

The Master's Cloth: A Rainbow Nation.
Exploring Faith and Spirituality through Colour.
A study of Apostolic and Zionist movements in Soweto.

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Declaration:

I, Mbali Dhlamini declare that this dissertation is my own independent work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

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05 February 2016

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Synopsis:

Colour has always played an important role in South Africa; from the beginning of colonialism when “Africans” were converted to Christianity and baptised in white robes, to the bright colourful church garments that flood Soweto on Sundays. In the nineteenth century “Africans” began to reimagine their faith and spiritually. Seeking independence and a sense of identity, they began to fuse Western Christian ideologies with “African” spiritual beliefs and attire, which led to the origin of African Independent Churches (AIC). I aim to demonstrate how colour was not only used as a break away from colonial influences, but was also used to portray African spiritual beliefs and to create a distinctive “African” religious identity.

This paper aims to study colour usage and its meaning within the South African context in order to show how colour use within Apostolic and Zionist movements relates to traditional African spirituality. The paper aims to show how colours used within both movements are symbolic and are thus used as spiritual codes. The paper will look at contemporary colours in order to show how Apostolic and Zionist movements continue to use colour to shape their spiritual identity.

For Soweto.

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Introduction

<i>Isondo lama Zion,</i>	<i>Church of Zion,</i>
<i>Isondo lama gwala,</i>	<i>Church of cowards,</i>
<i>Wake wayibonaphi indoda,</i>	<i>where have you seen a man,</i>
<i>Isontha iphethe induko,</i>	<i>worship carrying a stick,</i>
<i>Ishaye isithena round, iguce ngama dolo...</i>	<i>going around in circles and</i>
	<i>kneeling....¹</i>

I remember as a child we would chant and sing this song while playing and skipping rope. I neither understood the implications of the song we were singing nor what we were saying. As a child the concept of Zion was always a mystery. These bright coloured church garments filled our surroundings like ghostly images; they would move and swirl through space. They formed part of my visual world and I knew if I saw a person dressed in one, that person was coming from, or going to, a religious gathering. As a child the concept of “*um’Zioni*” (A Zionist) was an abstract concept. Through visual elements in the Zion Church, I slowly began to formulate an understanding. The words of the song above -- “where have you seen a man worship carrying a stick, going around in circles and kneeling” – captivated me and influenced my perception of Zion. As I grew up exposed to brightly coloured and fancifully designed

¹ A song by a local musician Vusi Qimbi.

church garments, my curiosity expanded. This has led me to research the history of Independent African Churches (AIC)² and the origin of church garments.

The scope of the paper is of a limited nature. The hypothesis of my study is that the use of garments and colour within the AICs is perceived as missionary influenced and that the colours are randomly chosen but my study argues that the use of colour within the AICs draws from African culture and thus the colours are used to explore faith and spirituality. My study aims to show that colour plays a significant role within the AICs through garments and other elements of their faith and spirituality.

The first Chapter will investigate the historical use of colour and argue that the metaphorical symbolism of colour predates the AICs. This will be done to establish a link between the colours used in the AICs today in relation to old African beliefs.

The second Chapter will look at how the idea of clothing and covering came into play during the process of conversion from traditional religions to Christianity, and therefore “civilised”. This chapter will analyse what the

² The term “African Independent Churches” will be abbreviated as “AICs” throughout the paper. However, the term AIC is problematic in describing these churches and movements as it was a term used to describe churches that had split from Dutch and European churches and does not necessarily reflect the true nature of Apostolic and Zionist movements today.

white robe meant to the wearer, with the aim of establishing a relationship between the origin of church robes, the symbolism of the white garment and their role within African Independent Churches today.

The third Chapter will focus on the formation of African Independent Churches and the fusing of African traditional beliefs and attire into Christianity. I will relate how the AICs altered their Western notions of Christianity through the use of colour and traditional rituals. The Apostolic and Zionist churches will be dealt with at length to provide a critical overview of their history and the significant use of blue and green colours in their practices. This Chapter will further analyse the contemporary use of colour within the Apostolic and Zionist movements in order to depict the importance of colour and its associations within their practice.

Chapter four will draw conclusions on how the origin of colour and colour use within Apostolic and Zionist movements has filtered beyond the standard blue and green introduced in the nineteenth century. This Chapter will look at contemporary Apostolic and Zionist garments and other elements used such as candles, flags and so on. The investigation will be presented through a visual essay that documents contemporary colour use within both movements. The Chapter will form the research basis for a documentary film that will be part of the body of artwork produced for the practical component of my Masters Degree. The Chapter will begin to investigate and locate different churches within Soweto and thus begin to map them through a visual

essay. The documentation will lead to a conclusion on the influence of African traditional colours such as red, yellow, blue, green and white discussed in Chapters one and three and the possible link to Western Christian church colours in the Apostolic and Zionist movements today. This will show how the Apostolic and Zionist churches have grown and how new movements of today continue to draw influence from other churches and movements.

The paper will make use of research methodologies such as research from academic literature and documentation through photographs, maps and field research including interviews to develop an understanding of the origin of colour usage within the AICs and its role today.

Chapter One

Colour and its symbolism.

Umbala is a *Zulu* word used to describe or define a mark or speck. Its use extends from descriptions of a hue, shade or tint to other different words. *Umbala* is translated to colour in English. *Umbala* can be used to describe more than a hundred different things and contexts in *Zulu*. The word's meaning changes depending on the context in which it is used.

This Chapter aims to investigate and argue how colour use predates the AICs within African culture to convey different meanings and how it was used for spiritual purposes. This will be done to establish a link between colour associations in the AICs today in relation to old African beliefs. Some key *Zulu* words or concepts are explained below.

Etymology of colour.

Imibala (colours) carry different meanings in different languages. In *isiZulu* like other African languages, different colours carry different vocabulary nodes. Most of the terms draw their names, meanings and associations from nature.

Uhlaza is a word used to describe something that is green or blue; this could refer to the blueness of the sky or sea or the greenness of grass and plants. In relation to plants the term can also be used to describe unripe fruits. The word also extends to uncooked substances or things in their raw state. The term can also be personified. For instance, one could remark that *Unenhliziy o hlaza* (you have a bad heart -- which relates to being unripe) or *unebala eli hlaza* (he is dark skinned)³.

Ubovu is a word used to describe something that is red or hot or that refers to blood. *Ubovu* is also used to describe anger or how angry a person is, *beka bovu avutha* (he was red, burning/hot angry)⁴.

Mhlophe is a term used to describe something that is white, cream white or off-white. It can also describe something that is transparent. For example, the term could be used to describe God, a "supreme power" or a good spirit. These are translucent forms that cannot be seen. Axel-Iver Berguland states that:

³ Hermanson, E. 2006. *Metaphor in Zulu: Problems in the Translation of Biblical Metaphor in the book of Amos*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press. 2006. Page 74.

⁴ Hermanson. E. 2006. *Metaphor in Zulu: Problems in the translation of Biblical Metaphor in the book of Amos*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press. Page 73.

Zulu informants are emphatic [sic] that everything in the sky is white. The Lord of the Sky himself is regarded as being white, some informants saying that perhaps he is white like water (i.e. transparent) but we do not know because he has not been seen by anybody.⁵

This thus reinforces the perception that the sky, sea, water and vegetation are all symbols of God, his presence and power. This ideology can be seen in the description of *luhlaza*. *Luhlaza* is used to describe the blueness of the sky and the greenness of the vegetation. Zion and Apostolic churches mix green and blue with white as white represents the purity and transparency of God in relation to his powers and presence through nature. The symbolic use of green and blue within Zionist and Apostolic movements will further be discussed below.

It is important to note that colour metaphors and symbolism sometimes differ within African culture and in the global context. J.S Mbiti⁶ states that some Africans believe white to be the colour of death. The relatives of the departed would smudge white chalk or paint on themselves as a sign of mourning the departed. This act is conducted when an elder is departed; white symbolises celebrating the life the departed has lived. Therefore does the use of white during a funeral signal that the person who has passed on was pure and holy

⁵ Berglund, I. V (1976:51f) cited in E. Hermanson. 2006. *Metaphor in Zulu: Problems in the Translation of Biblical Metaphor in the Book of Amos*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press. 2006. Page 74

⁶ Mbiti J.S. 1990. *African Religions and Philosophy*. Oxford: Heinemann. Page 56.

and will therefore ascend to heaven? Does the family through wearing white help to send the departed spirit to the after-life? Zionist and Apostolic movements conduct a similar ritual when a family member or church member dies -- all church-goers would dress in their church garments during a funeral. These rituals and other similar customs will be discussed at length in the Chapters to follow.

Mbiti⁷ further explains that only white, brown, red or black coloured animals would be sacrificed to God. This is so because only pure and sanctified animals are worthy of being offered to God, as he is believed to be pure and holy. Thus only animals with one single shade of skin colour were regarded as pure. Pure in this instance reads as unmixed or neutral. Thus the use of brown, red and black animals was also allowed in sacrifice. This then shows how colours are read differently for different purposes and how colours have negative and positive associations; much like with *Zulu* love letters, which will be discussed below. This is an interesting analysis of how white is used in different contexts as the initial use of white is always linked with good and purity.

Myama is a term used to describe something that is black or dark. The term is also used to describe the night, a bad spirit, a bad omen or even death. “[E]vil, and associated things, are generally related to dark and the left side, while

⁷ Mbiti J.S. 1990. *African Religions and Philosophy*. Heinemann. Oxford. Page 56.

good things are spoken of as *ezimhlophe*, the white ones.”⁸ Red, black and white are symbolic colours for medicine used in *Zulu* treatment. Red, black and white coloured medicine is believed to maintain a bond between a person and nature.

Traditional healers such as *Izangoma*’s and *Izinyanga* also use the colours mentioned above. They are believed to embody spiritual powers. During *ukutshwasa* (*sangoma* initiation), *sangomas* fuse the different colour medicines together. The colours in traditional *Zulu* treatment and that of *sangomas* have the same meaning as red is the bridging colour of transformation. Black symbolises darkness, night, danger and difficulties. White symbolises health, purity and *amadlozi* (ancestors). Red is also significant to *umndiki* and *umdawo* which mean ancestors. Young *matshwasas* (initiation students) paint their faces with white or red ochre as a sign of accepting the calling, as these colours are believed to represent *amadlozi*⁹.

Within the *Zulu* etymology of colours, there are other terms that are used to refer to certain tones of *umbala* (colour). *Nsundu* is a term used to describe a dark brown tone. *Mpofu* (tan) on the other hand can refer to an animal (an eland) but also refers to a tan tone or shade¹⁰. The term can also be used to describe the beauty of a person; *emohle*, *empofu* (she was beautiful, of a lighter brown

⁸ Hermanson, E. 2006. *Metaphor in Zulu: Problems in the Translation of Biblical Metaphor in the Book of Amos*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press. 2006, Page 74.

⁹ Reeder M. 2012. *A Sangoma’s Story – The Calling of Elliot Ndlovu*. Penguin. Uk: Page 11.

¹⁰ Reeder M. 2012. *A Sangoma’s Story – The Calling of Elliot Ndlovu*. Penguin. Uk: Page 11.

shade). The term can also refer to hunger and poverty as some could say *omulomo wake bo womile umpofu* (her mouth was dry and a whitish pink).

Words such as *luthuthuva* means cream coloured, *mdaka* refers to mauve tone; *mdubu* is a light mauve and *phuzi* a yellow tone¹¹. These words also refer to earthly tones and natural substances. The term *mdaka* is borrowed from *udaka*, which means moist underground soil. The term can be used to describe a person's appearance; for instance if a person or a thing is dirty or 'soiled', they would call him *umdaka* and it *lmdaka*.

Whereas *mdubu* refers to dusty brown, *phuzi* is a term used to refer to a bright yellow coloured pumpkin. *Luthuthuva* (cream coloured) meaning is associated with a sandy colour, a dusty tint or an off-white colour. *Luthuthu* is a term used to refer to a greyish, foggy colour -- an association with smoke.

Some of these colours' metaphorical meanings are only rarely used in *Zulu* phrases and riddles and are not used as part of general daily speech. Thus these terms become important codes that are used for spiritual matters and other elements within *Zulu* tradition like in *Zulu* love letters to be discussed below.

¹¹ Hermanson, E. 2006. *Metaphor in Zulu: Problems in the Translation of Biblical Metaphor in the Book of Amos*. Stellenbosch: Sun press. 2006. Page 74.

Beadwork and colour.

It is therefore important to note that colour associations and meanings amongst the *Zulus* change in relation to the context and patterns in which they are used. For example, beadwork in Africa was used not only for decorative purposes, but also for public awareness and for spiritual and personal messages. Beadwork was used to indicate an individual's or family's position in the community, one's age and gender amongst other things. The patterns and design of the beadwork would use colour to represent different individuals. A spiritualist or prophet would use specific colours for their beadwork that were linked to the stage of their initiation. Beadwork known as *Zulu Love Letters* were also used in marriage and courtship negotiations.

Zulu love letters are a good illustration of colour meanings and use. In 1907 Rev Father Franz Mayr¹² analysed the use of beads and colour meanings amongst the *Zulu*. He stated that when the Europeans brought bright fancy colourful beads to trade with the *Zulu*, the beads fuelled their traditional creativity and skills. He stated that the *Zulu* were only fascinated by specific kinds of beads and colours. Each colour bead was given a specific name and meaning. This led to a visual way of communicating thoughts. Listed below are literal names and meanings the *Zulus* associated with specific beads that Rev Father Franz discussed:

¹² Mayr, F. 1907. *Language of Colours Amongst the Zulu's expressed by their Bead-work Ornaments; and some General Notes on their Personal Adornments and Clothing: "Language of Colours Amongst the Zulu's"* .Nature, Volume 75. Macmillan Journals Limited. Page 162-163.

White beads = *itambo* (bone).

Black bead = *isitimane* (name of a regiment for *Mpande*; also;
Nick-name for a very black person).

Blue beads = *ljuba* (lit. dove).

Red beads = *umgazi* (from *igazi*, blood).

Yellow beads = *incombo* (lit. young native, corn still yellow)
or *inpuzi* (lit. bright yellow native pumpkin).

Green beads = *ubuhlalu obuluhlaza* (From *uluhlaza*, new
grass).

Striped beads = *intotoviyane* (lit. large striped grasshopper). [sic]

Pink beads = *ubuhlalu obumpofu* (from *impofu*, poor\poverty).

Transparent brown beads = *umlilwana* (lit. a low fire).

Dark Blue beads = *inkanbane* (lit. Common Ibis)

Large sized beads of any colour = *amapohlo* or *amaqanda*
(*amaqanda* means eggs).¹³

¹³ Mayr, F. 1907. *Language of Colours amongst the Zulu's expressed by their Bead-work Ornaments; and some General Notes on their Personal Adornments and Clothing: "Language of Colours Amongst the Zulu's"*. Nature, Volume 75. Macmillan Journals Limited. Page 162-163.



Figure 1: Mayr, F, Igcagcane, 1907. Page 162

Figure 1 is a beadwork called *Igcagcane*¹⁴. This form of beadwork is one mostly made by a girl in reply to a marriage proposal from a man. In this letter the girl responds by telling the man that she is fond of him by using a lot of white beads and contrasts that by using black beads that symbolise that there is a problem in them being together. The pink beads represent poverty, as the man is poor. As a result she may not be able to marry him. Because of that, she feels sickly and thin – represented by adding green beads to the pattern. Mayr further explains that:

Traditional associations within each community have attached accepted meanings to the various colours, even to different shades of a colour, although the precise meanings assigned to a given colour may vary across regions, and with fashion and time. There is thus no fixed

¹⁴ Mayr, F. 1907. *Language of Colours Amongst the Zulu's expressed by their Bead-work Ornaments; and some General Notes on their Personal Adornments and Clothing: "Language of colours Amongst the Zulu's"* .Nature, Volume 75. Macmillan Journals Limited. Page 162-163.

code for reading the meaning of colours; but there are some common *Zulu* bead colour connotations (summarised from literature in Wickler and Seibt 1990): White beads stand for all that is good (love, spiritual purity, happiness, truth). Black beads stand for evil, misfortune, sorrow, but also may symbolise the black leather skirt of marriage and thus express impatience to be married. Red stands for strong emotion, longing and passion of the heart. Deep yellow either indicates emotional withering away, or it stands for pumpkin, home and garden as symbolic of household. Pale Yellow signifies gossip. Pink signifies poverty, in particular the lover's inability to pay the bride-price (*lobola*). Green stands for virginity and young age. Blue signifies fidelity and faithfulness¹⁵.

Some of the coloured beads mentioned above carry different meanings and association from the meanings of colour discussed earlier on. When the coloured beads are used to create a *Zulu* love letter, for instance, their meanings become specific to that context. The use of colour-coded beadwork is also evident in the AICs today. It is also interesting to note that within Apostolic and Zion movements there are certain beads which are forbidden. Prophets in Apostolic Churches are not allowed to use red beads as they are believed to be associated with *sangoma* beads but Zionist prophets use red beads.

¹⁵ Wolfgang Wickler and Uta Seibt. *Syntax and Semantics in a Zulu bead Colour Communication System*. *Anthropos*, Bd. 90, H. 416. (1995), pp. 301 – 408. Anthropos institute. Stable url: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40463187>. Accessed: 16/09/2014. 09:28. Page 392.

Interpretation of colour within the Zionist and Apostolic movements.

Jean Comaroff ¹⁶states that blue and green are believed, in Southern Bantu tradition, to be associated with white and its power to cleanse and purify, and are perceived as hues of nature, rain and growth. The *Tshwana* relate blue and green to vegetation and fertility. Green, which is called *tale*, is symbolic of roots, heritage and “a point in time”. In *Setswana* they would say “*kgologolo tale*” meaning back in time when it was still green. Blue is called *bududu* and it is linked with improvement and progress; it is also the colour of water and rain that is linked to purity and cleanliness. *Bududu* is the opposite of *budula* (to turn into grey or blue). *Budula* means to ready or ripe. Comaroff states that blue, green and white used in conjunction with each other evoke feelings of fluid flow and activate emotions of renewal and rebirth to the wearer. Blue is perceived by the *Tshidi* group to be a cool colour and Comaroff states that the *Tshidi* did not wear red as it was a “hot” (boiling) colour and is associated with heat and blood. The symbolism of colour and its etymology within the Southern Basotho is similar to *Zulu* colour symbolism and etymology discussed above.

The colours used in most Apostolic and Zionist movements¹⁷ have similar meanings and associations to the etymology of colours discussed above.

¹⁶ Comaroff, J. 1985. *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South - African People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Page 223.

¹⁷ The colours will be discussed in Chapter three.

Martin West¹⁸ states that in most African Independent churches, colours are usually revealed in forms of dreams. In his field research he reports that for a prophet named Mrs M. R. the most significant colour was yellow. Prophet Mrs A. N.'s chosen colour was blue, which she regarded also as the colour of Mary, the mother of Jesus. West explains that for her yellow was a colour that symbolised the Holy Spirit. She believed red was symbolic of blood; associated green with power and fertility while white remained an emblem of purity.

Colours and attach different meanings to them. The cords are made from different coloured strings of wool which are plaited together. They are believed to serve as a powerful protection to the people wearing them. Prophets gave different colour combinations to clients in relation to their problem after acquiring spiritual guidance from the ancestors. West¹⁹ gives an example of how Mrs A. N., interviewed in his fieldwork, would use plaited strings of white, green and red in combination for clients who have consulted with her about their lack of employment. Clients who suffer from bad luck are treated with a combination of red and green strings, while those who require critical medical attention are treated with five different colour strings: namely red, green, white, yellow and blue.

¹⁸ West, M. 1975. *Bishops and Prophets in a Black City: African Independent Churches in Soweto, Johannesburg*. Cape Town: David Phillip. Page 116.

¹⁹ West, M. 1975. *Bishops and Prophets in a Black City: African Independent Churches in Soweto, Johannesburg*. Cape Town: David Phillip. Page 116.

Sudkler²⁰ states that red and black colours are forbidden in Zion church wear. She further explains that red in the Bible is used metaphorically to refer to the blood of Jesus. Zionists perceive blood as a taboo. Black is believed to be the colour linked to death.

Comaroff²¹ writes that these metaphors relate to the use of colour in Zulu Love letters:

...yellow and blue are all primary colours, which together with black and white are perceptually unique and not visually decomposable into constituent hues. They would thus seem as a set, to be universally suited to serve classificatory functions; that is, to signify a systematically related order of meanings.

Flags and colours.

The South African Flag has an interesting arrangement of colours and meaning. It is said to represent a rainbow nation and can serve as an interesting comparison to colours discussed above.

²⁰ Sudkler, B.G.M. 1961. *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*. London: Oxford University Press. Page 214.

²¹ Comaroff, J. 1985. *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Page 223.



Figure 2: South African Flag²².

The pattern of the flag is designed with 6 different colours: red, blue, green, yellow/gold, black and white. According to the South African history²³ website, red is symbolic of the blood of the activists shed during apartheid: this meaning coincides with the meaning of red discussed above. Blue symbolises the sky and ocean, which is also similar to the meanings and associations of the Apostolic and Zionist movements. Green symbolises the fertile land in South Africa. Yellow/ gold represents the minerals the country has. Black represents and recognises the black people of South Africa and White represents the white people.

²² <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/flags/countrys/zzzflags/zalarge.gif> . Accessed 01 March 2015.

²³ <http://www.southafrica.info/about/history/flagguide.htm#.VossQEvlfwl> . Accessed 01 March 2015.

The South African flag like any other flag has traditional rules on how it is supposed to be handled and hung²⁴. The flag must be respected; thus it cannot touch the ground or floor, it cannot be hung upside down, and while it is hoisted and lowered, the viewer must take off their hat and salute the flag by placing their right hand over their heart. Thus the above examples indicate respect and dignity for the flag and country.

Flags are also important emblems within the Zionist and Apostolic churches. They are used to signal spaces of worship. For instance, a white flag symbolises that in that house or place there is a *diahelong*, meaning there is a church. *Diahelong*, means something that is built, thus meaning that someone or a group of people have established a church on that land. The flag marks off the territory but also acts as an invitation to others to enter that church. A white flag may also symbolise that there is a wedding taking place there.

Different Apostolic and Zionist movements use most of the colours discussed above in combination. It is interesting to note that most churches use colours that coincide with the national flag and reflect on South Africa being a rainbow nation. Thus this relates to my hypothesis regarding that the use of colour within the AIC originates from African culture as the colours used in the flag have similar meanings.

²⁴<http://www.southafrica.info/about/history/flagguide.htm#.VossQEvlfwl>. Accessed 01 March 2015.

The South African flag design uses shapes and patterns that are similar to the traditional Ndebele paintings. Thus like the AIC church garments they reflect African traditions.

In this Chapter I have discussed the etymology of *Zulu* and *Tshwana* colours with the aim of understanding and analysing their origin and meanings. I have also tried to establish the origin of colour significance and use within different Apostolic and Zionist movements. From the discussion above it is evident that the colour meanings are very similar between different South African cultural contexts. For example when discussing red, it's significant meaning refers to blood within both *Zulu* and *Tshwana* cultures, and even when used in *Zulu* love letters and by the Methodists mentioned by Comaroff. What was most interesting was that the blood would move from relating to fertility when used in a *Zulu* love letter to relating to the blood of Jesus for the Methodist and the bloodshed by apartheid activists in the South African flag. This therefore reflects on how the use of colour within South Africa relates to a broader spectrum and different cultures but the key meaning remains similar. Through the discussions above, I have shown that colour use and meaning within the Apostolic and Zionist Churches predates the nineteenth century when the AICs emerged and that the colour significance relates to different cultural contexts within South Africa.

Chapter Two

The origin of Church garments.

This Chapter will study the notion of clothing and covering through the process of becoming Christian and 'civilised'. In particular, it will analyse what the white church robe means to the wearer; with the aim of establishing a relationship between the origin of church robes and their role within African Independent Churches today.

For the colonial evangelist in South Africa, the most crucial realm of enlightened consumption hinged on the human form. It was on the body that the commodity came into physical contact with, and enclosed, the self. To the nineteenth century religious sensibility - keenly attuned revealed anatomy - the treatment of the domesticated physique was an everyday sacrament. In cleaning it, housing it, curing it and clothing it lay the very essence of civility.²⁵

²⁵ Comaroff, J. 2002. *Fashioning the Colonial Subject. The Empires old Clothes:* in Comaroff, J and J. 2002. *Of Revelation and Revolution: The dialectics of Modernity on a South Africa volume 2*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press Page 220.

The naked body.

The notion of black people not having clothing²⁶ became a fundamental focus in converting them to Christianity. Houle²⁷ explains that it was unacceptable for African Christians to attend a church service wearing their traditional animal skin garments and exposing certain parts of their body. Comaroff's statement above indicates how the body became the primary factor for converting Africa.

This method was applied through the use of religious rituals such as Baptism. Baptism was the key element of Africans' transformation, as though literally immersing the body in water meant washing away its barbarian customs and any evil tied to the body. This process was linked to the concept of being cleansed of their past lives as sinners. Sin was associated with their traditional lifestyle and dress. Sin was and is still believed to be of the physical being. Water became a metaphor for rebirth²⁸; for once baptised they were born again as different being, as Christians. They were now converted and 'cleansed' which meant they had to take on a new life as 'civilised' beings.

Thus the concept of covering oneself with clothing came into play during the

²⁶ In the 19th Century missionaries did not consider African dress as appropriate items of clothing.

²⁷ Houle, R.J. 2011. *Making "African" Christianity: "Africans" Reimagining their faith in Colonial South Africa*. Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press. Page xxiii.

²⁸ Smith, J. Z. 1978. *Map is not a territory: studies in a History of Religions. 'Garments of shame'*. Leiden: University of Chicago. Page 6.

process of becoming 'civilised' and Christian. After the transformation process through baptism, converted Africans were required to portray their new identity by wearing white garments.²⁹ "And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light."³⁰ The white garment symbolised transformation and renewal and therefore became an important element of faith.

The heathen body

Clothes as despicable as we think are so unspeakably significant. Clothes... are Emblematic...on the other hand; all Emblematic things are properly clothes, though-woven or hand-woven: must not the imagination weave garments, visible bodies, where in the else visible creations and aspirations of our reasons are, like spirits revealed, and first become all powerful [?].... Nay, if you consider it, what is man himself and his whole terrestrial life, but an Emblem; a...visible Garment for that divine me of his, cast hither...down from heaven?³¹

²⁹ Smith, J. Z. 1978. *Map is not a territory: studies in a History of Religions*. 'Garments of shame'. Leiden: University of Chicago. Page 12.

Houle, R.J. 2011. *Making "African" Christianity: "Africans" reimagining their faith in Colonial South Africa*. Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press. Page 24.

³⁰ Mathew. 1972. *The New English Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 17:2

³¹ Professor Teufelsdröckh, Sartor Resartus (Thomas Carlyle [1834] 1920:62 cited Comaroff, J. 2002. *Fashioning the Colonial Subject. The Empires old Clothes*: in Comaroff, J and J. 2002. *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South Africa Volume 2*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Page 220.

The white garment.

The description of the heathen body and the symbolic use of garments above indicate how constructed and influential the concept of the heavenly garment was and still is. One can also view the idea of white robes as a way of Africans covering their dark black skin; by wearing white they now became pure and godly. After being cleansed of their 'savage' nature, the white robes became their new characteristics. The white robes became a direct link to civility, as it required converted Africans to change their lifestyle to fit into the new realm of Christianity.

Fabric helped create garments that would readdress African Spirituality even today. The body was subjected to the fabric, and relied on the fabric to exist. Symbolism for existence beyond one's self relied on what the garments provided. The garment drew its power from the idea that the body was wicked and needed the garment to be emblematic as Comaroff states above. White robes became a symbol for rebirth and thus its whiteness indicated purity³².

Church garments become the first emblematic item of civilisation owned by Africans. To them the garment became their link to the new spiritual world. Houle³³ writes that because converted Africans' only clothing was their

³² And His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. Mark. 1972. *The New English Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 9:3.

³³ Houle, R.J. 2011. *Making "African" Christianity: "Africans" reimagining their faith in Colonial South*

church garment and it was believed to be pure and godly, it did not mix with their traditional attire, as that attire was believed to be ungodly. They would hang it at the back of their bedroom door until Sunday, when they had to go to church. As a result, the wearing of church garments became ritualistic. This ritual links to the notion of *izambatho* being perceived as higher garments that are anointed and could only be worn to church on Sundays.

Christianity does not seem to be looked on [by the *Bechuana*] as a life to be lived, but rather as a garment to be worn, which may be put on or taken off, as the occasion requires.³⁴

The statement above expresses the essence of what Christianity meant to Africans and how church garments functioned and still function today. *Izambatho* was not and could not be part of their daily normal life as humans on earth. When they were 'ordinary people' who went on with their daily lives they dressed in their traditional clothes. This concept is still relevant within the AICs as *izambatho* are still only worn for spiritual and church purposes. This ritual restricted to Sundays could possibly link to the idea that the church garments had to remain clean, crisp and 'pure' white. *Izambatho* could not be stained through performing daily tasks such as cleaning. *Izambatho* became a special garment and care had to be taken to house it and clean it. This

Africa. Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press. Page 24.

³⁴ LMS, South Africa Reports in Comaroff, J. 2002. *Fashioning the Colonial Subject. The Empires Old Clothes*: in Comaroff, J and J. 2002. *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South Africa Volume 2*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Page 218.

possibly led to rituals to keep the garments crisp and pure white, as we know them today. Ecclesiastes 9:8³⁵ states: “Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment”. Today, churchgoers invest time and energy in preserving their garment’s white-ness and neatness. Specific washing techniques have been adopted to maintain the look and feel of the garments. Zionist and Apostolic members would often soak their garments in starch³⁶ so that they could remain crisp when ironed and brilliant white.

By naming church garments as higher clothing, church goers refer to *izambatho* as the only form of clothing that makes them feel dressed, “un-naked” holy Christians. Their other ordinary clothing is relegated to use during their daily life and its activities; be it doing house chores or working. *Izambatho* then becomes a ‘higher garment’ or ‘holy garment’ that is perceived to have so much power that it is able to cover up their sinful nature and transform them into ‘civilised’, Godly beings. The garments were, and are still, worshipped, as they were believed to be holy. These garments have become an important exterior and symbol for African Christian members’ faith.

³⁵ Ecclesiastes. 1972. *The New English Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 9:8

³⁶ Starch is a chemical that helps maintain the garments white and crisp. The chemical also makes the garment heavier and easy to iron.

African traditional influence in the AIC.

This idea of church garments as a cover might relate to colonialism, but perceiving church garments as a transitional object³⁷ also has links to ancient³⁸ African traditions of dressing up in costumes for masquerades. Africans' association with faith and spirituality has always been linked to tangible objects such as masks and costumes and will further be discussed below.

To be able to understand African religion and its influence within the AICs, it is important to look at African traditional rituals that bear a resemblance to rituals of the AICs to date. In my analysis of AICs and their practices in relation to artefacts and dress, I found that African masquerades bore similarities to those of the AICs. For instance, during masquerades, performers wore masks and costumes. These artefacts form an important element during rituals and ceremonies, as they are believed to usher the performers into a trance state. Anthropologist John Picton³⁹ wrote that in addition to masks being used for dramatic distancing and the denial of human presence during a masquerade, they were also believed to embody some metaphysical power. This power may be a temporary presence in the mask (material artefact) during the

³⁷ The term "transitional object" in this context is used to explain objects that are believed to have mystical powers and help one transcend to a spiritual place.

³⁸ Ancient in this context is used to refer to things or methods that belong to the past or an historical period.

³⁹ Picton, J.1998. *Patches of History' Patching up My Art History: Some Reflexions on The Sculpture of EL Anatsui in EL Anatsui: A Sculptured History of Africa*. Saffron book: page 53.

performance, or the power may remain in a properly consecrated mask. Sacrifices to the mask are made even when it is not being worn. The mask gains more strength with each sacrifice and thus the masks may become too powerful to be worn during a masquerade.

Likewise, it is important for church members within the AICs to wear their uniforms for church rituals. These garments are also believed to have mystical powers and help church members move into a trance, *moyeng* (into the spirit). The concept and role of *moya* (Spirit) will be discussed at length in Chapter Three. Within the AICs there are other garments that are called *Seaparo sa moya* (spiritual garments). These garments are revealed to the owners through prophecies, visions or dreams and are much like the masks discussed above. They are believed to carry mystical powers. Therefore *izambatho* are sacred spiritual objects such as the masks.

When one is to be adorned with *izambatho*, the person would have the garment made, then send it to the pastor, who houses it for a certain period until the garment is ready to be worn. This ritual is conducted for ordinary church members, prophets and even other pastors. The pastor lights a candle for the robe and burns *imphepho* as a way of preparing the garment and blessing it. This ritual is similar to how masks are prepared for masquerades.

The influence of African rituals on the AICs' practices has become apparent.

Africans have always perceived costumes for rituals to have an inherent power. Similarly, the AICs see *izambatho* as sacred and powerful. Like the masks, they are stored separately. These artefacts become an important transitional object in rituals and in their connection with the universe⁴⁰. Thus, this connection between artefacts and belief systems could be reflected in the association of church garments with spiritual experiences today. *Izambatho* thus became new costumes and symbols of their new faith to *amakholwa* (Christians). It was necessary for converted Christians to have garments that communicated both their African spiritual beliefs and Christian faith.

From the discussion of *mhlophe* above it is evident that Africans already associated white with God or a supreme power. As Berglund⁴¹ wrote, the Zulu believe that:

“...The Lord of the Sky himself is regarded as being white.... perhaps he is white like water (i.e. transparent) but we do not know because he has not been seen by anybody...”.

Thus terms such as *ubungwele* (pureness) or *ngwele* (purity) that have similar connotations to *mhlophe* are used to describe and define God. *Ngwele* or *ubungwele* are translucent forms that are associated with white - a pure

⁴⁰ Krüger, JS. n/a. *Along Edges. Religion in South Africa: Bushman, Christianity, Buddhist*. Pretoria. University of South Africa. Page 316.

⁴¹ Berglund, I. V (1976:51f) cited in E. Hermanson. 2006. *Metaphor in Zulu: Problems in the translation of biblical metaphor in the book of Amos*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press. 2006. Page 74.

colour.

One has to understand that African Christianity was re-appropriated by Africans to fuse their African beliefs with Christianity because Africans already had an understanding of God, a supreme power. This is evident in their belief that God exists in nature. In Sesotho ancestors are called *badimo* and God is called *Modimo*, -- *ba* is a plural and *mo* a singular. The heavens are therefore called *hodimo*, which also means high/above. This shows how *badimo* are linked to God who is *Modimo*. Thus Africans understanding of a supreme power, a god, exists in nature, in the sky.

From the discussion above it is evident that the introduction of Christianity to Africans, the concept of God, and the idea of white as a spiritual, holy colour managed to create a bridge with similar concepts within African spirituality. The relationship between the colour white and AIC church garments drew on traditional African beliefs, thus encouraging converted Africans to adapt Christianity and make it their own.

Civilisation: New cultural consumption.

The colonials aimed to dismiss African culture and lifestyle by introducing their Western objects as materials of desire. This desire was linked to more than

just material objects: also to the new lifestyle as a 'civilised' being, a new social skin. They aimed to combine an exchange of consumer goods and services with colonising and dismissal of African culture and tradition. Through Christianity they created a desire and need that only they could supply and satisfy.

Civilization was to be promoted by the encouragement of discerning consumption, through which Africans would learn to want and use objects of European provenance in a refined Christian manner; that, by being drawn into the workings of the market, would-be converts might develop a healthily competitive urge to fashion novel identities⁴².

European objects became objects of desire that were appropriated into African culture: for example, the beads discussed in Chapter one. Western objects became an attraction into "civilisation" through which Europeans were able to start negotiating the idea of class and difference between Africans.

Through clothing they were able to create awareness of self and being naked. This became a similar concept to that of the story of Adam and Eve. Missionaries portrayed being naked as evil in relation to the temptation that occurred in the Garden of Eden. Once converted Africans perceived themselves as naked in the eyes of God, they needed the white fabrics to

⁴² Comaroff, J. 2002. *Fashioning the colonial subject. The Empires Old Clothes:* in Comaroff, J and J. 2002. *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South Africa Volume 2.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Page 219.

cover and present themselves as holy in the presence of God. Smith⁴³ further explores this concept of the notion of being naked and aware of having to cover one's self.

I advise you to buy for me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see⁴⁴.

The missionary women initially created garments for the Africans by folding white pieces of cloth and sewing up the sides – a T-shaped garment -- leaving openings for the arms and cutting a hole for the head. This became the template for African Christian robes which still exist in South Africa today. Most church garment designs continue to be based on the T-shaped garments.⁴⁵ This design is similar also to a Dalmatica – a garment that originated around the third century⁴⁶. This garment became popular with traditional deacons and bishops around the early fifteenth century.⁴⁷

The claim that Africans' attire showed minimal social order and class

⁴³ Smith, J. Z. 1978. *Map is Not a Territory: Studies in a History of Religions*. 'Garments of Shame'. Leiden: University of Chicago. Page 6.

⁴⁴ Revelation. 1972. *The New English Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 3:18.

⁴⁵ This drapery type of design with string cords tied around the waist is also in reference to the robe Jesus is depicted wearing in old biblical drawings

⁴⁶ H. Norris. 2002. *Church Vestments: Their Origin and Development*. Courier Corporation. Page 43.

⁴⁷ H. Norris. 2002. *Church Vestments: Their Origin and Development*. Courier Corporation. Page 51.

⁴⁸ became another entry point for European colonialists. Through dress the Europeans were able to create difference and classify Africans, allowing them to isolate, divide and eventually conquer the Africans – the age-old “divide and rule” strategy. Some Africans thus began to question their culture and to leave behind their traditions, resulting in cultural segregation amongst Africans. Africans now split into two groups as some refused to convert and remained traditional while others converted to Christianity. Houle⁴⁹ states that the converted Africans who were now Christians referred to themselves as “People of God” and began to view themselves as better than those Africans who refused to convert. They had found a new identity as *amakholwa* (believers) and those who refused to follow them were referred to as *amabhinca* (traditionalists)⁵⁰.

Despite this strategy, a large group of Africans remained as *amabhinca* (traditionalist) and refused to convert to Christianity. Africans’ transformation to *amakholwa* was not a smooth one as many compromises were made. Many families were torn apart as there was alienation and rivalry between *amakholwa* and *amabhinca*.

The concept of the “other” was planted within the African community as *Amakholwa* began to look down on *Amabhinca*. “*Izambatho*” became a way in

⁴⁸ Comaroff, J. 2002. *The Empires old Clothes. Fashioning the Colonial Subject*. Page 229.

⁴⁹ Houle, R.J. 2011. *Making “African” Christianity: “Africans” reimagining their faith in Colonial South Africa*. Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press. Page 24.

⁵⁰ *Amakholwa* and *Amabhinca* are isiZulu terms formulated in Kwa Zulu Natal during the Transformation stage.

which *Amakholwa* could identify themselves as different. The white garment gave them power to distinguish themselves as beings superior to *Amabhinca*. The garment gave them a sense of duty and a new identity, and allowed them to represent their new faith that embodied their cultural beliefs.

Church garments became fashionable items through which difference and class were identified. For as Amakholwa needed to portray their new identity that was evident through social skin or clothes, the usage of signs and symbols allowed them to reconstruct their identity. Signs such as stars and the cross became symbols that represented their faith distinguishing them from members of other faiths.

The Church became an institution for Africans -- a systematic way of living that revolved around the idea of purity and holiness, referenced by the white garment. Clothing came with its own responsibilities that extended the culture of consumption. A new culture of maintenance revolved around the garments. Church-goers had to wash themselves in soap so they could be clean enough to wear the robe⁵¹. This brought about cleansing rituals associated with the garments today, like the use of starch to preserve the whiteness of the garment, as opposed to their previous use of oil and mud to preserve the body and traditional attire.

⁵¹ Houle, R.J. 2011. *Making "African" Christianity: "Africans" Reimagining their Faith in Colonial South Africa*. Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press. Page 50.

This Chapter has argued that garments as transitional, spiritual objects draw influence from African spirituality. The inherent power that is believed to exist in the garment is activated through rituals such as lighting a candle for the garment and the pastor praying for it. This resembles African rites using masks in masquerades. This Chapter has shown that the white robe had and continues to have significant spiritual meaning for the wearer, reflected also in acceptance of the responsibilities that came with owning and caring for it. White garments are still evident in most churches today as a sign of faith and purity. Such associations to *izambatho* drew on early interpretations and associations of the garments. This Chapter has demonstrated a clear link between the origin of church robes and their role within African Independent Churches today.

Chapter Three

Africans re-appropriate their spirituality through colour and the formation of African Independent Churches

...Special garb came to distinguish the devout at a time when Western dress alone had lost its own significance as a symbol of Christian affiliation. Indeed being bloused by the prayer union was a solemn milestone of a woman's religious commitment, a reward for upright living, a public proclamation of marital respectability. Even the poorest women could thus rise to positions of status and respect which were otherwise unattainable.⁵²

This Chapter will focus on the formation of African Independent Churches and the fusing of 'African' traditional beliefs and attire into Christianity. I will study how 'Africans' altered their faith through the use of colour and how their doctrine was Africanised. Houle⁵³ wrote that when clothing became popular amongst black people during colonialism, Africans who had become Christians needed to have an element that distinguished them from the non-

⁵² Elphick, R. 1997. *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History*. T.R.H Davenport. Page 258

⁵³ Houle, R.J. 2011. *Making "African" Christianity: "Africans" Reimagining their Faith in Colonial South Africa*. Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press. Page 46.

believers. African Christians began to add elements that created different designs for their garments and made them appear as people of God and separate from the non-believers. Colour and African symbols became the key element of transformation.

During the 19th century Africans began to reimagine their faith and looked beyond the Western colonial doctrine that their traditional beliefs were ungodly. They began to craft a new type of religion that was distinctive to Africans.

African Independent Christianity is defined as a religion that was re-appropriated by Africans, when Africans fused Western Christian beliefs with African traditional beliefs to create a new type of faith. African Independent Christianity originated as a breakaway from missionary churches. African Christianity is characterised by traditional African elements such as the use of drums, faith healing, traditional rituals, bright church garments and ancestral worship, to name a few. The garments were created from bright coloured fabrics, which were then fancifully adorned by adding 'African elements' such as beads, leather, etc. in contrast to the white garments, introduced by the missionaries.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Houle, R.J. 2011. *Making "African" Christianity: "Africans" Reimagining their Faith in Colonial South Africa*. Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press. Page 46.

S.W.D Dube defines African religion as a “search for life”.⁵⁵ He further explains that Zionists invoke a significant use of symbols in their “search for life” which stems from a rich African philosophy. He suggests that:

There is recognition that African life is lived at different levels. There is for example the level of human existence and the trans-human level of the cosmos. It is in the symbolism that this truth finds expression. It is in the symbolism that the “obligatory and the desirable” are represented. Consequently, substances used to typify or represent or recall something, by possession of analogous qualities or by association of fact or thought; e.g. those that are used in Zionist ritual, give expression to certain spiritual truths.”⁵⁶

This Chapter will begin by surveying a range of AICs that were established during the nineteenth century. The survey will depict how early AIC churches used colour and ‘African’ traditions to re-appropriate Christianity and establish a new identity. Although the Chapter will look at early AICs, the history and origin of the churches will not be discussed, as this is not within the scope of this paper. Rather it will emphasise an analysis of the colours and style of the various uniforms in order to identify their influence on contemporary colour usage and meaning.

⁵⁵ Dube SWD. 1994. *Heirophanies: A Hermeneutic Paradigm for Understanding Zionist Ritual in Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots: Its Dynamics and Strategies*. Brill. Page 107.

⁵⁶ Dube SWD. 1994. *Heirophanies: A Hermeneutic Paradigm for Understanding Zionist Ritual in Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots: Its Dynamics and Strategies*. Brill. Page 107.

Converted Christians began to design their own clothing to represent both their past and present selves. They began to move away from the standard white robes discussed in Chapter two. This trend fused Western fashion with African costumes for women. Ironically, however, some men turned to the British military uniform⁵⁷ as a model for their garments, possibly inspired by Egenes Lekganyane who founded the Zion Christian Church as an “army of God’s people” in 1910 (will be discussed below).

The Zion Christian Church.

The Zion Christian Church (ZCC) is one of the biggest and oldest Zionist churches in Soweto and South Africa. In 2001, the ZCC had approximately 72 070⁵⁸ members in Soweto. The army-style khaki uniform was a fundamental element of the establishment of the ZCC and continues to be key to its identity today. It is believed that Lekganyane had visions in 1910 that indicated the colours of the ZCC uniform. Alcock⁵⁹ wrote that Lekganyane looked up to the heavens and appealed to the angels of God to request colours that would represent his people. When the angels presented a black and white uniform he replied: “No, I didn’t mean that one”. The angels then presented red and

⁵⁷ Houle, R.J. 2011. *Making “African” Christianity: “Africans” Reimagining their Faith in Colonial South Africa*. Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press. Page 46.

⁵⁸ Statistic South African. 2001. Census 2001, Table 1: *Religion by Sex*, Soweto.

⁵⁹ Alcock, S. 2008. *Chronic Life: Clothed*. n/a .Kalakuta trust. Page 30.

white colours and Lekganyane was not pleased with those either. He said “that one does not suit ZCC either”. The angels then presented him with green and yellow colours. He then replied: “Please thank the Lord for me”. Those are the colours that represent the ZCC today.

The ZCC men’s uniform includes khaki starched pants and jackets, completed with a khaki shirt and tie. To complement the attire the ZCC men, who are known as *mkhukhu* (a shack), wear a military-style black peaked hat with the church’s symbolic star, flat-soled white boots, and a ZCC badge⁶⁰.

The ZCC women always cover their heads; either with a head scarf or beret, depending on the position the wearer has in the church. Sello Alcock⁶¹ explains that:

The women of the church wear what Comaroff labels as the “standard transformation of the Protestant model”: calf length straight skirts, a Victorian tunic with rounded collar and a neat headscarf. The tunic is daffodil-yellow, while the skirt is normally blue or bottle green.

⁶⁰ Alcock, S. 2008. *Chronic Life: Clothed*. n/a .Kalakuta trust. Page 30.

⁶¹ Alcock, S. 2008. *Chronic Life: Clothed*. n/a .Kalakuta trust. Page 30.

Members of the church choir wear the women's blue long-sleeved dress on specific occasions. Wearing a bottle green beret and tie completes the outfit. This uniform is worn with black shoes and would not be complete without the church badge. The women sometimes wear a khaki uniform similar to the one worn by male troops in the army. It is a dress that is worn with a brown tie, bottle green jersey and beret ⁶². This uniform has a similar style to the women's uniform of the British Army (today).

Another ZCC uniform that has a similar style and purpose to the military one is the church's official uniform. It is a bottle green suit with yellow stripes on the sides. Only members who have honoured the rules of the church and proved their loyalty strictly wear this. The uniform is normally worn with a bottle green matching peaked hat and tie, white shirt and black formal shoes. This uniform is regarded as *Seaparo se seholo*, meaning the highest-ranking uniform. The women's uniform is similar; it is regarded as the ceremonial officer's uniform based on military tradition.

The ZCC is known mostly for its British army-style uniform, as it is the one worn by most ordinary members of their church who have not acquired a higher-level standing within the church. The British style uniform is still important to the ZCC and their mission to represent themselves as an Army of God's People.

⁶² Allock, S. 2008. *Chronic life: Clothed*. n/a .Kalakuta trust. Page 30.

The ZCC has a range of uniforms and styles that may have influenced other AICs that followed. What makes the ZCC uniform distinctive is that their colours are different from the palette used by other Zionist churches. The uniform is primarily Western influenced and the colours are thus not easily interpreted in relation to the symbolic African colours discussed earlier in the paper.

The Methodist Church.

In contrast, the Methodist Church uses the colour red, mixed with black and white. The Methodist Church is referred to as the "church of blood", *Kereke ya madi*, relating to the blood of salvation. *Madi* in the *Tshidi* group is not only a term used to describe blood but also money.⁶³ The colour white is still linked to purity whereas black is linked to the "law".⁶⁴ The formation of these three colours signals the structure and conduct of the church. However, Elphick⁶⁵ says that the Methodists took their use of red from the British soldiers' uniform similar to Lekgayane's idea for the ZCC. Elphick states that they also wanted to be "soldiers of the cross".⁶⁶ The women use red to symbolises the red blood of Jesus, cleansing away sin through the use of black skirts and conveying hope by using white hats and collars.

⁶³ Comaroff, J. 1985. *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South "African" People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Page 223.

⁶⁴ Comaroff, J. 1985. *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South "African" People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Page 222.

⁶⁵ Elphick, R. 1997. *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History*. T.R.H Davenport, page 258.

⁶⁶ Elphick, R. 1997. *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History*. T.R.H Davenport, page 258.

Other African independent churches.

A group of Zionist leaders emerged from the split from the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion during the nineteenth Century⁶⁷. These included leaders such as Lekganyane (discussed above), Mma Nku of the St Johns Faith Mission, Daniel Nkonyane and Isaah Shembe of the *amaNazaretha* Church who will be discussed below.

The Nazareth Church is one of the earliest African Christian Churches that exist. Shembe formulated the doctrine of his church in competition with the doctrine developed by Western churches in KwaZulu-Natal at that time⁶⁸. He fused *Nguni* cultural beliefs with Western Christian doctrine. Shembe looked at how Western beliefs and African traditional beliefs had been in conflict from the time that Christianity was first introduced in Africa. For example, as Christians did not allow polygamy, he created a church that offered a place of worship for women who were formerly in a polygamous marriage and had been abandoned by their husbands and who had then converted to Christianity⁶⁹. He catered for *Amabhinca*, the traditionalists discussed in Chapter two. He based his doctrine on Biblical scriptures about women and on *Nguni* cultural beliefs. This made his church popular as it bridged the gap between Christianity and African traditions.

⁶⁷ See Addendum, page 135.

⁶⁸ Muller, A.M. 1999. *Rituals of Fertility and Sacrifice and Desire: Nazarite Women's Performance in South Africa*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. Page xviii

⁶⁹ Muller, A.M. 1999. *Rituals of Fertility and Sacrifice and Desire: Nazarite Women's Performance in South Africa*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. Page xix.

The Nazareth Church chooses to worship in an open landscape. The initial church was founded on top of a mountain and is called *Ekuphakameni*, which means an elevated space⁷⁰. *Ekuphakameni* is associated with the heavens and is described as a heaven on earth by the church-goers⁷¹. Their other places of worship are not marked on any map and are usually situated far away from any habitation⁷². This makes their places of worship unknown to the general public, as they are sacred spaces that should only be found by the church-goers. It is believed that *Ekuphakameni* is a holy place and so no one entering the space is allowed to wear shoes. The church-goers wear white robes and men carry traditional shepherd's crooks⁷³. In their practice they use the printed word, the Bible that is a Western belief system and fuse this with the use of traditional artefacts, which form part of their attire when they worship, such as beadwork and animal skins.

Shembe followers believe that God owns their place of worship, and that no unruly noise should be made in that space as it is a holy space that is protected by spiritual guards⁷⁴. Activities such as dance and rituals that happen within the space are believed to be led by the spirits that occupy the space and are believed to be holy. The form of worship is no longer based on a Western Christian system but rather has merged with traditional forms of worship. This is an example of how Africans have used both Western and

⁷⁰ Muller, A.M. 1999. *Rituals of Fertility and Sacrifice and Desire: Nazarite Women's Performance in South Africa*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. Page 2.

⁷¹ *ibid.* Page 66.

⁷² *ibid.* Page 10.

⁷³ *ibid.* Page 5.

⁷⁴ *ibid.* Page 192.

traditional beliefs to reinvent their faith. All the elements discussed above thus become important transitional elements in their relation with the landscape, which then transforms into their spirituality.

Elphick⁷⁵ states that it was Daniel Nkonyane⁷⁶ who introduced elements such as wearing white robes, worshiping barefoot, carrying holy sticks, and using Old Testament signs that are still visible in the Zionist worship today. Nkonyane introduced these elements into the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion⁷⁷ before he broke away from it.

Mma Nku of the St Johns Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa was one of the first of few women to establish a church. Her church is one of the largest Apostolic Churches today. It is said that Mma Nku had visions to found the church in 1939. The story goes that it was revealed to her to build a church of God with twelve doors in Evaton, west of Johannesburg⁷⁸. The twelve doors were symbolic of the twelve apostles who were disciples of Jesus in the Bible. Mme Nku's church grew popular through her use of divine healing and prophecy. Until today, the church-goers wear the blue and white colours which were revealed to Mma Nku in her vision.

⁷⁵ Elphick, R. 1997. *Christianity in South Africa: A political, Social and Cultural History*. T.R.H Davenport, Page 218.

⁷⁶ Daniel Nkonyane is one of the early pastors who established an AIC church. He will be discussed at length in Chapter three under the history of Zionism.

⁷⁷ The Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion was founded by John Elexander Dowie. John Elexander Dowie is acclaimed for the establishment of the Zionist and Apostolic movements in South Africa through his publication and preaching on faith healing, which will be discussed at length in Chapter three under the history of Zionism.

⁷⁸ Elphick, R. 1997. *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History*. T.R.H Davenport, Page 220-221.

Important elements used in Apostolic and Zionist movements.

Symbolism in Zion ritual expresses the unity of the psycho-spiritual and physical realms of human existence. In Zion this is achieved through the harnessing of symbolic ritual objects, e.g. water, coloured vestments and candles.⁷⁹

Water.

Isiwasho is water that has been blessed by a prophet or a pastor. *Isiwasho* is mostly mixed with salt or ash. It is believed to have the power to heal, cleanse away bad bile and give life. *Isiwasho* is medicinal and is believed to have power to dispel supernatural illnesses. It is a liquid that one drinks, *gaba* or even cooks with as instructed by the prophet. Water is one of the key symbols in Zionist and Apostolic movements. It is symbolic of life, renewal and rebirth. The symbolism of water is drawn from the divine consciousness of life and its cosmos⁸⁰. *Isiwasho* is used to purify what is internal whereas baptism cleanses the physical and spiritual. *Isiwasho*'s remedy works through faith and hope, as it is believed to contain mystical powers. Dube⁸¹ says that water from waterfalls, the sea and rivers is believed to have mystical powers as it is believed to be clear and purified – probably based on the notion that flowing or moving water is purified by the rocks it passes through. The power from the

⁷⁹ Dube SWD. 1994. *Heirophanies: A Hermeneutic Paradigm for Understanding Zionist Ritual in Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots: Its Dynamics and Strategies*. Brill. Page 108.

⁸⁰ *ibid.* Page 109.

⁸¹ *ibid.* Page 109.

water is activated through faith and prayer.

Umoya.

Most AIC churches define themselves as *Kereke ya moya* (Churches of the Spirit). They believe the spirit of their Ancestors and the Holy Spirit leads their practice. The term also originates in contrast to the Churches of the law, being their breakaway churches. Comaroff⁸² states that the Methodist Church, which also falls under the AICs, uses the colour black as a symbol of them being a church of the law. Churches of the law are churches that followed the missionary rules and laws that govern a church. Apostolic and Zionists movements, by categorising themselves as *Kereke ya moya*, moved away from a “formal” church doctrine to a more flexible doctrine where the spirit of the ancestors and God would lead their doctrine.

The driving force in Zionist and Apostolic movements is *Umoya/moya*. *Umoya* cannot be easily interpreted as “air”, although that is the direct translation. *Umoya* is a mystical force or power which translates as the Holy Spirit or any spirit. *Umoya* can also translate as wind and breath⁸³. It is a cool force that moves and swirls; its movement can go from calm to wild. Wind, air and breath become key elements in the Apostolic and Zionist understanding of

⁸² Comaroff, J. 1985. *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South “African” People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Page 223.

⁸³ Dube SWD. 1994. *Heirophanies: A Hermeneutic Paradigm for Understanding Zionist Ritual in Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots: Its Dynamics and Strategies*. Brill. Page 110.

umoya. Therefore *umoya* is a divine spirit that has *amandla* (powers) to reveal dreams and spiritual gifts such as the speaking of tongues which relates to African understanding of the universe⁸⁴. “The spirit, breath or air... *umoya* is the ritual force of the body... this spirit... also gives strength... to take air... *athathe umoya*... to take strength...”⁸⁵

You will often hear *Amazioni* or *Amapostola* chant and say “*ke moyeng*” (direct translation: I am in the spirit) or “*ke holwa ke moya*” (I am led by the Spirit). This saying depicts how influential the spirit is to the Apostolic and Zionist dogma.

Sundkler⁸⁶ argues that dreams play a major role in the colour use and meanings within the Zionist movements. A spirit or angel would appear to a prophet during prayer and instruct him/her to dress one of their sick members with a green sack. The green sack would help heal the person and chase away bad spirits. Dreams and vision are believed to be revelations from *Umoya*.

⁸⁴ *ibid.* Page 111.

⁸⁵ Vilakazi, A. 1962. *A Zulu Transformation*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal. Page 87.

⁸⁶ Sundkler, B, G, M. 1961. *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*. London: Oxford University Press. Page 249.

Candles – Fire and light.

Fire emits light. Fire produces heat, and because of this it has strength and power. Light, *kganya*, translates to a clear vision. The burning of candles represents honouring the presence of the spirit that gives power. Candles are blessed so that once lit their light will challenge the *ubumyama*. *Ubumyama* may represent a bad spirit or a bad omen. Light represents hope, healing and faith. Candles are lit for different reasons and occasions but their use is always to draw *kganya* -- light, hope, healing and protection against evil. Candles are lit during sermons, healing rituals, funerals, *umsebenzi* (ancestors' rituals) or individual or group prayers.

To strengthen a house that is threatened with witchcraft, Dube⁸⁷ says that a candle is buried at a specific point in the yard; red coloured candles are mostly used for such rituals. When used for this purpose, the candle will be burnt for a short period, and then put out. The candle can also be buried in the ground upside down with the tip away from the house. This is so that any mystical attack directed at the house or at the family is directed away from the house or is attracted to the burnt wick of the candle.

⁸⁷ Dube SWD. 1994. *Heirophanies: A Hermeneutic Paradigm for Understanding Zionist Ritual in Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots: Its Dynamics and Strategies*. Brill. Page 111.

The first time I experienced such a ritual was early February 2014. I was walking home from school at around 8pm at night. The house next to mine had placed a lit red candle on the dividing wall between my house and theirs. This image was very intense as the light made the red candle glow in the dark. What I found interesting in this moment was how the candle was not hidden but placed openly to the public eye. It was also interesting as it was placed next to our pedestrian gate which we use to enter and exit the house. It was clear my neighbours had gone to visit a prophet, sangoma or inyanga. I wondered if they thought or were told that the threat comes from my family, was it a sign to threaten us? Hence it was lit at a time when people are still roaming the street. Why wasn't it lit at a period where people were asleep? Although it was my first such experience, I could see that there were mystical powers attached to the ritual. I became aware of a reality that there are forces around us that exist outside of our own world that one cannot deny.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Author's personal experience.

Iyanga ne Ikanyezi (moon and stars).

The moon and the stars are believed to have cosmic powers. The moon is used to calculate a phase or time. The moon symbolises rebirth and renewal. Stars are symbolic of the cosmos. Most churches used these symbols in their logos, badges, flags, hats and church garments. These elements symbolise light in darkness, the notion of good things. The moon symbolises change as it represents a new season.

These symbols are often sewn on the garments worn by prophets or pastors. One can tell through these symbols that the wearer has a special gift.

The night is also a symbolic time for most rituals that occur with Apostolic and Zionist churches. Most of the churches host their rituals at midnight and others do so when there is a full moon. Lebo Temane, a spiritual prophet, says that she wakes up to pray at 3:00 AM in the morning. She claims that at this hour there are many forces roaming around. This is the hour of darkness, hence she lights a white candle and kneels to pray before it to ask for lightness and cast out any evil forces.

In December 2013. I was driving out of Orlando in Soweto through Klipspruit river valley. It was at around 3am, on a Sunday morning. I saw a group of men dressed in white in a circle around a blazing fire. Their white robes sparkled with orange from the red sparks that the fire was producing. The men were kneeling in what appeared to be a praying ritual. This image captivated my mind and still exists in my mind. The figures seemed so surreal. It was a very windy morning and I recall the wind fighting against the fire and their white robes blowing but their bodies remaining static fighting against the wind. I thought to myself that it had to be faith that kept them static, that made them gather on a windy morning to worship. Could they be fighting off evil forces like Lebo⁸⁹ does when she lights a candle at midnight?⁹⁰

Even during Umlindelo, a ceremony held during a funeral the night before burial, the church members would gather at the deceased's house to pray and praise during the night. This ritual is done to help protect the spirit of the deceased and usher it to the right place. As it is believed that wicked things happened at the deepest hours of the night, a white candle would be lit and imphepho burnt to help show the deceased spirit light and protect it from evil. The church will sing and preach to console the family of the deceased and helped them heal as they bid farewell to their loved one.

⁸⁹ Lebogang is a spiritual prophet who will be discussed below.

⁹⁰ Author's personal experience.

Staffs and Rods.

The use of staffs and rods in Apostolic and Zionist movements draws its symbolism from herding sticks. The stick also references the stick of Moses in the Bible. The stick is used to chase away bad spirits and stop attacks. The stick is also perceived as *insika* (pillar).⁹¹

Colour symbolism within the Apostolic and Zionist movements.

Harriet Ngubane⁹² states that traditional Zulu medicinal practices use *myama* (black), *luhlaza* (green/blue), *bomvu* (red), *mhlophe* (white), *phuzi* (yellow). Dube further elaborates that:

Black and red medicines remove mystical illness. The medicines are heated because they are meant to expel from the body substances that cause heat. White medicines which are meant to restore the balance of the body, are not cooked. Yellow forms a bridge between the use of black medicines and white medicines.⁹³

Luhlaza is all that is powerful. *Luhlaza* can refer to the blue water or green

⁹¹ Dube SWD. 1994. *Heirophanies: A Hermeneutic Paradigm for Understanding Zionist Ritual in Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots: Its Dynamics and Strategies*. Brill. Page 111.

⁹² Ngubane. H. 1997. *Body and Mind in Zulu medicine*. London. Academic Press. Page 116.

⁹³ op cit. Page 111.

vegetation as discussed in Chapter one. *Luhlaza* symbolises life and existence; thus in terms of vegetation, all that is green is alive. Dube states that *luhlaza* is linked with the supernatural and rebirth:

The use of *luhlaza* seeks to symbolise unity between human beings and the cosmos because: “the man is akin to nature, [is] a child of the mother earth and brother to the plants and animals which have their own spiritual existence and place in the universe”⁹⁴

The use of green in Zion draws its symbolism from nature and therefore is seen to help one reconnect with the earth. Thus by wearing green one’s spirit is renewed and one becomes alive. Comaroff in her book, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*,⁹⁵ indicates that the Zionists frequently combine white and green as representative colours of their faith with blue as an additional colour.

Yellow *iphuzi* as discussed in Chapter one originates from the colour of a coarse pumpkin. *Iphuzi* when used in combination with other colours suggests an intermediate stage in Zion. It is a colour that is often used by healers who undergoing training or by recuperating patients. Yellow is believed in Zion to be symbolic of rejuvenation and reawakening. In understanding the symbolism and uses of yellow/ *imphuzi*, Dube⁹⁶ explains that *iphuzi* is a vegetable

⁹⁴ Dube SWD. 1994. *Heiropophanies: A Hermeneutic Paradigm for Understanding Zionist Ritual in Afro---Christianity at the Grassroots: Its Dynamics and Strategies*. Brill. Page 113.

⁹⁵ Comaroff, J. 1985. *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South “African” People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Page 223.

⁹⁶ op cit. Page 113.

from nature and therefore linked with the way of life.

Red ubomvu, is defined by Dube⁹⁷ as a symbol of twilight, and thus represents a trance state between ubumyama (darkness) and ukukhanya (lightness). Red is also often utilized in a symbolic fashion as yellow. The use of red might relate to the symbolic use of blood during a sacrifice.

The colours mentioned above symbolise important elements the Zionist faith and are similar to the use of colour within Apostolic churches. In some instances, the colours are intertwined, for instance the coloured cords discussed in Chapter one.

Church garments.

The Zionist garment is an important aspect of their existence on earth and in the afterlife. "Together these colours evoke a sense of fluid process, of regeneration and animated flow, such as the active qualities imparted to the body when the colours are worn"⁹⁸. Thus when a Zionist member dies, he or she is buried with his/her church garment. The garment is believed to help the

⁹⁷ ibid. Page 114.

⁹⁸ Comaroff, J. 1985. *Body of Power, Spirit of resistance: The Culture and History of a South "African" People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Page 223.

member transcend to heaven. The garments symbolise their faith and church-goers pride themselves on displaying their Christian identity as discussed in Chapter two.

Garments are also used to create hierarchy within the church with colour being used to classify the position of a member. This is illustrated by the different colours of uniform used in the ZCC, discussed above.

Rituals and ceremonies.

A number of rituals exist within Apostolic and Zionist movements. Most of the elements above are used during the rituals. Church garments are always worn for every ritual or ceremony that takes place within the church. Church members also wear their uniforms when attending the funeral of another church member or a close relative. During healing rituals, candles and sashes in specific colours are used. For example, this applied in the ritual of protection of a house that is under threat (discussed above).

Ilathi is a thanksgiving ceremony where sacrifices are made to ancestors to give thanks for life and blessings. *Ilathi* is normally prophesied or envisioned and the member concerned buys an animal that is prayed for and then

sacrificed to thank the ancestors for ones well being and prosperity⁹⁹. During the ceremony, food will be served to feast and celebrate with the host of the ceremony. By the host sharing their prosperity, it symbolises the African ideology of *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* is the concept of sharing and believing that one is human because the other person is.

Contemporary colour use within Apostolic and Zionist movements.

... Colours are not arbitrarily chosen, but are revealed in dreams, in visions and during services. They are a visible sign of compliance with the dictates of the supernatural. In addition to ordinary uniforms and vestments, the sashes, cords and head or armbands are all designed in revealed colours. Zionist colours sacralise human life and provide for the unity of the cosmic prayer. The prescribed colour combinations add to the meaning and being of an individual. They virtually change his status and increase his being.¹⁰⁰

Colour continues to be part of the search for faith and spirituality within the Apostolic and Zionist movements in Soweto today. Most Apostolic churches use blue and white as their representational colours, and Zionist churches mainly use green and white. Traditionally blue was symbolic of the Apostolic's

⁹⁹ Dube SWD. 1994. *Heirophanies: A Hermeneutic Paradigm for Understanding Zionist Ritual in Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots: Its Dynamics and Strategies*. Brill. Page 115-116.

¹⁰⁰ Dube SWD. 1994. *Heirophanies: A Hermeneutic Paradigm for Understanding Zionist Ritual in Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots: Its Dynamics and Strategies*. Brill. Page 114.

and green for Zionists, but today the colours have extended to a range of greens and blues in both movements. The greens and the blues have been combined with other colours such as yellow, mauve, pink, and so on, in order to create different tones and colour schemes. These colours are used not only as representational colours but also as hierarchy indicators within the church.

They are also believed to serve different spiritual purposes such as chasing away bad omens, inviting the Holy Spirit and inviting ancestral spirits, to name a few. The colours are not only used for church robes but are also evident in their spaces of worship through the use of candles, flags, stones and other adornments. Contemporary churches have added new colours such as lime green¹⁰¹ but most churches still do not use black as it is still seen as the colour of darkness.

The following section will discuss the meaning behind the colours used and their associations in Apostolic and Zionist movements today by looking at two women who are spiritual prophets in their churches.

Lebogang Audrey Temane,¹⁰² a spiritual prophet. Lebogang explained to me that dreams play a huge role in the colour schemes of her church and spiritual roles. She said that she dreamt of specific colours and fabrics that indicated

¹⁰¹ Discussed in Chapter four.

¹⁰² Lebogang Audrey Temane (24) is a spiritual prophet under her father's church, Kopanong Apostolic Church. Lebogang was chosen to be interviewed for the study as she is a young person and received her calling while she was still in High School and she was one of the people who inspired this study. Lebogang and I were friends in High School. I knew her before and after she became a prophet and I thus recall conversations we shared during her initiating period. I thus decided to go back and interview her for the study and to also see if her growth as a spiritual prophet.

and guided her to her specific calling as a spiritual prophet. Yellow, turquoise, red, black and white from the leopard print are the colours of her spiritual robes (see Figure 3).



Figure 3: Lebogang Temane's spiritual uniform in her bedroom, Phiri.

Photograph by author.

Lebogang told me that she kept on dreaming about her deceased grandmother. In the dreams her grandmother kept presenting her with a red printed cloth. She says she would wake up with a heavy headache every time and she could not understand what was happening. She then told her father about her dreams. Her father, who is a pastor, was able to read her dreams and told her that her grandmother was sent by their ancestors to present her with the gift of prophecy. Her grandmother was also a spiritual prophet and

the ancestors had now passed the gift on to her. Lebogang was then sent to another lady who was also a spiritual prophet, who guided her initiation in becoming a spiritual prophet.

Lebogang went to the shops with her dad to buy the fabric her grandmother had presented to her in her dream. She then went to a stream somewhere in Soweto, which she would not disclose. Upon her arrival there, as part of her initiation, she was told to jump into the river. She said that she cannot swim and once she was inside the water she descended to the “very bottom of the earth”. She described this place as another level beyond the ground. It was surreal to her as she could breathe underwater, although she could not swim. She felt as if a wind pulled her down there as everything took place so quickly. Under the river she found objects that her grandmother had instructed her to find including the red and white printed fabric her grandmother had presented in her first dream. These objects were important to her initiation and are important tools for her spiritual practice.

In Figure three above is Lebogang’s bedroom and practice room. After accepting the gift from her ancestors, fabrics and colours were then revealed to her to construct her spiritual garment. She bought the yellow, turquoise and leopard print fabrics and took them to a specific woman to create the garment. Once the garment was designed she had to perform a ritual to thank her ancestors and to wear the garment. She had to light a candle for her garment as a sign of accepting the gift and honouring the ancestors. Her *Seaparo sa*

moya could not be hung inside her wardrobe with other garments as it was sacred. She set up an area in her room where she would pray daily, and that became her spiritual corner (see below). In the corner, she set up all the objects she had found in the river, her candle, and *imphepho*, spiritual blue beads, and hung *her Seaparo sa moya* (spiritual garment).

Her grandmother had received this gift of prophecy too and was initiated under a Zionist church. Zionist spiritual prophets use green and red beads but because Lebogang was initiated under a Apostolic church she had to use blue beads. Apostolics forbid the use of red beads as they are similar colours to those used by *Izinyanga* and *Sangomas*, although most Apostolic churches' healers and prophets do use red printed fabric and red sashes.

Lebogang also explained that when opening his church, her father dreamt about a congregation of people dressed in a specific hue of blue. His mother through the dream that the congregation was waiting for him --their leader -- and that he must include a white cross as part of their church robe so that people may know that they are the church of God then told him. Most church colours are revealed to their leaders through dreams and prophecy. Through my research, I have found more than twenty different Apostolic and Zionist churches in Soweto and they all wear different colours and uniforms.

Mme Onica¹⁰³ is a member of the National Apostolic Church in Zion, under the leadership of Rev Bishop Dijo. She grew up under the Roman Catholic Church. In her interview, she said that she has a special garment that is distinctive to her alone and is different from the communal uniform of the church. She said that she dreamt of this garment and then narrated her dream to her pastor who advised her to listen to her dream. She then went to buy the fabric and had the garment tailored in accordance with her dream.

Mme Onica fell sick for a while and she had a vision to join *kereke ya sgubhu/ kereke ya moya*. She then left her old church and went to Rev Bishop Dijo and narrated her vision. He did not give her full answers but said she must choose to stay and ask him to write her name in his church books. She says she was drawn to the church through *sgubhu* (the beat of a drum) and that the church gave her life. *Sgubhu* is her main attraction to the church as she is transcended when a person who has a special hand for beating drums plays. She doesn't know if she is *moyeng* or how to explain it, but that person is playing her rhythm. She becomes free and happy, although she has problems but she doesn't feel them.

Mme Onica explained that her church wears many colours but she has her own robe. The bottle green and white uniform is the "church joint" -- the one that is worn by everybody which symbolises that you are of a certain church

¹⁰³ Mme Onica was chosen for the study as she an elderly person who has been a member of her church for more than ten years. She is also a spiritual prophet but functions differently to Lebohang as she does not perform healing methods but rather receives visions and prophecies.

(see fig 5). She doesn't know why the church chose that green.



Figure 4: Mme Onica wearing her spiritual robe. Photograph by author.

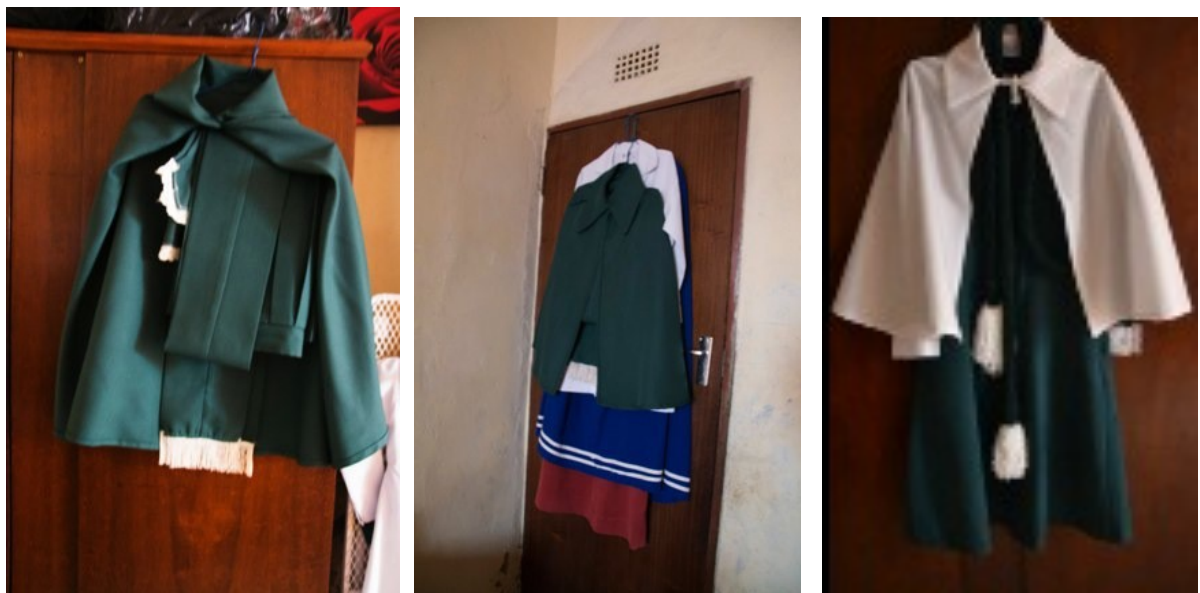


Figure 5 a, b & c: Images of Mme Onica's uniform in her bedroom.

Photograph by author

Depicted in figure 5 a, b and c are Mme Onica's other church uniforms. Figure 5 a and c depict her other uniform called joint *ya kereke*, which means the uniform that is worn by all the members of National Apostolic churches. When asked why the churches use this specific tone of green, she answered that she does not know. Only the pastor would know. She said when she joined the church had the uniform already so she did as the church does. She can only account for her blue robe discussed above and she knows personally what it means to her.

Mme Onica hangs all her robes and her grandchildren's robes inside her room, behind the bedroom door. She said they are of spiritual significance and cannot be packed away with her normal everyday clothes. This concept originates with the way white garments were treated during early Christianity, as discussed in Chapter two. This remains a common belief and practice amongst Apostolic and Zionist members.

In conclusion, this Chapter focused on the introduction of African traditional beliefs and attire into Christianity. I have studied how Africans converted and altered their faith through the use of colour and traditional rituals. African Christians began to add elements that created different designs for their garments and made them appear as people of God and separate from the non-believers. Colour and African symbols became the key element of transformation. Through using colours that symbolise African cultural beliefs, Apostolic and Zionist movements were able to reshape and appropriate Christianity into their beliefs.

This thus substantiates my hypothesis that the use of garments and colour within the AIC was not missionary influenced and randomly chosen but rather draws from African culture and spirituality. This chapter has shown that by looking at the symbolism of colour within both movements and by looking at contemporary uses of colour by the two spiritual prophets interviewed.

Chapter Four

Contemporary use of colour: A visual essay.

Chapter four will draw conclusions on how the origin of colour and colour use within Apostolic and Zionist movements has filtered beyond the standard blue and green introduced in the nineteenth century. This Chapter will look at contemporary Apostolic and Zionist garments and other elements used such as candles, flags and so on. These elements will be investigated through a visual essay with the intent to document contemporary colour use within both movements.

We have seen that the nature of Apostolic and Zionist movements transforms over time. Their religious characteristics change meaning and other elements within these movements remain unrecorded and unknown. Some of these elements are also crucial in differentiating these movements from formal “conventional” churches and movements.

I am intrigued by the way the garments inhabit a certain power within them and how once personified the wearer is transformed into another being. I am interested in the persona of the wearers once they put on their church robe, how they transform from the “earthly being” to the “spiritual being” once

embodied in the garments and how the colours help traverse that. This visual essay intends to engage with the wearer and depict how the garment elevates their spirit and persona. This visual investigation will create a link amongst the important elements within Apostolic and Zionist movements discussed in Chapter three: the elements such as candles, stars, moon, staff, Church garments, and flags. Most importantly it will show clearly how colour is used symbolically through these elements.

Thus the visual essay aims to prove my hypothesis that is that the use of colour within the AIC draws from African culture. The visual essay begins to show how colour plays a significant role within the Apostolic and Zionist movements and how it is used in other elements of their faith and spirituality. The visual essay also depicts how the use of colour within the Zionist and Apostolic has grown and filtered beyond the green and blue discussed in Chapter three to the use of contemporary colours such as gold and pink which will be depicted below.



Figure 6: Madutlo Street, Naledi.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ All Photographs in this section where taken by the author.



Figure7 & 8: Madutlo Street, Naledi.



Figure 9: Mapetla.



Figure 10: Mapetla.



Figure 11: Neeleng Street, Mapetla.



Figure 12: Mapetla.



Figure 13: Mapetla.

From the use of flags depicted above, one can see that the houses are used as churches. A blue flag indicates that it is an Apostolic church, whereas the red flag shows that there is a pastor or a prophet in the house. A yellow flag could represent that the person is an initiate or there is a prophet in the house who is undergoing initiation. A green flag indicates a Zionist church. A white cross symbolises a Christian church.



Figure 14: Apostolic Church, Naledi



Figure 15: Apostolic Church, Mapetla.



Figure 16: St Early Apostolic Church, Naledi.



Figure 17: Ukuvuswa Christian Church in Zion, White City.

This church garment was spotted while shooting and filming in Senaoane one Sunday. This church robe belongs to the *Ukuvuswa* Christian Church in Zion that is situated in White City. Under Pastor Mkhize, the church does not own a building but has been hosting their services inside a classroom at Sydney Maseko Adult School in White City. The man in the picture was the first to proudly explain the colours of their church to me. He said that the lime green represents light: you were dark, now you are light. The darker green represents that you are spiritually complete. This man said that Zion Churches are differentiated from each other through the type of shirts they wear.



Figure 18 : St Joel Christian Fellowship in South Africa. Phiri

This is a very interesting church garment that has moved away from the basic colours of the Zion and Apostolic. The design follows the more Victorian nineteenth-century style of dress. The lady in the photograph could not explain why they chose to use gold, maroon, pink and white as symbolic colours of her church. What I could make out from the colours was that gold was symbolic of wealth. Maroon is more intense and less intimidating than red but it must have a rich symbolism. In *Zulu*, this colour is called *mdaka*, referring to earthly or natural substances. The style also borrows from the Zionist (ZCC) army-style uniform.



Figure 19: St Joel Christian Fellowship in South Africa. Phiri



Figure 20: Kopanong Apostolic Church, Phiri.



Figure 21: Kopanong Apostolic Church, Phiri.



Figure 22: Zion Church, White City.



Figure 23: Zion Church, White City.



Figure 24: Womensprayer group, Mapetla.

A group of women from different churches gather every Thursday and pray together. Thursday is known as *illanga labomama* (women's day), thus most churches regard it as such.



Figure 25: Mercy Apostolic church, Mapetla.



Figure 26: Izikhova Inhlanihla Ethiopian Apostolic Church in Zion. Phiri



Figure 27: Izikhova Inhlanihla Ethiopian Apostolic Church in Zion. Phiri.



Figure 28: Niniva Church of God, Senaoane.



Figure 29: Believers in Christ, Senaoane.



Figure 30: Lefeteng Apostolic Church, Phiri.



Figure 31: Church of Zion, White City



Figure 32 Apostolic Church, Mapetla



Figure 33: National Apostolic Church. Phiri.



Figure 34: Corinthians Apostolic Church, Mapetla. Mapetla High School.



Figure 35: Modimo onale Rona Apostolic Church, Phiri. Kgotsa Primary School.



Figure 36: National Apostolic Church in Zion, Phiri.



Figure 37: Mrs M's in her living room, Tladi.

Through conversations about my project with people around Soweto, I was introduced to an elderly lady Mrs M. What I found interesting about her was that she does not belong to any church or movement. She states that Jesus speaks through her. She says that Jesus instructed her to take off her old church garment and showed her the garment she is supposed to wear (see the one photographed below). Thus she is her own church. In her living room she hangs pictures of herself in her old church uniforms, her family, and most important, pictures of Jesus.

The cloak she is wearing above was hand- sewn by her. She said that a voice inside her instructed her to go and buy specific colours of fabric and to design a cloak as pictured above. The cloak has verses on it, which are hand sewn by her. The words are sewn delicately and beautifully. These are the verses and praises that the voice of Jesus inside her instructed her to write. She only wears these clothes and says that she was supposed to wear leather sandals like the ones Jesus wore. She uses a lot of yellow in her garments and even in her living room and mural paintings, which will be discussed below. Yellow seems to be a spiritual colour for her that symbolises the presence of the Holy Spirit.

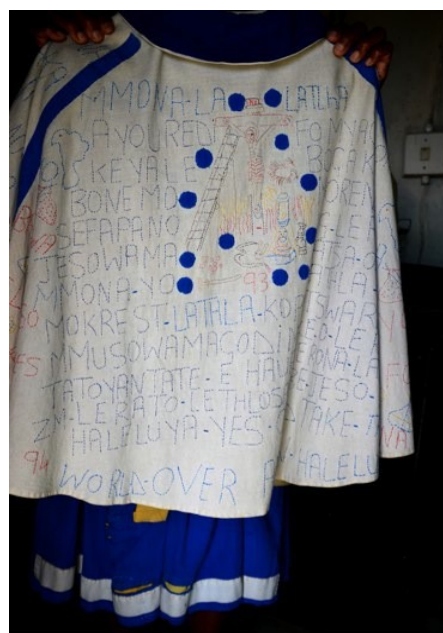


Figure 38: Mrs M's spiritual garment, Tladi.

She owns more than three different cloaks but she only allowed two to be photographed. This is her second cloak. She used a combination of blue and white. Blue could symbolise the colour of Mary much like Mrs A.N. discussed in Chapter one.



Figure 39: Mrs M's Mural, Tladi.

Depicted is a mural painting inside her yard. She also did mural paintings in a clinic at Tladi in Soweto. She says the murals were also an instruction from Jesus. The verses and praises written are what Jesus wanted her to share with the world. The murals are an interesting visual way of using colour to explore faith and spirituality, as she received a lot of feedback; good and bad from the community. The murals remained in the clinic for a number of years until they were recently painted over, with only the mural inside her yard remaining.

In conversation with a member of one of the Apostolic movements from Soweto, he explained to me their church dress code. He said that women wear a blue dress with a white cord and men wear a blue shirt and black trousers. I had not come across an Apostolic church before that uses black. When I asked him why they wear black, he said they wear a uniform as if they are going to work, and they also wear a black tie. This is the standard uniform for all male members. This indicates how colour use has grown beyond the standard blue, white and green. I found this very baffling as black was perceived as a taboo when the AICs were originally formed. Furthermore, this member could not explain what the black symbolised in relation to the blue and white. I could only make a link to the use of black in the Methodist Church discussed in Chapters two and three.



Figure 40: Mapetla.

In the course of my research, I found that most of the churches and church members refused to be photographed or even asked questions. This reflects their desire to remain invisible. When I searched online for Apostolic or Zion churches in Soweto only one appeared on Google Maps. This could be a result of the economic necessity that forces most Apostolic and Zionist churches to forego formal church structures and mostly worship in open spaces, public halls, pastor's houses or school classrooms. Their spaces are never permanent as they may be moved from the schools or halls if other events conflict with their services. Open land can be occupied.

Thus these churches often remain invisible. Some movements or churches function as secret societies so that only members of the church know where the church is located. Not only do they choose to be invisible in terms of monuments, they also are very secretive regarding their church doctrine and *ditaelo* (church rules). As a result, during my walks, I interacted with a lot of churchgoers who became defensive when I asked them about their church. Most of them refused to say anything to me and pointed out that they do not want to be in the media. I came to understand that you can only access certain information by being a church member.











This church was spotted along the Klipspruit valley road in Orlando. They choose to worship in open spaces, as they believe Jesus worshiped in open spaces. In conversation with an ex-member, she told me that these types of churches originate from Zimbabwe. They call themselves Azibaba. They don't read the Bible and don't believe in Western medicine. They believe in the use of faith healing and mainly use water, stones and rice, which are blessed by the pastor. Although they don't read the Bible, they use a lot of biblical references. This to some extent contradicts them saying they don't believe in the Bible.

Depicted above are two different churches that were spotted in the same open space. The churches both have similar characteristics. It was interesting to note that although they wear the same garments and worship in the same space, they have not merged.

Figure 41- 48: Mazibaba, along the Klipspruit valley road, Orlando.



Figure 49: House of God Church in Zion, Umuzi Ka Jehova.

Sekano Ntoane High School. Senaoane.



Figure 50: Holy Apostolic Churchh, Pimville.







Figure 51-53: Holy Christian Apostolic Church, Morris Isaacson High School, White City.



Figure 54: Amakholwa Apostolic Faith Mission Church,
Ikageng Primary School, Naledi.



Figure 55: Amakholwa Apostolic Faith Mission Church,
Ikageng Primary School, Naledi.



Figure 56: St Joel Christian Fellowship in South Africa. Phiri.



Figure 57: Reyo Boka Christian Church. Mapetla



Figure 58: Apostolic Church, Motsaneng Primary School, Mapetla.



Figure 59: Lebogang Temane's spiritual corner, Phiri.

One has to note that Africans believed in a God before Christianity was introduced to Africa. Their belief in God is seen and interpreted through their use of colour, the stars and moon and their understanding of the cosmos. God was is and is still believed to exist in nature hence the primary colours for Zionist and Apostolic are green and blue which symbolise the sky and vegetation. This notion can also be seen through the belief in and use of plants and herbs to heal and the importance of worshipping in open spaces on green land next to flowing water. Thus their belief in God exists beyond the Bible and faith. It is evident in the elements used, which are discussed above. The importance of using the moon and stars in the symbols also depicts their understanding of the universe to fulfil spiritual needs.

This visual essay has depicted how the origin of colour and colour use within Apostolic and Zionist movements has evolved beyond the standard blue and green introduced in the nineteenth century. The visuals provided above have depicted how Apostolic and Zionist garments and other elements used such as candles, flags and so on are mystical and spiritual objects that can only be decoded through colour. Thus substantiating my hypothesis that the colours are important and spiritual and thus not randomly chosen.

Chapter Five

Non-Promised Land: Bana ba Thari Entsho

A Masters degree Exhibition.

Set on the Ramparts of a historical space, *Non-Promised Land* is an investigation of how Apostolic and Zionist movements use colour to explore faith and spirituality in an attempt to negotiate their presence and space. A survey of how colour use within the AIC movement has shifted from the white missionary garments to a rainbow of colours that crowd our communities on Sunday is discussed in earlier Chapters. In the church members' continued search for independence and a place to belong, these bright coloured church garments fill our surroundings like ghostly images; they move and swirl through space. *Non-Promised Land* locates the journey and struggles of the AIC within Johannesburg, a city of gold and possibilities that is symbolic of the independence of South Africa through appropriated spaces such as Constitution Hill.

Constitution Hill is an important national heritage site. It is home to the Constitutional Court of South Africa and to historical exhibitions located in the former prisons where many leading political activists were detained under apartheid. The Constitutional Court protects the basic rights and freedoms of all who live in South Africa and is therefore symbolic of the freedoms of speech, religion and movement (among many others). I chose to appropriate this

historically rich space and to transform it into a spiritual and church-like space in order to reflect on the social issues most AIC churches face.

Constitution Hill stands on a hill close to Hillbrow where many city dwellers reside, often in abandoned buildings lacking basic services. The residents in Hillbrow include people from the African continent who have migrated to Johannesburg to find better and safer lives. The Constitution Hill site carries a deep history of displacement and South African identity and thus corresponded well with the history of AIC.

As a city, Johannesburg does not cater for the spiritual needs of most city dwellers. Due to their lack of financial resources and access to infrastructure, most AIC churches choose to survive by occupying unconventional spaces and transforming them into churches.

The title *Non-Promise Land* challenges the biblical context of the Promised Land being a lavish promised space. By choosing to use the term “*Non*” in the title I introduce to the viewer aspects of what the show represents. *Non-Promised Land* represents the journey AIC churches took in moving away from the missionary doctrine to the AIC contemporary doctrine discussed in Chapter three. It speaks of the struggle the AICs undertook and are still undertaking in search of a unique African identity. It speaks of a journey where people flood to Johannesburg, a city that does not cater for their spirituality, where churches occupy vacant garages, parks and old buildings and re-appropriate them to meet their spiritual needs. The

exhibition title speaks of a resistance, a continued journey where nothing is promised or given, where faith is not romanticised but is rather a continued fight in battle to find something that resembles an idealistic promised land. In this instance a promised land becomes a meditative space where, through song, dress and gathering of spirits, one is transcended and transported to a spiritual space.

Baba ba thari entsho, “we are children of the black leather strap”, is a phrase popularly used to refer to black people more especially in the Southern African region. The term originates from ancient Botswana poets and was chanted as a national symbol of pride¹⁰⁵. By choosing to use this phrase in the title, I locate the subject matter geographically in a Southern African context.

¹⁰⁵ www.botswanastories.co/about.html. Accessed 28 December 2015.



Figure 60: *Non- Promised Land* Interior. Photograph by author.

Upon entering the exhibition space (see above fig: 60), the viewer was immediately absorbed into a meditative space, an artist re-imagined church space made visible through the blue tent, made with the same cloth AIC churches use to create their flag and garments as seen in the visual essay Chapter four. Through the blue tent, I instantly introduced the importance of colour within the exhibition. This space immediately invited the viewer to alter his\her consciousness, while the overwhelming blue and darkness of the space creates sensations of being underwater, as the viewer is saturated into the blue. Creating an alter-like space and an imagined heavenly or underwater space allows the viewer to transcend into another space as they walked inside. They were greeted by a blue church garment that stands in the centre, reminiscent of a how a cross would hang as a centrepiece in a church.

A heavy scent of and smoke from *mphepho* saturates the room and directs the viewer to the burning *mphepho* placed on a candleholder in which a blue candle burns. *Mphepho* is used symbolically within the AIC to cleanse a space of unwanted spirits and also to invite ancestors and other heavenly spirits into a space. The scent of *mphepho* is meant to heighten one's senses. The use of *mphepho* stimulates the viewer into a transcendent space. The burning of *mphepho* next to the drawing with a blue candle is a ritual frequently practiced within the AIC. As explained in Chapter three, the pastor has to pray and meditate over the garment for a period of time before the churchgoer wears it. Thus by burning the candle next to the drawing I reference the importance of ritual within the AIC.

Bomma is a term used within the AIC to refer to women as mothers, motherly figures, role models, but mostly as spiritual figures. *Bomma* is a series of pastel drawings that exhibited in *Non-Promised Land* and will be discussed at length below. These drawings are based on actual female garments, as posed by their owners. In choosing to entitle these images "*bomma*" I invite the viewer to engage with images as more than depictions of garments. The title portrays the inherent power of the garments and their owners. Although the owners/wearers are not visible, their presence is evident through the way they chose to style and wear their garments (see fig: 60). The garment becomes an important part of their identity and for some the only clothing that defines them. In fact, it is more than just clothing but a medium to spirituality.



Figure 61: *Bomma I*. Photograph by author.

Bomma I (Fig: 61) depicts a blue church garment pastel and charcoal drawing. The garment floats on a black background that pushes the contrast and hues of the garment forward. This causes the viewer to engage with the detail and design of the garments and the labour that goes into preserving the garments discussed in the previous Chapters. The drawing well illustrates the ironed garments and starched white collar and belt. The blueness of the room and direct lighting on the drawing bring forward the blue and white and all the layers that make the garment complete. The image speaks of determination not to give up on a journey of

spirituality that is not promised nor guaranteed, where belief and faith are reflected in the labour and commitment of preserving the garment. The layers speak of the wearer's care in preparation of a spiritual journey, emphasising the importance of the garment's colours.

The garment depicted is mostly worn by women who have a higher position in a church or by pastors. In this image the cloak is elevated and causes the garment to float, as if it has heavenly powers and authority. The blue-collared shirt is also suggestive of a pastor, as it appears similar to Catholic pastors' shirts. Because the shirt is unbuttoned and without a white collar it suggests a rebellion against Western doctrine. *Bomma I* shows a typical Zionist uniform that fuses old Western Catholic styles and African attire through the use of African coloured cords tied around the belt. The image is larger than life-size and presented in a black box frame, slightly elevated off the ground.

The drawing stands above a glass floor that reveals the ground below and leads the viewer to the next room: a corridor where an installation of three candles is lit in a dark space (see fig: 60).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ The class floor is more evident in figure 72, see page 142.



Figure 62: *Bomma I*. Photograph by Mbali Ngwenya.

The candles are of primary colours that are used by the AIC -- namely red, green and blue -- making reference to the RGB colour model and its use in visual art and other fields (see above).



Figure 63: *Non- Promised Land Interior*. Photograph by author.



Figure 64: *Bomma VI*. Photograph by Mbali Ngwenya.

In the following room, five drawings of church garments stand like marching soldiers, and force the viewer to engage with them in a respective manner (see fig 63). By presenting the soldiers in a marching state I recreated visuals captured on my Sunday walks as explained in Chapter four. The room is darkened with direct lighting on the individual drawings, pulling the viewers attention to the robust colours and textures of each garment (see fig: 64).



Figure 65: *Bomma I*. Photograph by Mbali Ngwenya.



Figure 66: *Bomma III*. Photograph by author.

From the right (see fig: 65) a maroon and yellow dress stands lit with a red candle. With its awkward pose and sparkling white shirt *Bomma II* captures the viewers gaze. The garment depicted is a standard Apostolic church garment but the owner has introduced their own stylistic approach to wearing it by choosing to allow the belt that normally hangs across like a sash to hang down. This reflects also a sense of rebelling to the dress standard. The pose differs from the others depicted in the *Bomma* series. It is reminiscent of *pantsulas*¹⁰⁷ as she poses with her one hand in her pocket. One can almost imagine the expression of the wearer through her body language. By flattening the white shirt I bring to the force AIC elements

¹⁰⁷ Pantsulas is a fashionable young urban black person, known to be mostly male.

in the garment. For example the yellow cloak and belt stand out inviting the viewer to engage with their materiality and texture. Yellow, gold and maroon are contemporary colours that are not frequently used for church uniforms by AIC. Thus this church has moved away from the standard white, blue and green discussed in Chapters two and three.



Figure 67: *Bomma VI*. Photograph by author.

Next to it stands *Bomma VI*, a dense almond green and white Zionist garment. This garment, although very traditional because of its colours and style of drapery is also typically Zionist because of its layers. The owner holds the position of an elder in the church evident by the number of capes worn. The layers in the

garment also signal her spiritual journey, as she would have acquired the capes at different stages and for specific purposes. Thus the elongated cape makes her appear mystical and as an authority figure. The coloured cord pulls the garment together, making the act of dressing up and layering is made complete. The black background and contrast pulls the viewer to the cord, as it becomes the focal point. A green candle and *Mphepho* is also lit next to the garment (see fig: 68).



Figure 68: *Bomma VI*. Photograph by author.



Figure 69: *Bomma IV*. Photograph by author.

Bomma IV depicts a spiritual garment beautifully designed and layered with colours that symbolize the wearer's faith and journey and where it has led as she dreamt of the garment. The wearer holds *liri* her spiritual shield; the shield references a cross, which is circled with a star on top. The wearer holds *liri* as a strong display of her faith almost as if she can ward off unwanted spirits with it. The shield stands parallel to where her face would be making it a symbolic reference to her spiritual identity. The colours of her garment reference the earth, heavens, water, purity and life as discussed in Chapter three. Much like in all the

garments in the *Bomma* series, the coloured cords are very symbolic in pulling the garment together and emphasise the ritual of dress and layering. The white cloak symbolises purity and holiness thus reinforcing a sense of reawakening when worn.



Figure 70: *Bomma V*. Photograph by author.

Bomma V uses orange, a contemporary colour that was rarely used in the beginning of AIC, fused with blue and white. According to the interpretation of colours in Chapter three, orange in this instance might have been used only to distinguish the church from others, as it does not fall within the AIC palette. However, when the wearer was asked what orange symbolised, they answered to

say it was gold and symbolised the golden star. Orange could have been used in this instance, as it is one of the closest colours to gold and possibly as a sign of vanity because gold material is more expensive.



Figure 71: *Bomma III*. Photograph by author.

Bomma III also uses a contemporary colour, an almost neon yellow with a blue grey. The *liri* carried by this wear borrows from appropriated African elements especially the beadwork detail on the top. This garment differs considerably from the others depicted in the series, as the uniform has a similar design to the

pleated dungaree school uniform design giving it a very Victorian look. The image stands tall and dominates the oval wall making the garment appear authoritative.



Figure 72: *Bomma III*. Photograph by Mbali Ngwenya.

A melody resonated from the back room into the room where the five drawings are displayed inviting the viewer across. A young female voice is heard singing:

Inkosi Mayibe nani;

May the Lord be with you;

ibe no moya wenu futhi;

May he be with your souls too;

<i>ngemphela kufanele ku lungile;</i>	<i>By truth it must be it is correct;</i>
<i>ukubasibone, sidumise inkosi;</i>	<i>That we must see, We must praise</i>
<i>the Lord;</i>	
<i>njengoba ku fundisiwe;</i>	<i>As we were taught;</i>
<i>kuzekube phakade...</i>	<i>Till the end of time...</i>

The sound created an ephemeral space throughout the exhibition and referenced the importance of song within AICs.

The curation of the works allowed the viewer to engage with the drawings as individual pieces but also as a body of work. The room allowed the viewer a 360-degree view making it easier to read the drawings in relation to the coloured fabric sheets displayed on the left side of the room. These are the same fabrics used to make AIC garments, allowing the viewer to engage with the materiality and saturated colours. The materials are colourfast making them ideal for the AIC as maintaining their colours is important to their faith. The fabrics are produced by local company Fasco¹⁰⁸.

The echoed melody led the viewer to the corridor with three more rooms. In one room sit rows of black plastic chairs. The chairs fill up the room as if awaiting a congregation. The plastic chairs make reference to most AICs in the Johannesburg CBD, which do not own buildings and either squat or rent a space

¹⁰⁸ See addendum page 167.

for their services. The plastic chairs suggest instability and mobility, as they are often set up an hour before the service and stored away afterwards.



Figure 73: *Non- Promised Land* Interior. Photograph by author.

The black church chairs in rows evoke a sense of waiting. The stillness of empty chairs and the viewers engagement with the sound allows the viewer to imagine a space of transcendence and a gathering of churchgoers in uniform such as those presented in the second room. The installation of unoccupied chairs resonates well with the images of the garments in the second room, almost as if they are marching to church and the empty chairs await them.

An installation of ethereal child-like dresses fills up the next room. Again, the room is darkened with direct lighting on the dresses made of gauze and wax. I used wax to construct the dresses in reference to the use of white candles within the AIC. White candles are symbolic of purity and are lit at almost every gathering in AIC and churchgoer's homes. In choosing to construct the children's dresses with melted wax I reference the labour that goes into the candle-lighting ritual and how it represents a construction of faith. As discussed in Chapter two, white continues to play an important role within the AIC.



Figure 74: *Non- Promised Land* Interior. Wax dress Installation. Photograph by author.

The work is suspended from a purpose built structure in a room that appears to be under construction, with exposed building plywood, walls and floor. This makes

the space appear as a non-conventional church space. It emphasis how temporary the church spaces are. Church members are able to alter any space into a spiritual space - much like what I did by turning a historical site, which was a prison into a translucent ephemeral space.



Figure 75: *Non- Promised Land* Interior. Wax dress Installation. Photograph by Mbali Nqwenya.



Figure 76: *Bomma III*. Photograph by author.

The same melody mentioned above still echoes from this room leading the viewer to the last room where a drawing of *Bomma VII* stands portraying a prophet's garment. Here the sound becomes stronger as the viewer engages with the spiritual work. The architecture with different holes created multiple echoes of the sound. The red cloak with a light yellow collar indicates that the wearer is a prophet. The red symbolises the spiritual powers and connection with ancestors.

Yellow symbolises a state of transition, meaning the prophet is undergoing training. The drawing is elevated with a blue cloth placed at its foot, along with a blue candle and *mphepho*, thus emphasizing the owner's powers and connection with the universe as green is symbolic of the earth. The red and yellow cloth suspended at the back embrace the work and emphasise the yellow and red cloak and its powers, thus making the robe appear as a divinity. By placing this work in the last room I give the prophet a spiritual corner referencing the characteristics of the actual spaces where spiritual prophets practice.

The exhibition space was completely transformed by darkening the space and controlling the lighting. The controlled lighting saturated the colours of the garments, candles and fabrics and thus presented an AIC palette. Although the Ramparts' history and architecture is profound, I managed to neutralise it by choosing to work with the spatial design and not concealing it, thus referencing the unconventionality of the spaces in which the AICs worship. The artworks and installations presented above allowed me to own the space rather than merely presenting work in it. The drawings, fabric and wax installation were all tied together through the use of sound to help the viewer navigate through all the rooms. Each room had a specific purpose and the passages linked the different rooms together to create a conceptual whole.

The exhibition substantiated the hypothesis of this paper as it depicted the importance of colour within AIC and how It was not only used as a break from colonial influences, but also to portray African spiritual beliefs and to create a distinctive "African" religious identity. Thus the use of garments and colour within

the AICs is no longer missionary-influenced and the colours are chosen with clear symbolic references in mind. The exhibition shows how the use of colour within the AICs draws from African culture and how the colours are used to explore faith and spirituality. Colour played and continues to play a significant role within the AICs through garments and other elements of their faith and spirituality.

Conclusion

In this paper an attempt has been made to understand the origin of colour use within Apostolic and Zionist movements with an attempt to illustrate the symbolic use of the colours within their doctrine and the spiritual significance. The scope of the paper is of a limited nature focusing on understanding the use of colour within Apostolic and Zionist movements; it made use of discussions around colour associations within the AIC in relation to African traditional language and practice.

Thus in trying to analyse and investigate the origin and meaning of colour use within the AICs, the paper was open to the idea that there might be no accurate answers to proposed questions. Given the nature and different reasons for the origin of colour used and meanings associated with the colours discussed in the above Chapters; there are possibilities that the answers are unknown. Throughout time; meanings and reasons for colour and its use within AICs have shifted between being for spiritual reasons and political reasons such as a group seeking to be identified differently from the other group but also allowing one to be part of a group they can identify with through its colours and uniform. The colours do not solely exist for categorising different groups but are mainly linked to the wearer's spirituality as the above Chapters have established. Each church documented in the paper uses colours that are specific to their spirituality, thus they are vast colours used. Colour usage within the AIC is African influenced and spiritual,

thus it has no relation to western notions but it is rather a coincidence that the colours in certain occasions have similar meanings. This thus has to do with a general understanding and reading of colour.

This paper thus enables the reader with content that would allow them to re look their opinion about the colours and thus understand how important they are. The etymology of colour and the meanings discussed in the first and second Chapter introduce elements in which the reader can begin to understand and analyse a colours of church garments, flags, candles and other elements within the Zionist and Apostolic churches depicted in Chapter four and in their own lives.

This paper has also shown the influence of western missionary in the formation of Apostolic and Zionist movements and thus did not over look the role civilisation and colonialism played in the introducing of Christianity to Africa. Hence the paper rather argues that Africans where able to relate to the notion of God and white garment as they already had an understanding of the concepts from their traditional spiritual beliefs.

It is interesting to note that during the transition from missionary churches to the formation of AIC, converted Africans moved from naming themselves *abazalwane* (converted Christians) to *umzioni* (Zionist) and *umpostola* (Apostolic) as they now associated themselves as different to missionary

churches and thus sought to be identified with their new doctrine.

This research is a work in progress that aimed to explore visual modes of understanding colour through a visual exhibition discussed above, it formed part of my masters' degree research that aimed to find alternative mediums to explore the use of colour within Apostolic and Zionist movements.

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Addendum



Mapping Soweto

Soweto is one of the biggest townships in South Africa. Its name is an acronym South Western Township. According to the 2011 Census, Soweto had a population of 1 271 625 living on approximately seventy square kilometres of land.

Description
Enter a description of the envisaged development (up to 100 words)

Legend

- ☐ Primary river catchments
- ☐ Secondary river catchments
- ☐ Tertiary river catchments
- ☐ Quaternary river catchment
- ☐ Rivers (NFEPA)
- ☐ Wetland clusters (NFEPA)
- ☐ National wetlands map 4 (NFEPA)
- ☐ World Street Map



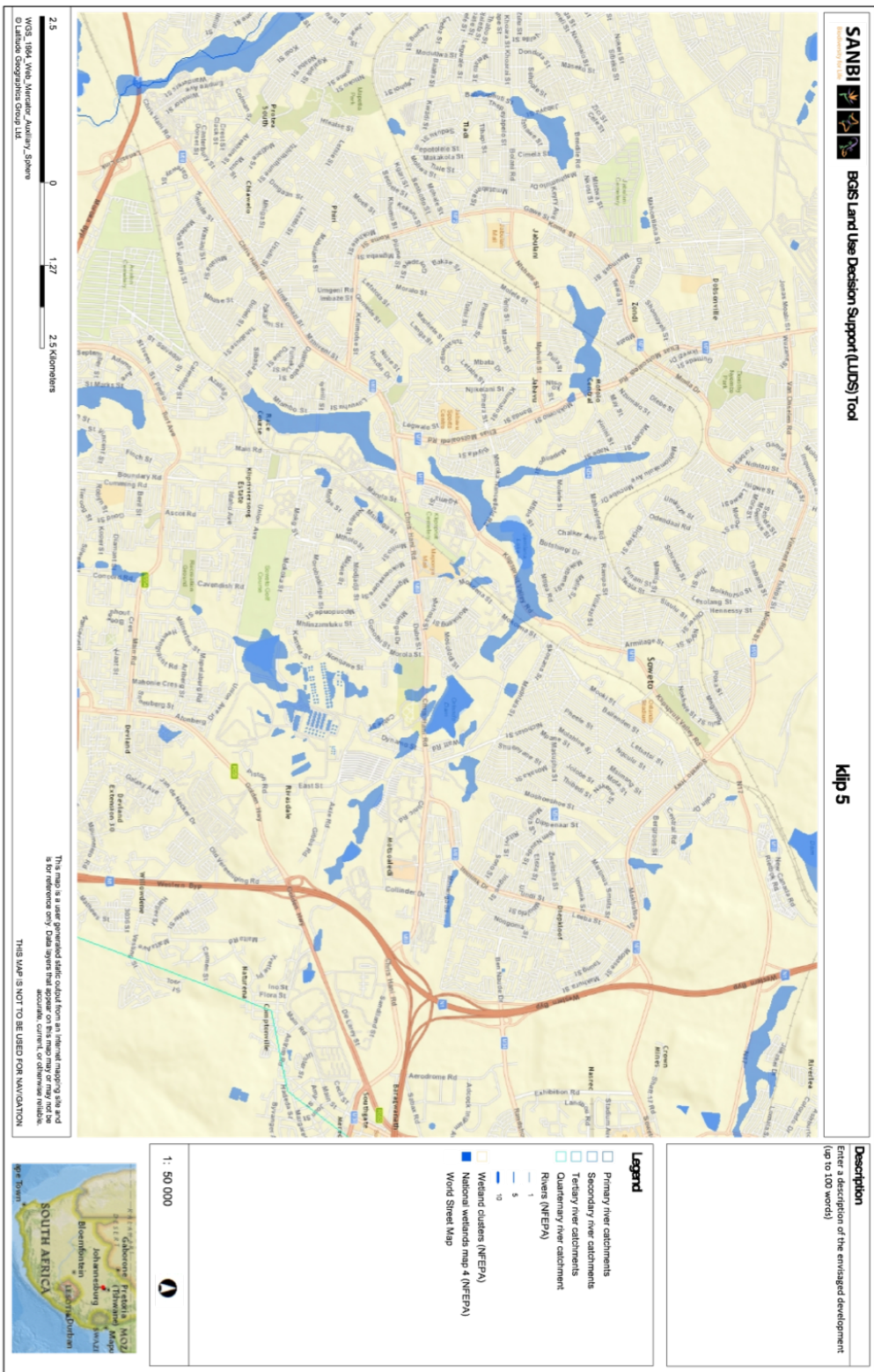
2.1
0 1.07 2.1 Kilometers
VGS, 1994, Web, Mercator, Auxiliary, Sphere
© Lulluux Geographics Group Ltd

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In 1973 Martin West¹⁰⁹ stated that Soweto had approximately 900 African Independent Churches. This indicated that Soweto had the largest grouping of Apostolic and Zionist churches in South Africa. Unfortunately, the last census conducted that included religion was in 2001, and recorded that approximately 225 089¹¹⁰ Sowetans were members of different Zionist and Apostolic movements. It is common knowledge that the number has escalated over the last 15 years as more movements have been established and expanded. Thus, we can estimate that approximately 40 percent of the Soweto population is Zionist and Apostolic church members.

Soweto Rivers.

Two major rivers, the Klip River and Klipspruit River surround Soweto. These rivers form an important aspect of Soweto's spirituality as they provide a platform for spiritual cleansing, rituals and baptisms. The rivers form part of a spiritual connection amongst the various AICs as the rivers and wetlands used for baptism and other spiritual rituals are all connected. The blueness of water, and the greenness of the vegetation surrounding the rivers form a link to the Zionist and Apostolic use of the colours and their symbolism.

¹⁰⁹ West, M. 1975. *Bishops and Prophets in a Black City: African Independent Churches in Soweto, Johannesburg*. Cape Town: David Phillip. Page 10.

¹¹⁰ Statistic South African. 2001. Census 2001, Table 1: *Religion by Sex*, Soweto.

Defining Zion and Apostolic movements.

The origin of the term Zion as the basis for Zionist churches owes its existence to John Alexander Dowie, the founder of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion. He is credited for the establishment of Zionism in South Africa. It is said that his publication entitled Faith Healing spread around the world and eventually to South Africa where his teaching laid a seed. A Dutch Reformed Church missionary, Petrus Louise LeRoux, picked up this seed. Ashforth¹¹¹ states that Le Roux left his church in 1903, as his church was not impressed with him teaching their faith to Zulu people. Le Roux is believed to have established the first Zulu Zion congregation. It is interesting to note that Dowie's publication was aimed at white immigrants in South Africa, but found its place amongst Africans who could relate to the concept of faith healing because of their belief in "spiritual powers to meet earthly needs, that the possibilities of harnessing the Holy Spirit in the case of healing were fully explored".¹¹²

Richard Elphick¹¹³ wrote that it was Daniel Nkonyane¹¹⁴ who is said to have introduced elements such as wearing of white robes, worshipping barefoot,

¹¹¹ Ashforth, A. 2005. *Witchcraft, Violence, and Democracy in South Africa*. University of Chicago. Page 186

¹¹² Ashforth, A. 2005. *Witchcraft, Violence, and Democracy in South Africa*. University of Chicago. Page 186

¹¹³ Elphick, R. 1997. *Christianity in South Africa: A political, Social and Cultural History*. T.R.H Davenport. page 218

¹¹⁴ Daniel Nkonyane worked under the leadership of Petrus Louise LeRoux. He and the likes of Nehemiah Tile are credited for establishing the first AIC which was led by Africans. Nehemiah Tile is said to have started the first AIC in 1892 which he named Ethiopian. Their history and churches will not be discussed at length as they do not fall within the scope of this paper but are rather used as reference.

carrying of holy sticks, and using Old Testament icons, which are still visible in Zionist and Apostolic movements today. He was one of the first Africans to help spread the Zionist doctrine in South Africa. He introduced these elements into the Christian Apostolic church in Zion before he broke away from it.

Apostolic and Zionist churches are known for their striking blue, green and white garments. You will mostly spot them along the Klip River trail that runs on the west side of Soweto. Other churches gather around the Klipspruit River that runs on the east side of Soweto from the top in Orlando all the way down past Kliptown to Klipspruit West. Most of the Zionist and Apostolic movements do not own a formal building structure or church in which to worship. This may explain the term they use to categorize their doctrine or lack thereof, which is '*kereke ya moya*' (church of the spirit). You will mostly find them in school classrooms or community halls that are often offered to them for free. Many host their sermons at their pastor's house and some worship outside in open spaces. Their financial resources are generally very limited, as the movements are mostly made up of small churches and financing a building is expensive.

Zionist and Apostolic churches have the same characteristics West¹¹⁵ argues that although the movements are similar, they both perceive themselves as different. Zionists claim to be traditional whereas Apostolic claim to be less traditional and place more emphasis on Bible teachings.

The small groups often maintain a relationship with other small groups that have a similar spiritual doctrine. This relationship offers them support with regard to occasions such as funerals, *mokete* (ancestral slaughtering), weddings, etc. Such groups' meet together to help and support other groups with cooking, preparing vegetables and any other form of assistance they might require. In preparation for a funeral, they gather the night before and host *umlindelolo* (night veil) at the house of the deceased. They sing and preach the whole night as a way of comforting those who lost their loved ones before they have to bury them.

Music is the most important element within Apostolic and Zionist movements, with each having its own distinctive style of music. Mme Onica, interviewed for the project documentary, said that one of the things that attracted her to her church was the beating of the drum. Through that music, she was able -- in her own words -- to "*kena moyeng*" (enter the spirit). Music seems to help churchgoers transcend into another being, allowing them to feel part of the

¹¹⁵ West, M. 1975. *Bishops and Prophets in a Black City: African Independent Churches in Soweto, Johannesburg*. Cape Town: David Phillip. Page 4.

church and gain a sense of belonging, as they are able to relate on a spiritual level.

Mapostola (Apostolics) have their own genre of music, which is known as “clap and tap”. Their singing includes a lot of hands clapping and tapping of feet. *Amazioni* (Zionists) have a different genre of singing known as *IsiZioni*.

The importance of music within the movement led most churches to establish their own church choirs. The Apostolics have also established “clap and tap” competitions, developing a genre of its own. The competitions have become a popular cultural activity in Soweto and other regions, providing a space for spiritual upliftment and for each church to showcase their musical talent.

Statistics South Africa

Census 2001

Table 1

Religion by Sex

for Soweto, Person weighted

	Male	Female
Dutch Reformed Church	5984	7056
Reformed Churches	141	162
Nederduits Hervormde Kerk	119	149
Anglican Church	16425	20345
Church of England in SA	439	523
International Fellowship of Christian Churches (Rhema etc.)	1500	1967
Methodist Churches of SA	24879	32028

Presbyterian Churches	5339	6306
United Congregational Church OF SA	430	693
Lutheran Church of Southern Africa	12057	13207
Roman Catholic Church	35405	42601
Apostolic Faith Mission of SA	1069	1366
Other Apostolic Churches	42389	51704
Baptist Churches of Southern Africa	1333	1666
Pinkster Protestante Kerk	72	66
Afrikaanse Protestante Kerk	3	4
Full Gospel Church of God in Southern Africa	1531	2085
Orthodox churches	0	0
Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints	124	175

Pentecostal Churches	75	97
Salvation Army United Church	808	1127
Seventh-Day Adventist Church	1996	2420
New Apostolic Church	25	35
Assemblies of God of SA	4074	4979
St Engenas Zion Christian Church	75	68
Zion Christian Church	33867	38203
Bandla Lama Nazaretha	2078	2553
African Methodist Episcopal Church	3536	4347
St John's Apostolic Church	3477	4579
International Pentecost Church	1607	1901
Other African Independent Churches	3989	5136
Other Christian Churches	16190	19739

African Traditional Belief	468	444
Jewish Faith/Hebrew	16	22
Buddhism	0	0
Taoist	0	0
Confucian	3	0
Hinduism	100	102
Muslim Faith	1463	1181
Bahais	5	5
Other non-Christian churches	0	0
New Age	4291	5642
Other Non-Christian Religions	150	91
Other Methodist Churches	589	747
Other Presbyterian Churches	497	678
Other Congregational Churches	705	874
Other Lutheran Churches	266	371

Other Catholic Churches	264	287
Other Baptist Churches	1835	2020
Other Pentecostal Churches	3462	4097
Other Orthodox Churches	49	77
Other (Seventh-Day) Adventist Churches	672	830
Other African Apostolic Churches	102	127
Other Assemblies	622	712
Other Zionist Churches	17110	21803
Church of the Nazarene	0	0
Christian Scientist	102	154
Christian Centres	1322	1859
Ethiopian Type Churches	6070	7955
Ethnic Churches	599	761
Other Evangelical Churches	12872	17359

Other Charismatic Churches	98	117
No religion	141051	96056
Refused	134	69
Other	208	243

Created on 23 January 2015

Statistics South Africa: Web page:

www.statssa.gov.za

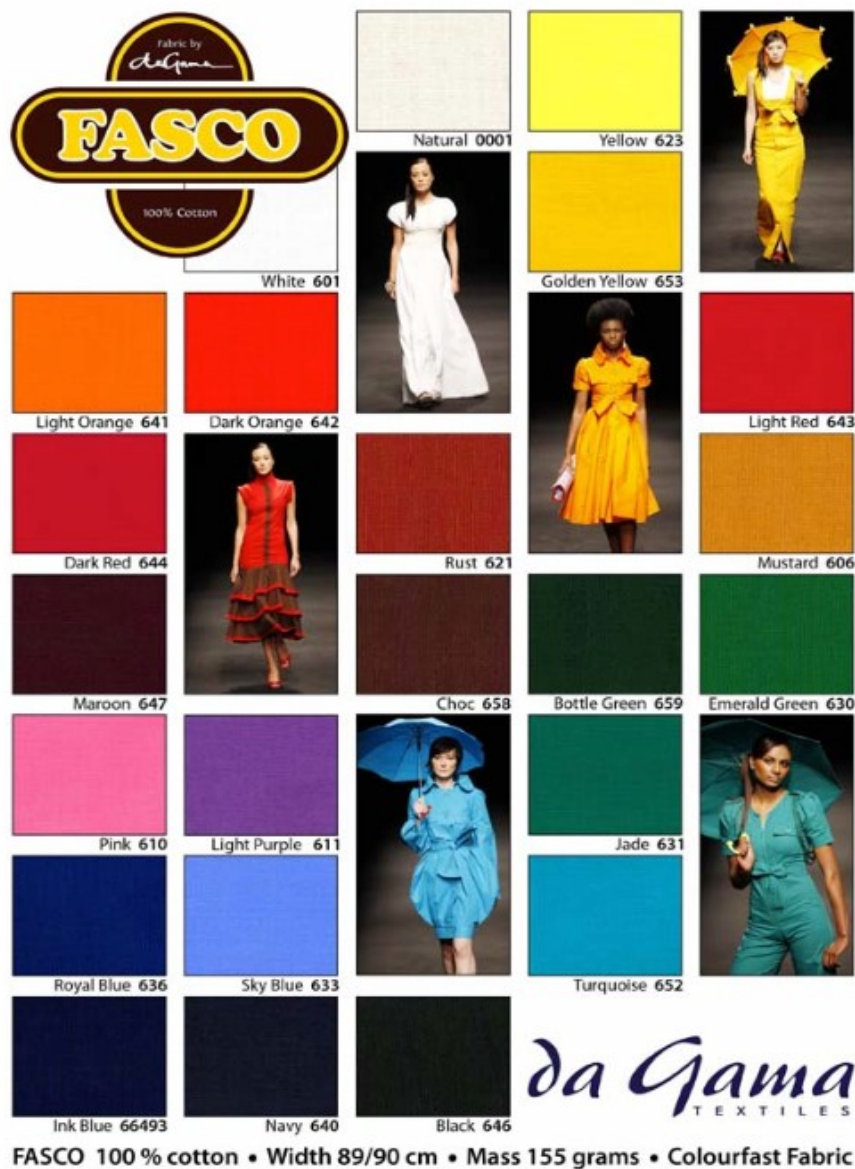
Statistics South Africa

<mailto:info@statssa.gov.za>

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Colours and material used by most Zionist and Apostolic Churches.

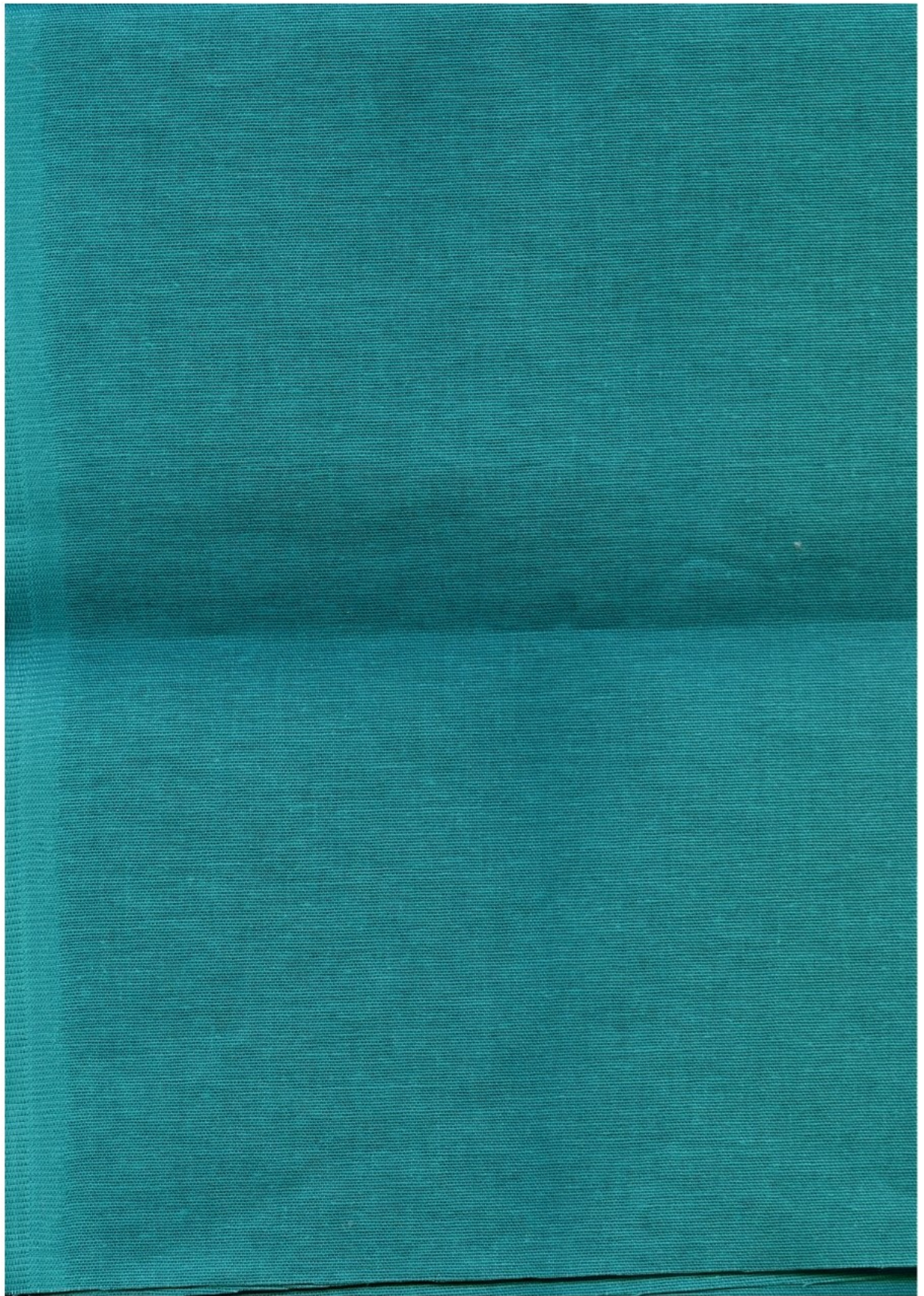


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¹¹⁶ http://www.dagama.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=189:fasco&catid=130:fasco&Itemid=270. Accessed 10 March 2015.

Material Samples









A Rainbow Nation,
Candle performance,
Artist Re-enactment.

