameni to declare that I would be going on an unknown journey, I asked God to guide me and keep me safe. I had to take several taxis to get to eNquthu. Once I was there I met a man who was going in the same direction as me, so we walked together. He gave me further directions when he reached his destination and I continued the long journey on foot. I eventually took a break and sat down because I was tired and hungry. I noticed not too far away a group of people wearing umNazaretha, they were kneeling and it looked like they were in the middle of a service. As I was getting ready to leave I saw a boy on a bicycle and he offered me assistance and took me to the house I was looking for. When I got there my brother and I didn't recognise each other but I introduced myself. My brother and I got to talking and I was telling him about amaNazaretha but he had never heard of them. I asked him how that is when he lives so close to one of the Nazareth temples. He then told me that there is no such temple in that area. I requested to go back with him when the elders of the house returned. At first they refused but after some negotiation they finally agreed to let him visit his home. He visited for a short while then went back to eNquthu to finish school. He decided to come back home for good in December of that year. One day I took him to church with me and I asked him again if he had ever come across

people who dress and worshipped like we did eMathambo. He reassured me he hadn't and that there was no Shembe temple close to where he lived. I have heard when people in church talk. They say there are two kinds of Shembe; Shembe the surname and Shembe the Christ-like Holy Spirit. The latter is the one that protects and saves people when they find themselves in dangerous or unusual situations. I then realised that I saw the Shembe spirit that day because straight after seeing the congregation I was offered assistance by the boy who I never told where I was going but he knew exactly where to take me. These are just some of the things that make me realise that this is a legitimate and real faith. This is why I chose Shembe and continue to choose Shembe (Mpume, interview with author, 2012).

Other members talked about joining the church because it provided them with solutions for their problems or it helped them find employment. Mntu was one of those participants. Mntu had health problems and was unemployed; she went to the Shembe Church and found solutions to her problems:

I went there because I had problems and my problems were solved. Firstly I had reoccurring issues with my ear; I was constantly getting ear infections. Secondly I couldn't find a job, I went there and I got the help I needed (Mntu, interview with author, 2012).

Gugu (interview with author, 2012) agrees and talks about the improvement of her general wellbeing:

It was their way of life [that attracted me]. Also, when I adopted this faith I noticed a positive change in my life. I have lived and survived thanks to this religion, my prayers are answered. I find that my problems are better when I declared them in prayer before God and before the church. Sick people find themselves better once they have joined the church and met the Chief. There are miracles that are performed in the church, anyone who goes there can find the help they need.

Shembe youth Mandla was born a member of the Shembe church. Mandla discusses his reasons for choosing to remain in the Shembe Church. Mandla believes that the Shembe Church has brought a lot of good to his life, including the chance to receive an education:

I was born ekuPhakameni, I grew up at ekuPhakameni. But as I grew up I started to see the value of ekuPhakameni and I started to see the things that God does through this church and through Shembe. Shembe has performed many miracles and sometimes I wonder how he is able to perform such miracles. Finally a time came when I needed my own miracle; I made my request to the King of ekuPhakameni. When you ask for something from the king of ekuPhakameni you have to be patient, pray and make offerings and if it is part of God's plan than your wish will be granted. I am a student now, doing the architecture of tomb making. When I heard that there was such a course I was very interested because I love working with my hands. So I went to the king of ekuPhakameni and told him I wish to do this course. I requested that I be accepted the next time applications are opened. The king of ekuPhakameni told me to inform others about this opportunity, in case anyone is interested. Finally the time came for me to go to an interview; I went back to the king of ekuPhakameni to ask to do well in the interview. A long time passed and I had not heard from the school and I was becoming discouraged, but I had not stopped praying. Three weeks passed, I then had a dream the night before I heard from the school, and it was a Thursday night. I dreamt that the King of ekuPhakameni was waking me up and asking me to sing a song with him, it was a song about me receiving a blessing or something. I woke up the next morning and told my mother about

the dream. Later on that Friday evening I received an SMS while we were preparing for the Sabbath, it was the school telling me I had been accepted into their programme. This is one of the many things that have led me to believe that the chief of ekuPhakameni exists and is great. This story and many others are what make me realise that I am where I should be. Shembe helps many people, in the church, in my community and in my family (Mandla, interview with author, 2012).

Pinky (interview with author, 2012) believes that growing up as a member of the Shembe Church positively influenced her upbringing:

I was born into this church, my parents and grandparents brought us up in the Nazareth way and we loved this way of life so I continued being a member. As a result we were different from other children. We were brought up as respectful and humble children who didn't indulge in negative worldly practices. I come to this church for my salvation so that one day when I am gone, God can welcome me on the other side.

Another participant talked about how Shembe saved his life by miraculously reducing his prison sentence:

In 1982 I lived here in Kwa-Mashu, a few friends of mine told me they had a job for me, but it was at Umlazi. I got there and I rented a two-room house and I started selling alcohol. My tavern was doing well and things were going great. But things started to change; one day men with guns came to interrogate me because my business had taken their customers. At this point the political violence was also getting worse, the ANC and IFP were fighting and people did not feel safe. I got involved with the wrong crowd, many of whom died. In 1988 I found myself arrested. I was sentenced to 18 years in prison, my friends were gone and I thought my life was over. My mother and father were both Zionists. My mother came to me one day and told me to approach these people that call themselves Nazareths. I was confused because my mother was Zionist. I protested, but my grandfather told me to do what my mother said. I found myself between court cases, hospital and prison trying to prove my innocence, but I was unsuccessful. I was constantly being rushed to hospital because I started to experience problems with my spine, which is why I have this hunchback I have today. Then one day the now late Vimbeni Shembe came to visit our prison. The Shembe Church was not welcomed or popular at first; Christian, Muslim and other religious leaders, however, were welcomed. When Shembe had been visiting the prison for a while he asked to baptise me and have me released into his care and guidance. People laughed at him and told him that this idea would never be approved. The baptism was approved and many prisoners and warden were baptised. We were given *umnazaretha*, which is the white Shembe religious attire. One night I was woken up and told I had to go to court the next day. When I got to court the judge told me my jail sentence had been erased and that I was free to go. It was a miracle, but that is how God works. I have been a member of the Shembe Church since then. I was reborn and I changed my ways. I married and my wife gave me one child and then another. My mother and entire family also adopted the Nazareth faith (David, interview with author, 2012).

Finally, Mpanza and Peter experienced Shembe's miracle through communicating in some form or another with Shembe. These messages from the spiritual realm helped strengthen both members' faith and helped them with the challenges that faced them:

I am the founder of the New Nazareth Baptist Church; I left eBuhleni last year in 2010. One of the reasons why I left eBuhleni is a strange but true story. There is an angel that came to us in 2006; she was a woman just like you, of your age. She used to come and tell us that

Shembe said we as amaNazaretha have deviated from the teachings of the first prophet Isaiah Shembe. At first she did not introduce herself as a messenger from Shembe, she first came to my wife and then I and it went on and on. In 2008 she finally explained that she was sent by Shembe and explained why she was here. This woman does not come to me in dreams or visions, she comes just as you came, but the difference is that you do not hear knocking on the door as we do, you would just find her in the house. Even when she leaves you will not see her leave even though she will bid you goodbye. In 2009 she started to teach us about ubuNazaretha and she started doing things which are supposed to be done only by Shembe, like; blessing Vaseline, blessing water and so on. Many miracles started occurring so I started revealing to people that there is an angel who comes to my house and performs miracles. My church became so popular that people left other churches to join my church. This did create some conflict. In January 2010 the angel came to me and told me that Shembe wanted to use me to preach the word of God. The decision was very difficult for me because the Nazareth church had never been led by someone who is not of the Shembe family. The angel use to tell me that she was sent by J.G. Shembe (Mpanza, interview with author, 2012).

Peter talks about how his faith was strengthened when Shembe communicated with him through a dream:

My parents were already members of this church, so I grow up in the Shembe Church. But what made me stay was a dream I had one night. The king of ekuPhakameni came to me in a dream. He appears while I am playing with my brothers and neighbours and he is walking on air. He is actually flying because he comes in the form of a bird that feeds on people's crops, so we try to chase it away. When the bird lands it transforms into the king of ekuPhakameni and sits next to us. The king then said to me; 'my child I want you, come to me'. He then called my brothers, sisters and other people that were with me. He then asked that we go to the house of ekuPhakameni, I had never seen it before but he revealed it to me. He asked us to go to that house and worship there, my brothers and sisters were scared and they all ran away, I was the only one left behind. The king of ekuPhakameni then gave me umNazareth and I put it on. As I approached the house of ekuPhakameni I saw that everyone who entered first knelt down and prayed, I was told to do the same and this is where my dream ends. It was during this time that I really started to love the king of ekuPhakameni. I stopped loving things of the world more than God. I use to love playing soccer and drinking, I then stopped drinking and started worshipping God (Peter, interview with author, 2012).

7.6. Conclusion

The Shembe Church has many things in common with Christianity but it is often met more with intolerance than acceptance. This chapter has discussed the differences and similarities between the Shembe Church and Christianity. This chapter has shown that most of the time the laws that are followed by the Christian and Shembe religion are similar. The differences come in with the interpretations of these laws and the ways these two religions choose to worship God. Many black Africans have moved to the Shembe Church and other AIC like it because they feel accepted and their cultural practices are encouraged rather than rejected. AIC managed to restore African culture and pride in a similar manner to that of Black Consciousness. AIC and Black Consciousness has taught people to use their unique cultural ideas and practices as a vehicle for change and as a solution to post colonial problems. The

testimonies show how many people find solutions to their problems when they look towards cultural solutions that they can relate to better.

Chapter 8: Shembe Challenges: Cases of intolerance or controversies?

8.1.Introduction

Many of the participants in this research believe that religious and cultural oppression did not end with the end of apartheid and the start of democracy. The Shembe church and its members are still often faced with many instances of intolerance. Modern South African society often does not understand the Shembe Church and other religious movements similar to it. The media has also played a role in creating and perpetuating this kind of intolerance towards ATR. Many Shembe followers and the church itself have hostile feelings towards the media. They believe that the media reports about the church are often one-sided and negative. Media angles and false information that focus mostly on the division within the Shembe Church have often created more tension and conflict between various factions. There are some clear cases of intolerance towards the Shembe Church, but this distinction is not always obvious. Often people have issues with Shembe practices and not the church itself. Here a distinction is made between the religion and its ritual practices (Goody, 1961: 143). Animal rights activists may have problems with animal slaughtering performed by Shembe members. Feminists might view virginity tests as a human rights violation. People have their own beliefs that may be at odds with Shembe practices, but this does not always mean they have problems with the church itself. Christians, for example, recognize Sunday as the Sabbath and keep this day holy. People and groups who do not recognizing Saturday as the Sabbath are not necessarily being intolerant towards Shembe paratyses. Many people are opposed to certain controversial Shembe practices and not the church itself. But it is often difficult to separate the religion from the practices that make up the religion. Bourdieu might argument that some of the conflict between the Shembe Church and orthodox Christianity are norm and expected. Fields often come into conflict with each other, it is how they interact. Some of these cases may not necessarily be intolerance directed towards the Shembe Church. Instead they could be fields coming into conflict with each other based on a difference of opinions and ideas. This is norm in diverse complex societies and should be in some ways encouraged. Diversity should be celebrated, people should be allowed to freely share ideas and opinions in post-modern society. This chapter will discuss cases that can be perceived as intolerance towards the Shembe religion. I will discuss cases of intolerance towards the Shembe church and its practices. I will also discuss controversies that arise as a result of different cultures sharing different opinions on certain practices performed by the Shembe Church. By doing

this I will be making a distinction between cases of intolerance and controversies that arise as a result of diversity and differences in opinions.

8.2.Intolerance towards the Shembe Church

This first case can be viewed as both a case of intolerance and a matter of differences in opinion. Sarie Van Niekerk's 2002 article on the deaths of five young boys at an initiation school is proof of how the media misinforms people by withholding certain important information. This article demonises the whole practice of initiation, but nowhere in the article is it mentioned that the initiation school involved went against the rules followed by cultural and religious groups that follow this practice. The boys who died in this Orange Farm tragedy were 13 years old, making them too young to participate in the initiation (Papu and Verster 2006: 179). The initiation school involved was a fly-by-night school and was in no way a reflection on how other schools operate. The media also often focuses on the fact that this practice spreads HIV, this is a big weakness in the practice and is something that has to be addressed. Often the virus is spread when the boys are being circumcised; the elders who perform this practice use the same blade for every boy. This is a problem that can easily be solved by the use of different blades and sterilizers during the procedure. Instead the media often calls for the banning of this practice and others like it, overlooking the positive aspects of the practice. This practice can also curb the spread of HIV; culturally boys are encouraged to abstain from sex until after they have undergone this process. Circumcised men are also less likely to contract the virus (Mhlahlo, 2009: 86). The practice also teaches young boys how to be responsible and look after their families and be respectful young men. The older men pass down valuable knowledge to the younger boys; the practice also creates unity, a kind of brotherhood between the boys (Mhlahlo, 2009: 49).

Another Shembe practice to have received a lot of criticism from modern society and the media is animal sacrifice. Like initiation, the media often paints a negative picture without investigating what the practice is about and how exactly it is performed. This practice is often said to involve cruelty to animals, which is not always the case (Mndende, 2009: 89). Animals are killed in far less cruel ways than what is seen in abattoirs which perform mass killings, and where animals experience a long and painful death (*Earthlings*, Monson, 2005). The animals are often killed with an assegai during rituals where an animal sacrifice is needed. The stab is made between the atlas and the axis on the neck, the assegai quickly reaches the spinal cord and the death is instant. This method is believed to be painless

(Mndende, 2009: 98). Animal killing instructions are believed to come from ancestors. People find the new bylaws problematic because sometimes they go against the rules set out by the ancestors. One of the ancestors' rules is that no pain should be inflicted on the animal; animals are treated well because they have to be in good health for the sacrifice (Mndende, 2009: 90). According to Mbali:

When it comes to outsiders their opinions differ. But I believe most people understand and accept the religion even though most people feel that they could never adopt our practices and ideas because they are too strict. But I've also heard of people in suburbs calling animal rights activists when cultural and religious practices take place and when animal sacrifices have to be made. People often have to even give notice or apply for permits allowing them to perform these religious and cultural practices. People living in suburbs are limited and cannot perform their cultural practices properly (Mbali, interview with author, 2012).

The media's portrayal of the Shembe Church is also often negative and one-sided. The media often puts profit first. The media has been known to misinform people and manipulate the truth in order to sell papers. False information is also often published due to lack of information. The media spends more time and resources on politics, sports and entertainment. Religion is not a category that receives much attention, while religious minorities often receive even less recognition and in some cases bad press (Wright, 1997: 104). This may be one reason why the media prints false information about the Shembe Church. The Shembe Church is also often ignored and not allowed the space to represent itself in the media. In response to the media's hostility towards the Shembe Church, Mandla argued that:

The church is also often discriminated against. There is a level of inequality, especially in the media. You find that religions such as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity have programming aired on radio and TV that are targeted for their followers on certain times or days. We as the Nazareth church are a religion which many hate and look down on, and as a result we are not given the same opportunities as other religious movements (Mandla, interview with author, 2012).

In agreement with the sentiments expressed by Mandla, Senzo argued that:

People write in newspapers that we are at odds with God's words or teachings. On weekends you see on TV different priests from different churches representing their religion, but one never sees a Shembe priest in these programmes. There is a Shembe Priest who goes on Radio Zulu but this is still not enough. The government also felt threatened by us during the apartheid area. They tried to move us as a way of destroying the church, but they were not successful. This is because the house of ekuPhakameni can't be moved, where God placed it is where it shall remain. When God spent Shembe here he found that people had built on surrounding areas and but not here. EkuPhakameni was not found by accident; it is our promised land God preserved this place for us (Senzo, interview with author, 2012).

The Shembe Church is perhaps the largest religious movement in Africa, but few people outside of KwaZulu-Natal even know about it. Some Shembe members believe that people

who do know of the church know it because of the media's coverage of the internal battles in the church. Many people also know it as the church whose messiah "attempted to fly off a mountain". Cliff discusses the media's selective approach when covering news on the Shembe Church:

I wanted to mention the lack of awareness there is about the Shembe Church. The media has not given the Shembe Church enough space to make its ideas known. The media is very selective about the things it puts out there that relate to the Shembe Church. Often when the Shembe Church is on the news it is always about the battles with in the church. The good things are not published. People do not even know about our religious gatherings and festivals (Cliff, interview with author, 2012).

Dumisani elaborates on the lack of understanding people have towards Shembe ideas and practices:

They do not understand us; some people criticize this religion without understanding it or asking questions about it. People aren't the same but most of us Shembe believers know better than to look down on some else's beliefs and it makes me feel sad when people do that to me. Some say the older men in the church only marry young women. They say a lot of misguided things like we wear primitive clothes and they say the traditional clothes we wear stink. They also tell the untrue story of how Shembe flew off a mountain (Dumisani interview with author, 2012).

However, Sbu mentions one positive role he feels the media has played. He explains how the media has assisted in exposing some of the lies that have been told about the Shembe Church.

I think the church has faced the biggest challenge when it comes to being accepted in society. In schools even the teachers have this discrimination towards young student learners who are in the church. They want us to cut our hair. So I feel within society the church has not been accepted. They even have these untrue stereotypes. They say Shembe tried to fly off a mountain, which was untrue. It has recently been addressed by many journalists who are now saying it is untrue. But that thing, it still traumatises us as members of the church. I think it's slowly but surely being accepted, but it is a slow process (Sbu, interview with author, 2012).

The media and South African modern society have played a huge role in influencing government's decisions and policy making when it comes to cultural and religious issues. Many Shembe members believe that the intolerance they feel largely comes from government's actions and sometimes lack of action. Youth mentor and Sabbath teacher Senzo believes that even the constitution does not sufficiently protect Shembe members:

The constitution is political; it is a site of struggle and conflict. Religion is the same; it is hard to separate religion from politics. When the missionaries first came to Africa they were seeking ways of controlling us. Instead they found out that we are brave people who fight for what we believe in. The one loophole they found was that Africans were God-loving and God-fearing people and this is the angle they used to control us. As God-fearing people we believed their lies because we could not conceive of anyone lying about God or using God to

manipulate others. Our government and laws are the same way. The laws of this country are made up by Christian teachings because they are the religious majority. The government promotes these because Christians are the majority and government wants to maintain control. The constitution does not protect our members when they are told by their employers that they have to cut their hair. They say the constitution protects everyone, but it does not protect us (Senzo, interview with author, 2012).

Government seldom consults with the relevant cultural groups when creating new laws. Even King Goodwill was not consulted when government put a ban on the virginity testing of girls younger than 16 (Vincent, 2006: 19). This angered many people, especially women who felt this practice was important for passing down knowledge and reducing the spread of HIV (Hugo, 2012: unpagued). David believes that the government only acknowledges the Shembe Church when it wants something from the church:

Society and the government do not respect our religious beliefs. The Shembe Christmas which takes place in March is not recognised or made into a holiday. Our religion is over 100 years old, but few people even know of it. Government turns to us when it needs help in the form of voters (David, interview with author, 2012).

Mandla agrees with David's position. He adds that Shembe members are often left out of meetings and decision making because meeting are usually held during the holy Sabbath:

The government does not respect our religious ideas. The government holds many participatory development programmes and community meetings, but these never take place on a Sunday, they always take place on the Sabbath. No efforts have been made to organise alternative meeting for those who cannot attend during the Sabbath. We as Nazareth people end up not having a say in what happens in our community (Mandla, interview with author, 2012).

Tumi adds that Shembe members are often left out or forgotten:

Sometimes there are gatherings that take place in society in order to deal with certain issues South Africa faces. Religious organizations and other groups are often invited, but the Shembe Church is often left out. People forget that we are part of this world and that these issues affect us as well (Tumi, interview with author, 2012).

Shembe followers feel that their holidays and sacred days like the Sabbath are not recognised by modern society and government. People do not spend the whole of July at their respective religious Meccas because Shembe religious holidays are not recognised and people often cannot get even some time off work or school. The weekends end up being the most full. Christian holidays receive special treatment and are in some ways celebrated even by non-Christians because most of them are made into public holidays. Most of the school holidays are even organized around sacred Christian days and events. Non-Christian religious holidays are not represented in the South African calendar. Working South Africans and Christians requested an extra public holiday because Christmas fell on a Sunday in 2011 (News24,

2011). This request was challenged by Hindus, the Shembe Church and other religious movements. Hindus felt that their religion should also be represented in the calendar and wanted Diwali to be made into an official public holiday. The Shembe Church felt the same way about some of their religious holidays. The Shembe Church said it wanted two of their religious holidays to be officially recognised by government and South Africans. These are March 10, the day Isaiah Shembe arrived in KwaZulu-Natal and May 2, the day of his death (News24, 2012). In June 2012 different religious groups united and made an official complaint to the CRL Rights Commission, saying they felt discriminated against because their religious holidays are not recognised in the South African calendar. Political and media commentator and elder of the Unique Philadelphia Bible Church, Mogomotsi Mogodiri, wrote an article with the headline “Evil forces against Christian holidays” in retaliation to the injustice with which he felt Christians were faced. Mogodiri proceeded to undermine other religious groups and criticised the CRL Rights Commission for even considering this complaint. Mogodiri feels that Christianity earned the right to be recognised because it is the most “superior” and most popular religion in South Africa (Mogodiri, 2012). Mogodiri’s article is hate speech; his suggestion that these other religious groups are evil creates intolerance. Mogodiri makes the assumption that Christianity is the “correct” religion. More needs to be done by the government when it comes to recognising other religious holidays. This will be very challenging in a diverse country like South Africa with many different religions, but perhaps the best solution is for government to stay neutral on this issue and not favour one religion over another.

Thembi feels that it is unjust and unfair that Christians have their important religious days turned into holidays. She also discusses her teachers’ unwillingness to assist when she has missed school to attend important Shembe gatherings:

Christians have their special religious days such as Easter and Christmas. These are even turned into holidays, people do not go to work and schools close. Our special religious days do not receive as much attention; we are not given holidays for our January, July or September gathering. This is discrimination and it is not fair. Teachers are unwilling to help us catch up when we miss school to attend our January religious pilgrimage (Thembi, interview with author, 2012).

Qondile talks about some of the challenges Shembe students face. Shembe students are sometimes emotionally and physically abused by teachers who are unwilling to recognize Shembe religious days. The abuse Shembe students receive is in itself a violation to their

human rights (Beeld, 2011). Corporal punishment is illegal in South African schools but Shembe students are still beaten by their teachers:

We sometimes come into conflict with teachers at school when they organize extra lessons on the Sabbath. They do not understand when we do not attend and they beat us and call us backward and accuse us being dumb and not loving school and knowledge. But we cannot go against God's laws. Our parents are also forced to work during the Sabbath or they get fired (Qondile, interview with author, 2012).

The media and government are not the only ones guilty of discriminating against the Shembe Church. Shembe members feel oppressed at schools, places of work and in their communities. Oppression, according to Iris Young (1990: 39), is “the exercise of tyranny and power by the ruling class”. It is also the disadvantage and injustices some people suffer (Young, 1990: 39). People in society are oppressed on the basis of their sex, gender, skin colour, sexual preference, culture, class and disabilities; be it physical or mental (Young, 1990: 40). In this case people are oppressed based on their cultural and religious ideas and practices. Oppression can also manifest itself in cultural imperialism, when the dominant field's experiences and ideas are put forward as universally accepted norms. Anyone who deviates from this is immediately outcast and are marked as ‘other’ (Young, 1990: 59). Young's concepts of justice and how individuals fit into society are also similar to Bourdieu's habitus theory. Fields interact with each other, and are hierarchical. Most fields are subordinate of the larger field of power and class relations (Nooy, 2003: 317). The theory of habitus encourages one to think in terms of relations, relations to other individuals and social fields. According to Young (1990: 39), “Justice refers to the institutional conditions necessary for the development and exercise of individual capacities and collective communication and cooperation.” Under the principle of justice, injustice refers to forms of disabling constraints, oppression and domination. Oppression, according to Young, is structural and in many cases targets specific cultural fields: it limits an individual's or group's agency. Oppression often exists in the very policies, laws and principles that govern society, therefore making it very hard to stop or reverse its effects on society. According to Bourdieu (1993: 72), culture provides the grounds for human communication and interaction, it is also however a source of domination and oppression. Dominant fields exist within and between cultures.

Groups and group identification provide the conditions for Young's five faces of oppression (exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence) to occur. Group identification and the notion of ‘in groups’ and ‘out groups’ can often lead to the problem of prejudices, stereotypes, discrimination and exclusion. Oppression, in this view, is

something that happens to people when they are classified in groups. Because others identify them as a group, they are excluded and despised (Young, 1990: 47). The dominant actors within a field often legitimate oppression by creating ideologies of natural superiority and inferiority (Young, 1990: 48). Culture is often characterized by struggle, with dominant cultures fighting to remain on top. The dominant fields often reject and discredit other fields just to maintain their control and power (Bourdieu, 1993: 74). Mandla (interview with author, 2012) discusses the oppression he and other Shembe members feel when people refuse to let them honour the holy Sabbath:

I have been discriminated against based on my religious beliefs. The pace we were going at in school was a little slow. As the year went on the teacher started to realize that we are running out of time and we had to work faster. The teacher decided to hold extra lesson on the Sabbath. The Sabbath for me is life; I cannot do anything on the Sabbath. I tried to explain that I would be unable to come to school on a Saturday and she was unwilling to negotiate or try to move the lesson. The teacher discriminated against me based on my religious beliefs through his actions and unwillingness to compromise. I never attended the extra lesson, I caught up on the work I had missed in my own time and it worked out for me. Another thing that I use to see with my older siblings when I was younger was the hair thing. Growing up my siblings were forced to cut their hair for school. This is forbidden under Shembe law, but no exceptions were made for Shembe followers. They were also called unhygienic and dirty for keeping long hair. But schools were not as strict with this when I was growing up. Sometimes they would tell me to cut my hair, but my mother would refuse. It is the same for those people who work: people are told to shave their beards and hair. People end up cutting their hair out of fear of getting fired. People have to choose between their jobs and their religion. Working people have the same issue with working on the Sabbath, its worse when they do a job that involves working with heat. We do not touch or work with anything hot on the Sabbath; we do not cook or clean. Once again they put you on the spot because they can replace you with someone who is willing to do the job.

Mandla was fortunate enough to have his school ignore his long hair. Siyanda Mkhize and many others, however, were not. Siyanda Mkhize and many other students were suspended from Shaka's Kraal secondary school for refusing to cut their hair. Mkhize is a member of the Shembe Church and shaving goes against the Shembe Church laws. The students who were suspended were allowed to return back to school only after they agreed to cut their hair (IOL News, 2010).

Thandi (interview with author, 2011) explains another Shembe practice that modern South African society does not understand. According to Thandi, Shembe members are often ridiculed for walking barefoot during the Sabbath:

We often have to walk barefoot from home to the Church. People who don't understand this practice often mock us, but this practice is important to us. When we walk to church we walk with the ancestors who can't be with us in the flesh, it's important that we walk barefoot so

that they see our foot-prints and follow us as we go. As a result people laugh at us and gossip about us.

Limo feels that Shembe members are often discriminated against based on their appearance and their decision to wear traditional clothes and grow their hair long:

When we are out there, people think we don't look after ourselves, that we are dirty and backward because we grow our hair natural and we often wear modest or traditional clothes. People expect us to follow these worldly trends and put on extensions and so on. This is what society's definition of beautiful has become and as a result we as young girls do get judged when we don't fit these standards. As a result, we can't get certain jobs because our ways are frowned upon (Limo, interview with author, 2012).

The discrimination people feel and the allegations that their religion is "backward" causes many to doubt and question their religious practices and ideas. Some even end up feeling shame and concealing their faith. For example, Bonga explained:

Just to touch on the issue of discrimination: people thought we were mad and unhygienic for keeping our hair long at school. We sometimes felt too ashamed to admit that we believed in Shembe because people would label us as backward, this is discrimination (Bonga, interview with author, 2012).

The Shembe Church has found solutions for this problem; the formation of NaTeSA (Nazareth Tertiary Student Association) is one way the church and the youth have dealt with issues of discrimination. NaTeSa is a student body movement that was started in tertiary institutions in KwaZulu-Natal. It was started for Shembe students, by Shembe students. This organisation recently spread to institutions in Gauteng (NaTeSa, 2012). Shembe students help each other with academic problems and issues of faith. This organization helps restore individual and collective faith in the Shembe Church. It creates a sense of belonging and unity amongst students who may have been otherwise lost (NaTeSa, 2012). Sbu (interview with author, 2012) explains the educational role NaTeSa plays:

Recently there have been two organisations developed, NaTeSa (Nazareth Tertiary Student Association) and NABASHU where young people talk about the values of the church, how it developed and how it works. I think through those institutions the church deals with these issues. The other one is for young academic students in universities; unfortunately here at Rhodes University we don't have the NaTeSA organization. I think through those organizations young people learn the values of the church and it helps them to educate other learners.

Another issue that many Shembe members are faced with is the inability to express their culture and religion through attire and other cultural symbols. People have the right to express their culture, but company codes of conduct and dress codes often trump people's religious rights. As a consequence, Shembe members have found themselves coming into

conflict with their employers. Their religion is very important to them so the choice between their religion and their jobs is often a very difficult one. Senzo discuss the challenges working Shembe members face. The wearing of *isiphandla* (animal skin worn around the wrist) has created a lot of conflict between Shembe members and their employers:

The discrimination is there, it was worse before, it's still there even today but in a more subtle way. People think that you can't be a Nazareth believer and be smart or educated. We are often only seen as backward and slowing down civilization. Certain jobs have standards on how their employees should look; if you are different you are not even considered, for example if one wears *isiphandla*, which is both a Zulu and Nazareth practice (Senzo, interview with author, 2012).

Ncube agrees with Senzo and adds that while employers often respect other people's religious practices, Shembe members do not always receive the same treatment:

I am no longer a student, I work now, and I just wanted to add that my brothers and sisters are right. We are discriminated against at work. When we wear traditional symbols and things like *isiphandla* we are asked to remove them or they are not received very well. But when an Indian man wears similar religious or cultural things they are not met with as much intolerance (Ncube, interview with author, 2012).

A particular instance of work-place intolerance towards Shembe practice drove one man over the edge. Bonginkosi Nene who was working as a security guard for Coin Security shot his boss Daniel van der Spuy after a dispute. The dispute was about shaving beards and keeping short hair at work. Workers of Coin Security are required to keep short hair and be clean shaven, but this is forbidden under Shembe law. Nene had been instructed to shave his beard several times, but he refused. Nene went through a disciplinary hearing and was dismissed from work. Nene shot his boss Van der Spuy when he was delivering the news to him (Peters, 2011).

It is clear from the above Shembe member's experience that more needs to be done to protect the rights of cultural and religious minorities. Incidents of violence such as the Nene case need to be reduced. Nene could have dealt with the situation in so many other ways that did not involve violence; he could have taken his employer to court and fought for his religious rights. But people in post-apartheid democratic South Africa should not have to choose between their livelihood and their rights. According to Rawls (2005: 5), rights are utilities and resources that should be divided equally. By 'equally' Rawls means that rights should be divided according to need and merit. Rawls calls for partial equality; this is because equality suggests sameness. According to Rawls (2005: 5), we are not the same, therefore we should be treated differently and rights should be distributed accordingly. To give equal rights to all

would put certain people at an advantage and others at a disadvantage; this would therefore not be a just system of rights distribution (Kymlicka, 1989: 26).

Managing differences or even accepting differences can be hard, so people often chose to ignore, reject and isolate them instead. This leads to the kind of hate we see in the Nene case (Dieckmann, Wulf and Wimmer, 1997: 15). Acceptance and tolerance comes from understanding others and not fearing or rejecting that which is foreign to us. Tolerance can be created through creating and sharing knowledge about minorities such as the Shembe followers. The media could play a huge role in creating and sharing this new knowledge and encouraging the acceptance of others. This kind of action would be hard to implement as the Shembe Church and the media as well as South African modern society seem to be at odds with each other. Religious and cultural fields such as the Shembe Church are often criticized by modern society for not being accepting and understanding of individuals and individualistic ideas. Cultural organizations like the Shembe Church criticize modern society for not placing more focus on collective wellbeing and ubuntu (Kymlicka, 1989: 23). Both modern society and cultural fields like the Shembe Church fail to see that there is value in merging both these seemingly conflicting ideas. The Shembe Church stands to gain from modern society. There are many modern ideas and technologies that could assist the Shembe Inanda community, especially when it comes to development and cheap, sustainable solutions for problems such as lack of electricity. One example is solar energy (Hickman, 2013). The Shembe Church could fix many of its problems through collaborating with various organizations, and through the sharing of ideas and experiences. This is one way in which the Shembe Church can also educate people about their religion and expose the lies and misconceptions about it. South African modern society can also learn a lot from the Shembe Church. Certain Shembe ideas can be followed to assist in reducing poverty, the spread of HIV as well as creating a more harmonious relationship between people and the environment. Shembe youth Andile believes that Shembe laws prevent them from engaging in risky sexual behaviour:

We have these 23 gatherings as young men at the Shembe Church, these teach us about God's laws. They teach us that if you are a young man of ekuPhakameni you do not date and engage in sexual activities. This protects us from illnesses and diseases that are out there. We are also advised against drinking and smoking (Andile, interview with author, 2012).

Mle agrees with Andile. He adds that Shembe laws can teach the youth to be humble and to respect elders:

There is a lot we can teach modern society. Nowadays we find illnesses and suffering in the world. Shembe law states that all things come from God but people no longer respect God and they go against God's laws. Children show no respect for their parents and elders, some swear in front of elders and do as they please because they know they are protected by the government and legal system. This is moving away from God's grace. The Shembe Church can teach the youth especially; to respect, to be grounded and to be humble (Mle, interview with author, 2012).

Khaya believes that Shembe laws can help create peace and harmony between people and the environment:

Respecting and following Nazareth laws can help reduce and prevent illnesses, conflict and crime in society. The king of ekuPhakameni also teaches us about respect and unity between individuals and their neighbours and communities. One must not stand by and watch their neighbours struggle; your neighbour's struggles should be your struggles, when they are happy you should be happy. Your neighbour is your brother. If we implement Shembe's laws our society could be a healthy and peaceful one. Shembe also teaches us to look after and respect nature; even trees have life, just like we do. We cannot cut trees for no good reason; if you do wish to cut down a tree, pray about it and get God's approval (Khaya, interview with author, 2012).

A Shembe priest explained the Shembe Church is a religion that transforms the Zulu fighting culture into love. Zulus have been known historically as some of the best warriors. Zulus won many battles fought against other cultures, including defeating the British in Mount Isandlwana in 1879 (Chelmsford, 1879). This battle stopped the first British invasion and is one of the few examples of an African "tribe" defeating European settlers. For this priest, the Shembe Church takes the power and spirit that the Zulus have when it comes to fighting and turns this energy into love and peace. Here Weinberg talks about his interview with a Shembe priest. He talks about the transformation of the Zulu fighting culture into something peaceful and positive:

"But one of the experiences I had was when a preacher said to me 'we are taking Zulu culture of fighting and the spear and we are turning it into peace and love'. And I thought that was very profound" (Paul Weinberg, interview with author, 2012).

The kind of multiculturalism needed to heal post-colonial Africa cannot happen unless black Africans learn to accept their own culture and what makes them different. Black Africans need to first rid themselves of the inferiority complex that so many feel. They need to reject colonial lies and misconceptions that create intolerance and limit them. Doing this begins with accepting small things about Africanness or blackness, for example accepting one's physical appearance, one's skin, one's hair and so on. Doing this can assist in making it easier to accept the more complex things about Africanness, things like culture and history

(Biko 2004: 45). For Amilcar Cabral (1966: unpagged) multiculturalism and freedom can only be achieved by the oppressed reclaiming their historical process and culture. Colonialism and neo-colonialism have denied people their culture and historical process. Black Africans have to reject the myth that history only began with the arrival of Europeans (Cabral, 1966: unpagged). Cabral (1974: 12) sees culture as an important tool in the fight against oppression and domination. Even the colonizers understood that they could only maintain dominance by repressing African culture. African were encouraged (and often violently forced) to reject their culture and adopt Western culture. This process was thought to be progressive assimilation, but in reality it was just another way of destroying African culture (Cabral, 1974: 14). The Shembe Church accepts Africanness and encourages its members to celebrate the things that make them different, their language, culture, and physical appearance. The Shembe Church's promotion of African ideas and African pride has many things in common with Steve Biko's Black Consciousness. Biko's Black Consciousness also rejects the idea that to be black is to be inferior (Biko, 2004: 111). The Shembe Church could be very useful in teaching other black Africans and South Africans how to love themselves as well as other African cultures and people. Black Consciousness like the Shembe Church rejects the oppressive ideas that still repress so many Black Africans, the idea that African culture, history and people are inferior. Instead Black Consciousness encourages people to accept their culture, history and physical appearance (Biko, 1998: 360). Black Consciousness is a "realisation that by seeking to run away from themselves and to emulate the white man, blacks are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black. It was God's plan to create them black" (Biko, 1998: 360). For Biko reforming the oppressive system is not an option because reform means accepting the oppressive foundation of the system. People must instead transform the system and shape it into what they wish. This transformation can only happen in a society where people accept themselves and those around them. This transformation can only happen when people realise that there is no such thing as a pure or superior culture, this transformation requires the mixing of different cultural ideas (Biko, 1998: 362-3; Matus, 2002: 473). The Shembe Church and other AIC have set the trend for the kind of transformation suggested by Cabral and Biko. Isaiah Shembe created a cultural religion that both African religions and Christians rejected. Isaiah Shembe looked beyond Christian oppression and found ideas he believed to be valuable and he implemented these in the Shembe Church. He went further by restoring African culture and encouraging people to be proud of their history and the things that make them African. People were encouraged to be proud of everything from their cultural rituals, ancestral honouring to even their hair and

colour of their skin. Thembi (interview with author, 2012) feels accepted and welcomed in the Shembe Church because her natural looks are accepted, she is not encouraged to change who she is:

“I love ekuPhakameni because the laws of ekuPhakameni please me. I like that we keep our hair in its natural state.”

Sisa and Senzo explain that the Shembe church can help restore African pride and cultural ideas that have been lost or abandoned:

There is a lot the church can teach modern society. The first thing is respect, especially respect for elders and God. The Shembe Church can also restore African cultures and ideas. People have abandoned African ideas and have adopted white culture which is not always a perfect fit for Africa (Sisa, interview with author, 2012).

Senzo elaborates:

We can teach society to truly love and worship God. We can teach people that God wants you just the way you are, that they don't have to reject their culture and traditional way of dress in order to receive God's love. What is missing in people is a sense of belonging, a sense of pride, and this church can instil those things in people, especial amongst black people. We can also teach people the value in being self-reliant, independent and working hard so that you may better your lives. The final thing is love and respect for God, for nature and for other people (Senzo, interview with author, 2012).

The Shembe Church can also help restore old African systems of knowledge production. Many African cultures relied on oral tradition when it came to creating and sharing knowledge. Reviving this practice can help restore old, lost information (Lawson, 1985: 15). This can also lead to a greater sense of cultural pride as well a great sense of unity between families and communities. The Shembe Church holds meetings for different groups so that people can learn from each other, as well as learn to respect each other. Mbali explains:

“There are gatherings for women; we call these ‘13’ and ‘14’. We all gather and learn from each other” (Mbali, interview with author, 2012).

Pinky believes that respecting people is important because God lives in people, disrespecting people is therefore like disrespecting God.

There are things we can teach modern society, for one... respect. We teach our children how to be respectful and humble people and to respect their elders. We teach them to understand that it is important to respect people because God is in people; God is in each and every single one of us. We teach children to be respectful in their mannerisms, their language and the way they address people. We teach them to be respectful in what they choose to wear; they have to respect themselves and their bodies. It is in this way that Nazareth children are different from most, they understand and value respect (Pinky, interview with author, 2012).

People joined and continue to join AIC for many different reasons. Many people join because their churches help them find solutions to their problems; others join because they have experienced miracles. But the most important underlying reason why people join AIC like the Shembe Church is acceptance. People often feel welcomed and accepted. They are free to practise their culture and honour their ancestors without fear or shame. The Shembe church has come far in restoring African pride and creating unity between two cultures that have historically been in conflict with each other.

8.3. Conclusion

South Africans have not worked hard enough to end intolerance. The Shembe Church is a religious movement South Africans should be proud of, as it dispels many colonial myths and misconceptions. Since it was founded, the Shembe Church has assisted in restoring African pride. The church itself is not perfect but it has provided salvation for many of its members who would otherwise be alienated and marginalized by society. It also contributes to South Africa's rich and diverse history and culture, which we should be proud of. But instead alternative cultures like the Shembe Church are often met with more intolerance than acceptance. I have discussed the experiences of Shembe members, from how they live to how they fit into their surroundings. This chapter has also discussed the kinds of intolerance Shembe members and the church has had to deal with. I have tried to make a distinction between the religion and its practices. Some Shembe practices are very controversial and many people are opposed to these, and not the church itself. It is hard for many church members to make this distinction. The church has come under a lot of scrutiny and people often feel attacked. There are however very clear cases of media intolerance and lack of acceptance of Shembe laws. This chapter discusses some of the members' frustration when they feel like their practices have come under attack.

Finally, recommendations were made on how alternative cultural fields and modern society can coexist. Working together and learning from each other can assist in building a stronger South Africa and destroying the legacy of apartheid and colonialism.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This study has provided a glimpse into the Shembe Church and some of the challenges that confront the church and its members. This study has dealt largely with the issue of tolerance and accepting cultural diversity in South Africa. The research had four main objectives, which were mostly achieved. The research aimed to:

- Document how the Shembe religion incorporates both African Traditional Religion and Christianity.
- Investigate how some members of the Shembe Church experience the acceptance of the Shembe religion in South African society.
- Document what has been done on the provincial and national level to encourage tolerance and acceptance of diversity as well as the participating of “alternative” groups (such as the Shembe Church) in the creation of social policy.
- Investigate any officially documented cases of intolerance towards the Shembe religion.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 address the first research goal. These chapters discussed Shembe ideas and practices; and highlighted which practices were adopted from Christianity and which were adopted from ATR. They also look at which Shembe practices and ideas were influenced by both African religion and Christianity. Many of the participants involved in this research believed there are greater similarities between their cultural and religious practices. Both their culture and religion encourages them to honour their ancestors and celebrate the things that make them uniquely African. The participants recognize that they share a lot of the same ideas with Christians, as both religions use the Bible and praise the same God. But Shembe members believe they differ greatly from Christianity in the way they understand The Bible and in the way they worship God. These differences in opinions have created a lot of conflict between the Shembe Church and Christianity historically and even today. Shembe practices have often been said to be anti-God, while ancestral honouring and practices such as religious dancing were rejected by missionaries.

The Shembe Church is unique in that it is one of the first cases of multiculturalism we see historically. Biko and Fanon call for the kind of multiculturalism one sees in the Shembe Church. For Fanon (1964: 50) resolving the colonial problem lies in the end to racial prejudice and the rejection of colonial status and ideas. Once the oppressor’s rigid culture is transformed, it finally opens up to the culture of people who have really become united. The

two cultures can confront each other, enrich each other and accept the reciprocal relativism of their different cultures (Fanon, 1963: 104). Similar to Fanon, Biko believes that Black Consciousness is needed to build onto African culture and pride. Black Consciousness refers to black people and their situation. It aims to restore the self-worth of black people oppressed by the external world (Biko, 2004: 110). A slogan like “black is beautiful” is in line with Black Consciousness ideas, it says; “You are okay as you are, begin to look at yourself as a human” (Biko, 2004; 115). Both theories believe that culture can be used a vehicle for change, it can emancipate the oppressed and create unity between the oppressed and the oppressor.

What was also important for the purpose of this research was to understand the concept of culture. Culture was defined in relation to Bourdieu’s field and habitus theories. Bourdieu believes that society is made up of various social fields. Fields interact with each other, but are also hierarchical which can often create conflict and struggle between fields. Conflict can also exist within fields as has been the case within the religious field. Most fields are characterized by a struggle; newcomers often challenge the dominant actors within a field, for example dominant Christianity versus diverse religious fields such as the Shembe church (Bourdieu, 1993: 74). In this instance, the Shembe Church would be seen as the newcomer who the dominant actors fear because they threaten the “purity” of the religion. Fields largely shape and influence individuals and society, but individuals do have the power to influence fields and change their social reality. This is where Bourdieu’s theory of habitus comes in. According to Bourdieu (1993: 64), social reality exists both inside and outside the individual. Individuals internalise learned external realities and the material world. Individuals can be largely shaped by society and the cultures that surround them. Bourdieu uses the concept of habitus to explain the relationship between humans and the social field (Pinto, 2000: 106). Habitus emphasizes the joint realities of individual subjectivity and social objectivity (Swartz, 1997: 96). Habitus is the ‘past which survives in the present’; the ideas passed on to each individual from their earliest upbringing. Although modified by newer experiences and events, it is dominated by the earliest experiences, norms and values (Brubaker, 2000: 44).

Relating to Bourdieu’s habitus is the formation of the Shembe Church. Isaiah Shembe restored African culture which was close to extinction and in some ways immortalized it. He also challenged the dominant field. Isaiah Shembe exercised his agency and merged what he believed to be the best of his individual and cultural ideas with dominant Christian ideas and

practice. He merged his individual subjectivity with his social reality and created a religion that was accepting of both African and Western ideas, two seemingly conflicting fields.

Religious and cultural intolerances still exist despite Isaiah Shembe's early efforts to create cultural unity and multiculturalism. The second and third goal of this research aims to uncover cases of intolerance towards that Shembe Church. These two goals are addressed in great detail in Chapter 8. Chapters 6 and 7 do also give a brief overview of some of the challenges the Shembe Church has had to face. Chapter 8 discusses in detail the controversies and cases of intolerance that Shembe members sometimes deal with. This chapter also tries to make a distinction between the religion and its practices. Some Shembe practices are very controversial and many people are opposed to these and not the church itself. Feminists believe that the church violates women's rights through its polygamy and virginity testing practices. Feminists are therefore opposed to the practice and not the church itself. It is hard for many church members to make this distinction, the church has come under a lot of scrutiny and people often feel attacked. There are however very clear cases of media intolerance and lack of acceptance of Shembe laws. Chapter 8 discusses the frustration many members feel when they are forced to cut their hair for school and work. This frustration even pushed one man over the edge and resulted in the death of his boss.

Research like this is very important, especially in the South African context. We are a new democracy and our country is made up of diverse individuals and groups who do not always know how to relate to each other. Research that deals with cultural diversity and marginalised groups is a starting point for dealing with diversity, educating people and teaching acceptance. I hope that I have demonstrated through this thesis that diversity is not something that should be feared; instead it is something we should embrace. We can learn more from each other by accepting each other.

References

- Arde, G. (1995). "Nazarite Church leader dies". *Daily News*. South Africa: Institute of current world affairs.
- Atheide, D.L. and Johnson, J.M. (1997). "Ethnology and Justice", in Miller, D and Dingwall, R. (ed) *Context and Method in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Amoah, E. (2009). "African Traditional Religion and the concept of poverty", in Paris, P.J. (ed). *Religion and Poverty Pan-African Perspectives*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Ayisi, E.O. (1979). *An Introduction to the Study of African Culture*. (2nded). London: Heinemann.
- Babbie, E. (1990). "The essential wisdom of Sociology". *Teaching Sociology*. 18, 526-530.
- Becken, H.J. (1968). "On the Holy Mountain: A visit to the New Year's Festival of the Nazaretha Church on Mount Nhlankakazi, 14 January 1967". *Journal of Religion in Africa*. 1(2), 138-149.
- Becken, H.J. (1978). "Ekuphakameni revisited: Recent development within the Nazaretha Church in South Africa". *Journal of Religion in Africa*. 9(3), 161-172.
- Beeld, A.R. (2011). *Corporal punishment still in schools*. Retrieved: February, 2013, from www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/corporal-punishment-still-in-schools-20110420.
- Bhabha, H.K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Bhabha, H.K. (2000). "Race, Time and the Revision of Modernity", in Back, L and Solomos, J. (ed). *Theories of Race and Racism. A Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Bible Gateway. (2011). *The Bible: New International Version*. Retrieved: January, 2013, from www.biblegateway.com/passage.
- Bigger, S. (2009). "Ethno-Spirituality: A Postcolonial Problematic?" *Alternation: Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa*, 3, 1-13.
- Biko, S. (1998), in Coetzee, P.PH and Roux, A.P.J. (ed). *The African Philosophy Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Biko, S. (2004), in Aelred Stubbs, C.R, Tutu, D, Biko, N. (ed). *I write what I like: a selection of his writings/ Steve Biko*. Johannesburg: Picador Africa.
- Bird-David, N. (1999). "Animism" Revised: Personhood, Environment and Relational Epistemology'. *Current Anthropology*. 40(s1), s67-s91.
- Blaut, J.M. (1992). "The theory of Cultural Racism". *A Radical Journal of Geography*, 23, 289-299.

- Bloor, M. (1997). "Techniques of Validation in Qualitative Research: A Critical Commentary", in Miller, G and Dingwall, R. (ed) *Context and Method in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Browne, D.L. (2005). "Shembeism and rainbow nation: Shembe religion and cultural change in Durban, South Africa". *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*. 31(1-2), 90-113.
- Brubaker, R. (2000). "Social Theory as Habitus" in Robbins, D. *Pierre Bourdieu*. London: Sage.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *Sociology in Question*. London: Sage.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The Field of Cultural Production*. Cambridge: Polity press.
- Bourdieu, P and Wacquant, L. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polite Press.
- Bourdieu, P and Wacquant, L. (2005). "The Cunning of Imperialist Reason" in Wacquant, L. *Pierre Bourdieu and Democratic Politics*. Cambridge: Polite Press.
- Cabral, A. (1966). *The Weapon of Theory*. Retrieved: February, 2013, from www.marxists.org/subject/africa/cabral/1996/weapon-theory.htm.
- Cabral, A. (1974). "National Liberation and Culture". *Transition*, 45, 12-17.
- Castle, G. (2007). *The Blackwell Guide to Literacy Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Chelmsford, K.C.B. (1879). "The South Africa Medal 1877-79." *Despatches 1879*. Retrieved: February, 2013, from www.northeastmedals.co.uk/Britishguide/zulu/despatch4_isandhlwana-isandlwana.htm.
- Christie, P and Collins, C. (1984). "Apartheid Ideology and Labour Reproduction" in Kallaway, P. *Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.
- Cobley, A.G. (1991). *The "African National Church": Self-Determination and Political Struggle Among Black Christians in South Africa to 1948*. *Church History: Studies in Christianity and culture*. 60(3), 356-371.
- Cockburn, A and St Clair, J. (2012). *America's best Political Newsletter*. Retrieved: December, 2012, from http://thewe.cc/weplanet/valued_life/humans_and_animals.
- Couldry, N. (2007). "Bourdieu and the Media: The promise and limits of theory" in Benson, R and Neveu, E. *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research design. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Second edition*. University of Nebraska, Lincoln: Sage Publications.

- Creswell, J.W. & Miller, D.L. (2000). "Determining validity in qualitative inquiry". *Theory into Practice*. 39(3), 124-130.
- Dieckmann, B. Wulf, C and Wimmer, M. 1997, *Violence: Nationalism, Racism, Xenophobia*, Waxmann: New York.
- Dougall, J.W.C. (1963). *Christians in the African Revolution*. Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press.
- Douglas, H.P. (1979). "The Passive Voice Theories in Religious Sociology". *Review of Religious Research*, 21(1), 51-61.
- Durkheim, E. (1965). *The Elementary forms of the Religious life*. New York: Free Press.
- Evans-Prichard, E.E. (1956). *Nuer Religion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The Wretched of the Earth*. London: Penguin Books.
- Fanon, F. (1964). *Towards the African Revolution*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fanon, F. (1952). "The Fact of Blackness", in Alcoff, L.M and Mendieta, E. *Identities. Race, Class, Gender and Nationality*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Fernandez, J.W. (1973). "The precincts of the Prophet: A day with Johannes Galilee Shembe". *Journal of Religion in Africa*. 5(1), 32-53.
- Frazer, J.G. (1890). *The Golden Bough: a study of magic and religion*. New York: Cornell University Library.
- Girard, R. (1988). *Violence and the Sacred*. London: Athlone Press.
- George, E.R. (2008). "Virginity Testing and South Africa's HIV/AIDS Crisis: Beyond Rights Universalism and Cultural Relativism towards Health Capabilities". *California Law Review: HIV/AIDS, Rights, Culture and Health Capabilities*, 96. 1447-1519,
- Goody, J. (1961). "Religion and Ritual: The definitional Problem". *The British Journal of Sociology*, 12(2), 142-164.
- Gouw, A and du Plessis, L.M. (2000). "The relationship between Political tolerance and religion: The case of South Africa". *Lexis Nexis*. Retrieved: January, 2013, from <https://litigation-essentials.lexisnexis.com/webcd/app?>
- Griffin, S.F. (1995). *'Shembe' is the way*. Durban: Institute of Current World Affairs (ICWA).
- Gunner, E. (1988). "Power House, Prison House- An oral genre and its use in Isaiah Shembe's Nazareth Baptist Church". *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 14(2), 204-227.

- Gunner, E. (2004). "New wine in old bottles: Imagery in the izibongo of the Zulu Zionist Prophet, Isaiah Shembe" in Draper, J.A (ed). *Orality, literacy, and colonialism in Sothern Africa*. Boston: Brill.
- Gyeke, K (1997). *Tradition and Modernity.Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*.Oxford: Oxford University.
- Harnack, A. (2005). *About the Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*.Retrived: January, 2011, from www.ccel.org/ccel/harnack/mission.titlepage.html.
- Harrison, V.S. (2006). "The Pragmatics of defining Religion in a multi-cultural world".*International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. 59, 133-152.
- Hause, P.L. (1996). "Isaiah Shembe's Church".*Journal of African History*. 37(2), 332-334.
- Heuser, A. (2008). "“He dances like Isaiah Shembe!” Ritual Aesthetics as a Maker or Church Difference".*Studies in World Christianity*. 14, 35-54.
- Heuser, A. (2008). "Representation of Shembe in the Cultural Discourse of African Renaissance".*Journal of Religion in Africa*. 35(3), 362-387.
- Heuser, A. (2008). "“A Lion Went Home’ Media Imaginations about an Alleged Rasta ‘Prophet of Truth’” in Dickow, H and Heuser, A (ed). *Religion on the Move.Exploring Passages in South African Christianity*. Byblos: International Centre for Human Sciences.
- Hickman, L. (2013). "Green deal: can it make millions of homes more energy efficient?"*The Guardian*.Retrieved: January 2013, from www.guardian.co.uk/environment/blog/2013/jan/28/green-deal-homes-energy-efficient.
- Hirschmann, D. (1990). "The Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa".*The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 28(1), 1-22.
- Hobbes, T. (1889).*The Elements of Law: Natural and Politic*. London: Simpkin, Marshall.
- Hook, D. (2004). "Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko, psychopolitics and critical psychology". *London: LSE Research Online*. Lansdowne: Juta Academic Publishing.
- Hugo, N. (2012). "Virginity Testing and HIV/AIDS: Solution or Human Rights Violation?"*Consultancy Africa Intelligence*.Retrieved: November, 2012, from www.consultancyafrica.com/index.php?option=com_context&view=article&id=1066:virginity-testing-and-hivaids-solutions-or-human-rights-violation.
- Idowu, E.B. (1973). *African Tradtional Religion.A Definition*.New York: Orbis Books.
- Ikas, K and Wagner, G. (2009). "Introduction" in Ikas, K and Wagner, G. *Communicating in the Third Space*.New York: Routledge.

- IOL News.(2010). "School suspends Shembe pupil for long hair".*IOL News*.Retrieved: March, 2013, from www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/school-suspends-shembe-pupil-for-long-hair-1,251017.
- Janzen, J.M. (1995). "Self-Presentation and Common Cultural Structures in Ngoma Rituals in Southern Africa". *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 25(2), 141-162.
- Jenks, C. (1993). *Culture*.London: Routledge.
- Johns, S. (2004). "Isaiah Shembe and the Uses of Textuality".*Journal of Southern African Studies*. 30(2), 401-403.
- Kaarsholm, P. (2006). "Culture as cure: civil society and moral debates in Kwa-Zulu Natal after Apartheid". *Current Writing*, 18(2), 1-13.
- Kalshcheuer, B. (2009). "Encounters in the Third Space: Links Between Intercultural Communication Theories and Postcolonial Approaches", in Ikas, K and Wagner, G. *Communicating in the Third Spaces*. New York: Routledge.
- Kamara, G.M. (2000). "Regaining our African Aesthetic and Essence through Our African Traditional Religion". *Journal of Black Studies*, 30(4), 502-514.
- Kee, A. (1986). *Domination or Liberation.The Place of Religion in Social Conflict*.London: SCM Press.
- Kitzinger, J. (1994). "The methodology of focus groups: The importance of interaction between research participants". *Sociology of Health and Illness*. 16(1), 103-121.
- Kumar, R. (2005). *Research Methodology: A step-by-Step Guide for Beginners*, London: Sage Publications.
- Kymlicka, W. (1989).*Liberalism, community and culture*. Oxford: Claredon Press.
- Lachmann, L.M. (2007). *The Legacy of Max Weber*.Alabama: The Ludwig von Mises Institution Auburn.
- Lawson, E.T. (1985). *Religions of Africa.Traditions in Transformation*. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press.
- Madise, M. (2005). *Parallels of the European Church Reformation and the Church reformation in Africa: The Cultural Dichotomy and Reflection*.UNISA.
- Marshall, C & Rossman, G. (1999). *Designing qualitative research 3rd Edition*. London: Sage Publications.
- Martineau, J. (1890). *Seat of Authority in Religion*.London: Longman, Green.
- Maton, K. (2005). "The question of autonomy: Bourdieu's field approach and higher education policy". *Journal of Education Policy*, 20(6), 687-704.

- Matus, M.B. (2002). "Contribution to a new critical theory of multiculturalism: A response to 'Anti-racism, multiculturalism and the ethics of identification'". *Philosophy Social Criticism*, 28(4), 473-482.
- Maxwell, D. (2001). "Sacred History, Social History: Traditions and Text in the Making of a Southern African Transnational Movement". *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 43(3), 502-524.
- Mbiti, J.S. (1975). *Introduction to African Religion*. London: Heinemann.
- Mbiti, J.S. (1997). *African Religions and Philosophy, 2nd Edition*. Nairobi: Heinemann.
- McCulloch, J. (1983). *Black soul white artefact. Fanon's clinical psychology and social theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McVeigh, M.J. (1974). *God in Africa*. Vermont: Claude Stark, Inc.
- Medical News Today (2008). *Virginity Testing Puts South African Government, Zulu Tribe At Odds*. Retrieved: November, 2012, from www.medicalnewstoday.com/release/123522.php.
- Meersman, B. (2012). "Soaring search for truth". *Mail and Guardian*. Retrieved: September, 2012, from www.mg.co.za/print/2012-05-04-soaring-search-for-truth.
- Memela, M. (2011). "Shembe church leader Vimbeni dies". *Sowetan*. Retrieved: July, 2011, from <http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2011/03/29/shembe-church-leader-vimbeni-dies>.
- Meyer, B. (2004). "Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches." *Annual review of Anthropology*, 33, 447-474.
- Mhlahlo, A.P. (2009). *What is Manhood? The significance of traditional circumcision in the Xhosa initiation ritual*. Cape Town: University of Stellenbosch.
- Miya, S. (2012). "Shembe faction breaks with tradition after shooting incident". *The Witness*. Retrieved: June, 2013, from http://www.witness.co.za/?showcontent&global%5B_id%5D=75727.
- Mndende, N. (2009). *Tears of the Distress: Voices of a Denied Spirituality in a Democratic South Africa*. Dutywa: Icamagu Institute.
- Mogodiri, M. (2012). "Evil forces against Christian holidays". *IOL News*. Retrieved: January 2013, from www.iol.co.za/news/evil-forces-against-christain-holidays-1.1422378.
- Momotl, N.K. (2002). *Law and Culture in the new constitutional dispensation with specific reference to the custom of circumcision as practiced in the Eastern Cape*. Grahamstown: Rhodes University.
- Earthlings*. Monson, S. (Director). (2005). [video/DVD] United States: Nation Earth.

- Mpanza, M.P. (1999). *Submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by Ibandla Lama Nazareth*. Retrieved: June, 2011, from web.uct.ac.za/depts/ricsa/commiss/trc/nazar.htm.
- Mthethwa, B.N. (1992). "Shembe hymnody and the ethical standards and worldview of the amaNazaretha", in Oosthuizen, G.C. and Hexham, I. (ed) *Empirical studies of African independent/indigenous churches*. New York: Lewiston, The Edwin Mellen press.
- Mthethwa, B. (2010). "Shembe battle goes to court". *Times Live*. Retrieved: March, 2011, from www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/article464232.ece/shembe-battle-goes-to-court.
- Muller, C.A. (1994). *Nazarites song, dance, and dreams: the sacralization of time, space and the female body in South Africa*. UMI Dissertation Services: A Bell and Howell Company.
- Muller, C.A. (1999). *Rituals of Fertility and the Sacrifice of Desire. Nazarite Women's Performance in South Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Muller, C.A. (2002). "Archiving Africanness in Sacred Song". *The Society of Ethnomusicology*, 46(3), 409-431.
- NaTeSa. (2012). *NaTeSa home page*. Retrieved: January 2013, from www.masoso.angelfire.com.
- Ndlovu, B. (2013). "Different stages of respect in Zulu culture". *Umlazi sharing indigenous knowledge*. Retrieved: February 2013, from www.ulwaza.org/index.php5?title=Different_stages_of_respect_in_zulu_culture.
- News24. (2010). "Fire at KZN Shembe Church". News24. Retrieved: March, 2013, from www.news24.com/South Africa/News/Fire-at-KZN-Shembe-church-20100719.
- News24. (2011). "Zuma asked for extra public holiday". News24. Retrieved: January, 2013, from www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Zuma-asked-for-extra-public-holiday-20111212.
- News24. (2012). "Religious groups want more holidays". News24. Retrieved: January, 2013, from www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Religious-groups-want-more-holidays-20120621.
- Ngalwa, S. (2004). "Traditionalists see virtue in virgin testing". *IOL News*. Retrieved: December, 2012, from www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/traditionalists-see-virtue-in-virgin-testing-1,220613.
- Nkrumah, K. (1965). *Neo-Colonialism, the last Stage of imperialism*. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons.
- Nooy, W.D. (2003). "Fields and Networks: correspondence analysis and social network analysis in the framework of field theory". *Poetics*, 31, 305-327.

- Nyirongo, L. (1997). *The gods of Africa or the gods of the Bible? : The snares of African Traditional Religion in biblical perspective*. Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education
- O'Connor, T. (2010). "Free Will". *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved: July, 2012, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/freewill/>
- Ohlange Institute. (2011). *J.L. Dube*. Inanda: Department of Arts and Culture.
- Okwu, A.S.O. (1979). "Life, Death, Reincarnation, and Traditional Healing in Africa". *A Journal of Africanist Opinion*, 9(3), 19-24.
- Oosthuizen, G.C. (1968). "Isaiah Shembe and the Zulu World View". *History of Religions*, 8(10), 1-30.
- Ostergard, R. L, Tubin, M, Altman, J. (2001). "Stealing from the Past: Globalisation, Strategic Formation and the Use of Indigenous Intellectual Property in the Biotechnology Industry". *Third World Quarterly*, 22(4), 643-656.
- Papu, J and Verster, P. 2006. "A Biblical, Cultural and Missiological critique of Traditional Circumcision among Xhosa- speaking Christians". *Acta Theologica*.No.2.pp 178-198.
- Parrinder, E.G. (1974). *African Traditional Religion 3rd ed*. London: Sheldon Press.
- Pauw, B.A. (1963). "African Christians and Their Ancestors", in Hayward, V.E.W (ed). *African Independent Churches Movements*. London: Edinburgh House Press.
- Peters, S. (2011). "Managers shot by guard over sacking". *IOL News*. Retrieved: December, 2011, from www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/guard-shot-by-manager-over-sacking-court-told-1,1179262.
- Peillion, M. (1998). *Bourdieu's Field and the Sociology of Welfare*. National University of Ireland: Cambridge University Press.
- Pickering, W.S.F. (1984). *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion. Themes and Theories*. Cambridge: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Pinto, L. (2000). "The Theory of Fields and the Sociology of Literature: Reflections on the Work of Pierre Bourdieu" in Robbins, D. *Pierre Boudieu*. London: Sage.
- Posnock, R. (1997). "How It Feels to Be a Problem: Du Bois, Fanon and the 'Impossible life' of the Black Intellectual". *Critical Inquiry*, 23(2), 323-349.
- Praeg, L. (2000). *African Philosophy and the Quest for Autonomy. A Philosophical Investigation*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Rawls, J. (2005). *Political Liberalism*. Columbia: Columbia University Press.

- S.A.B.C. (2011). *Shembe Trial to Resume on Tuesday*. Retrieved: February, 2012, from www.sabc.co.za/news/a/7f5b9280490fef5d1fdff7e1b6dce/shembe-trial-to-resume-on-tuesday--20111114.
- Saunders, C.C. (1970). "Tile and the Thembu Church: Politics and Independency on the Eastern Cape Frontier in the Late Nineteenth Century". *The Journal of African History*, 11(4), 553-570.
- Schatzki, T.R. (2000). "Overdue Analysis on Bourdieu's Theory of Practice" in Robbins, D. *Pierre Boudieu*. London: Sage.
- Schnaiberg, A. (1987). *The Environment: A surplus to scarcity*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Scorgie, F. (2002). "Virginity Testing and the Politics of Sexual Responsibility: Implications for AIDS Intervention". *African Studies*, 61(1), 55-75.
- Sliverman, D. 1997, "The Logics of Qualitative Research", in Miller, G and Dingwall, R. (ed) *Context and Method in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Somè, M.P. (1996). *Ritual Power, Healing and Community*. Wellow: Gateway Books.
- Somè, M. P. (1997). *The Healing Wisdom of Africa. Finding life purpose through nature, ritual and community*. New York: Penguin Putnam Inc.
- Stanford. (2012). "Chronology of Apartheid Legislation". *Stanford University*. Retrieved: December, 2012, from www.stanford.edu/class/history48q/Documents/EMBARGO/chap13.htm.
- Street, J. (1997). *Politics and Popular Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Storey, J. (2003). *Inventing Popular Culture*. London: Blackwell Publishing.
- Sundkler, B.G.M. (1948). *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*. Cambridge: James Clarke and Co.
- Swartz, D. (1997). *The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu: Cultural Power*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Swartz, D. (2002). "The Sociology of Habit: The Perspective of Pierre Bourdieu". *The Occupational Therapy Journal of Research*. 22, 615-695.
- Teoh, S.H, Welch, I and Wazzan, C.P. (1999). "The Effects of Socially Activist Investment Policies on the Financial Markets: Evidence from South African Boycott". *The Journal of Business*. 72(1), 35-89.
- Thorpe, S.A. (1991). *African Tradition Religions*. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- Tishken, J.E. (2006). "Whose Nazareth Baptist Church? Prophecy, Power and Schism in South Africa". *Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, 9(4), 79-97.

- Van Niekerk, S. (2002). *Five teens die during initiation*. Pietermaritzburg: The Natal Witness.
- Van Wichelen, S. (2009). "Polygamy Talks and Politics of Feminism: Contestations over Masculinity in a New Muslim Indonesia". *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 11(1), 173-188.
- Vilakazi, A; Mthethwa, B and Mpanza, M. 1986.*Shembe.The Revitalization of African Society*.Skotaville: Johannesburg.
- Vincent, L. (2006). "Virginity testing in South Africa: Re-traditioning the Postcolony". *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 8(1), 17-30.
- Wallace, A.F.C. (1956). "Revitalization movements". *American Anthropologist, New Series*. 58(2), 264-281.
- West, M.E. (1975). *Bishops and prophets in black city: African independent churches in Soweto, Johannesburg*. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Wilson, G. (2004). *So what colour was Jesus?* Retrieved: November, 2012, from www.bbc.co.uk
- Wilson, M; Kaplan, S; Maki, T and Walton, E.M. (1952).*Keiskammahoek Rural Survey Volume III Social Structure*.Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter.
- Wiredu, K. (1998). "Towards Decolonizing African Philosophy and Religion".*African Studies quarterly*, 1(4), 17-46.
- Woodhead, L. (2002). *Religions in the Modern World*. New York: Routledge.
- Wright, S.A. (1997). "Media Coverage of Unconventional Religions: Any 'Good News' for Minority Faiths?". *Review of Religious Research*, 39(2), 101-115.
- Young, I. M. (1990).*Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University.
- Zagzebski, L. (2004). "Foreknowledge and Free Will".*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.Retrieved: June, 2012, from: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/free-will-foreknowledge>.