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A Faith-based Response to the Precarious Work-Life of Black People through Six Days of Labour, One Day of Rest in Ibandla lamaNazaretha

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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA



A Faith-based Response to the Precarious Work-Life of Black People through Six Days of Labour, One Day of Rest in Ibandla lamaNazaretha

Fikile Masikane
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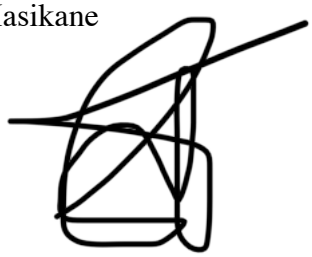
Supervised by: Professor Bridget Kenny & Professor Lorena Nunez-Carrasco

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand in March 2025

Declaration

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

Name of candidate: Fikile Masikane

Signature of candidate: 

Date: 31 March 2025

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to God and kuwona wonke AmaNazaretha. Those who have been part of this study directly and those who have welcomed me with so much kindness and care during my time in Inanda, Pinetown and Johannesburg. The past couple of years of this enquiry have been nothing short of fulfilling.

Wonke amaNazaretha

Makabemunye

Abenjengebumba

Likasemende.

Ngithi kunina nonke: iNkosi inibusise!

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"It takes a village to complete a PhD" (Motsemme 2011: iii and Shange 2020: 8). This is indeed true. The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the village and community of supervisors, mentors, family and friends. Above all, this thesis would not be possible without God!

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your thoughts about the great part of the thesis. I know that you have been supervising this project beyond the grave. Thank you for being a great supervisor and mentor Prof. You may be gone physically, but you remain in our hearts forever.

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All the views and ideas expressed in this thesis are my own independent views, and not of the funders.

Abstract

This study explores work and rest within the religious and cultural life of Ibandla lamaNazaretha; a church founded by a Black South African prophet Isaiah Shembe (1869–1935) in 1910. Known for its synthesis of African traditional values and Christian doctrine, the church expresses its theology most vividly through Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha (the Nazarite Hymn Book), a body of hymns composed by Shembe himself. These hymns continue to shape the moral and spiritual imagination of amaNazaretha. This offers guidance on how to live including how to work and how to rest. Grounded in ethnographic fieldwork, archives, ethnomusicology, sound, active participation and life history interviews with Shembe followers, this study further examines how these teachings are understood and practiced by followers. It shows how they resonate within the broader context of ongoing social and economic precarity faced by Black South Africans in post-1994. The study argues that precarity, as a human condition, is re-imagined and in some ways subdued through the conceptualisation of rest that is not leisure, in relation to work that is not labour. Focusing on Shembe's teachings, I demonstrate how his conceptualisation of work and rest transcends conventional understandings tied to productivity, economic value, and individual leisure. Instead, Shembe offers an alternative framework in which rest holds spiritual, communal, and ethical significance, serving as a form of resistance to material precarity in the Black lived experience. Ultimately, the study seeks to cover the gap that straddles between religious praxis and the meaning of work and rest, particularly as it relates to faith, dignity, and liberation in Black life.

Key words: work, rest, faith-based institutions, precarity

Vocabulary

Abantu abanedlozi: people who have the ancestorial calling

Abaphansi: ancestors

AmaNazaretha: Nazarites

Abantwana beNkosi children of God

Bhombela: Isaiah Shembe

Babamkhulu: Isaiah Shembe

Bantwabami my children

Ekuphakameni: the holy place

Emadokodweni: campsites found Ebuhleni

Emkhathini: the cosmos

Ibandla lamaNazaretha: The church of the Nazarite ("the Shembe church")

Imithetho yasEkuphakameni yomProphet uIsaiah Shembe: The Shembe laws from Isaiah Shembe

Ikhonzo yesikhumbuzo: a service of remembrance

Ungikhumbule remember me

Isikhumbuzo remembrance

Isigcawu: a place where the sacred dance takes place

Isibhindi: courage

Izihlabelelo ZamaNazaretha: the Nazarite hymns

Izinkhondlo: poems

Kusihlabelelo: in this hymn

Lesisihlabelelo: these hymns

Uhambo: pilgrimage

Ukuhlabelela: loosely translated as "singing"

Ukusina: traditional Zulu dance

Umgidi: sacred dance

Umgidi wamaNazaretha: the sacred dance of the Nazarites

Ulala nathi: the evening prayer

Umthandazo wokuvuka: morning prayer

Umthandazo weSabatha The Sabbath prayer

UmNazaretha: a. The white rope that the followers wear on the Sabbath day.

UmNazaretha: b. This also refers to a person who is a member of the church

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIC	African Initiated Churches
AWG-ICU	Arthur Wessels George- Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (Durban)
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workers Unions
CBD	Central Business District
AME	African Methodist Episcopal
AMEC	African Methodist Episcopal Church
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NCG	Nazarite Baptist Church OR Nazarite Church of God?
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
WSP	World Soundstage Project
ZCC	Zion Christian Church

Izivumo Zamaculo

Izinombolo ezivela lapha zitshengisa ukulandelana kwa-maculo njengoba evela kusihlabelelo zamaNazaretha

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Figure 1: Isaiah Mdliwamafa Shembe[1] (1869 – 1935)



[1] This photograph of Isaiah Mdliwamafa Shembe was sourced from the Dictionary of African Christian Biography: "copyright © 1998, by Gerald H. Anderson, W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan. All rights reserved". https://dacb.org/stories/southafrica/shembe2-isaiah/ Sourced: 27 March 2025

Prelude

Bongani uJehova ngoba elungile!

Isihlabelelo 60 (Hymn 60)

Stanza 1
Bongani uJehovah
Ngoba elungile,
Ngoba umusa wakhe uhlezi phakade
Ngoba elungile
Stanza 2
Wayikhumbula i-Africa
Ngoba elungile,
Akalibalanga abantu bakhe
Ngoba elungile
Stanza 3
Walenza lona iZulu
Kanye naloMhlaba
Ngumsebenzi wezandla zakhe
Ngoba elungile
Stanza 4
Wabakhumbula abantu bakhe
Abanqulu zisobala,
Wabathumela uIsaiah iNceku yakhe
Ngoba elungile
Stanza 5
Ngalezo zinsuku
Izithulu ziyakuzwa,
Okushunyayelwa kulencwadi
Ngoba elungile
Stanza 6
Abangafaki lutho,
Ezinyaweni zabo,
Wabalungisela ukungena
Endaweni eyingcwele
Stanza 7
Nabagunda amakhanda
Bawazungeze emaceleni,
Nabagunda izilevu zabo
Ngokwephula imithetho
Stanza 8
Nabangena nezicathulo
Endlini kaJehovah
Beyiphendula indlu yomdlalo
Ngokwephula imithetho

Preface

One Sabbath afternoon at the Nqobizitha Temple in Pinetown Wyebank, Rev. Mpanza sang this hymn before his sermon. Listening to his words and his subsequent comments inspired me to examine the hymn closely. I spent about twenty-two months with the Nazarite community (amaNazaretha), particularly attending services on the Sabbath (Saturdays). This is how I came across hymn 60, as noted in Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha (Hymns of the Nazarites), often during various gatherings at different temples where the amaNazaretha meet for worship. As an active participant in these services, I found this song relatable and memorable, even outside the church setting. Through continuous reflection on my experiences and the time I spent with the followers of the church after each Sabbath, I sought to return to the core of my research, aiming to understand Isaiah Shembe's views on work and rest as expressed in the hymn book and to explore how these views are interpreted and practised by the followers today. It seems to me, that hymn 60 is an anchor for the church community in relation to how they understand work, rest, and ubuNazaretha.

After thoroughly analysing the lyrics and the practices of amaNazaretha, it became clear that hymn 60 articulates a perspective that Isaiah Shembe and his followers uphold regarding the values cherished by the community and, ultimately, what it means to be umNazaretha (a Nazarite). Thus, I have included this hymn, "Bongani uJehova Ngoba eLungile," in this thesis to structure the chapters according to each stanza. This framework is based on the themes addressed in the stanzas, which informs what I present as a central argument divided into chapter segments. In this regard, each stanza corresponds to the central argument presented in its respective chapter. It is important to note that while the stanzas are aligned with chapters, they do not necessarily follow the order of the hymn. Where necessary, I have combined some stanzas into one chapter. Nevertheless, the chapter-stanza relationship is delineated throughout the thesis. Overall, the hymn serves as the claim to which the findings attest in supporting the main argument of the thesis. Analysed closely, hymn 60: "Bongani uJehova Ngoba eLungile," is a heightened response by Isaiah Shembe to the question of the precarious work lives of Black people.

Chapter One

Introduction - uShembe nobuNazaretha (Prophet Isaiah Shembe and the Nazarites)

Bongani uJehovah
Ngoba elungile,
Ngoba umusa wakhe uhlezi phakade
Ngoba elungile

Praise Jehovah
Because He is good
His mercies endure forever
Because He is good

Introduction

Constructed in sociology, this qualitative interdisciplinary study is based on the question: What is the position of Ibandla lamaNazaretha on, and practice of, work and rest in response to the precarious life of Black people in post-1994 South Africa? While the study will indicate elaborately what the overall Nazarite position is in this regard, I find it helpful to foreground the hymn number 60: "Bongani uJehova Ngoba eLungile," as a heightened response, an overarching and summative poetic expression by Isaiah Shembe to the question of the precarious work lives of Black people. The following sections contextualise the framing of the research question and offer insights into the paradigms that inform my scholarly engagement and methodological choices. The hymn presents the type of probing ideas that I deconstruct in the chapters throughout the study. However, I imply that the reading of the study is accentuated through a parallel reading of the central hymn, notwithstanding other supporting hymns identified in the subsequent chapters.

The words in the first stanza above are taken from the prelude to provide a framing idea for this introductory chapter. This thesis is centred around recognising people who approach God with a direct relationship and interpretation of scriptural instruction outside what I see as the type of mediation that is underscored by cultures that reside outside their own. Recognition,

in this context, is significant to highlight as it "is not merely interpreted as a question of seeing something for the second time, nor does it imply a series of encounters," as Han (2020:1) argues. Instead, recognition does much more; it suggests that we have come to understand something more "authentically than we were able to when we first encountered it" (Han, 2020: 1). For amaNazaretha, my engagement and recognition of the references to their cultural understanding and engagement with biblical teachings is from the context of Blackness that resists the notion of Western Christianity. This notion is often associated with the interpretations of missionaries that Isaiah Shembe, their Prophet and founder of the Nazarite church, fundamentally opposes (Sithole, 2016). Stanza one that frames this introductory chapter centres amaNazaretha as a faith-based community that dispels the commonly imposed sense of inferiority that has historically plagued Blacks since their encounters with colonisation. AmaNazaretha believes in the supremacy of Jehovah, whose goodness and mercy are eternally hovering over all people across generations, cultures, and locations. Although this premise supposedly applies to generic Christian believers, throughout this thesis this positionality becomes explicated and delayered through the specifics of the faith of amaNazaretha and their understanding of a God of all people, and how they culturally translate that into their everyday practices.

The thesis recognizes Shembe as a theorist based on his hymns, which embody his teachings and life history (this I highlight in each chapter). It acknowledges amaNazaretha as a people with a unique consciousness, making it essential to study both from a perspective of value and appreciation. This approach contrasts with previous colonial frameworks, critiqued and largely rejected for their biases, inaccuracies, and lack of appreciation, which I discuss in chapter two (Chilisa, 2012; Sithole, 2016; Gordon, 2018; Mnyandu, 2019).

Scholars from various disciplines continue to indicate, both implicitly and explicitly to varying degrees, their interest in the lives of Black communities, which I see as an expression of perceived empirical value in the production of knowledge (Gordon, 2018). The history of colonisation and forms of segregation faced by Black people is understood in some scholarship as a result of precarity (Butler, 2004; Barchiesi, 2016; Standing, 2019). These same histories emphasise missionisation and religiosity as essential to how Black people have navigated complex periods and living conditions (Peterson, 2021). In other cases, slavery and labour issues have been central to debates about the work lives of Black communities worldwide (Du Bois, 1903). The faith-based community of amaNazaretha (Nazarites), founded by Isaiah

Shembe, is centred on the principle of Sabbath keeping, based on the fourth of the Ten Commandments. This principle is significant, as a theological premise, for the emphasis it places on the direct relationship between work and rest—six days of labour followed by one day of rest (Exodus 20:8). As we will see, this relationship is at the crux of Shembe's theory.

The thesis explores the concept of work for its insights into the practice and values of rest stemming from spiritual interventions that help navigate the everyday lives of Black people, specifically amaNazaretha. It recognises that a precarious world presents problems that require solutions and responses for survival. Social scientists have been preoccupied with the notions of inequalities and the human condition to understand its ontologies and epistemologies. Economic realities have created a necessity for labour and productivity as a response. While this study acknowledges this factor, it is its primary intent to explore the kind of responses that are conceived and motivated in faith-based settings of Blacks. The central argument in this study is that the existence of precarity as a human condition is subdued in the notion of rest as not leisure in relation to work as not labour. Based on this premise, the study attends to faith and how it offers primary definitions of rest and work as functions of existentiality and humanness towards a life of abundance. Whereas, precarity underscores the struggle and anxiety about the present and the future which are perpetuated in practices that pose as tools of mitigation in labour with intermissions to leisure.

Engaging with Black studies within the broader discipline of sociology, which encompasses diverse streams, fields, and subfields, this study primarily situates itself at the intersection of labour and religion, referencing culture (including language, music, and dress), as well as subfields such as leisure (redefining rest) and urban studies (addressing precarity), along with aspects of belonging, place, memory, and sound, which are elaborated upon in the findings' chapters.

This introductory chapter covers the broad conceptualisation of this study, and the literature reviewed in dialogue with the ideas that frame how I arrive at the research problem statement and rationale. These include the ideas and history of labour in Zululand, where the introduction of industrialisation and factory work, for example, disrupted a society that had its own values, cultures, and traditions that defined work and labour. It highlights the long-standing debate around the land question and its importance to those who have lost it—not only for labour or work purposes but also for the ancestral significance that the land holds for Black people, as

detailed in Nkosi (2023). This background serves as a backdrop for the proceeding chapters, as they address the historical and contemporary realities of the precarity of Black lives from the perspective of spirituality through the collective practice of rest.

Below I present the framing ideas that have informed this study. These include a brief overview of the history of labour in Zululand as a setting in which the Shembe teaching was initially introduced. This is followed by a synoptic reference to the relationship between theory and practice, emphasizing that the former informs the latter, instead of the other way around. I anchor the centrality of the prelude-hymn in this thesis and its practice as vital to the argument based on the hymn's inherent meaning as a consequential yet pivotal theory. In highlighting my position, I recognize the historical and somewhat conventional reading of Shembe hymns as musical iterations. However, my point of departure is that the music is secondary, and these hymns are primarily "literary texts", as argued by Sithole (2014:1), through which theory is understood by using musicality as a tool for dissemination. For instance, this is seen in how the followers of the church sing isihlabelelo 60, umthandazo wokuvuka (morning hymn), which I elaborate on in Chapter Five, and the umthandazo weSabatha (the Sabbath prayer), which I elaborate in Chapter Six. The lead singer makes a proclamation, and the congregation responds to the lead singer's proclamation in a call-and-response manner. The meaning of this call and response can be understood not in the song's musicality but through the power and emphasis of the words, which emphasize the power of coming together in a community to renew people's strength. In addition, the temples situated in open areas across various cities (specifically, Mpumalanga, Johannesburg, and Durban), where followers sit on the floor (on the grass under a tree), reflect the deep connection that the followers have with the land.

The history of labour and land dispossession in Zululand

In South Africa, imperial rule and the lingering effects of colonisation endure (Mpofu-Walsh 2021; Simpson, 1990; Comaroff, 1998). This legacy is rooted in dispossession and domination, both achieved through violence. The invasions that initiated imperialism and led to the dispossession of lands subjected Africans not only to the loss of freedom but also to massacres, which were central to the imperial and colonial enterprise. It was not just the economic patterns of the imperial powers that changed; those of the Africans were also restructured (Magubane, 1973; Guy, 1982; Coetzee, 1982). While the economic patterns of imperial powers expanded and grew stronger, the economic structures of Africans were weakened and distorted. Colonialism and imperialism did not limit their impact to economics, markets, or finance; they

also restructured the lives of Africans, including their societies, cultures, and religions—essentially their ontology, their way of being (Ngcukaitobi, 2022).

The British created and dominated the world through trade in gold and diamonds, in Kimberley, for instance (see Guy 1982; Marks and Rathbone, 1982; Atkins 1988; Ngcukaitobi, 2022). Indeed, the British built a powerful Empire by extracting minerals for profit, significantly impacting the lifestyles of Africans whose livelihoods were drastically changed. The agenda of the British Empire and the foreign policy of Westminster and the monarchy were not centred on trade between the English and Africans; instead, they were rooted in dispossession through brutal force (Mamdani, 2001). For instance, this violence was clearly exhibited through a series of wars that occurred across South Africa, including the Cape Colony Frontier Wars from 1779 to 1879, the 1879 war in Zululand, and later, the Bambatha Rebellion of 1906 (Guy, 1982; Magubane, 1991; Ngcukaitobi, 2019).

The de-linking of the economic autonomy of Africans from their native trade exchanges orchestrated by the British ensured that death became a tactic within the imperial enterprise. While the deaths of Africans during the English invasions of Africa can only be estimated, the exponential nature of these deaths is beyond dispute. This issue is not limited to South Africa; through domination, the British Empire has alienated Africans across the continent. I refer to alienation in this context with reference to Marx's use of the term, where people are alienated from their work, human nature, and themselves (Marx and Engels, 1906). I offer an in-depth engagement with this in Chapters Four and Five. Consequently, the topic of alienation has preoccupied the interest of anti-colonial thinkers (Achebe, 1978; Said, 1979). Colonial history leads to madness; however, "madness is not death", hence, the colonial experience can "generate revolutionary subjects" (Maxaulane, 2022: 84), of which I recognise Shembe as one such subject.

In South Africa, the introduction of 'factory production,' for instance, with the sugar plantation in 1848 in Kwa-Zulu-Natal, became one of the most important developments for the British economy through the enforcement of cheap African labour for the development of capitalism (Wolpe, 1972; Richardson, 1982: 515; Guy, 1982). The plantation required labourers who would "cultivate the grass and root crops to produce raw sugars" (Richardson, 1982: 515; Guy, 1982). At the time, this kind of work was foreign to the natives of Zululand and a great majority

of them refused to participate in a wage-labour system (Guy, 1982: 173). What they were accustomed to was harvesting and planting during certain seasons, and they were also not accustomed to working throughout the year (Atkins, 1988). The refusal of the Zulu natives to participate in a wage-labour system led to labour shortages in the sugar plantation. Hence, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, or "somtseu" (Guy, 1979; Mathiane 2016) as he was commonly named by the Zulu natives—the then governor and British administrator, and secretary for Native Affairs in KwaZulu-Natal from 1846 until his retirement in 1875—had to import labour from India, Mozambique, the Swati and the Ndebele kingdoms while he found ways to get the Zulu natives to work in the factory (Guy, 1979: 42). Shepstone, unlike his fellow colonists, was known to be fluent in Nguni languages. That made him aware of the Zulu natives' attitudes and feelings, in the case of Zululand, and he realised that a "frontal attack on their way of life to produce wage labourers would provoke a reaction which the small white community and the British garrison could not control" (Guy, 1979: 43).

Shepstone then implemented "territorial separation" through the "divide and rule/share" policy; this he learned through the Cape Colony (Guy, 1979). The taxation, according to Mamdani (1996), succeeded in co-opting Zulu natives to become wage-labourers (Guy, 1982: 173; Christopher, 1988: 233). The "Shepstone system" provided a certain continuity with the past by retaining features of the pre-capitalist system, maintaining the homestead production. By allowing some Africans access to land, by applying of customary laws and recognising chiefly authority (Guy, 1982: 172).

Isaiah Shembe, living in this period (the late 1800s and early 1900s) was concerned about the number of Zulu natives who had been converted into wage-labourers. Even though he was subjected to working in a plantation at a certain point (Papini, 1991), he was deeply shaken by the nature of work that society had been forced to perform. As John Langalibalele Dube wrote in Isaiah Shembe's biography: "wayevama ukukhuluma ngomsebenzi uShembe, uthi akazi ukuthi kwenziwa yini abantu bangasebenzi balingise ama-Ndiya wona athola ukuzigcina endaweni encane" (Shembe spoke about work a lot, and he was concerned about why people did not work, and imitated Indians who work in confined spaces) (Dube, 1936: 32). Isaiah Shembe then problematized wage labour—because he saw the plantation or the mine as a non-workplace and as a place of confinement. For Shembe, the place was mechanical and therefore artificial. This "factory" (working in enclosed and confined buildings/firms) was grafted into the social order and what the factory achieved was not in synergy with the organic social order

but disrupted that social order. Wage labour meant migrant labour and the separation of rural and urban life, as the railway took people away from their rural homes (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1987:191). The factory disrupts the social order because it disrupts the home in that it separates the husband from the wife and creates distorted familial structures (as I will detail in Chapter Five). For Shembe, migrant labour was the source of social disintegration in that the factory (enclosed and confined buildings/firms) creates a different and separate social experience for males, for women, and for children.

In the context of South Africa, waged labour was racialised, and this racialisation created a different mode of being black in the world (Manganyi, 1973). The loss of freedom in modernity through development, as Escobar (1995) conceptualizes, meant a loss of society, as it were, which had embedded in it the meaning of selfhood, or the person's identity. For Isaiah Shembe, at the time, this freedom could not be restored in the factory, but rather it could only be attained through what Arendt conceptualizes as action, the *vita activa* (the life of action) (Arendt, 1968:12). The loss of humanness means a denial of a person's humanity, a destruction of a person's identity (Arendt, 1968). Labour, which is the foundational part of what it means to be human, helps with the processes which require mankind to produce for themselves nourishment (food and drink) and other biological necessities. Shembe's theorisations will help us see how, in a racialised order of waged-labour relations, the meaning of labour changes not only because of exploitative wages (see Comaroff and Comaroff, 1987), but also through the fact that blacks are forced to cater for the necessities of white people, and they are made to neglect or pay as little attention to their own basic needs.

Theory as liberatory practice

This thesis' overarching framework is the concept of "lived experience" (Manganyi, 1979). I illustrate how Black people's lived experiences constitute knowledge. This is important for us because it makes it possible to relate to the poetics of Shembe, which viewed wage labour not as requiring restructuring, but as having to be replaced by a different kind of work. As I will show, Shembe was concerned with understanding the mechanisation of work, and he realised that the mechanisation of work would translate into the mechanisation of social experiences, which would mean oppression. Hence, he was preoccupied with questions of freedom. The linking of work to human freedom confirms Shembe's concept of society as a structure that is shaped by the kinds of work the people within it perform. The use of wage labour to disrupt African societies by imperial powers galvanized Shembe to use izihlabelelo (hymns) to try and

understand the deeper meaning of the relationship between work and society. These izihlabelelo were crafted as poems which he had sung in the mountains and would later be written down by John Langalibalele Dube. Izihlabelelo takes us through his pain, deep sorrow, and hope (Muller, 2010). In them, he also wrote about how life could be challenged and lived differently. As hooks (1991a: 7) explains, "Theory is not inherently healing, liberatory or revolutionary. It fulfils this function only when it is asked to perform in that manner or allowed to direct our theorising towards that end." The theory makes it possible for self-recovery- it makes a recovery possible. This thesis argues that Shembe's teachings offer us a theory of liberation.

The possession of a term does not bring a process or practice into being, since one may practise theory without even knowing/possessing the term, just as we can live and act in feminist resistance without using the term feminism (hooks, 1991a). The point is that Isaiah Shembe did not know that he was theorising, but the connection between his izihlabelelo and the lived experiences of his followers made the theory possible. Consequently, as this thesis will show, Shembe and his followers have engaged in the reformation of work and ultimately in black emancipation without terming their articulations as theories of work or black liberation. I analyse several izihlabelelo and followers' practices, like hymn 31, hymn 143, hymn 129, hymn 183, hymn 212, hymn 188 and hymn 200, throughout the thesis.

Collective liberation is possible when our lived experience of theorising is linked to self-recovery processes. As such, there will be no gap between theory and practice (hooks, 1991a). As I will demonstrate, amaTempeli amaNzaretha (Nazarene Temples) are spaces where thinking and reflecting occur. In these spaces, the synchronicity of time is restored every Saturday, and reflection is made possible. In this qualitative study, I used ethnographical tools of field work, interviews and participant observation, along with analyzing archival and official church documents and multimedia recordings on the internet to explore this phenomenon of the Shembe paradigms and practices.

Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha

Izihlabelelo (the hymns) are a sacred and integral part of amaNazaretha. I experienced these in my site visits, which included my participation in the church services at various locations identified in Chapter Two, and my engagement with the actual personal copy of the hymnal that I received as a gift in support of my research endeavours. Izihlabelelo are found in the

church's hymnal (Shembe 1940). The hymns "were first published by Johannes Galilee (Isaiah Shembe's second son) Shembe in 1940" (Sithole, 2014: 2). "Isaiah Shembe composed 219 out of the 242 hymns in the hymnal that was published by J.G. Shembe" (Muller, 2010: 3). The hymns "were initially written in isiZulu, with occasional references to isiXhosa" (Muller, 2010: 1). Izihlabelelo begins with three liturgies: the morning, evening, and the Sabbath prayer (Shembe, 1940; Muller, 2010; Sithole, 2014). The church followers use these prayers daily for services held in the morning and evening. During the holy months, the liturgies are communal at Mount Nhlangakazi in January for the Ekuphakameni faction and at Ekhenani for the Ebuhleni faction. They are also used at Ebuhleni at the headquarters in July and October. The liturgies can be articulated not only in the eTempelini (temple) but also indoors in the households of the followers and members. The Sabbath prayers are done communally at various Temples, often read aloud by male leaders. The hymns are central to the worship and life of the followers as they are used in many services.

There have been several reissues and revisions of the hymns since the passing of Isaiah Shembe (Muller, 2010: 3). Bongani Mthethwa, in an interview with Muller 2010 in 1999, commented that "Isaiah Shembe was a great maskhanda musician of his time" (Muller, 2010: 3). Moreover, these hymns are deeply spiritual and poetic texts in which Shembe interweaved in certain hymns Biblical verses and traditional Zulu beliefs - folklores and metaphors, reflecting the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from which Isaiah Shembe and his followers emerged (Muller, 2010). According to Mthethwa (1990), in the interview, he recalls that Galilee Shembe said that:

> Mentioned in 1966, that the ancestry of the church could, in fact, be traced back to about 400 years in the Zululand's history. He suggested that its origins went back to the Nxumalo kingdom (which existed alongside the kingdoms of AmaZulu and Mthethwa people). The Nxumalo people are now located at Nongoma, the place of the Ndwandwe people in Northern Kwa-Zulu Natal (Muller, 2010: 4).

Furthermore, Isaiah Shembe combined traditional praise poetry- "the purpose of which was to critique and honour political leadership—with a rhapsodical verve of biblical psalms to create a new and hybrid cultural text" (Muller, 2010: 4). The emphasis of the hymns is the articulation of cultural practices, recording and interpreting the impact of the serious social-political experiences of black South Africans (Muller, 2010).

Muller notes that "when the hymns were broadcast on Bantu Radio Services, as recorded by musicologist Hugh Tracey in 1948, hymn 183, "Lalela Zulu!" (Listen Zulu Nation), became the most popular hymn at that time" (Muller, 2010: 5). Mthethwa (1990) mentioned to Muller that "this hymn was banned in 1960 due to its content" (Muller, 2010: 5). From this premise, Muller (2010), an ethnomusicologist, argues that the Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha (the Nazarites hymns) carry with them messages of empowerment for Black people and thus, "deserve a place in South Africa's musical history, especially in protest music, as well as in the black empowerment and black consciousness ideologies" (Muller, 2010: 6). It is important to note that Isaiah Shembe did not receive mission education and largely could not write his own hymns (Gunner, 1988; Muller, 2010; Sithole, 2014). Shembe relied on assistants/ scribes who received mission education and, more so, his friend and neighbour John Langalibalele Dube to write them down (Gunner 1988; Oosthuizen 1991; Muller 2010; Sithole, 2014). After his words were committed to paper, he would memorize and recite the texts to them.

Sundkler (1961:186) "describes a series of dreams in which Isaiah Shembe hears a female voice, often a young female's voice, singing new and unexpected words, providing a foundation for how Shembe conceptualised the black condition under colonialism". Shembe "does not see the face of the young female girl, but as he wakes from the dream or walks along the path in Zululand, meditating, he hears that small, clear voice that gives him a new hymn" (Sundkler, 1961: 186). This composition mode "contrasts with the university-educated Galilee Shembe, who sees in his dream a chalkboard on which the hymns he composed are written" (Sundkler, 1961: 186). Sithole (2011) argues that Sundkler's analysis of the hymns as messages that came to Shembe in dreams sent by heavenly messengers is not entirely a true representation of the composition of the hymns. For Sithole (2014:3) "this view deprives Shembe of his creativity and agency".

This composition of Shembe's hymns contrasts with the Western hymns which were introduced in Latin in Africa or through missionary translations of hymn texts from America and other parts of Europe (Muller, 2010; Moshugi, 2024). According to Moshugi (2024), locals in different regions later translated these hymns into vernacular languages. Generally, the texts of these mission hymns "were of poor quality," Muller (2010: 5) argues, and "were either not understood by local people or viewed negatively." However, for Moshugi (2024), in some cases, translation into local languages provided cultural access for the locals, allowing originally Western English hymns to be adapted into local culture and style of singing.

Muller (2010) infers that indigenous dances and musical instruments were not acceptable for use in worship services and churches in all mission sites, perhaps from the supposition that they were not typical to Western Christian practices. However, Isaiah Shembe reclaims these elements, distinguishing Ibandla lamaNazaretha from other African Initiated Churches (AICs), like the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) and Pentecostal churches, as well as the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, with which it is often misclassified, I say this because of the way in which the Shembe church practices the Sabbath rest, the centrality of the hymn that was composed by Isaiah Shembe and the overall disposition of the followers in how they relate and understand their identity broadly. Unlike the translation of Western hymns into local languages and culturally stylistic singing that Moshugi (2022, 2024) discusses, which is commonly practiced by the AICs, Shembe employed his own words, experiences, and context to create the hymn book.

This distinction is essential to religious practice and worship. In this thesis, I argue that this difference makes amaNazaretha unique among the AICs, which are often categorized alongside Shembe. European missionaries frequently suppressed African hymns (Moshugi, 2022). Mthethwa, as noted in the interview with Muller (2010: 2-3), believed that "the musical and non-musical hymnody of Shembe resonates deeply with individuals because it encompasses the entire psychosomatic experience of the Black individual". Furthermore, "the role of poetry in his socio-political historiographical expressions, coupled with his focus on highly idiomatic isiZulu and isiXhosa poetic language, highlights the significance of language and religious performances" (Muller, 2010: 2-3).

Sithole (2014: 2) argues that Shembe's hymns should be "located within the African and South African literary tradition". Since, Shembe's opposition to oppressive legislation and attitudes in South Africa during his lifetime is evident in the hymns (Sithole, 2014; Muller, 2010). One of the most pressing issues for Shembe was land ownership for Black people (Mthethwa, 1990 in Muller, 2010; Sithole, 2016). To this end, the African belief holds that God is "chthonic" (Mthethwa, 1990: 4): this means that spirituality and sacred worship are related to the underworld, emphasizing a connection to the land. By implication, if people are denied access to land and material abundance, they are thought to be without God to care for them, poor and destitute (abantu abangenadlozi) (Mthethwa, 1990 in Muller 2010: 4). In the hymns, Shembe addresses the issue of landlessness in various ways—through prayers about work and rest in public worship. As we will see, the centrality of these hymns and prayers has not diminished

in value for the Shembe followers, and their significance continues to resurface in conversations I had namaNazaretha.

Lastly, "musicologists recognise the strength of Shembe's musical output in combining two musical cultures, creating a new and unique musical language" (Mthethwa 1990, in Muller 2010: 4). Moreover, Mthethwa (1990) suggests "that by not rejecting African musical heritage and incorporating African religious practices with biblical adaptations, Shembe was not creating a new musical language; he was reviving a musical language that the missions had demonized" (Muller, 2010: 4). Shembe "reintroduced the Zulu traditional drum alongside the Western bugle" (Mthethwa, 1990 in Muller, 2010: 5). Shembe constructed his own long trumpet known as izibomu (used during imigidi, as I discuss in Chapter Seven), which is unique to the Shembe church (Sithole, 2014 and 2016). Although Mthethwa (1990) and many others regard Shembe's hymns as contributing to South African musicology, in this thesis, I extend this categorization to demonstrate that Shembe's stylistic poetics in izihlabelelo contribute to the theorisation of work by centring rest as a significant component of labour. For, as Sithole (2014: 4) suggests, "reading Shembe's hymns without the consideration of their politics would be futile," not only that, but it would be limiting and a major disservice to what the hymns have to offer overall.

Additionally, they underscore the essence of ubuNazaretha as a symbolic ritual that transmits values and orders upon which a community is based. Most importantly, they foster a sense of community in relation to the "dyschronicity" (Han, 2011) of African society as shaped by colonisation. In his poetics, Shembe paid considerable attention to words and the melody's shape (Mthethwa, 1990; Sithole, 2016). "IsiZulu is a polytonal language, meaning that a single word can have multiple meanings, determined by the tonal inflections of each syllable and the context in which the word is used" (Muller, 2010: 5). "Shembe slowed the tempo of a tune to accommodate ukusina, the sacred dance" (Mthethwa 1990 in Muller, 2010). "He incorporated choruses that generated dance movements. Sometimes, the repetition of the text functions effectively as a chorus" (Mthethwa, 1990 in Muller 2010: 5). For example, Rev Ngidi, in Chapter Four, when posing a question to those who wish to follow the Nazarite faith, asks: uyathanda ukusilandela? Qala uthenge isibindi. He takes this from hymn 143, which has no chorus; however, Ngidi creates a repetition to emphasize uboqala uthenge isibhindi lapho siyakhona. You want to follow us where we are going? You must first buy (the emphasis on

the word “buy” as opposed to “have” implies that courage is something of value that cannot be easily attained by anyone) courage/bravery.

Shembe emphasizes the observance and understanding of rest, requiring one to be courageous enough to practice it each week. Shembe’s belief in the commandment of Sabbath rest leads him to view rest as interconnected with work rather than separate from it. Human life is intertwined with work, thus the importance of Exodus 20:9 in Shembe’s cosmology. His cosmology is founded on the idea that nature provides for human beings’ basic needs, and nature responds to the efforts of those who cultivate the land by ploughing and harvesting food, or by gathering water from drinkable sources to quench their thirst. The human body does not work simply because it is free; rather, it is the hands that work, reflecting a liberated mind that has discerned between basic and secondary needs.

The problem emanates when nature is mechanised through building factories on nature, because this process destroys the relationship between man and nature, and it restructures the valuation of basic needs and secondary needs. Mechanization requires a person to work with their bodies because mechanisation is synonymous with oppression and this oppression begins through the separation of the human bodies from their connection with nature. Mechanisation requires a human being to work with their bodies because mechanisation is more concerned with the propagation of working places than with the propagation of homes. The necessity of nature is not only reflected through its capacity to provide nourishment to human beings; it is also reflected in nature’s charity in allowing itself to be used as a home for human beings. Hence, human beings build their human settlements on nature. With mechanisation comes a precarious existential mode which is not revealed in a labour relations complex, but is reflected in the fact that nature is no longer the basic needs provider for human beings. The factory has taken over this role. Factories produce a condition of mass production and mass consumption which can only be sustained through a waste economy. The economy of basic needs which was created by human beings working the land with their hands was based on equilibrium and conservation, not on waste.

In this particular Isihlabelelo, I elucidate Shembe’s use of language “with awareness that doing so allows for language to be de-formed deliberately changing its meaning by changing the contexts in which we use old words” (Gqola, 2001: 95). Further, I elucidate Shembe’s vocabulary and repetition of phrases and the words “remembering” the past and

"remembering" rest, to not only problematize erasure, to create an archive and, through his imaginative language, not just kulesishlabelelo but all others, to amplify, the possibilities of liberation. The rhetoric that Shembe is communicating is that Africa is forgotten by God and in the writing of her history. Remembering/ukhukhumbula is more than remembering/memory; it is paying attention to that person's needs. God paid attention to resources by giving Africa land. In this land, people work. Hence when they need resources, they turn to the land; God remembers them through resources. Being grateful, remembering and not forgetting.

The repetition and emphasis of God's righteousness is significant. He is righteous because he remembers Africa. Colonization was built on the idea of Africa being forgotten, with the West coming to save the continent. Shembe refuses to blame God for Africa's demise, maintaining a continued attitude of thankfulness while avoiding the notion of victimhood. He states that it is up to you to recognize God's righteousness. "uMusa wakhe uhlezi phakade" embodies a psalmist's stylistic approach of gratitude. Liberation exists not merely in the imaginative realm, but as something continuously present. It transcends mere imagination and responds to the human condition—more specifically, the black condition. The powerful act of memory and re-membering, along with place and belonging, are necessary practices for contemplating rest (both in thought and action) as a liberatory theory. Isihlabelelo 60 addresses the understanding of the human condition that has been invaded; this invasion transformed society and altered the meanings associated with life, livelihood, work, labour, identity, class, and power, all of which intersect in kulesihlabelelo. I do this as a means of exploring the context and conceptual possibilities for new a language.

Based on my immersion in ethnography (where I attended Sabbath services, recorded filed notes, participated in the celebrations during special months), active participant observations, interviews and narrative inquiry. My analysis in each chapter is interdisciplinary. It is guided by the thesis, highlighting the lived experiences of Isaiah Shembe and his followers. It draws on hooks' (1991: 1) concept of "theory as liberatory practice" and Manganyi's phenomenological approach, which seeks to perceive reality as it is rather than through theoretical lenses or frameworks. This positions me in conversation with sociologists, historians, musicologists, anthropologists, literary scholars, and scholars of Black studies, among others.

Sociology allows me to see beyond the aesthetic form of ukuhlabelela (a form of expressive singing done by the church), which could be misinterpreted as merely singing in music, for example. The absence of scores in the Isihlabelelo, which I refer to as Shembe's 'hymns,' distinguishes them from the traditional hymnody found in Western-appropriated methods of musical understanding. This distinctive aspect of Shembe's hymns is discussed in the methodology chapter and revisited in the chapter on rest.

Conclusion

This interdisciplinary sociological study is crafted with an interest in the intersection of religion and labour. Focusing on the practices of rest and work, the Church of amaNazaretha is observed for its entrenchment in the theologies and traditions that uphold Sabbath keeping. The thesis unfolds through the following chapters by presenting, in Chapter Two, the paradigms that underscore methodologies related to liberatory ideas suitable for Black communities. This answers how to study Shembe and locate the community yamaNazaretha, by the research site, ethnography in relation to the community. In this way, one will understand faith and the response of work and rest which delves into the Nazarite community. Chapter Three, considers faith and values to understand a faith-based community. Chapter Four delves into the Nazarite consciousness, and how these values are lived out in the world. In addition, Chapter Five reflects on work as an individual imperative and Chapter Six foregrounds rest as a communal activity informed by theology, its understanding, and application in the community. It concludes with the concept of remembrance in Chapter Seven, positioning it as a central practice that reinforces the faith surrounding rest and work as a response to what is ordinarily considered precarity. Chapter Eight provides concluding thoughts and recommendations for further study. Primarily, each chapter is intended to provide a dimension, a sub-argument to the overall argument of the thesis.

Chapter Two

Researching Back: Paradigms of how to study amaNazaretha related to liberatory practices

Mayibhalwe kahle indaba kaShembe. Ibe ngamaqiniso odwa (Adv Mnyandu, 2019, Esikhawini.)[2]

Ngalezo zinsuku
Izithulu ziyakuzwa
Okushunyayelwa kulencwadi
Ngoba elungile

During those days
The deaf shall hear,
What is preached, in this book
Because He is righteous

Mayibhalwe kahle indaba kaShembe ibe ngamaqiniso odwa

This chapter explores how to study the practice of work and rest against the methods of oppression within a Black faith-based community of amaNazaretha. While there have been extensive contributions written and documented on the church and its practices; there has not been sufficient work done to probe the question of work and rest. This thesis shows how these two practices (work and rest) form part of the essence of ubuNazaratha. Nkosinathi Sithole, an author and lecturer in the English Department at the University of Zululand and member of Ibandla lamaNazaretha, in many of his writings and publications (2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2016, 2021), argues that even though Ibandla lamaNazaretha is the most studied church across various disciplines, it remains among the most misunderstood churches in literature. This misunderstanding and misreading leads to several misconceptions about the church. These misunderstandings stem from what Sithole (2016: 7) describes as scholars' "preoccupation with academic demands [rather] than Ibandla lamaNazaretha itself." Such preoccupations hinder the ability to write about Ibandla lamaNazaretha outside the lens of scholarship that has been examined about the church for many years (Sundkler, 1960; Oosthuizen, 1968; Gunner 1991, 1998, 2002; Brown, 1995, 1996; Hexham, 1996, 1997; Muller, 2010, among others). It

[2]The accurate rendering of Shembe's work and history.

is important to acknowledge that their contributions have been valuable, as their research and analysis have recognised the church as a vital part of Zulu history and culture, providing an academic framework which establishes a body of literature on the church.

Similarly, Mnyandu (2019), quoted above, also refutes how Isaiah Shembe, and by extension ubuNazaretha, has been written about in literature and understood by the public in places where there are practising followers of the church. For this reason, Mnyandu (2019: 1) warns: "mayibhalwe kahle indaba kaShembe. Ibe ngamaqiniso odwa", meaning there must be an accurate rendering of Isaiah Shembe's history and works [as written in the hymns]. This thesis then takes seriously the concerns raised by both Mnyandu (2019) and Sithole (2016), who are both church members and scholars.

It is through this accurate rendering of ubuNazaretha that I approach my analysis and methodologies conducted in this study with sensitivity and care. I directly engage with the church followers' practice of work and rest, paying close attention to the meanings that followers attach to these practices, from which I draw my analysis and understanding of these two practices. My analysis speaks to what Hammarberg et al., (2016: 499) write about qualitative research methodologies as methods which are adopted to answer questions about experiences and viewpoints of the research "participants." In this study then, I adopted a qualitative research methodology, for its strength of fundamentally acknowledging the meanings that people attach to and/or make sense of their daily-lived experiences, from their point of view (Baxter, 2008: 2). Mnyandu (2019), like Sithole's (2016) concern, recognises that there has not been an accurate representation of the Nazarite community and thus they both voice an outcry for the church to be studied accurately. Moreover, Mnyandu (2019) supports examining the church with intention and a heightened specificity to learn and understand rather than imposing stereotypes and generic approaches. Gordon (2018) critiques the historical research and documentation of black cultural value, suggesting the need to study previously undervalued cultures with genuine appreciation for their significance. I will indicate later how this sentiment was echoed by amaNazaretha, further emphasizing a desire for a different, meaningful approach to their respected faith and life.

The concern raised by Mnyandu and Sithole about the inaccurate rendering of the Nazarite community by researchers directly influences my methodologies, and how I intend to honour the commitment and cultural value to community engagement. Chilisa (2012: 14) alerts us that

“the community of social science researchers is experiencing a struggle as it has to come to terms with social injustice issues that arise from the research process itself, as well as from the findings that are produced by their efforts.” Hence, I position the centrality of unconventional methods, which are instructed by the need to liberate the manner of studying black cultures (hooks, 1991a; Gordon, 2018).

Furthermore, my research question: What is the position of Ibandla lamaNazaretha on, and practice of, work and rest in response to the precarious life of Black people in post-1994 South Africa? necessitates an immersion in the context of the collective practice of rest on which the Nazarite community is built and sustained. The following sections outline my efforts to achieve this.

The purpose of this section is to give an account of how I have addressed the primary research question as stated above. The section elucidates the methodological ideas and processes that frame and underscore this study, while drawing from actual methodological encounters with the field. It clarifies the rationale for site identification and the various forms of data collection and analysis. This study, as guided by the practices, draws the connection between work (in dialogue with labour sociology) and rest (in dialogue with political studies, among others) and shows how human experiences and the meanings that they attach to their lives cannot be understood in isolation or from one lens. Rather, the interdisciplinary overview of understanding lived experiences can expand into new forms of knowledge. The study makes a methodological contribution to show this possibility.

This study is based on narrative inquiry through life histories and archival research methods. This resulted in an understanding of the history of the church and its inception in the context of the political climate of South Africa in the early 1900s. The significance of the hymn book is that it carries in it the doctrine of the church and provides Isaiah Shembe’s recording of his experiences, and the church followers interpret and build a particular consciousness about what it means to be umNazaratha post-1994. Based on my immersion in ethnography (where I attended Sabbath services, recorded filed notes, participated in the celebrations during special months), active participant observations and interviews, I got an understanding of how the church followers interpret, practise and understand the doctrinal teachings of Isaiah Shembe on rest and work. Overall, the chapter argues for a methodological approach that gives eminence to observing rest in the context of those who understand and practice it.

The rationale for the research approach: contextualising the unconventional

Chilisa (2012: 3), like Mnyandu (2019) and Sithole (2012), expresses criticism of colonising epistemologies and methodologies in research. It is the responsibility of non-Western researchers, Chilisa (2012) argues, to ensure that they conduct research responsibly by providing an accurate rendering of how to study Black and marginalised communities. In the case of Ibandla lamaNazaretha and its practices, it will provide a language that will expose and sensitise researchers and students to diverse epistemologies, methods, and methodologies, especially of former colonised societies, as well as historically and economically oppressed communities, who have been excluded from dominant epistemologies (Chilisa, 2012: 15).

When this has been achieved epistemologically and methodologically, then even the "deaf" (not in the physical sense of not hearing) shall hear what is written in the hymn as taken from the verse by Shembe: "in those days, even the deaf shall hear what is written in this hymn" stated above. Put differently, when the practices of work and rest have been properly understood and written about, then there will be clarity in literature that opens up a possibility for new knowledge to be produced and knowledge that will liberate the majority of Black people from their precarious condition.

Obtaining access to the research site

This study began with my interaction with Rev. Mpanza in 2016. When I started my PhD research in 2019, I contacted him again. At that time, I was unaware that Rev. Mpanza had moved from Ebuhleni to pursue his calling, still guided by Isaiah Shembe through Hlaleleni and Thingolwenkosazane. This meant I had two research sites for which I obtained ethical clearance. I conducted this study in Inanda, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), with the Ebuhleni community, located near Shembe Village, which has a larger church population. Inanda is a semi-rural area north of Durban, one of the first townships in the city, and is home to several notable Black leaders, such as John Dube and Pixley Seme. Shembe founded his church in 1911 and named it along biblical lines - Ibandla lamaNazaretha (The Nazarites). He established his settlement in Inanda, which became the holy city of Ekuphakameni (Kumalo and Mujinga, 2017b). More recently, disputes regarding the succession of the church have resulted in numerous factions branching out and several court decisions determining who the church's leader should be. A crucial case is now in the Supreme Court of Appeal of South Africa, involving Mduduzi Shembe (the current leader of the Ebuhleni faction), Nkosi Mqoqi Ngcobo

(from the Ebuhleni faction), Mbongwa Friend Nzama, and Vela Shembe (the current leader of the Ekuphakameni faction) (Appeal case no: 957/2018, volume 11: 2128). For this study, I had access to the Ebuhleni community, which is also part of the church's original headquarters, where its history is still preserved in its original form.

Due to the media's coverage[3] on the church disputes, complemented with the ways in which the church has been written about in literature as argued by Sithole (2016), I realize that it was because of the inadequate documentation of Shembe's narrative and the church's representation in literature that made me anxious to begin this research. My anxieties were more pronounced in the tone of my early fieldwork notebook entry, especially during the Sabbath church services and the umgidi (the sacred dance). The narratives shared through testimonies and sermons created an internal conflict that, at that moment, made it challenging to focus on what the devotees were saying. As I listened and took notes during the church services and umgidi, I often asked myself: "How does this make sense? Do you believe Shembe said that?" "I will omit this part because it seems illogical." "Why are the women sitting like that? Is it due to patriarchy?" "Why are they reading the Bible? Aren't they supposed to read scriptures that they have written similar to the Bible?"

This conflict is also shaped by the Western research methods training I received at university, which taught me how to read, observe, and conduct fieldwork. It is further influenced by the writings of prominent scholars about the church, aligning with what Sithole (2016) mentions. Approaching the church through the lens of patriarchy and the oppression of women within its practices indeed reveals certain realities. However, this perspective undermines the experiences of the amaNazaretha and perpetuates stereotypes about the church and its practices.

Muller (2010), for example, connects the value placed on virginity in the church to women's empowerment, emphasizing women's control over their bodies—a theme prevalent in feminist thought. She downplays the connection between culture and religion, thus treating virginity as a reaction to patriarchy. However, the high value placed on virginity by the church highlights the synergy between Zulu culture and Shembe ways of being in the world. I sensed this challenge in Sithole's (2016) writing. Nkosinathi Sithole is a member of the Ebuhleni church

[3] https://sundayworld.co.za/news/battle-for-shembe-church-reins-rages-on/(accessed 26 February 2025)

and a professor in the English Department at the University of Zululand. He lives the doctrine of the church and writes about it from the "inside," often correcting how researchers have interpreted certain practices over the years (Sithole, 2016). Therefore, Mnyandu's plea was to document indaba kaShembe accurately.

The manner in which the church has been studied was part of the early discussions I had with Rev. Mpanza at Nqobizitha Temple in Wyebank, Pinetown in 2021. After our lengthy conversation one Sunday afternoon before the radio station broadcast, he admitted to having ignored my messages and requests for an interview and to access the church for this research. After years of reaching out to him via Facebook inbox, commenting on his posts, and sending him WhatsApp messages, he finally responded in 2020 with a request for a synopsis of my research project and my intentions to write about the church. Mpanza, impressed by my commitment to study how the church understands Shembe's doctrine of rest and work, remarked that "ngangibona isicefe nje mina, siyasazi isicefe sama researcher afuna ukubhala ngo Shembe neBandla ngendlela yabo bangasizwa thina ukuthi sithini futhi nokuthi siphila kanjani." (Mpanza, 2021) This means, "I thought you were part of those many annoying researchers who wanted to write about the church according to their own understanding and interpretation and not fully represent our interpretation and understand how we live." I did not listen to this carefully at this particular moment, as I was relieved to finally have access to the church. However, Mpanza's expression and remarks show one of the many signs of fatigue exhibited by the communities that we study, regarding outsiders entering their spaces and demanding stories about their lives (see Maphuvayenda and Masikane 2023), while often failing to bring about changes to their conditions or to provide an accurate representation of their lived experiences.

Mnyandu emphasizes the importance of Black people loving, cherishing, practising, and living Black cultures; for Mnyandu, this is a means of understanding and embodying Black freedom. He observes that other Black churches do not consider Shembe's doctrine to be genuinely expressive of true religion. We engaged in an extensive discussion with Dr. Xakaza, Shuku, Rev. Phana Mabaso, and Rev. Mpanza on Rise FM regarding the misconceptions of Isaiah Shembe (August 8, 2021, Pinetown) and the possibility of not fully experiencing what it means to be human outside the white gaze. In his prayers and hymns, Isaiah Shembe utilised idioms, concepts, history, events, and ideas that resonate with African ontologies.

In this chapter, I discuss three fundamental practical and methodological points made by Isaiah Shembe, relating to how the church's followers and members interpret and practice what is written in Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha. This stanza follows one in which Isaiah Shembe describes how the White colonialists perceived the Zulu natives upon their arrival in Zululand. In this context, Zulu men, in particular, wore amabheshu (cow-skin) to cover their fronts and buttocks, which were often exposed. From a colonial perspective, this was likely regarded as indecent and/or inappropriate dress. Consequently, the White colonialists altered the Zulu natives' clothing to make it more "appropriate," as discussed in Chapter Three. This change required the Zulu natives to adopt and heed the instructions of the White colonialists in their attempts to transform their culture.

In the stanza quoted above in this chapter, Isaiah Shembe makes a crucial point about hearing and/or listening to words that are written in esihlabelweni ("the hymn"). In this chapter, I interpret this metaphor of the deaf hearing not as an expression of physical inability to hear but instead as Shembe speaking to a people who choose not to listen to the written words. He argues that whether they choose to listen and be liberated by what Shembe presents, they will ultimately hear these words at some point. This "hearing of these words" will be driven by their lived experiences of increased precarity, alienation, and oppression that they face daily. This is not to say, hearing does not require physical ability; instead, hearing and listening hold deeper meanings that go beyond the physical realm. I reflect on izihlabelelo as a sonic expression alongside Makhathini (2023: 5), who captures in his album titled *Letters from the Underworld* (2020) an understanding of "listening and acknowledging" words from the "living dead" (Mbiti, 1969) as a form of knowing and daily guidance, which holds liberatory potential in the context of the church followers.

Research sites

Figure 2: Map of Inanda and the location of the Shembe Village



Map by Nombulelo Shange, 2013[4]

Wyebank, Pinetown

This is the first site that I was introduced to. This site will be covered in Chapter Five.

Germiston

This is part of the Rev Mpanza faction, which is in Johannesburg where the church followers work in and around Johannesburg. This site will be covered in Chapters Five and Six, where I conducted ethnography on the Sabbath as well as interviews with Rev Sikhakhane and Rev Ntuli.

Mpumalanga, Ermelo

In Mpumalanga Amsterdam, I attended a service of remembrance that was hosted by the Nazarite Church of God (NCG). This site will be covered in Chapter Seven of the thesis.

Mr Van der Khoza, Marianhill

Here I attended umgidi waseNGC; this will also be covered in Chapter Seven of the thesis.

Ebuhleni

Here I attended the July conference where I stayed with Zama and her family, emadokodweni. This will be covered in Chapters Five and Six.

[4] This image was sourced from Nombulelo Shange's Master's Thesis submitted in 2013 at Rhodes University.

Sandanezwe

This is a temple in Johannesburg Central Business District (CBD) where I attended Sabbath services. Mostly, followers who work and live around Johannesburg attend the services here.

Access to the church

After I received ethical clearance (protocol number: H21/04/22), to conduct the study at Shembe village (which has the Ebuhleni faction and community Nanda and the Nazarite Church of God NCG faction, led by Rev Mpanza) in October 2020, I began with an informal introductory conversation with Zama Mthethwa at her home in eMtshebeni in Inanda Durban in December 2020. I was introduced to Zama Mthethwa by a family member who lives in the same area at Shembe Village. We had a four-hour-long conversation about her life and journey in Nazaretha church. At the time, I was unaware that Rev Mpanza was no longer part of the Ebuhleni faction. In my exchange with Rev Mpanza and the church administration, they had not mentioned this at the time. Then, when I could finally go and conduct the research in August 2021 (postponed due to Covid-19 lockdown restrictions), I went to Pinetown – Wyebank the site of the Nazarite Church of God (NCG). Rev. Mpanza often speaks about leaving Ebuhleni as an act of obedience guided by uThingolwenkosazane (Shembe the third) and Hlaleni (an angel) to ideologically carry out Isaiah Shembe's lineage as they follow and teach Isaiah Shembe's doctrine and practices.[5] Rev Mpanza asserts that this is what the other factions lack. This will be further discussed in Chapters Four and Six.

Lastly, I would spend time with the same people that I interviewed in their workplaces (both those who are formally employed and those who do other forms of work outside the "traditional" employment setting). Rev Mpanza gave me the details of Rev (Dr) Phana Mabaso, who is the Nazarite Baptist Church (NCG) communication liaison, and I received the gatekeeper's letter to conduct the study with the church. Rev Mabaso introduced me to Rev (Dr) Xakaza, an NCG reverend and a presenter of the NGC's radio station programme, along with two other young leaders who are board members of the church. Rev Xakaza and I would have conversations with Rev Xakaza and the two young leaders on Sunday afternoons, an hour or so before the radio station broadcast. I attended the church service on Saturday, observing and taking notes of the service. After my failed attempt[6] at conducting a formally structured

[5]The church has had many factions over the past couple of years. This study cannot get into these factions.
[6]It failed because my questions seemed very biased and I largely only asked questions in relation to how they rest and work. For example, I asked her if she and her husband observe the sabbath the same, almost insinuating that

interview with one of the female members during the lunch break, Rev Mpanza asked me to speak to him on Sunday to present what I would do and how I needed their help. I came on time, made sure to leave my shoes in the car since shoes are not allowed to be worn in the temple, and covered my head as I reverently walked towards a room that Rev Phana directed me to. I was met by Rev Phana, Rev Xakaza, Shuku and Sihle, who are part of the board as members of the radio station broadcast. Rev Mpanza was still in the house at the time. After I was introduced to everyone in the room, Rev Phana noticed that I was not wearing shoes, and he remarked, "You do know that we wear shoes outside the Temple." They all laughed and explained why I must wear shoes. Rev Xakaza concluded by appreciating the effort and respect and further encouraged me that I would soon learn about the church.

As we were talking, Rev. Mpanza entered the room. I immediately went down on my knees from where I was sitting, but he quickly stopped me. This became a good icebreaker joke among us as they noticed how nervous I was to speak to him in person, especially after seeing how the church members behaved around him during the Sabbath. Shortly after this, Rev. Mpanza asked me about my experience in the church on Saturday and whether I found the sermon useful. He then asked me to present my research and explain how I would conduct it. I nervously went through my notes and began to discuss the research and the interviews I planned to conduct, including a breakdown of numbers as outlined in the proposal. Rev. Phana interjected before I could explain the kinds of questions I would ask members:

> Sisi, this is good, and we are glad you have an interest in studying the church. I have a suggestion, though: why don't you participate in the church activities like any other member? By this, I mean be part of us, attend the conferences, see how we live, and then take it from there.

I looked at him, and before I could respond, Rev. Mpanza agreed, and the politics of research were discussed at length. I was very grateful for this advice as it allowed the research to take shape. I then began attending church services as a member, interacting with people during lunch without asking questions related to the research question, and became part of the radio broadcast team on Sundays, which airs at 6:00 pm on Rise FM. This broadcast session would

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they have different experiences because of their gender roles and patriarchy. Does she rest the same way that her husband does… The interview seemed very rushed as she sat holding her lunch and spoon ready to go and have lunch with the group of women who sit together outside the temple.

begin with a reflection on the Saturday service between Mpanza and me. The engagement would lead to a discussion that was part of the radio station slot on Sundays. Among many topics discussed during my time there were the misconceptions surrounding Isaiah Shembe, the practices of the church, and how he is represented in academia.

The research became a part of my daily interactions with church members and followers during our face-to-face meetings on the Sabbath. I also benefitted from the richness and complexity of Shembe's conceptualizations due to my participation in the radio broadcast brainstorming sessions and my attendance at the Holy Mountain. My active involvement overcame the barrier of being just a researcher in the church, even though my hosts were aware that I was a PhD candidate. The church began to see me as one of their own. As a result, many of my "interviews" were informal, occurring over an extended period through conversations during lunch or sacred dance ceremonies, rather than in formal recorded and guided interviews. I relied heavily on my silver and white notebook to document these conversations daily, ensuring I wouldn't forget them. When I returned to Johannesburg in March 2022, I received Rev. Ntuli's contact details, who is the uMfundisi at the Germiston temple. The members recognized me, as we had met during large conferences in Wyebank-Pinetown, and many had heard me on the radio station. This familiarity made my entry into the Germiston temple much easier. There was a significant difference in experience at Germiston compared to Wyebank-Pinetown. This may have been due to the presence of Rev. Mpanza and Mkhokheli Mpanza, which made the Wyebank-Pinetown setting more formal and somewhat restrictive, at least based on my personal experience. The Germiston temple felt more open in terms of space and community, and its smaller size fostered more intimate and interactive connections.

Even though I spent the first year of the research with the NCG, Zama (who is not part of NCG but is a member of Ebuhleni and lives in Inanda) and I remained in contact throughout the year, even when I moved back to Johannesburg. Since Ebuhleni is a larger group than NCG and Ekuphakameni, I explored both to gain a deeper understanding of ubuNazaretha in various locations. I received a gatekeeper's letter from uMfundisi uNgidi to visit Ebuhleni in July 2022, and I stayed in Zama Mthethwa and her family's dokodo (traditional homes found in Ebuhleni for members who arrive during the Holy Months). Here, I gained insight into the church during this month. Over this time, I had many conversations with different people. True to the intervention offered by Rev Phana, by actively participating in the church and its activities, this

research allowed for various techniques. Unlike the structure of my interview schedule that separated individuals from their weekly activities (work) and Saturday (rest), I learned that members do not come in and out of ubuNazaretha based on the day. They embody ubuNazaretha in their everyday lives.

Setting and structure of Ibandla lamaNazaretha

The leadership structure of the Shembe Church is hereditary, particularly concerning whom the Inkosi (king) of the church is (Kumalo and Mujinga, 2017: 134). The leadership consists of the Inkosi, a position held by some of Isaiah Shembe's male descendants across various factions (Kumalo and Mujinga, 2017: 134). Beneath the Inkosi is the umfundisi (a role held by Mpanza in the Ebuhleni faction for many years). The umfundisi oversees and manages one or two districts, each typically containing four to six temples. Below the pastor is the Umvangeli (the Evangelist), regarded as a knowledgeable individual with extensive insight into the church's history (Kumalo and Mujinga, 2017: 134). The umvangeli serves as a primary source of information and is often an elder. Following the evangelist is the Umshumayeli (Preacher), who leads at the temple level, conducts sermons and manages temple affairs. Next is the Umhlambululi (Ablutionist), responsible for overseeing the Friday ablutions or cleansing rituals. Following him is the Inkosana, a diminutive form of Inkosi, which means "little king." In the absence of an Evangelist, the Inkosana conducts sermons at the temple level. As I have observed and heard from various preachers in the temples, the final and most significant position is held by a woman known as umkhokheli (the leader). The role of umkhokheli is specifically to guide women and young girls. UkuKhokhela abantu means to lead people; this role aligns with what Magoqwana (2018, 2020) identifies as the role of uMakhulu or oMama in the African context. uMakhulu, the uMkhokheli in this case, serves as an essential source of knowledge, embodying the core values and understanding that upholds the institution. This leadership structure is similar to that of the Nazarite Church of God (NCG), except that the leader, such as uNyazi Ebuhleni, is Rev Mpanza. This is noteworthy, as the individuals involved in this study interacted with me based on their ranking within the church.

amaNazaretha as a Research Field

The Shembe community has been significant among Black people in Zululand, notably since Isaiah Shembe established the Ekuphakameni headquarters in the early 1900s. This church primarily serves the Shembe village, which encompasses the areas around the current Ebuhleni and Ekuphakameni headquarters in Inanda, Durban in KZN, South Africa. Over the years,

Isaiah Shembe's following has expanded to various regions, including Johannesburg, Free State, Pretoria, Mpumalanga, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique, with over three million church members currently (Gunner 2002; Sithole 2016). Sociologically, the Shembe community can be defined as an institution functioning within a state. As an institution, it prioritizes the welfare of its members, followers, and the larger eNanda community. I engage with this institution then as an epistemological category. In other words, I view the Shembe community as a source of knowledge. When studied accurately, the language used by the community, when unpacked correctly, produces "new" knowledge (Mkhize, 2022). This aligns with Magoqwana (2020), who argues for viewing uMakhulu (grandmother), the matriarch in African communities, as an institution of knowledge.

However, my engagement with the Shembe community as an institution of knowledge has proven to be challenging, as I have had to endure the pain of translation. By implication, I must bring the research to the [Westernised] reader's culture rather than bring the readers to the Shembe community's culture. This means that in translating the culture of the Shembe community or the Black communities that are often studied, the meaning and essence of the culture frequently get lost, as the researcher must explain within the Western paradigm. Following Chilisa's (2012) central argument of "researching back," it allows those communities that have suffered oppression and exploitation "space to communicate from their frames of reference" (Chilisa, 2012: 30). It is a process of questioning how various disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, politics, and science, through "an ideology of Othering," have described and theorized about the colonized Other and denied the colonized Other the ability to name and know from their frame of reference (Chilisa, 2012: 30). Translation, I believe, is a contributing factor and, with all its limitations, highlights the urgency for inclusive knowledge production that involves institutions concerned with organic ways of achieving the welfare of their followers and members. The limitations of translation further underscore the coloniality of ethnographic work (Ndlovhu, 2020; Maluleke, 2021; Moshugi, 2021, Nyuke, 2021, Ndlovu, 2022). Thus, it affects what Adv Mnyandu warned above: ukungabhaleka kahle kwendaba kaShembe (the [in]accurate rendering of Shembe's history).

In an effort to demonstrate the issue of false representation popularized by colonial approaches to ethnographic work, this chapter draws inspiration from lessons learned in the postgraduate course on social transitions, offered by the Department of Sociology at Wits University. This

course was taught by Prof. Shireen Ally and Prof. Zimitri Erasmus during my honours year in 2015. Prof. Zimitri Erasmus introduced social transitions as a course of "unlearning." I remember the puzzled expressions on our faces as we looked at Prof. Zimitri, who led the first block of the course, as she elegantly and gracefully explained her meaning. The process of unlearning ultimately challenged our understanding of society by exploring postcolonial contexts through the lens of colonial frameworks regarding the experiences of the colonized. This perspective was limiting in many ways, as it prevented us from seeing ourselves as Black students in literature or as knowledge producers. By centring Black scholars in various ways, we deconstructed colonial knowledge and began to reconstruct a framework that de-centre's whiteness as the sole producer and authority of knowledge and as a means of understanding the world.

This was a critical moment for many of us, especially for me, as we could locate ourselves, our culture, and our backgrounds within the classroom. This was where the inspiration to research Ibandla lamaNazaretha began. Although, at the time, I thought of the church as part of a decolonial movement, given the rise of the decolonizing scholarship in South African universities, further intensified by the #feesmustfall student protests in 2015/16. These student protests questioned the lingering effects of colonialization, which are still prevalent in our education system and other social institutions through "neo-liberalized universities, hierarchical, bureaucratic structures, and institutional culture that are defined by whiteness" (Motimele, 2019: 205). Coincidentally, when these student protests, mainly at Wits, took place in the second semester, we understood the protest within the concepts we were using in the social transitions course. Most of the social transition cohort participated in these protests at certain times, making the protest translate the theories from our classroom into a lived experience so that, for us, theory and practice became unified.

The climate of protests is generally infused with a sense of anger, especially among protesters who are desperately seeking justice. Our anger as students of social transitions was fuelled by the calls for lower fees at Wits and the nature of the knowledge we had been consuming in sociology for many years. This anger propelled us as honours students to find ways to challenge the knowledge structures that excluded and deemed indigenous knowledge unfit for inclusion in the university curriculum. This challenge was twofold: first, it meant pleading with the police to cease fire as they became violent towards students (see Ndelu et al., 2017; Ndlovu, 2017).

Second, we challenged violence through the process of writing (Kgoroba, Mashibini, Masilela, Maubane, Moyo, Mthombeni & Ndlovu, 2017), as acts of "critical rebellion and resistance" (hooks, 1989: 3), breaking the silence around theorizing Black realities through the teachings of the founding fathers of sociology (Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber). We identified some of these in the colonial ethnographic research methods used, remnants of which were still present in our curriculum; we aimed to think and write "against the colonial grain" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017: 79), so that we did not reproduce or perpetuate "colonization in methodologies" (Fanon 1967:17), driven by the even more infuriating realization of whom the research subjects usually are.

For instance, in my master's research report (2017), I conducted a conceptual study of the rest and work as written by Isaiah Shembe in the hymn book. I argued against conducting fieldwork by refusing to include ethnography as part of my research methods without a clear understanding of alternative methodologies that aligned with the research report's goals at that time. Chilisa (2012: 13) criticizes the social sciences for their "methodological hegemony," which Gordon refers to as "disciplinary fetishism" (Gordon, 2014: 82). This suggests that "the method within disciplines becomes the world, and in that, the world is obsessed with administering rules and regulations—which Fanon describes as self-devouring methods" (Gordon, 2014: 82).

While disheartened by the Westernized approach to conducting fieldwork in Black communities, my determination and dedication to African knowledge production could not be extinguished. In hindsight, however, I value that moment as it shaped my understanding of scholarship and knowledge production. Decolonizing the colonial ethnographic misrepresentations of Black experiences is not merely an act of activism for incorporating autobiographical knowledge into higher learning; rather, it is an acknowledgement that indigenous social structures support the African ways of being in the world and merit accurate scholarship, ultimately producing critical knowledge.

In this section, I provide an account of my experience with namaNazaretha between the years December 2020 - June 2023, even though inheritance disputes have plagued the church since the 1970s. These different factions, as recorded by Kumalo and Mujinga (2017: 123):

> Ekuphakameni, led by Vukile Shembe; 2. Ebuhleni, also known as Ebuhleni Shembe International Church, led by Vela Shembe; 3. Ginyezinye, led by Sizwe Shembe; 4. Mini Shembe (referring to Galilee Shembe's son, Mini, who is not very active and is socially well-defined as a group within the larger Church); 5. Tembezinhle, led by Mduduzi Shembe; 6. Gauteng Shembe Church, led by Phakama Shembe; and 7. the New Nazareth Church of God (NCG), led by Mthembeni Mpanza (who is the only leader not from the Shembe clan).

The succession debates of the Ibandla lamaNazaretha began when Isaiah Shembe passed away in 1935. However, they became more pronounced in the 1970s (Kumalo and Mujinga, 2017: 124). The most recent and widely documented court battle began in 2011, leading to the emergence of the Ebuhleni and Tembezinhle movements (Kumalo and Mujinga, 2017: 124). For the scope and purpose of this research, I interacted with amaNazaretha aseNazarite Church of God (NCG) in Pinetown (Durban) and the Germiston Temples (Johannesburg), under the leadership of Rev. Mpanza, also known as uBaba uMalusi. I also engaged with amaNazaretha aseEbuhleni in Nanda (Durban), the Tembezinhle movement, and at the Sandanezwi Temple in Doornfontein (Johannesburg), under the leadership of uBaba uMduduzi Shembe (uNyazilwezulu). The Ebuhleni movement is regarded as one of the largest among the church factions in terms of followers.

In this section, I illustrate how I navigated both spaces, which are known to be strict and otherwise inaccessible to outsiders. The intention here is not to merely report on the research methods employed in this study but, rather, and perhaps most importantly, to position this chapter as part of the ongoing debates among social scientists such as Mafeje (1963), Magubane (1996), Chilisa (2012), Magoqwana (2020), Mkhize (2022), Magadla (2021), and Motsemme (2020). These scholars are not only questioning the social justice of the research process itself, but are also seeking alternative ways to theorize Black realities. This approach takes the argument presented by Wiredu (1997: 6) more seriously; it states that there must be a set of methodologies "of thinking conceptually from the basis of African languages to derive propositions and meanings that have epistemic coherence in how Africans make sense of aspects of their human experience." For Peterson (2019), thinking conceptually from African languages presents the processes of knowledge production, narration, and interpretation. This is possible through "trans-generational reflections, narratives and cultural memory in South

Africa" (Peterson, 2019: 345). This matters, Peterson elaborates: "as alienation, for black people, is part of black senses of being in relation to land, means of life, kin, space, and social formation" (Peterson, 2019: 345).

Peterson's perspective is crucial for my reflective account of language (as a system/culture and communication, as explained by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1980), with the communication medium being isiZulu. Certain Zulu practices aided me in navigating the space in ways that were not explicitly taught to me by the Shembe community but are intrinsic to Zulu culture. As a Zulu woman, I had deeply internalized these practices due to my upbringing in KwaZulu-Natal. Consequently, I became aware of the knowledge production inherent in the temples I visited—valuable insights often overlooked in higher education. Mkhize's (2022) observation highlights that accurate representation is not about conceptualizing the experiences of others; rather, it is about allowing their experiences to instruct the investigator in a mutually beneficial setup that fosters interactions between the researched and the researcher.

The primary aim of this chapter is to present the methodological tools I employed and to reflect on conducting research on eBandleni LamaNazaretha. The methodological tools included active participant observation, life history accounts, and both formal and informal discussions with members, and autoethnography. Primary sources also encompass archives, such as the court case between the Ebuhleni and Ekhuphakemeni factions, which was held at the Durban High Court for many years. It also includes archival reports detailing how Shembe acquired the land, along with recorded sermons, Sabbath services, July festivals, and the January pilgrimage by members, which are recorded in videos on the YouTube channel [7]. The main text of analysis throughout the thesis is izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha, which was composed by Isaiah Shembe, and complied by Galilee Shembe and John Langalibalele Dube, as stated in Muller (2010) and Gunner (2002).

Narrative Articulations

Narrative and oral history play a pivotal role in this study. It is through narrative, the telling and retelling of Isaiah Shembe's lived experiences, that the Shembe community continues to exist today. In the context of my engagement with Isaiah Shembe and the interpretation of his texts, life history and experiences, the main question that the thesis addresses or seeks to

[7]1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWit-trpAUA (accessed 26 February 2025)
2.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLEItpK2p7g

enquire about is what is the position of Ibandla lamaNazaretha, on the practice of work and rest in response to the precarious life of Black people in post-1994 South Africa? Given the context and background of the church and its founder, particularly, through the modality of narrative enquiry, and articulation as conceptualized by Bradbury and Peterson (2019), I found ways to articulate oral, literary and textual narratives through isihlabalelo, the style of music, umgidi - the sacred dance, visual art, observations and life histories. Placing these different modalities in conversation with one another demands what Bradbury and Peterson (2019: 327) emphasise: "translation efforts [in this context, accurate translations] on the parts of the speakers, writers, and readers, which may result in disagreement and misunderstandings." However, these disagreements, and in some cases misunderstandings, are necessary for their potential "transformative effect for knowledge production" (Bradbury and Peterson 2019: 327). Indeed, Christ (1995: 86) expands that "to use language with awareness that we are de-forming it, deliberately changing its meaning by changing its context, is an exercise fraught with danger." The experiences of amaNazaretha, nobuNazaretha in general, as I articulate in this thesis, inform and shape their subjective experience and social life. "Articulation" as defined by Bradbury and Peterson (2019: 327) has a dual meaning, as "the connective relations between two different components, and as giving voice and expression." How I have methodologically analyzed the significance of narrative is not in the conventional perception as portrayed in various social sciences disciplines, that narratives are an "uncomplicated exercise that is simply a story of, or reflection on, experiences in life" (Bradbury and Peterson, 2019: 328). Narratives do much more; even stories are an outcome of how "narratives encompass and exceed stories." It is through this understanding that deeper understanding of narrative articulation, that I first present Isaiah Shembe, and followers and members presently not only as their narrative serves as a "defining feature of what it means to be human" (Bradbury and Peterson, 2019: 327) but more so what it means to be umNazaretha in post-1994 South Africa, in some ways guided by the core values and beliefs that are stipulated by Isaiah Shembe esihlabelelweni. And, as such, the stories told by followers through their life histories have the power to shape and transform the lives of those who share similar experiences.

Additionally, in Krog et al.'s narrative enquiry investigation in their 2009 book, *There was this Goat*, they highlight, among other things, the transformative power of narratives and stories, considering the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its intention:

> It is said that we tell stories so that we do not die of truth. But we also tell stories to know who we are and to make sense of the world. We constitute our social identities through narrative and although life is much more than stories, stories also try to create order in the chaos of our lives. Stories in their widest sense can be used to bring order or tell about chaos. We listen to one another's stories so that we share the truth. But we listen to stories to become for a moment, somebody else, to be somewhere we have never been before. We listen to stories to be changed. At the end of the story, we do not want to be the same person as the one who started listening. (Krog et al., 2009: 19)

Data collection methods and instruments

According to Hammersley (2006: 4), ethnography does not form part of a clear scientific classification or "taxonomy" and can be understood in different ways, under different contexts, to distinguish one kind of work from another. In the context of this study, I define ethnography, as identified by Hammersley (2006: 4), as a form of "social and educational research that emphasises the importance of studying at first-hand what people do and say in particular." This includes extended contact, through participants' observation, open-ended interviews "designed to understand people's perspectives complemented by the study of various sorts of documents official, publicly available or personal."

Ethnography

As stated above, this ethnographical study included interviews, archives, texts and observations, which I recorded using my cell phone, and kept a notepad to record my field notes, daily. "Field recording, sometimes referred to as photography, includes the capturing of found soundscapes and other ambient research setting that includes, [but is not limited], to language, [and it pays attention] to audiotaping interviews [in a] well-established [way as a crucial] form of collecting data" (Drever, 2002, cited in Droumeva, 2016: 73). Moreover, like early anthropologists such as Malinowski (1979) or Stoller (1997), and in the context of Ibandla lamaNazaretha, Sundkler (1948, 1961), Gunner (2002), Muller (2010) in some of their research of the church, made use of audio recording devices/tapes to document ethnography. In the case of Sundkler (1948, 1961), for example, as he notes in one of the footnotes of his 1948 study, that he benefitted from local field researchers who helped transcribe and translate these recordings.

My attempts are informed to a certain extent by postcolonial theory and critical race theory, which aim to critique Euro-Western methodologies by "promoting methodologies that privilege the disenfranchised, dispossessed, and the marginalized colonised Other in the third and fourth worlds" (Chilisa, 2012: 71) for its transformative potential. My analysis then forms part of conducting ethnography as "a decent practice that overcomes its colonial history by examining the subject position of the ethnographer, collapsing the us and them assumption and privileging local knowledge" (Chilisa, 2012: 72).

My ethnographical engagement placed me in the field as an active participant observer. My participation and observations attended to a range of interactions and activities that also involved musical encounters where I heard music and saw responses to the music and participated in the singing. Here, the congregants used "hymn" singing to express and reinforce doctrines and theological orientations of the teachings of Isaiah Shembe. Although I am not an ethnomusicologist nor am I particularly interested in the hymn-singing phenomenon for musical reasons per se, I have had to acknowledge the debates and potential tools that ethnomusicology affords. Although not understanding these debates in-depth, I benefitted from understanding these debates on the purpose and importance of sonic ethnography. Ethnomusicologist Steven Feld (2012) formulated an in-depth analysis and strength of "sonic ethnography as an articulated methodology, beyond its being an alternative form of data collection" (Droumeva, 2016: 74). The World Soundscape Project (WSP), which "focuses extensively on listener experience and on soundscapes as both a material and social ecology intimately connected to a sense of place and does so through a normative rubric" (Droumeva, 2016: 74) also contributed to this debate.

Moshugi (2022), in his work on hymns, explains the premise on which scholars have based ethnomusicological reflections mainly with a view of its usefulness in distilling cultural nuances and elements that frame musical expressions, practices and creation. In the case of my study, I recognised the peak of my interest in the Shembe "hymn" practices was to understand how the church members, as practitioners explained and understood their hymn singing about their beliefs. Hence, I argue that although the singing has been commonly addressed as that of hymns by various scholars like Muller (2010), Gunner (2002) and Sithole (2016), what I analyze is not hymns as hymns but rather as prayers which are expressed through music as a

sonic medium. In this sense, the prayer is central, and the music is consequential. This is further corroborated by Moshugi (2022) in his justification for observing hymn practice as a system that encompasses other conventionally creative aspects of hymns. I elaborate on this briefly in Chapter Five on rest and my experience emaTempelini and, in Chapter Seven, I analyse umgidi and the January pilgrimage more extensively.

Although ethnographic engagement during my research in the field relied on interviews and participatory observations (notwithstanding other methods as mentioned above), through actual encounters and attendance at services and events, this immersion afforded me the possibility of a personal experience method, an autoethnographic reflection (Droumeva, 2016). As an integral part of the object of study, autoethnography inherently allows a researcher to draw from their social and cultural experiences and emotions (Droumeva, 2016). It is an approach that has captured the attention and interest of arts-based researchers and others across the social sciences and humanities, due to its strength in describing the personal aspect of an encounter. Thus, I found it befitting to recount and analyse my findings as a participant observer.

Active participant observations

Participatory action research requires the researcher's "participation in individual and group dialogue and action" (Chilisa, 2012: 72). This, when done responsibly by the researcher, produces "accountable research that is driven by 'participants' and focuses on change within a given neo-colonial setting" (Chilisa, 2012: 72). According to Burawoy (1991), this kind of research describes the vast difference between the natural sciences and the social sciences regarding research and inquiry in the methodology. For the social sciences, this is ethnography, particularly, participant observations, while the natural sciences adopt a "positivist model for the study of the social world, where the relation between the observer and the participant is contamination, a source of bias" (Burawoy, 1991: 1). In this view, the social sciences are best conducted at a distance where the observer (the researcher) is separated from the participant (those being researched) according to University's ethics. However, participant observation, in my case, active participant observation broke out of this shell and joined the Shembe members and followers and allowed me to have an encounter with their everyday lives, while also experiencing these encounters through ethnography (Burawoy, 1991). This, for Burawoy (1991), can lead to a different picture of social research in that problems that were otherwise repressed now become central. Participant observation allows a closer connection with those

we study/interact with. This helps us "understand how social theory is designed to explain the behaviour of others but it reflects back on ourselves, of who we are and what interests we have" (Burawoy, 1991: 3-5).

Conducting ethnography through active participant observation in the Shembe community had some advantages and posed some serious existential challenges for me as a Seventh-Day Adventist. My positionality as a scholar and member of the Seventh Day Adventist church which observes the Sabbath day, made the concept and practice of the Sabbath observance a familiar one. In fact, the Sabbath observance is not unique to the Shembe church; there are several churches that observe the Saturday Sabbath day, i.e. the International Pentecost Holiness Church (IPHC), and the Seventh Day Adventist Church. However, how amaNazaretha practices and observes the Sabbath seems to be rooted in an African perspective/tradition, whereas the Seventh Day Adventist church is inclined towards Western interpretation and practice of the Sabbath observance (Moshugi, 2015).

This informed my own unconscious hegemonic view of the church at first as I participated in their activities and listened to their sermons. At times, as I grew accustomed to the practices of amaNazaretha, I would take a break and visit the Adventist church again. This made me realise the vast differences even more. One difference is the expectation of wearing shoes in the church (holy temple) and the need to "dress up" for church (modern/latest fashion dresses and heels, accompanied by a lovely handbag and perfume). The singing, interpretation of scripture, and the overall programme of the day also differ significantly. It seems there is more effort involved in terms of thought and engagement in the Adventist church than with amaNazaretha. Consequently, by the end of the Sabbath, there is a sense of peace and relief among emaNazaretheni, whereas in the Adventist church, it felt like labour; I would be exhausted after church due to the intellectual depth of engaging with scripture from Sabbath school to Vespers (the end of Sabbath devotional). Observing how amaNazaretha relates to God and understand themselves without a sense of performativity left me grappling with an existential crisis regarding how to practise rest on the Sabbath day. Although I was aware that I was entering the space of amaNazaretha as an outsider, when a life-changing event occurred during the research process in 2022, it was in Ibandla lamaNazaretha that I found solace and healing.

As mentioned earlier, I engaged in active participant observation. This meant taking part in church activities, such as sitting where I was instructed and stepping forward to present my offerings when the collection began. I attended the church services on the Sabbath, starting in August 2021. Additionally, I participated in the radio show on Sundays from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm, where we discussed various topics related to ubuNazaretha. I also attended the May remembrance service in Mpumalanga. Then, I stayed in Ebuhleni in July 2022. Over two years, I conducted 10 interviews with members and held numerous informal conversations with church members about their experiences as amaNazaretha. These interactions not only opened up conceptual possibilities for understanding the world and experiences of amaNazaretha, but also illustrated what Kunene (1981: 245) referred to as African discursive practice: "knowledge is acquired through one's engagement with the community."

The teachings and conversations that I had with some of the senior leaders of the church showed that these conversations with the contentions around the accurate rendering of indaba kaShembe happen amongst the Shembe followers as much as it does amongst those who are writing on it. The two years (full-time during the Holy Months and consistently on the Sabbaths - either in Johannesburg or Durban) spent with the church became an awakening moment for me. It provided me with a new meaning and different kind of appreciation of 'fieldwork',[8] in that, as we argue elsewhere, fieldwork is not a site for research extraction, but rather it is a community of people, communities within which we [Black researchers] come from as well (Maphuvayenda and Masikane, 2023).

Life histories

I initially proposed doing semi-structured interviews which would be 30-45 minutes long according to my interview schedule, which turned out to be extended (informal and some more formal) conversations with the members of the church. These were shaped into life history accounts through conversations. Life history interviews have allowed me to understand the complexity of human beings. I follow the life of Isaiah Shembe throughout the thesis, and I place different moments of his life as captured by Esihlabelelweni, as narrated by the followers during church services and testimonies. The power and strength of life histories are shown in two recent works. The first is by Siphokazi Magadla in *Guerillas and Combative Mothers*

[8]See Maphuvayenda and Masikane (2023)

(2023), which looks at how women in the liberation struggle movement have been misrepresented, and times erased from the recordings of the courageous figures who were active in the movement. Second, Thozama April (2012) follows the life of Charlotte Maxeke for narrative inquiry. The work of Nthabiseng Motsemme (2004b) on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), has also influenced my method as she follows the narratives of women.

These examples stated above have shown the transformative possibilities of narrative as it enables people, here amaNazaretha, that I interviewed, to "symbolically give coherence to their lives and the world around them" (Peterson, 2019: 346). This, in the case of Rev (Dr) Xakaza and Mfundisi Ngidi, for instance, allowed them to have a critical consciousness and thinking which further enabled them to create, resist and transform subjectivities in the private and public spheres, imagine possible social realities and futures, ultimately, not only read themselves and their place in the world but to also be read by others.

Significantly, "the role of narrative is to create a different order of reality from that which is given [it is] an aspiration to provide a second handle on existences" (Peterson, 2019: 346). The process of this research has shown that amaNazaretha has created a reality that is different from that which is given, or they have found ways to exercise their agency amidst constraints.

Locating the study within the broader context of literature on language

Kunene (1987) points out that Nguni concepts cannot easily be translated into English. They necessitate significant reorientation or reinterpretation to capture their essence in the target language. This idea is fundamental for Oyewumi (1997: 8), and she describes it as:

> sense-making in the world of Yoruba concepts not as worldviews but rather as world sense - which is an idiomatic orientation to how phenomena are interpreted an Indigenous world sense and frame of reference which is often encoded in language idiom and the historical evolution of culture.

Magoqwana (2018), for instance, provides a practical way of entering the local languages, histories, and practices of societies, by including, as Chilisa (2012) argues, spirituality as a methodological framework that speaks to African indigenous methods. In a similar way to Magoqwana (2020) has emphasised the practical inclusion of "uMakhulu" (elder mother/senior

mother/grandmother in isiXhosa) as an institution of knowledge, to de-centre 'the founding fathers' of sociology as knowledge producers. UMakhulu has played a critical role in Black communities in terms of oral history and socialization (see Magoqwana 2018 and 2020). In the context of Ibandla lamaNazaretha, in the thesis I use isihlabelelo as the central text of analysis and the two key prayers (umthandazo wokuvuka; nomthandazo weSabatha) and some of the hymns which are expressed through 'ukuhlabelela'. I conceptualize ukuhlabelela as a central method of understanding African spirituality/Black expression. These hymns I read as 'inkhondlo[9]' and 'imbongi'[10], and argue for 'ukuhlabelela[11]' as a method of spirituality that "respects the communal forms of living that are non-Western, and creates a space for inquiry based on relational realities and forms of knowing that are predominant in this community" (Chilisa, 2012: 30).

Reading and conducting research responsibly

> Umklomelo esiwutholayo ngokulandela ezinye izizwe ukuhlupheka okukhulu, ukufa, nokuvelelwa yiyo inhlobo yezifo namashwa. Sibe inhlekisa emhlabeni. Simlahlile uThixo wethu owasidala wasibeka e-Afrika, wasipha indlela yethu yokhuphila nomkhonza. (Adv Mnyandu, Esikhawini, 2019: 1)

> The outcome of following other nations' culture is extreme poverty, death, all kinds of diseases and bad luck. We have deserted our God, who created us and placed us in Africa, he gave us our own way of life and a way to worship him. (Adv Mnyandu, Esikhawini, 2019)

Writing from "within"

Although Mpanza's validation and access gave me the confidence to conduct this ethnographic study of the church, it also left me with a huge responsibility of reliability. This was evident in the way in which Rev Mpanza spent time teaching and engaged with me every week, hoping that the research outcome would serve to speak truth to Isaiah Shembe's teachings and

[9]Poetry and praise methods.
[10]Praise - usually when African chant their clan names. When the Zulu King for example walks in a room for an event there is a person who loudly chants imibongi for him. The Xhosa culture also does the same.
[11]This is different from singing; it is a deep expression by the person to either praise, lament or cry in ways that do conform to the stylistic rules of singing.

represent their experiences as followers and leaders of the church from their own narratives. My positionality and background as a Black woman from both the rural and the township areas have opened me up to many ways and forms of life. This meant that I had very little difficulty with language and culture for accessibility and navigating the space in general. It was the same knowledge of restrictions in the Zulu culture, and the background in such restraints made it difficult in most cases to conduct interviews and negotiate power dynamics. From my experience, in the Zulu culture, as a way of respect, there is a certain way in which one speaks to men, especially married men. In the church, which is known to be strict, navigating this dilemma was challenging. For the most part, I was in conversation with men who were more receptive to the research and what it was about. Women, even though they spoke to me, it was always with caution, and this was particularly so in NCG (Rev Mpanza's church).

However, as Collins (1986) and later Ali (2015) both caution about the complexity of research and representation, we cannot suppose that by virtue of belonging to the same ethnic group, and relating to the community in a certain way, we can claim to know their feelings. Although I shared a similar background with most people I spoke with, I realized that my experience and interpretation of those life histories were different. It is that difference that needs to be captured and spoken about, the same way we accuse Western knowledge of being homogenous in understanding. Going onto the field, I had to refrain from taking the same stance of homogenizing. I grappled with this issue throughout the research journey. I started as an outsider, literally, a PhD researcher from Wits who wore long, black dresses in contrast with an insider who had umNazaretha (the church rope), the hymn book, isichephu (the grass mat), a bumper sticker (written "Shembe is the way"). Although I made friends, I remained an outsider; hence when the "fieldwork" ended I was reminded that I was not part of the church.

Attentive listening and theorizing about the vocabulary/language yamaNazaretha

This work was conducted in IsiZulu. The sermons, readings, hymn book, which is the central text of analysis, and secondary material were all sourced and documented in IsiZulu. As a Zulu speaker from KZN, this was the most comfortable encounter and interaction in the research process. As mentioned above, the church embodies ubuNazaretha. This means that they have their own language that goes beyond something that can be translated without losing meaning.

Data analysis methods

Ukuhlabelela as a conceptual sonic expression and new methodological framework

Ukuhlabelela is usually translated into English as singing, even though ukuhlabelela is not the same as singing. The expression of ukuhlabelela, has a deeper idiomatic meaning. For example, in isiZulu, ukuhlabelela is often associated with amahubo (the Psalms) in the Bible. The psalms are not sung, but rather ihubo liyahlajelelwa. This is done to show the emphasis on the form in which ukuhlabelela takes place, as either izinkondlo or izimbongi. In a different context, there is a saying that:"ukuhlabelela kuyamuthokozisa odabukileyo", meaning, ukuhlabelela brings joy/healing to the broken-hearted; to further signify that ukuhlabelela, if done correctly, has a liberating potential for the one who is doing it.

Ukuhlabelela takes up multiple emotional dimensions for the performer and the listener (Mapaya, 2014). For Mapaya (2014: 13), ukuhlabelela has "a piercing through the heart effect, that cannot be expressed through dance or clapping of hands like singing, for both the listener and the performer." The depth of the message in isihlabelelo serves as an appeal for "humanness and for mercy" (Mapaya, 2014: 13). This is informed by the "intonation of the isiZulu language" (Mapaya, 2014: 13).

In our Black churches, particularly the African orthodox churches, English hymns are often translated to vernacular languages. For example, during a service, if a church member is led by the Spirit and decides to render an impromptu musical item, often in these instances this particular performer cannot sing in the "conventional" sense of singing. They will often begin with a disclaimer that they are not going to sing but uzohlabelela. What is important is the message of the spirit that led them to convey it and not the melody of singing. This shows a distinction between singing and ukuhlabela. In this instance, this individual, by making this disclaimer, is aware that ukuhlabelela has the potential not to come out as a beautiful harmonious sound as expected when singing in a conventional sense, where the voice supersedes the message. Here, the message that needs to be conveyed is deeper and more significant to the performer and the listener and the performer has no control over how the sound will be received. However, according to Mapaya (2014), once that message has been released by the performer, it is liberating to them and moving to the listener. And as Shembe in the above stanza communicates, the message that is written in ezihlabelelweni has a liberating

effect on those who are deaf, whether in a literal sense, where the person can read the message or deaf because of colonization.

It is no coincidence then, that izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha as a text is not called Amaculo amanazaretha (songs/hymns of the Nazarites), because this text is a central feature in the lives of the followers. The text has the three prayers (Morning, Evening and Sabbath prayer) and a total of izihlabelelo ezingu 219 which were written and composed by Isaiah Shembe. As written in the preface of the text by Rev Mpanza:

> Isihlabelelo sokuqala zasihlatshelelwa ngabantwana ayehamba nabo ngo-1910 eqala ukufika eNatal. Esesibili safika ngonyaka ka-1913 mhla eqala ukukhwela entabeni yaseNhlangakazi. Kusukela ku-1914 kuze kube u1919 akuqanjwanga sihlabelelo. Ngo1920 waqala waziloba kakhulu waqala nokuloba imithandazo , umthandazo wokuvuka, wokulala, kanye noweSabatha. (Izihlabelelo ZamaNazaretha, New Nazarite Baptist Church. Shembe, 1940: 1)

In the thesis, I analyse Isaiah Shembe's concept of work and rest in relation to the broader lives of Black people and Black experiences of labour and precarity. These concepts, which were lived out and practised by the followers, are written in izihlabelelo, making the text the central text of analysis throughout the thesis. I argue that Isaiah Shembe, as a Black thought liberation thinker, composed and compiled izihlabelelo to show history through his conceptual input. Since ukuhlabelela kuletha intokozo, which could be translated as freedom/liberation or rest, the literal act of ukuhlabelela umthandazo wokuVuka (every morning before work), which uses idioms and praises, has conceptual and practical underpinnings, in that "singing" ukuhlabelela liberates the doer. Beginning the day through this practice, the Morning Prayer, is liberating, according to the members. The individual is released continuously, as this is repeated in the morning, evening and on the Sabbath. This is how the Nazaretha consciousness and personhood are formulated. This liberated self does not seek liberation from external forces, but it is born liberated.

Ukuhlabela noma izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha are written in the form of izinkondlo (poetic structure) and are therefore not sung but are expressed through ukuhlabelela. In most cases, this is done by kneeling or sitting on the ground during the church service. And izihlabelelo,

dedicated to umgidi, the sacred dance, is also slow-paced and follows a rhythm that makes the dance itself spiritual as it is an offering by the performer to the non-living. The prayers take a poetic form as well. The language that Shembe uses is filled with figures of speech, puns, and a rich and complex language of praise. In some instances, prayers and hymns are used as likeness or comparison, while others are used to emphasize the outcomes of certain actions and highlight concepts to paint a picture. However, if one does not understand isiZulu, it will be difficult to understand or translate. According to Msomi (2019) and Sithole (2016), Shembe was a poet, at least in the writing and composition of the prayers and the hymns, even though he was 'illiterate' according to colonial standards.

As West (2006: 179) rightly puts it, the church was founded upon three narratives: "the narrative of Zulu traditional religion and life, the narrative of Shembe's particular colonial context in the 1800s and 1900s, and the narrative of the Bible." This overview reflects how my anxieties were settled - those initial anxieties of making sense of the church. It has allowed me to realize the extent to which colonization has affected the lives of many, and Shembe's prayers and hymns are an embodiment of these effects. Read this way, the text helps us understand the process which Shembe underwent in "rediscovering" himself and those around him by creating a physical place at Ekuphakameni,[12] which signifies memory, connection to the spiritual and obedience and empowering the marginalized.

This threefold narrative is evident in the framing of the hymns, and the prayers, which he further emphasized in some of his sermons that were recorded (on audiocassettes) at the time (Gunner, 2002). This narration is reinforced by his successors, church leaders and church members in the form of testimonies during the Sabbath church services. The sermons often take the form of "encounters with Shembe," looking at the work he did in the past, known by the members through oral history. His spiritual presence is felt by the members and remembered through the physical presence of the current leader (uNyazi Ebuhleni and Rev Mpanza at NCG). This is further commemorated by the followers during the Holy months of January, July, and October. Isaiah Shembe left izihlabelelo with the Black nation.

Ukuhlabelela as a methodological approach entails lamenting, praise, expression of pain, anger, prayers, and storytelling as an expression of speaking back as liberating and healing. With this

[12]A holy or scared place. A mountain found in Inanda

understanding, I now understand why some members who are in despair, either from the week or an ongoing challenge that they face in their life that is difficult to overcome, give their testimony on the Sabbath day the temple often opens with isihlabelelo 31: weludlawu lwezulu (pincer/member who is closely connected to heaven). Lesisihlabelelo is expressed and is felt deeply not only by the member who gives a testimony at the time, but it is also felt deeply by us who are listening, as the person analyses each stanza/line ehuba (expressing, almost in a poetic stylistic form) the deep sorrow that is in their heart. One can hear from these words that Isaiah Shembe kusihlabelelo, 31, was burdened and weary and needed to be rescued.

Weludlawu lwezulu,
woza ungephule,
sengishile sekwanele
hawukelumoya wami

Umzimba usuphelile
akubhubhe okwenyama,
ukuze umoya usinde
Ngosuku lweNkosi
Mhawukeli wezinyembezi
Hawukelumoya wami

Mthandi wezoni
Hawukelumoya wami
Awukhethanga bala lamuntu
Kubo bonke abakhalayo
Mhawukeli wezinyembezi
Hawukelumoya wami

Oh, pincers of heaven
Come and rescue me.
I have burnt enough,
Have mercy on my soul

The body is finished
Let the flesh be destroyed
So that the soul may be saved
On the day of the Lord
Redeemer of tears,
Have mercy on my soul

Lover of sinners

Have mercy on my soul
You did not choose from those who
Weep, By colour of the person
Redeemer (forgiver) of tears,
Have mercy on my soul

The singing of the verse was unique and unusual for me, as indicated in Chapter Two. I understood singing, especially in church settings, as a harmony or melody of different parts (soprano, alto, bass etc arrangement with scores), which was not what I was hearing here. However, as I got to familiarize myself with the church and the singing, I appreciated how everything aligned. No one is bound by the script according to musical scores/notes synonymous with European/American ways of singing as often depicted in hymns, and even those that are locally translated from English to the vernacular (other official South African languages) in most churches (Moshugi, 2022).

In this instance, the Shembe theological teaching becomes distinct in not only accommodating local interpretations, but also relying on ways of life, thinking and expressions that emanate from the African context. For example, during this peculiar prayer, a person is free to sing in whatever way they feel without becoming self-critical about the issue of the sonorousness of their voices (whether the singing is refined or unrefined). Instead, what is prioritised is natural and authentic singing, where the focus is on the emotional surrender to the words sung rather than the tone given to the words.

To sing and embrace whatever comes out serves the purpose of stating that a prayer is more than a musical item on the agenda. This freedom to be one's authentic self is a product of unscripted forms of artistic or musical expressions that define the general practice of the church, as observed in other segments of church services. This shows rest as the practice of liberation in a sense that, even in singing, the singer is not confined by the conventional rules of hymns but can express themselves through ukuhlabelela as a liberatory activity. This practice and liberatory activity allow the person to be fully emersed in rest without confinement.

It resonates with African ways of learning and musical practices that are based on oral rather than written traditions that often create room for interpretation and alteration without

necessarily changing the essence (Moshugi 2022). This implies that music serves as a means and not an end. The prayer remains unaltered and lyrically un-improvised even as the actual singing continues to vary. By further implication, the essence of devotion remains the same even as circumstances and means of its expression change.

isiZulu language and the challenge of translation

As the reader goes through the following chapters, they will notice that although the interviews and main text are written in English, there are moments where I retain isiZulu words in their original form. In such cases, ukubhala lamagama ngesiNgisi (the writing these concepts) is provided. This choice is deliberate, as certain words and concepts such in isiZulu would lose their depth, spiritual significance, or cultural meaning if directly translated into English.

There are two main reasons why I chose to include isiZulu words and segments of the interviews in their original form. Firstly, lokhu kuwumsebenzi webandla—ukungavumeli ulimi lwesiZulu ukuthi luhlale eceleni njengolungelona ulimi lwesayensi noma lwemfundiso yabo. For a long time, indigenous African languages have been presented in italics, as translations, or confined to footnotes—as if they are not capable of carrying intellectual weight or expressing theoretical thought. This reinforces the colonial assumption that languages like English are superior in academic spaces.

However, in my engagement with the Shembe Church and its followers, isiZulu was not only the language of communication but also the language of theology, ritual, and spiritual meaning-making. It is through isiZulu that participants expressed their worldviews, faith, and philosophies. As a researcher who also navigates the world through isiZulu, retaining these words in their original, non-italicised form is my way of affirming the language as a legitimate tool for theorisation and knowledge production.

In doing so, I hope to challenge the dominance of English in academic writing, while affirming isiZulu njengolimi lwemicabango, lwemfundiso, nolwazi lwangempela—both for the followers and for the reader. In this way I bring the reader to the research and not the other way around.

Ethical considerations

The very idea of rendering an accurate image of Shembe and ubuNazatha is a function of ethics that informs how one needs to interact with the findings. Also, to study the church from a position of value; in that, I carry their narratives and practices with integrity. My active participation was negotiated and had to be with an illustrated commitment to show ubuNazaretha and the community who they are, and not how they have been studied previously. This was accepted after years of trying to gain access.

Anonymity, informed consent and confidentiality

Consent was one of the most complex and contested ethical issues in my study of the Shembe community, influencing many other ethical considerations. I did not face major difficulties in securing my interlocutors' agreement to take part. Once they understood that my research would not cause harm, most—especially within the Shembe Church, - who are known to be very private about their faith and believes, and also the fatigue they experience with researchers who do capture their stories with care and accuracy—were willing to participate. I made it clear from the beginning that I would be writing their stories and contributions in my thesis, which helped ease discussions around anonymity. Some participants asked to remain anonymous, while others—believing they were standing for an important cause—wanted to be identified. Initially, I agreed to name those who wished to be acknowledged and use pseudonyms for those who did not. However, this raised further ethical challenges at the intersection of consent, confidentiality, and anonymity.

Confidentiality had to be continuously negotiated throughout the research process. While it was easier to manage in one-on-one interviews with individual Shembe followers. Similarly, although interviews with religious or administrative figures were held in private, their positions made it harder to fully protect their identities. I was mindful in how I wrote about these accounts and made sure all interlocutors were aware of the limitations surrounding full anonymity.

Conclusion

This chapter advocates for a methodological approach aligned with appreciating the community being studied. It recognizes the need to assert cultural value through unconventional liberatory methods that aim to dismantle aspects of conventional approaches that are often oppressive. By employing the hymn's stanzas, offering an exposition of the

research field, and utilizing diverse sites, narrative articulations that prioritize the voices of community members, ethnography, participant observation, life histories, and secondary data sources such as archives and other literature, the chapter promotes the use of qualitative tools in a responsible and empathetic manner.

I identify “researching back” as a crucial methodological contribution to exploring new inclusive and reflective methodologies of the communities we often study; this approach opens the potential for creating new knowledge. This knowledge production hinges on researchers conducting their work responsibly, meaning they employ the language and translation of these communities while being aware that this can “de-form it, deliberately changing its meaning by altering its context," as Christ (1995: 169) teaches. This understanding is vital for ensuring that we, in this context, Ibandla lamaNazaretha, can be understood. In addition, the accurate rendering of indaba kaShembe is not only a question of engagement; it is mainly a matter of ethics that I wish to highlight in this study, as underscored by Adv Mnyandu (2019). The chapter further acknowledges the contributions of several scholars who have begun this kind of groundwork in their studies, demonstrating the possibility of creating knowledge.

The chapter thoroughly explained my experience with the amaNazaretha aseNazarite Church of God (NCG), located in Buhleni, from 2020 to 2023. This account further emphasized the complexities of the insider-outsider researcher issue in relation to my own religious connections and sense of belonging. This prompted me to examine and evaluate my faith and journey with God, beginning from my early childhood in Kwa-Maphumulo under the influence of the Kwa-Sizabantu mission to my choice to become an Adventist in adulthood. After all, as Socrates said, “an unexamined life is not worth living” (Plato, 1901: 8). By engaging in attentive listening, thinking, and collaborating with the Shembe community as knowledge producers, I analyzed ukuhlabelela as a liberatory practice. Ukuhlabelela differs from singing, and izihlabelelo should not be analysed as hymns, as doing so diminishes the profound meaning of this sonic expression and its significance for the members and potentially for those who hear it.

Hence, returning to Adv Mnyandu’s message:

> Mangithathe leli thuba ukukhuthaza abantu bakithi, isizwe esiMnyama, ukuba sivuke, sikhuthale ukubhala nokulondoloza umlando nezinto ezingamagugu akithi. Izizwe eziningi zaseMpumalanga (amaShayina namaNdiya) neziseNthshonalanga zinama bhuku omlando oxoxa ngempilo, amasiko namaqhawe abo.
>
> Let me take this opportunity to encourage my people, the Black nation, to be enthusiastic about writing and preserving our history and everything that is dear to us. Other nations, like the Chinese and the Indians, treasure aspects of their cultures.
>
> Manje ke ngithi nathi asivuke, sithande okwethu. Akuphele ukuzinyanya sengathi uNkulunkulu wenza iphutha ngokusidala sibe nebala elimnyama. Ngisho ngoba sithanda kakhulu ukulandela impilo namasiko ezizwe ezinebala elimhlophe (abelungu). Okwakithi sikubukela phansi, asikufuni sithi kubi, kuyabheda, akuphucuzekile. (Mnyandu, 2019: 1)
>
> So now, we must also do the same: love what is ours. Let us stop looking down on ourselves, as if God made a mistake by creating us with the Black skin that we have. We love following the cultures and histories of White people (Europeans) and say that ours is backwards, ugly, and wrong. (Mnyandu, 2019: 1)

It is through the dialogue between narratives, my participation in church activities, and my analysis of isihlabelelo and the practice of ubuNazaretha that I have observed the transformative or liberatory effects of the practice and concept of rest, which is the defining feature of what it means to be umNazaretha in post-1994 South Africa.

Chapter Three

Unbounding Temporalities through Faith-informed Teleology in Rest and Work: A review of literature

Wabakhumbula abantu bakhe
Abanqulu zisobala,
Wabathumela uIsaiah iNceku yakhe Ngoba elungile
God remembered his people,
Whose buttocks were exposed,
And sent Isaiah Shembe Because He is good

Introduction

Through narrative inquiry, observations and my active participation in the church, my engagement with literature in this chapter denotes a relationship between temporality, memory, religion, and work/labour, in scholarship to make a case for Isaiah Shembe's perspective as a unifier of the three to present an alternative to understanding Blackness studies. The underlying justification of this study is premised on addressing, on the one hand, Adv Mnyandu (2019) and Sithole's (2016) concern of the inaccurate rendering of Isaiah Shembe nobuNazaretha, from the perspective of the church and the followers of the church. On the other hand, it addresses the concerns raised by many Black scholars, who show in various ways the gap in literature, methodologically and theoretically, in representing the cultures and values of Black communities in ways that give significance to their practices and way of life (Amadiume, 1987; hooks, 1991a; Motsemme, 2004b; Chilisa, 2012; Gqola, 2013; Gordon, 2018; Magadla, Magoqwana and Motsemme, 2021; Mkhize, 2022).

The body of literature covered in this chapter extends aspects of literature that have been referenced earlier in contextualising the study, more specifically, literature on Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha. Through the historization of labour which disrupted the Zulu society as it was, I highlight the key debates that some labour scholars have presented on the meaning of waged labour and the purpose of work in contemporary South Africa. Ultimately, these scholars show how waged labour as it stands exposes the deeply precarious condition of Black people and/or poor Black workers. In this chapter I emphasise, through literature, the social inequalities with their lengthy roots in colonialism, which are commonly referred to by scholars in various fields

in explaining the extent of poverty and suffering among Black people. I show how the role of religion in our Black communities has been an overarching one, yet there seems to be limited clarity in scholarship as to the connection between the promises of the church and the actual emancipation that members seek, expect or work for. Most studies in this field have not adequately covered churches. Also, church and/or religious studies have not intentionally and explicitly focused on issues around work and/labour. This chapter seeks to cover this gap that straddles between faith-based institutions and issues of labour as an emancipatory activity. It considers the role of faith-based institutions in addressing the issue of the precariousness of the majority of Black people.

The phenomenology of time: a Western and African perspective

Even though time has been discussed extensively by various scholars in different fields, it can never be exhaustive because to live is to exist within time and space and to make sense of our existence and reality within these dimensions. "Time," in this regard, "is the constituent of the metaphysical realities that possess intricate characteristics and are challenging to grasp" (Jaba, 2024: 35). As such, time, for Hoy (2015), becomes a manifestation in human life and cannot be ignored. In theology, philosophy, and by extension sociology, the issue of time is implicitly and/or explicitly discussed in understanding the human condition or the precarity of the human condition. Isaiah Shembe, in relation to time, places emphasis on the "six-day of work, and one day of rest" cycle (umthandazo weSabatha - the Sabbath prayer). With specific reference to Shembe's conception of time, I show how his cyclical understanding of time becomes a critical entry into broader literature or scholarship on precarity and its relationship to temporality. Time measurement determines how it is understood from the anthropocentric perspective of cultural life. For example, in Exodus 20 of the Bible, mankind was given an instruction to work for six days, and the seventh day must be reserved for religious worship. Here, the separation of religious worship and work is significant because it brings us back to the teleology of religion which, following this "six-days of work, one day of rest" cycle as reintroduced by Shembe, encapsulates the entire human experience.

In line with Hoy's (2015: 15) question on how one experiences time, I foreground the western and African "phenomenology of time" (Jaba, 2024: 34). Here, I borrow from Jaba's definition of "phenomenology" in this context as that which seeks to understand the "essence or nature of time" (Jaba, 2024: 34). I look at McTaggart's (1908) understanding of time, which is in

sharp contrast to Mbiti's (1990) understanding of time, in order to show the differences in the Western and African conceptions of time in order to locate Shembe's positionality of work and rest as a model that speaks to the precarious condition of human beings.

Hoy (2015: 15) poses a question: "Does time move toward us from the future, or from behind us from the past, or the present?" This is to say, do we experience existence through the past, the present, or the future? When time is experienced from the past, it is closely related to loss (Hoy, 2015). The complication is that the loss is associated with memory rather than loss, which can be identified by the disruption of the linearity of time. Since we cannot get out of time, we are always in time, and to not remember time means experiencing loss through memory's complete incapability to capture time (Hoy, 2015). For us to understand past events, we cannot use time to understand them, we must use memory, as Shembe illustrates through the remembrance of the Sabbath day and through imigidi (the scared dance) and holy months that I will discuss in Chapter Seven.

McTaggart (1908: 457) then refutes the reality of time, which he categorises as "A-, B- and C series theories." The A series, which I refer to here in relation to Mbiti's argument is "the series of positioning running from far past through the near past to the present and then from the present to the near future and the far future" (McTaggart, 1908: 458). Of significance here, is that for McTaggart, as summarised by Jaba (2024: 36): "time progresses from the future to the present and then recedes into the past." In traditional African thought, according to Mbiti (1969, 1990) "time is real" (Jaba, 2024: 34). Mbiti (1990) uses the Kikamba and Swahili languages to deconstruct the meaning of time (Mbiti, 1990). He argues that these two languages have phrases and verbs such as: "tene" and "mituki" in Kikamba and "sasa and "zamani" in Swahili (Mbiti, 1990: 22) that point to the African phenomenology of time. For Mbiti (1990), these phrases show that in African thought there is no concept of time which moves forward toward a future climax or the end of the world, theologically. Since the future does not exist beyond a few months, the future cannot be expected to offer a radical change from the current state of the present moment. This questions the idea of development, human development, or activities and achievements conceived as being linear (moving from low to high degrees). The centre of human thought and activities operates within a *now* moment. This is not to say that people should not study or work towards a future to improve themselves - but it is to say that the process connected with any human teleological action is never outside the act itself.

Thus, the conceptualisation of time according to past, present, and future seems to correspond to the utility of memory, temporality, and religion (the transcendental/imagination). This, in itself, is not catastrophic; what is cataclysmic is that past is not removed from the present while memory does not depend on the distant past and desires do not depend on a context, they depend on the imagination. As such, if we move from the imagination and back to memory, we realize that the imagination can influence memory, although it is difficult to see how definitively the distant past could interfere with the distant future for us who are alive. Again, if we begin from the imagination, it means we will begin in the future, but the linearity of time recognizes this as an idolum (false reasoning). But this is not an idolum, because to consider the existence of the future as the part of time that justifies eternity is to assign the imagination a social role. If the imagination has a social role, it does not have to wait for unknown distant conditions for it to have an influence, it can be exercised in the already existing human conditions.

Foucault (1975) eloquently conceptualises that the domains of power move beyond structural powers that primarily function within institutions. He shows how power also operates in the everyday lives of people. This power is one that has been "internalised" or "normalised," where punishment does not come from outside; it comes from within (Foucault, 1975). The development project by the industrialised nations of North America and Europe which were used as the yardstick for societies in Asia, Africa and Latin America to "catch up with industrialised nations" preoccupies many nations today (Escobar, 1952: 4). Development and industrialization came with new conceptions of time in Nguni society, more specifically (Atkins, 1988). This institutionalization of time presents a complex interplay of the development of power, in discipline and punishment which Foucault (1995) writes about extensively. In his critique of the modern world, Foucault (1995) describes this "movement from the body to the soul" (Foucault, 1995: 11). Development and disciplinary power shifted from centralised and overt oppression and punishment to covert and dispersed forms of authority, surveillance and judgement. The move from punishing the soul through new technologies of power serves to order, judge and examine us all. Punishment is not confined to the legal sphere but operates throughout society and all of its institutions. It is effective because prisoners never know that they are being watched. Power is produced and reproduced through intricate relationships between hegemonic projects (Foucault, 1995).

The institutionalization of faith through religion leads to some axioms: belief exists, and it must be convincing to be considered true. However, truth must be compelling in tangible ways, such as in how you live. Therefore, there will be a disconnect between faith-based institutions and the aspirations of individuals. This is why white domination sought to position itself as an object of belief by how it presented itself in the world. For instance, factories, universities, and churches serve as expressions of faith through a knowledge system rooted in a specific order of realism.

In relation to religion, Long (1995) seeks to understand religion in connection to the interpretive modalities of the modern world to comprehend how religion functions as an orientation of meaning-making for African people. Long (1995) employs the process of signification. Signification involves using signs, symbols, and imagery to interpret and understand religious meaning-making for various purposes (Long, 1995: 14). This approach helps illuminate the divergent ways human beings communicate, seek, and negotiate historical definitions and socio-cultural power in both sacred and secular spheres (Long, 1995). The history of slavery, segregation, and systemic oppression meant that in the past, Black people lacked the freedom to share their voices and visions, which would have allowed them to articulate their cultural and religious aspirations (Cone, 2010).

As a result of white supremacy, Black people were meant to embrace Western Christianity as a mark of being civilized (Mbiti, 1979). This created confusion because Black people already had their own cultures and experiences (Mbiti, 1979). There is then a constant connection between the past and the present. Fundamentally, Long (1999) and Cone (2010), in various ways, speak dynamically to the complex dimensions of modernity's effects on faith/Black faith and culture.

If there is a separation between private life and public participation, religion can either dispense with private life or public life, depending on the context in which religion is seen as legitimized to be effective (Cone, 2010). Consequently, this dilemma prompts us to consider whom religion serves: is it for individuals or institutions within society? If we assert that religion is for individuals, it becomes part of private life; if we claim it is for institutions, religion serves as a mechanism for governing social order. This implies that religion is separated from institutions

in the first scenario, while in the second, religion gains influence within societal institutions. Therefore, for religion to serve as an instrument of truth, faith, and freedom, it must align an individual's private life with the principles derived from religion that guide societal institutions.

Temporality and leisure: rest

Blacks have a connection to rest, which is central to their well-being and requires in-depth consideration. This is because a comprehensive understanding of work is contingent upon rest, and faith can become confusing without this relationship. Therefore, a dualism might arise when viewing work in an either/or (work/rest) manner. At the same time, this duality is resolved once the postulates of Paul and James are treated as two sides of the same coin instead of being interpreted as conflictual or opposed. Once Paul and James are recognized as positing that genuine human work can never be self-negation, the principle of rest no longer signifies a hiatus; it signifies recognition, meaning to observe one's work according to God, as Genesis 1:31 states, "then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good." The act of recognition suggests the confirmation of faith; it means celebrating faith's role at the end of a teleological act. Recognising that this study is not grounding itself in theology but in bringing the ideology and internalisation of how people understand faith and live out their lives with this ideology embedded in their minds determines how they engage with time and space.

Temporality and precarity: work

I highlight the key debates that some labour scholars have presented on the meaning of waged work and the purpose of labour (Arendt, 1958). These scholars show how waged work as it stands exposes the deeply precarious condition of Black people or poor Black workers. I begin with literature that provides a distinction between work and labour and the importance of providing this distinction in labour scholarship. I engage with scholars who have extensively interrogated the changing nature of work in South Africa and the evaluation of the changing workplace order as a reflection of how precarity is central to this changing work order. I draw from uMbuso weNkosi's (2023) analysis of how the changing workplace order emulates or is a reflection of the society from which the work is performed.

This historical account provides an understanding of the emergence of the work ethic. More specifically, Weber's (1903) protestant work ethic in the spirit of capitalism is an ethic that I then bring into conversation between religion and work in the different African Initiated

Churches and Pentecostal movements which predominantly have a large Black following in Africa. This way, I further seek to establish what seems to form part of a continuum of responses to the link of suffering to work, especially in relation to Black people. Marshall (2009: 3-4) states that religious beliefs cannot be reducible to political militancy or ideology, but they contribute to the historical conditions in which the complex field of political practice and representation are produced. Religious doctrines engage with the context of epistemology, normative and ontological insecurity of life. What this larger literature shows is that these churches offer a view into the complex belief systems in relation to a particular moment of precarity.

In the current discussions on work, which are mainly concerned with waged work arising from industrialization, work is generally understood to mean employment in any form, regardless of its value in a free market (Denning, 2010). However, work can also refer to any task set that collectively provides purpose and structure to a way of life (Webster et al., 1983). As argued by Arendt (1958), labour may be considered a much broader concept than work, typically encompassing tasks performed without any financial reward—both throughout the life course and in the everyday business of social reproduction. Indeed, discussions on the family and the gendering of caregiving responsibilities are closely tied to sociological debates on work and labour. These discussions are significant for this study, as Standing (2009) articulated in his distinction between work and labour.

The Meaning of Wage-Work and Labour in Labour Scholarship

Often, when we think about work, we either typically think of it in relation to "industrial capitalism" (Monteith et al., 2021: 1), or, work, is generally taken to mean "employment" in any form, regardless of whether it is of value to a free market (Denning, 2010). Rarely do we think of work that includes other kinds of activities such as work or activities done in the home, such as "reproductive labour, subsistence farming" (Wolpe, 1972: 436) and the work of "hustlers" in most informal townships around South Africa, for example (Dawson, 2022). Instead, "labour is usually defined as non-domestic, paid, legally codified, institutionalised, and socially safeguarded employment in the legalistic and economic sense" (Komlosy, 2018: 8). However, "work can also refer to any set of tasks that collectively give purpose and structure to a way of life" (Webster, 2005: 55).

Many of the terms thus used to characterise labour, such as "decent" (International Labour Organisation (ILO), 1999); "precarious" (Standing, 2009), and "informal" (Agarwala, 2009) are constructed on this basis (Montheith et al., 2021). Barchiesi (2011), for example, shows that not all work is labour, and that not all labour is work. This then blurs the lines between an understanding of what work and labour are. There is undeniably a lot going on for these debates, and this has preoccupied labour sociologists for many years. Most recently, the upsurge of digitalisation, the gig and platform economy. These debates have been brought to the fore again as they continue to highlight the continued labour struggles in contemporary South Africa in particular. And as Shaw and Waterstone (2002: 18) rightfully maintain: "We need to be careful how we use the term work, since its definition affects how we imagine future worlds."

With this foregrounding of the very definition of work and/labour, as well as the history of industrialization and its impact on different societies, as contextualized in Chapter One, it becomes easier to understand labour relations and labour struggles that continue to permeate society as capitalism continues to expand. However, it is crucial to think of these struggles and their effects from the perspective of workers. I look at Kenny (2018), Sefalafala (2020) and Dawson (2022) for the strength of their work in providing the meanings of work and labour, drawing from rich ethnographic work from various communities in South Africa.

Kenny (2018), in her compelling study with retail sector workers in and around Johannesburg, explores the different articulations of work for retail workers. These different articulations of work represent an important intervention by Kenny (2018) in the broader discussions of labour relations. According to Kenny (2018: 8), labour relations in South Africa "continue to be constituted through racial subjugation." Robinson (1983), in his critique of Marxism, argues, in *Black Marxism capitalism and Black radical tradition*, that capitalism as a whole was racialized, not only in Africa but also in Europe with the Irish and the Jews, for example. Of significance for the meaning of work for Kenny (2018: 15-16) is the "linguistic differentiation" of the terms for workers in "*aba*-sebenzi and *izi*-sebenzi," both of which she argues "can affirm the objectification of black people." Kenny (2018: 15-16) suggests that there was a linguistic shift from "isi" to "aba" in the 1970s as the labour movement shaped ideas of collective workers. The isiZulu word used – "abasebenzi" means workers, with the suffix aba- designating the plural noun category of human beings.

Fundamentally, Kenny's (2018) use of linguistic forms to denote workers highlights the meaning attached to the political subject of the worker by those using these terms, which leads to a non-class categorization of humans (and draws from imisebenzi and umsebenzi, which refer to work that supports others). Kenny (2018) contends that abasebenzi "became significant on its own terms to make demands around forms of relationality within the retail workplace itself, a space of national imaginary" (Kenny, 2018: 15-16). Ultimately, Kenny shows how waged labour becomes re-imagined as collective practice through the labour movement. Beyond simply being seen as wage labour, it is reclaimed as potentially empowering with the labour movement and the use in the change in linguistics to abasebenza emphasizing this. This further relates to the urgency for workers to prove they are not passive victims without a voice or power to challenge their working conditions (Webster, 1979; Buhlungu, 2007).

Work, then, understood as materializing labour that brings about social relations and ties of obligation and belonging, does not create "isisebenzi an object—performing a degrading work as umsebenzi" (Kenny, 2018: 16). Attention must be paid to certain distinctions: "imisebenzi" (ritual work) and "umsebenzi" (any kind of work), which are religious and more often cultural practices in which families relate to their ancestors, both emphasize the constitutive properties of work (Kenny, 2018). Thus, and perhaps more fundamentally, for Kenny (2018: 16), "abasebenzi stated a claim to a relational redefinition of labour. Abasebenzi means variously: adult, participative, respect-worthy, facilitative of other social relations, skilful, collective and public."

Post-1994, the migrant labour system, low-wage work, and mass youth unemployment continue. In September 2024, Stats SA reported a 60.20% increase in the unemployment rate among youth aged 15 to 34 years. The term "omahlalela" as referenced by Sefalafala (2018, 2020), alongside Kenny's (2018: 185) notion of "sitting at home and doing nothing," encapsulates the anxieties surrounding the lack of participation by most people in labour. Kenny's (2018: 185) analysis with reference to Thando Shabalala's expression of how she understands her "spatial marker-home," divided off as "private", and its association with inactivity "sitting and doing nothing." For Kenny (2018) this provides an analysis that seems to affirm a separation by Thando, of the "private space and inaction and the public space and action" (Kenny, 2018: 186). This is significant as it highlights how the "spatial metaphor

provides an alternative interpretation of the meaning of wage-work and labour, subverting the binary of private and public, and underscores the political relevance of work in building personhood, social relations, and future political communities" (Kenny, 2018: 18-19). Unregulated work, often occurring within the domestic sphere, overlaps with survival priorities, particularly in urban areas. The metaphor for unemployment, "sitting at home and doing nothing," or "omahlalela" and "umahlalela," connects to how "participatory citizenship is understood in relation to community building, with the belief that people derive identity from compensated work" (Sefalafala, 2020: 1).

Sefalafala (2020) suggests that in the most recent context, the Covid-19 pandemic exposed the policy gaps in relation to unemployment. This is in relation to the increased precarity during the pandemic. The refusal of low-wage jobs is a critique of precariousness and racialized inequality and a political demand for social and economic inclusion. Similarly, post-Covid-19, the unemployed remain abandoned and excluded from the economy and society. They are seen as "bomahlalela" in their communities and families or seen as people who lack an understanding of what it means to be a person of value in the world (Sefalafala, 2018).

Like Dawson's (2022) study in Zandspruit of young people who rejected low wages, none of them hoped to work in low-paid, low-skilled jobs. However, working was essential for them to activate their desires for material possessions and secure rewarding jobs in the future for a good life. Thus, working was a "future-oriented activity, a pursuit that ensured the circulation of resources and enabled mobility, both physical, as in the movement between spaces, and sometimes economic, but more often the movement of people toward something to come" (Kenny, 2018, 204). For the unemployed, having a job is a future achievement and an affirmation of self within a lineage (Dawson, 2022). The discourse surrounding unemployment as inactivity and powerlessness reinforced workers' experiences of work tied to agency, and sitting at home meant not being fully human (Sefalafala, 2020: 2).

Unlike Dawson's case of young men refusing to work, Sefalafala (2020:1) argues that "productivism has become an important measure of personhood." This indicates a social organization integrated into the industrial processes of valuing commodities hierarchically. In other words, this society has adopted the vice of defining human networks in market terms, granting more status to those who participate in industrial production while assigning less value

to individuals engaged in other forms of social production. Therefore, the problem with unemployment extends beyond mere poverty or financial lack; the central issue is the exclusion from the "productivism anchored hegemonic source of meaning and dignity" (Sefalafala, 2020:2). The unemployed endure a life filled with uncertainty and fear due to their state of anomie. According to Sefalafala (2020:1), the pandemic underscored that jobs alone cannot provide security and dignity for everyone. Covid-19 revealed the urgent need for a dual approach—one that acknowledges the necessity for both wages and comprehensive social protection within society. Disconnecting income from labour and expanding our imagination to reconsider what constitutes work has become recognized as the Basic Income Grant or Universal Basic Income (Sefalafala, 2020).

The key is to rethink the concept of work, and the Covid-19 pandemic showed the failure of employment as an effective strategy of social inclusion and inequality. It is further shown partly to be an outcome of the broken-down mechanism of income distribution based on wages (Sefalafala, 2024: 10). Sefalafala's case study on retrenched mine workers revealed a high tendency of the unemployed to prefer to be part of a wage labour system than to be part of a grant system. They proclaim this in an epoch where jobs increasingly are no longer a viable source of security and dignity. Alarmingly, jobs are beginning to fail to service their historical promise of mediating between the economy and society, which forebodingly forces us to regard the idea of full-time employment as a thing of the past even though the vision of a decent life, equity and social justice is still possible outside of wages (Sefalafala, 2020, 2024). Denning (2010), in his analysis of the ideology of a "wage less life," (Denning, 2010: 273) critiques the traditional centrality of wage labour. He proposes a future where society and human life within it is no longer driven by the means of economic activity to find meaning and sustenance.

Weeks (2011: 6) presents a compelling argument that "the history of the imposition of waged labour and its dominant ethic is incomplete without a parallel history of rebellion and refusals." Barcheisi (2011) suggests the alternative of having a post-work society to be achieved through dismantling the very nature of work as commonly known and practised. Gorz (1999) and Weeks (2011) explore the idea of leisure time being as important as work. The way in which Weeks (2011) understands the nature of work and the formation of the working class makes it clear as to why she sees the importance of dismantling work as it is. Gorz (1999), like Weeks (2011), advocates for a post-work society where individuals could be freed from wage work

and can instead engage in other activities that are fulfilling and contribute to the making of others, as Kenny (2019) puts it. Gorz (1999), advocates for an end of work in which the re-evaluation of work and leisure, creativity and social relationships are central to the organisation of society.

If we understand wage work as finding its value in linear time, we must then understand this condition as one which depersonalizes a waged worker. The argument has been that time for Africans, *ceteris paribus*, is not a linear time of past, present, and future. Time, when looked at in this manner, presupposes a memory, an active intellect, and an imagination. History is created through memory, the present is created through temporality, and the future is a projection of desires not yet achievable. A work that requires memory but rejects the intellect cannot be a work that achieves human desires; hence, it must be regarded as an oppressive work. Social dimensions of this kind bring about the "production of vulnerabilities" (Gordon, 2022: 13). This sets the stage for precarious conditions; ongoing poverty, inequality etc., the invisibility of certain groups and exploitation (Gordon, 2022).

The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism

In the Protestant ethic, Weber argues that religious beliefs and practices significantly contributed to the breakdown of economic traditionalism and the emergence of modern rational capitalism (McKinnon, 2002). Protestant beliefs converge to create the "spirit of capitalism" (McKinnon, 2002: 62) which has a unique affinity with the capitalist practices of small-scale businesspeople. More especially, Weber on "modern capitalism" (McKinnon, 2002:62) argues that it was formed by an elective affinity between the external and institutional form of capitalism on the one hand, and on the other, the internal and the ethical spirit of capitalism rather than its form.

According to McKinnon (2002), the idea of "the calling," came from Luther, and it suggests that faithful Christians should serve God devotedly in their occupations instead of retreating to the monastery to serve God (which critiques the Catholic ideology of the Pope as the mediator between God and the people). Calvinists believe that God predestined an everlasting life; and that death, heaven, and hell relate to the idea that how one lives ultimately determines their afterlife (McKinnon, 2002: 63). The Protestant Reformation was influenced by capitalism—the spirit of capitalism.

Weber (1905, cited in McKinnon 2002: 63) asserts that "we intend to establish to what extent religious influences have, in fact, been partially responsible for the qualitative shaping and the quantitative expansion of that "spirit" across the world, and that concrete aspects of capitalist culture originate from them." This connects to the structure of a capitalist culture characterized by hard work and a labour-driven society.

> The confusion of the reciprocal influences emanating from the material base, the social and political forms of organization, and the spiritual content of cultural epochs (specific periods in history) of the Reformation implies that the only viable way to proceed is to investigate whether and how effective affinities between certain forms of religious belief and the ethic of the calling can be identified… (McKinnon, 2002: 63).

The Emergence of African-Initiated Churches

Sundkler (1961), Oosthuizen (1986), Anderson (1999), and many others have extensively examined the formation of African Initiated Churches (AICs) and the reasons for their emergence. According to Sundkler (1961: 30), African Initiated Churches "are churches that split from Western-oriented churches, referred to as independent churches, initiated by Africans themselves without ties to Western missions, and are called indigenous." The term AICs is a broad designation used to describe "African Independent Churches, African Initiated churches, African Independent churches" (Anderson, 2001: 1). AICs began in the 19th century, and by the 20th century, "African initiated churches constituted an all-African population of 42,000. By 1983, there were 29 million, accounting for 12 percent of the Christian population in Africa. In the year 2000, they were estimated at 54 million, representing 14 percent of the total population of Africa" (Anderson, 2001: 4-5). Fihlani (2016) inquired why governments are restricting churches, noting that there are 57% Protestant churches in Africa, including AICs and Anglicans. One significant reason for this growth relates to the dissatisfaction of Black followers with the mission churches' inability to incorporate African Traditional religious beliefs into their presentation of Christianity. By the end of the 20th century, AICs had spread across Africa, becoming the continent's most prominent Christian churches (Kealotswe, 2014: 1).

Although AICs are dynamic and not homogeneous, one type of AIC may embrace concepts that another may not necessarily adopt, both in practise and theology (Anderson, 2001: 2). AICs represent a distinct style of African theology, which Anderson refers to as "African

narrative theology," where "theology is formed in relation to the felt needs and questions of people" (Anderson, 2001: 4). They further emphasize "the relationship between the gospel and culture, contextualize Christianity, develop new forms of mission strategies, engage in a radicalized experiment of an indigenized Christianity, and highlight intercultural communication of the Christian gospel" (Anderson, 2001: 5).

For this reason, many Black followers were drawn to these churches due to their emphasis on African traditions, including practices such as acknowledging ancestors, African praise and worship, and the use of native languages. It is important to note that, as Mbiti (1975: 16) argues, there is often a misconception among writers about African religions and African Initiated Churches, particularly among White scholars and some African scholars, who have been inclined to use the same terms and hold incorrect ideas about AIC practices. Mbiti (1975) asserts that Africans do not worship ancestors as their departed relatives. Worship entails much more than what these writers suggest. It is believed that departed relatives continue to exist in various ways, and people express this belief by building shrines for the departed and placing food or drink there, or on graves, and sometimes mentioning them in prayers. However, these acts of respect for the departed do not constitute worship; rather, they reflect a belief that the deceased, even up to four or five generations back, should not be forgotten.

By recognising their lineage and embracing African cultures, the AICs foster deeper spiritual connections for their followers with their heritage. Consequently, it is unsurprising that literature on African Initiated Churches frequently portrays them as either reactionary or resistance movements (Oosthuizen, 1961; Sundkler, 1961). Anderson (1999) notes that various terms often describe AICs, including revolution, schism, and renewal. This stems from their status as "breakaway" movements from established historic churches (Anderson, 2001: 120). According to Kanyane (2017: 74), this situation arose because the leadership and administration of former churches were predominantly White, which marginalized the authority and voice of Black followers. In the 21st century, an increasing discourse suggests that African Initiated Churches should not solely be seen as reactions or rejections of Western Christianity (Mpanza, 2023).

The first African Initiated Churches (AICs) were those that "do not claim to be prophetic or have special manifestations of the Holy Spirit, and which have modelled themselves more

closely after the European mission churches they separated from." These churches have been referred to as Ethiopian or Ethiopian-type churches in Southern Africa, as well as African churches in Nigeria (Anderson, 2001: 15). The origins of Ethiopian churches date back to the 4th century in Ethiopia, from where they later disseminated across Africa. While some contend that AICs are not just reactionary movements, others maintain that these churches often resemble their predecessor churches in practices and doctrines (Anderson, 2005). For example, they engage in infant baptism, follow liturgies, sing translated European hymns, dress in European-style attire, and exhibit a less enthusiastic demeanour during services (Anderson, 2001: 5). These characteristics reflect a Catholic-oriented doctrine and practice prevalent today.

Sundkler (1961: 56) argues that "church organization and Bible interpretation are largely drawn from the patterns of Protestant Mission Churches from which they seceded," a reference to the Methodist church founded by John Wesley in the 19th century, followed by the Presbyterian Church established by John Calvin, rooted in reformed theology, and the Lutheran Church founded in the 16th century, which is based on Martin Luther's teachings. Ethiopia played a significant role in forming African breakaway churches like the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), particularly in Southern Africa, alongside the Ethiopian Orthodox Churches (Comaroff, 1985; Anderson, 2001). In the African Initiated Churches, individuals derive meaning and understanding of their reality through their connection with their ancestors, whom they believe influence their current lives. They hold that severing ties with their ancestry leads to a loss of identity and supernatural intervention. It is thought that the precarious conditions of their lives arise from losing the connection with "abaphansi"—meaning ancestors.

Healing Churches Linked to Prophets

These African independent churches emphasize spiritual power (Anderson, 2001). They are independent African churches with historical and theological roots in the Pentecostal movement, although they have diverged from Western Pentecostal forms over the years (Cabrita, 2010: 444). They highlight the working of the Holy Spirit. This is the largest and most significant group of the AIC and includes a wide variety of some of the largest churches in Africa—the Kimbanguist and African Apostolic (Abapostoli) churches in Central and Southern Africa, the Aladura and Harrist churches in West Africa, and the Zionist Churches (AmaZioni) and AmaNazaretha or Shembe in Southern Africa, each with over a million followers (Comaroff, 1985; Anderson, 2001). Due to their substantial following and growth, they are

now recognized by the World Council of Churches, something they were denied for many years by colonial powers (Anderson, 2001).

Isaiah Shembe is connected to other African spiritual leaders who built their followings around explicit critiques of White missions (Sithole, 2016; Kumalo and Mujinga, 2017). Likewise, Prophet Engenas Lekgayane of the Zion Christian Church in Northern Transvaal (Limpopo), one of the largest African Initiated Churches in Southern Africa and the second largest in Africa (Anderson, 1999), also rejected colonization in a similar manner. After receiving an education from an Anglican Mission, Lekgayane chose to form his own church after a lengthy search for a spiritual home that addressed African issues (Sundkler, 1961; Comaroff, 1985; Vilakazi, 1986). In Nkamba, Congo, after Isaiah Shembe and Lekgayane established their churches, Prophet Simon Kimbangu of the Kimbanguist Church, who was also a healer, founded his church and began prophesying about the liberation of Black people (Kayango, 2005). Simon Kimbangu also addressed the concerns raised by both Isaiah Shembe and Engenas Lekgayane. These are just a few examples of the many leaders who opposed missionaries and the influence they had in their regions.

Additionally, written theology in these churches is less emphasized; instead, there is a significant difference in liturgy and belief systems, with a strong focus on prophetic healing practices (Anderson, 2001). Foundational to these churches are clear theological presuppositions that are more evident in practice than in dogma (Anderson, 2001). Similarly, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches place a great emphasis on healing. One of the most defining features of these churches is their style of dress, such as the use of a universal uniform: white robes with sashes for some, and military-style khaki for others. This adaptation to and confrontation with African tradition highlights the contributions these churches make in contrast to European mission churches (Comaroff, 1985). Furthermore, Comaroff (1985) argues that the adaptation of Pentecostal churches resulted in something "new" being created for the members.

Maxwell's (2006) instructive study on African Initiated Churches examines key movements since the 1990s. He establishes crucial connections with previous studies while making essential recommendations for a new direction in the field of African Christian Studies. These churches focus on prophecy, healing, and the Holy Spirit, with their foundational theology

emphasizing the capacity to connect with the Holy Spirit without mediation; it is through this connection that healing occurs. The common thread of Pentecostalism, connecting both old and new churches, lies in the emphasis on a personal encounter with God through the Holy Spirit, prophetic healing, and spiritual churches. This focus on experiential rather than dogmatic aspects aims to address the existential needs of the African worldview. These churches represent African independence from missionary control and underscore the legitimate biblical authority of African Christianity—many of which were influenced by Black American breakaway churches, particularly the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) in the 19th century.

Maxwell (2006) considers anthropology and other related disciplines to provide a robust argument for a reconsidered approach to Western versus African scholarship. Citing the limitations and failures of other scholarship, some of his findings suggest studying African Christianity similarly to Christianity of other territories such as Latin America, Asia, and Europe. This opposes previous positions that believed African Christianity was merely Christianity from Europe. In addition to this, Maxwell (2006) recommends that future scholarships consider such issues as human rights and decolonisation as a key feature of African Initiated Churches, and here I agree with him. The Shembe Church would then typically form part of the African Initiated Church as far as this decolonial ideology and practice is concerned. However, I do believe that there is more to the Shembe church than just being identified as part of the AIC movement. This is because of its emphasis on and retaining of the Sabbath rest, which most AICs do not practice or observe in the same manner that the Shembe church does (the exception being the International Pentecost Holiness Church founded by Rev Frederick Samuel Modise in 1962). A question that permeates in relation to the above is how the Shembe church (while often associated with AICs) is positioned uniquely in the indigenous sphere since it historically had no institutional ties with any particular mission-based church, notwithstanding that its founder embraced the Bible and sought to establish a wholly African orientation to theological interpretation and application.

Pentecostalism: Name It and Claim It

A probe into Pentecostalism has yielded essential material for this study, particularly regarding some of the popular claims made by other churches about providing economic liberation or emancipation for their members—including issues related to miracles and the prosperity gospel

(Khanyile, 2016). Pentecostalism is one of the fastest growing and most prominent forms of Christianity after Catholicism (Martin, 2002, Burgess, 2006). Its origins can be traced back to the early nineteenth century in the United States of America (Nunez, 2016: 152). Anderson (2002: 167) notes that Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches represent a third response to White cultural domination and power in churches. For Marshall (2009: 2), Pentecostalism constitutes the most crucial sociocultural force in Southern Nigeria. Katsaura (2019) also adds that Lagos, Nigeria, is the current Pentecostal hub of the world. This makes Nigeria the centre of anointing, prophecy, healing, and miracles. Nunez (2016) further notes that the presence of the Holy Spirit, which is often physical and commonly manifested in the ability to speak in tongues, adds to faith healing, prophecy, and deliverance from demons, all of which are central experiences in this form of Christianity. This dynamism is the main attraction of Pentecostal churches.

In Pentecostal services, for instance, Stolz (2011: 2) observes that "paralytics arise from their wheelchairs, stiff knees become flexible, cancerous ulcers disappear, and headaches vanish." Among other things that happen during the services, Stolz highlights that the "atmosphere of miracles and healings" is dominant, and the idea of "all things are possible" fills the audience with hope and confidence in overcoming their everyday struggles. While many debates surround the possibility of these miracles, some see them as nothing more than a placebo effect (Randi, 1989; Rose, 1971; Abbot et al., 2001; Ernest, 2003). This debate is inconsequential; what becomes important is the effect or the need for instant liberation through healing that some of the churchgoers may be desperate to receive in some instances to curb structural issues that seem too pressing and complex to resolve in any other way. In other words, politics and previous religious denominations seem to have failed participants, and the only way out is absolute faith in God, who, through the Holy Spirit, will perform miracles that will transform one's life.

Moreover, Marshall (2009) quotes Pastor Ojewale, who speaks of power and struggle of revolution of the coming battle, of militancy and strategy in raising an army to hasten the changes required. He suggests that this is at the level of everyday realities of our personal lives and the political, religious, economic, and social systems. This further highlights the impact and the effect that Pentecostalism is intended to have on its followers, the act of appealing to faith that permeates the social production systems of the communities and nations.

Pentecostalism instils a sense of hope and the potential for earthly prosperity attainable through God. The practices and performative rituals, expressed through fervent prayer, lengthy church services, mid-week prayers, all-night vigils, midnight prayers, testimonies of healing, and Bible studies (Robbins, 2004; Marshall, 2009; Meyer, 2009; Maxwell, 2006; Tazanu, 2016), emphasize the spiritual support experienced in real life, which may represent the kind of liberation people seek. Furthermore, stickers on the cars, homes, and workplaces of believers, anointed materials such as handkerchiefs, anointed oil and water, and various other objects, including reading materials and the music surrounding believers throughout the city (Geischere, 2004; Meyer, 2009; Garbin, 2013; Tazanu, 2016), illustrate how Pentecostalism provides tangible resources to its followers (Khanyile, 2016).

At the heart of Pentecostalism is the concept of being born again, which primarily relates to renewal and regeneration (Anderson et al., 2005; Marshall, 2009). Marshall (2009) further analyses this concept as a response to corrupt and broken religious and political traditions. This notion takes on a "renewed significance in light of the uncertainty of the post-colonial present" (Marshall, 2009: 8). It presents the possibility of redemption and reiterates the promise of hope and change. This is especially evident in Nigeria, where a self-conscious engagement with the Nigerian past and the failures of the civilizing mission introduces new and significant disruptions through the born-again movement (Marshall, 2009: 7). The break with the past involved in being born again is characterized by a deliberate confrontation with the system of distinctions inherited from the colonial era (Marshall, 2009: 10).

Pentecostalism focuses on the doctrine of being "born again", which, as Marshall eloquently states, allows followers to shed a history of tradition and a culture marked by political injustices and social inequalities, forging a path forward with the hope of manifesting change through words as a means to achieve reformation and liberation. Comaroff (1999: 4) discusses how millennial capitalism, emerging as the gospel of salvation, convinces followers that their lives will be immediately transformed through the Messiah. For instance, Katsaura (2019), in an interview conducted in Nigeria, recounts a Zimbabwean pilgrim's experience at one of the largest Pentecostal churches in Lagos:

> As I go back to Zimbabwe, I expect things to be different. This place is a place of power. T.B. Joshua is a mighty man of God. You know, having gone through my prayer program here and after being anointed with morning water, I have been receiving phone calls from people who have disconnected from me. Suddenly, they have begun to think of me. The anointing I have received here is opening doors for me. I will return soon to give my testimony. (Katsaura, 2019: 67)

Additionally, Comaroff (2009) observes that this outsourcing of prayers by pastors—referred to affectionately as “man of God” or “daddy” by their followers—involves a “service fee” within the "faith market" (Comaroff, 2009: 20). In South Africa, people pay to travel and find ways to generate income to receive prayers for healing from diseases, unemployment, and depression, and to reconnect with their families. This manner of organizing and popularizing theology emphasizes tithing in ways reminiscent of market-based principles, where every essential product is vigorously advertised due to stakeholders' confidence in its profitability. According to Comaroff (2009: 20-21), there is a phenomenon of "space-time compression," with “here and now healing,” that brings God to the people, providing instant healing and demonstrating God’s faithfulness in response to their own faithfulness. Furthermore, this also promises an immediate desire for success, embodying both the magical and the millennial (Comaroff, 1999).

From the Pope praying, or confession of sins, to a personal experience with God through the arousing of the Spirit, we see similarities with the mainstream denominations: the exercise of faith which says that the material sacrifice will yield a quick and wholesome response from God. Comaroff (1999) concludes that if the John Wesley sermons on stewardship, for instance, echo Marxist theory in advocating that the value of a commodity should be determined by the amount of human labour used in its production, this same relationship can be picked up by the sermons preached by the so-called ‘man of God’ which mimic the logic of finance capital and investment in God. The refrain here is: the more you put in, the more you get out. For Comaroff (1999: 46), “this quality plays on the optimistic millennialism that has always been inherent in capitalism, enhanced with laissez-faire in its fundamentalist form.”

Lastly, while the AICs see the need to merge both the cultural and the religious together with the aim of allowing the followers to be in touch with their past and their traditions while at the

same time embracing the new-found Christianity, the Shembe church regards this connection between the Zulu traditions and God as disproportionate without the observance of the Sabbath. Though Marshall (2009) believes that the stance on authenticity to African religion is in more ways political, this is due to the way that Christianity has been a vector of Western imperialism to the ongoing salience of the trope of authenticity.

Fundamentally, as Nyuke (2016: 161) rightly states, “for many Africans today, religion provides a significant identity resource; more importantly, during a period of rapid social change that distorts economic, social, and political lifestyles in unprecedented ways. Religion offers a true means of anchoring stability and a pathway to security." Pillay (1994) argues that for Parsons and Malinowski, religion acts as "a tonic of self-confidence," helping individuals cope with various "stressors" that could destabilize society. Nunez (2015) presents a counterpoint that highlights the ongoing precariousness of Black individuals in these churches, raising the potential issue of a disconnection between expectation, promise, and reality. The AIC churches have been depicted in some ways as detached from the challenging realities faced by most Black followers, even though their religious programmes do include initiatives, particularly advocating for employment amidst rising unemployment rates in African communities. I believe the churches accomplish much more than what is typically documented about them. As it stands, Vilakazi, Mthethwa, and Mpanza’s (1986) work critiques mainstream perspectives on the AICs, as we will explore further below. Fundamentally, a gap remains in the literature concerning AICs and Pentecostal churches in relation to labour, and faith remains.

Faith vs. Work[s] Debate

Long (1995) provides a theory of religion that is able to surmount theological narrowness that can lead to the intellectual, if not socio-political, hegemony of any specific faith tradition; an interpretation in which religion is prior to and in fact legitimates Christianity. Religion is transcendental, liberating, and universal. The church is one place where one looks for religion. However, the church is not the only context for the meaning of religion. The Christian faith provides a language for the meaning of religion, but not all the religious meanings of Black communities were encompassed by the Judeo-Christian forms of religion (Long, 1995).

Following Tillich's (1957) logic of theology and its systemic method, where faith serves as the foundation of being and existence for human beings—whether they identify as religious or not—the working definition of faith is described as sure of what we hope for and confident about what we do not see, according to Christian theology. This has sparked intense debate and has become a central point of contention among various church denominations, some of which embrace the notions of faith, justification, and works as presented polemically by Paul and James in the Bible. The paradox between Paul and James revolves around the interplay of faith and works to attain liberation or salvation. This concern is crucial since liberation is at the heart of the Christian gospel (Cone, 2010). Although many theologians have come to see Paul and James' arguments as two sides of the same coin, they remain significant in Christian theology concerning salvation and faith, as faith embodies the state of being fundamentally concerned. That which is deemed necessary in one's life effectively becomes the object or subject of one's existence—in this context, the purpose of one's life and their views on the afterlife related to the concepts of heaven and ancestry (Tillich, 1951; Mbiti, 1979).

In Romans 5:1-2, Paul states: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we also have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we exult in the hope of the glory of God." In contrast, James argues that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. Salvation, which can be understood as being freed or liberated, especially in the context of Blackness, is the ultimate concern. For Paul, justification by faith, rather than by works, is crucial because individuals tend to prioritize their works, thereby removing God from the equation. Conversely, James asserts that faith without works is dead. Paul addresses the issue of works by qualifying them as not an end in themselves. As James maintains, there can be no good works outside of faith; without works, it is evidence that faith is dead.

The Christian notion of faith, powerful though it is, seems escapist in some ways, as it allows individuals to have a particular understanding and conceptualization of eternity. Here, the question of faith borders on something that Mbiti is ultimately concerned with regarding time. For Mbiti, there is a contradiction in how modernity understands time as past, present, and future. This position aligns with Wynter (1984), who shows how the conception of time in Europe becomes the blueprint for understanding time in all societies. Christianity, through

theology, asserts that one is justified by faith and not by works, which aligns with Protestantism.

What does this imply for Black individuals, specifically concerning the labour they do for a living? The debate between faith and works, and by extension, the idea of faith and good works, has always been problematic—an issue that would be resolved through a dialectic using time as a kernel for finding a solution. The Protestants discuss domestic versus industrial work, compelling them to confront the passage of time. We are justified by faith and not by works (domestic, industrial, ritual (umsebenzi), or reproductive). James and Paul lead one to see good works not merely comprising remunerated tasks but also spiritual endeavours. This suggests that there are works we perform with our bodies, and works that transcend bodily productivity and are visceral.

Furthermore, this implies that we possess an anatomical body that performs these works, and we also have a soul capable of internalizing the commandments, with the process of internalizing these commandments considered a form of work. In Joshua 22:5, we read about Joshua addressing the Israelites, saying, "but take careful heed to do the commandments and the law which Moses commanded you, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." Additionally, Paul's conception of faith as a priority does not negate work; instead, it relates to the processes our souls undergo when internalizing the "word" of God. In James's view, regarding works as the necessary supplement to faith, he does not devalue faith; he associates bodily performed works with the guidance of the "word" of God.

Significantly, however, the Black reality, in many ways, operates within the boundaries of lack and is always caught up in an "emancipatory struggle" (Mamdani, 2020: 5). Thus, Black Theory, according to Gordon (2010:196), is not only suspicious of the "shortcomings and the injustices that are embedded in the blueprints and foundations of modernity, it also critiques Western knowledge systems. Perhaps the dis-embedding of this reality of "lack" requires Audre Lorde's (1978: 53) radical exercise of the "erotic" that will challenge racism, sexism, etc. Desire interwoven with the erotic becomes, as Mazibuko (2022:29) conceptualizes, "a crucial source of knowledge of ourselves as it articulates [truthfully] our wants, longings, and urges that are not only sexual" but rather ones that seek "radical social change" (hooks, 1991a).

Blackness is often considered as deficient because it has been removed from a linkage with truth. This perception is because African religions are the background of African cultures, which do not rely on intelligence as expressed through literacy. A sense of wholeness rather than lack could be achieved through understanding how colonialism has labelled African religions as superstitions and backward because the religions did not depend on written scripture. If we consider that oral literature is not as significant as written scripture, it means that Black people did not have a theology. This point proves that when they went to mission schools, they believed they could form their own theology. This has negative implications on the ways we understand work or labour: work becomes the expression of human intelligence, and activity that does not find expression through accreditation is threatened with falling outside what is categorized as work.

For knowledge to be taken seriously, it must create truth and belief, which Mudimbe (1988) understands as the significance of knowing something or is driven by the idea of knowing something. This requires one to see that this is not something that is left to the imagination. Here then, White people are making themselves the truth, hence the image of a white Jesus, so that people can believe in their "truth." Time and work are related to each other in the protestant ethic through clock time, which serves as a value signifier to the output of the industrial class. Faith is related to truth because truth is the evidence of the operations of temporality and being. As such, temporality or truth is absorbed by faith, which does not rely on tactility as truth does.

Temporality and the future: faith

Berlant (2011: 9), a literary scholar, speaks of "cruel optimism." The persistent thoughts of a better future, where things will be favourable, like an end of the world, the return of a messianic figure—our attachment to that thought/dream is cruel if we think of time, according to Mbiti, the 'past and the present.' This gap between what one hopes for, or desires, becomes inherently detrimental to the individual when the individual obsesses over what they desire, as it holds them back from the actual reality, or actual time. Can optimism be cruel? Mbiti (1979) says we should not think beyond tomorrow as if to say the future is cruel. Judging from the cruelty of the present—if events determine time—we have the present and the past. And the present in many ways is cruel—for Black people at least. The future has nothing to do with optimism, perhaps.

Essentially, the end of the future is not something we should be concerned about. It is cruel, in fact, to think about the future, it would seem, as our very essence and being rests upon the now moment. So, we need to find ways of practising faith that seek truth outside crude hope, where we recognize that the future can only exist in the realm of approximation. The future exists in its possibility—but the future is not truthful because it borders on proximity. The future exists outside the realm of truth.

Perhaps this is where the question of faith comes in. How then do faith and work correlate, if your work cannot justify you even if work influences your faith? If we consider work within a limited conceptualization, which is a timed activity, and a recordable activity and whose end is a reward at a particular contracted date, then faith and work are not coexistent. Faith is a pursuit of truth that is outside of anything that we do because of necessity. Faith cannot be defined by labour or work. Theological interpretations of human reality, if we take Long's formulation, must try to understand human suffering and help guide the alleviation of such suffering instead of being a stop short at understanding the notions of the sublime experience as a reward to religion.

Re-membering as a Praxis of Rest

Memory and remembering and remembrance play a critical role in the church and its members and followers. Historically, the collapse of the apartheid government not only brought hope for those who suffered but also allowed them to inscribe and perhaps envision a new South Africa. De Klerk's recognition of apartheid as a crime, in a recorded speech before his passing[13], did what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) expected from the perpetrators of the apartheid regime. The TRC chaperoned the transitional process from the apartheid government to the African National Congress-led government with the intention of allowing both the "perpetrators" and "victims" to come face-to-face and confront the past for healing and [making use of the Christian moral code] of forgiveness as a starting point (Motsemme, 2004b: 911).

[13] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwL2NpgvKf8 recorded by News24 on the 11 November 2021

The Commission has justifiably received much criticism for its performativity (Bozzoli, 1998), its disingenuous use of certain kinds of narratives/testimonies which were prematurely sourced from victims at the time (Magadla, 2023), masqueraded by the parade of rainbow nationalism (Maake 1996; Gqola 2001). Of relevance here, is the methodology of narrative enquiry employed by the Commission as a means of retracing, "truth" telling as a means of reparation. Remembering the past, whether as a tragedy or as a nostalgic past (Dhlamini, 2009), centres on the importance of memories as a significant basis for a collective memory of the past and a future in the context of South Africa (Motsemme, 2004b). Dhlamini (2009) in *Native Nostalgia*, seeks to redeem nostalgia as a legitimate mode of remembering, and thus a modality of rewriting history. He pits sensory memory against the distortions that render all Black life as homogenous suffering. His impulse is that forgetting can disfigure and distort the past, and it is the memory that serves as a corrective (Worby and Ally, 2013: 462). H.I.E. Dhlomo's body of work of remembering, showed how the presence of coloniality "dis-membered [fragmented] pasts; and narratives which are a fundamental part of memory work and truth telling, the possibility to resist and going beyond time and geography" (Peterson, 1991: 25).

Ellen Khuzwayo (1990, quoted in Peterson, 2019: 355) explained that "in the black communities we remember our stories for a little longer than other people do. [Since] after all, for so many years now, we have owned our stories while owning so little else. Thus, memories, as an act of remembering, like Morrison conceptualizes in her 1987 novel *Beloved*, remain in one's psyche (in this context, it remains in spaces and places) even if they are repressed and "presumably forgotten" (Worby and Ally, 2013: 463) by the conscious mind for its traumatic and damaging effects.

Telling and retelling of the past and experiences, in our Black communities is crucial; stories are often told by grandmothers and those stories are transposed from generation to generation through retelling (Magoqwana, 2010). A good example is Nomavenda Mathiane in the novel *Eyes in the Night* (2016), who narrates the untold story of her grandmother through her eldest sister Ahh, who lived in the twentieth century. Her grandmother, Nombhosho (which means bullet), was the daughter of Mqokotshwa Makhoba, one of King Cetswayo's generals of the iNgobamakhosi regiment, who later got elevated to the status of advisor to king. The story provides a context of life in Zululand pre-colonization and during the war from the perspective

of an ordinary member of the community. The grandmother's memory (see also Kholeka Shange, 2019) begins from the point that was most hurtful and traumatic:

> I begin my narrative by recalling what happened in 1879, the year in which I grew up faster than I could shout my name. That year was the one in which we experienced events and encounters that no one, particularly a child, should ever witness. It was also the year my people lost everything—their land and fields—and were reduced to being vagrants and beggars in the land of their birth. (Mathiane, 2016: 13)

This memory of war through a traumatic revisit of the past by Gogo uNombhosho paints a vivid image of the events of the war in Zululand in 1879. This narration is important for us as she is concerned with naming. By naming the mountains and caves where they lived, we put a name to the unnamed regiments who died during the war, as well as getting a vivid image of how they survived the caves in Shiyane mountains, eating "rats and roots"—with her husband, their grandfather, coming to the caves occasionally to see them and move them to different places of the mountain according to how close the British soldiers were to them. She continues:

> Gogo described their abode in the mountain as a single entrance cave that was secured by a huge boulder against an enormous tree trunk. A small strip was left open to let in light and a bit of air. The interior was perpetually damp and since the cave was a narrow structure, there was little room to manoeuvre. They could only lie down or sit with their legs folded. The ground was covered with grass, soft tree leaves and branches which served as a mattress beneath their grass mats. To enter the cave one had to crawl, one person at a time. Apart from the chirping birds in the morning that heralded the beginning of another day, there was no way of telling night from day. (Mathiane, 2016: 59)

The place, which is marred with bloody imagery of the 1879 war, and travelling to those painful details was necessary for Nombhosho, to indicate that the place/mountains which once belonged to them worked for their good at protecting them and providing for them while they were under attack. This journey from mountain to mountain stores these experiences and is a sacred place of remembering. In a similar way that the members of the church make use of

memories and places, the January Pilgrimage is one such moment in which mount Nhlangakazi is a site and place of memory that requires a revisit to show continuity and prevent erasure.

Mathiane's narrative from her grandmother highlights the aftermath of the Isandlwana war of 1879. This links to Shembe's emphasis on memory as an example of how work was done, in that the Zulu natives did not work for other people:

> The old warriors shook their heads in dismay when talking about the aftermath of that war, which saw people abducted by the invaders and turned into slaves. Others willingly went to the Boers because they could not cope with life after having lost everything they owned. The old warriors despised weak people who had capitulated to the foreigners and had become white people's property. The concept of working for anyone other than the king was alien and repulsive to the veterans in the cave. (Mathiane, 2016: 30)

Similarly, in the novel *Beloved*, Toni Morrison uses the term re-memory to illuminate the ways in which "narrative and history are always in processes of enacting or constituting realities or truths" (Naidoo and Veriava, 2009: 3). The act of re-memory "invokes particular choices, focuses, priorities, omissions, styles, and everything else that goes into the fictioning of other histories" (Naidoo and Veriava, 2009: 3). Re-memory becomes an important act of refusing erasure and silencing (Gqola, 2001). Gustavo Esteva (cited in Naidoo and Veriava, 2009: 3) argues that "the capitalist system dis-members communities," in a similar way that Mudimbe (1988: 6) defines colonialism as that which breaks apart, disfigures. This is done in order to "lock us into individual ways of coping with capitalism." Esteva suggests that there should be "a process of re-membering that celebrates local knowledges, values, and ways of relating to life that is oppositional to the dis-membering tendency of capitalism" (Naidoo and Veriava, 2009: 3).

Largely, the contribution of this thesis, is a new archive through the investigation of Shembe's teachings. As Rev Mpanza mentions in one of his sermons, for example, beyond Shembe remembering the Sabbath, he also remembered the corroborations of Zulu Kings and looked at how colonialisation changed history to make people forget about important events and moments that occurred in history—like the 16th of December:

> It is only Shembe who taught Nazarites to mourn Dingane's day, now 16 December. In all other faiths, including African religion, no one ever thought that this day was a day of mourning for the African people. To them, it was a day like all other days when we could drink and enjoy ourselves at the beaches, while the boeres were thanking God for our defeat! The prophet did all he could to take this nation back to Jehovah our God. But, like the children of Israel, they could not understand him, especially the African Christians, for they had received teachings from the white missionaries that Shembe was an Impostor. This day was a day of mourning for the Nazarites for many years, until this time when the prophet told them to stop mourning because God had heard their prayers. (Rev Mpanza, online sermon, 2010)

Conclusion

As stated above, this chapter demonstrates how faith is understood in religion as a matter of belief, along with its relationship to truth, which historically finds expression through culture and tradition. The systematization of religion, faith, truth, and other modes of existence in the world poses a challenge for Black individuals, as their existence has not permitted a systematic organization of lived experiences. A bureaucratically centred structure of life introduces a clock as a regulating tool not only for human teleological activity but also for how individuals organize their experiences. Such a structuring of social experience, based on conforming to centrally governed social activities, can only create a divided reality where the state dictates the public actions and endeavours of the individual, while the individual navigates a private life expected to assimilate into the public sphere. In terms of work, this implies that individuals labour for purposes outside their own, and regarding faith, Black individuals often have to forsake the truth of their traditions to embrace the truth of a foreign religion simply because that religion is linked to a Gregorian calendar and adheres to a scripted doctrine.

Shembe urges us to begin contemplating theological and colonial issues based on our local social experiences. Within this centripetal approach to understanding our Black lived experiences lies the concept of rest, as we will see, leading us to a place where we think beyond decoloniality, and Black thought, all of which are undeniably significant. What may arise from this is reminiscent of Gandhi's motivation to consider an alternative modernity. For Shembe, we have found reconciliation with what we possess, or do not possess, and we recognize this

particular day as the Sabbath, a symbolic act of struggle and remembrance of liberation and God, distinct from the Protestant and Jewish Sabbath.

My point of departure with Shembe is that the six-day, one-day rest aligns with the "curse" Judea principle. Rest is connected to the curse of colonialism and the remedy for slavery that the Jews also experienced. Shembe is asking how we can conceptually move forward now that we face the issues of modernization and colonization. Divisions or binaries are not effective, and symbolically we are trying to overcome any kind of separation. Shembe acknowledges this struggle, not in a pessimistic light; rather, he directs us toward a liberation theory of rest. The principle that man shall not live by bread alone—eating from his own labour, the bread of life—man shall live by faith and rest; the just shall live by faith. This means they shall thrive simply by existing in the world, in harmony with the rhythm of time.

The stanza from the hymn by Shembe shows the metaphor of the bodily exposure of the Nguni people that was revealed through the teachings that the missionaries brought with them, including churches, mission schools, theatres, medicine, and other things, to make Black people feel backward and inferior. For Shembe, embracing this nakedness aligns one with nature and allows for rest, as I will show in Chapter Six. Black people's culture and history were subsequently altered. White missionaries convinced the Zulu natives that they were naked and needed to adopt a new culture and history. However, the Zulu, or more broadly the Nguni nation, could not erase their memory of their way of life as a people. As such, Isaiah Shembe, sent by God, helped save the Nguni people from abandoning the traditions handed down by their ancestors. In this chapter, I analysed this stanza to discuss the conceptual contribution that Isaiah Shembe makes regarding liberation through theology, specifically the theology of rest and faith. Through izihlabelelo (the hymn), I explore his critique of faith, culture, and religion as presented in Christian theology. Shembe emphasizes the importance of the Nguni people being remembered by God.

In the stanza quoted earlier in this chapter, Isaiah Shembe begins with imagery of how the Nguni people dressed before colonization and emphasizes that God remembered His people, suggesting that they had been forgotten or alienated due to the invasion and dispossession they experienced at that time. This imagery conveys a dual meaning: the first is that he reminds the Nguni people of who they were prior to the conquest through their attire—images of Zulu

natives wearing cowhide, with tails covering the front while their backs remain exposed: abanqulu zisobala; the second is that as a result of the invasion, they have become exposed to outsiders, rendering them vulnerable due to the recognition of their nakedness.

I foregrounded Mbiti's conception of African time using the concept of rest and its practices in relation to work, viewed through the lens of faith. By engaging with faith, particularly the Nazaretha faith, I draw on principles centred around rest, where rest informs work. Understood this way, rest addresses the precarious condition of Black people from the perspective of temporality or a specific "modality of time itself" (Han, 2017: 35). The Western understanding of temporality as past, present, and future (Mbiti, 1969) directly connects to issues/outcomes of precarity, yet rest, as conceptualized by Shembe, reconciles with or resolves precarity. This resolution illustrates how time, or temporality, or "temporal disturbances and irritations" (Han, 2017: 2) leads to "dyschronicity," where "time lacks the rhythm that would provide order and thus falls out of step" (Han, 2017: 2). Rest aims to restore synchronicity by refocusing human experiences on time, enabling the arrangement of those experiences to align with the "rhythm of time" (Han, 2017: 2).

I showed how African Initiated Churches and Pentecostal movements, which predominantly have a large Black following in Africa, reflect the meanings that people attach to what these churches offer in relation to their own human realities as followers. This way, I further seek to establish what seems to form part of a continuum of responses by many sectors to the plight of Black people. Marshall (2009: 3-4) states that religious beliefs cannot be reducible to political militancy or ideology, but they contribute to the historical conditions in which the complex field of political practice and representation are produced. It engages with the context of epistemology, normative and ontological insecurity of life. What this larger literature shows is that these churches offer a view into the complex belief systems in relation to a particular moment of deep precariousness.

I emphasized how rest is substantial, and work is consequential. There is a distinction between faith that informs and faith that responds to the issues created by precarity. Faith is a resource

that informs, educates, and instructs, while normative practices draw from faith. When normative practices rely on faith, it indicates that faith becomes a social variable for addressing deontic matters (obligation and duty). The followers of faith shape their values and norms, guiding them on how to conduct themselves throughout the week and at its end.

Through faith, there exists a convergence of the problem of temporality and a response that elevates or addresses temporality. The role of faith in understanding the human condition is to harmonize the individual with their environment, which, as a social terrain, is no longer indifferent to nature but rather home. Faith enables human beings to achieve substantial and modal identification with the environment by incorporating temporality into itself, since temporality is limited to the ordinal understanding of that environment. Temporality cannot achieve what faith accomplishes because it cannot transcend its own ordinal mechanisms, which are subjected to a social context where the central concern is the differentiation between deontic matters and alethic matters (necessity and possibility). This distinction is qualified by the association of temporality with the civil or political realm, while faith is associated with spiritual or ecclesiastical power.

Chapter Four

umNazaretha Consciousness (live out the faith and values in the world) Individual implication

> "Uyathanda ukusilandela? Qala uthenge isibindi"[14] (Mfundisi. Gumede, Ekhenani, January 8, 2023)

Abangafaki lutho
Ezinyaweni zabo
Wabalungisela ukungena
Endaweni eyiNgcwele

Nabangagundi amakhanda
Bawazungeze emaceleni,
Nabagunda izilevu zabo
Ngokwephula imithetho

Who do not wear
Shoes on their feet
He [God] prepared
A holy place for them

Who do not shave their hair
Or trim their hair on the sides
And shave off their beards
And break the law

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine the narratives and life histories of amaNazaretha to comprehend what it means to be umNazaretha in post-1994 South Africa. Narratives and life histories provide an insightful approach to understanding people and how they interpret their lived experiences. They also offer deeper insights into the complexities that shape individuals and allow us to observe their rich narratives from their perspective. This is particularly true for

[14] If you want to follow us first have courage/buy courage

those who have been misrepresented or misunderstood, such as amaNazaretha and the Shembe community, along with their founder, Isaiah Shembe. By drawing on the lived experiences and life histories of amaNazaretha over time, I have gained a clearer understanding of ubuNazaretha; it has also given me insight into how the followers practice ubuNazaretha, which is known to be challenging due to its numerous laws. According to Manganyi (1977: 54-55), narratives hold psychical and cultural significance as they reveal the Black collective unconscious—a "historical unconsciousness." Peterson (2019: 346) emphasizes that these narratives are "crucial because they contribute to social discourses where the reflection of experiences becomes collective memories that are central to the desire to attain a better life." Therefore, as hooks (1991a) suggests, there is a necessity to theorize from our Black lived experiences.

Therefore, I connect the hymn with the narratives of the followers, particularly as indicated in the accounts of Isaiah Shembe's life by his early successors: Babu Galilee Shembe, Babu Londani Shembe, and Nobabu Absolom Shembe. Isaiah Shembe's life became an incubator for others because it allowed them to relate to the challenges he faced and the hopes he nurtured. This narrative ties into the broader history of Black people in South Africa and how their encounters with colonialism and apartheid reshaped their lives. It also illustrates how violence robbed them of their possessions and left them in poverty, creating trauma that is both psychological and emotional. Consequently, living with such trauma has meant that Black South Africans would always carry the scars of the past, remembering what they have lost. This has fostered a sense of unease among South African Blacks, as they attribute their misfortunes not to natural causes but to their colonizers, settlers, and the oppressive apartheid government.

From this basis, I engage with the followers' life histories and narratives to not only understand the social and political contexts that the followers live in (past and present) but also to highlight the complex ways in which the followers (as amaNazaretha) relate to the world around them. This is done through a Fanonian orientation of the alienation of Black people which is perpetuated by "racial ideologies of colonial modernity," leading to madness (Maxaulane, 2022:84). The followers' lived experiences form part of the collective stories of loss, suffering, pain, confusion, struggle, vulnerability and precarity (hooks, 1991a; Butler, 2004; Magona, 2012). At the same time, it shows that followers' life experiences and Isaiah Shembe's

teachings are synchronic with the teachings influencing the day-to-day life experiences of the follower. This body of collections of life histories shows in the end that redemption triumphs. Redemption, in this instance, is only possible, as I conceptualize in this chapter, through "ukuba nesibindi," a consciousness of courage as expressed by Isaiah Shembe in Isihlabelelo 143. This interpretation of Hymn 143 is multivalent as every follower interprets it in their own unique way.

I contrast Fanon's (1967) notion of madness with Shembe's notion of courage. For Fanon, the notion of madness, at least in relation to the experiences of Black people, must be associated with colonialism, with its brutalities and the psychological debilitations caused as a result of those brutalities. However, for Shembe, such brutalities do not need to lead to madness, as heartache or cognitive dissonance caused by the colonial experience can be embalmed by the exercise of his teachings, which leads to the spirit of courage rather than the spirit of defeat or resignation. Although colonial incursions had a traumatic effect on Black lives, the courage to analyze the processes of these incursions would reveal the time when Blacks were not violated by their colonizers. This realisation would reveal that the default state of the Black experience/s is not based on measuring the experiences of Blacks through the concepts borrowed from the West, but it is to attempt to remember the times when Blacks were not forced to assimilate into categories of existence sanctioned by the colonial settlers.

This relates to what hooks (2000) maintains in her feminist collective group:

> I saw our words as an action, that our collective struggle to discuss issues of gender and blackness without censorship was a subversive practice. Urging us to consider that many of the issues that we continue to confront as black people—low self-esteem, intensified nihilism, and despair, repressed rage and violence that destroys our physical and psychological well-being—cannot be addressed by survival strategies that have worked in the past (hooks, 2000: 6).

The unresolved understanding of how the trauma of colonialism is to be understood in relation to Black lives has led to survival tactics instead of the achievement of authentic freedom/liberty. The condition of many Black South Africans reflects the continuation of the

categories imposed on the Black communities during colonialism and during the apartheid social order.

Followers of the church give testimonies on the Sabbath day ematempelini (in the temples) as a big part of the church service. The testimonies reveal, among other things, shared suffering, and a yearning for strategies to alleviate such suffering. These chronic sufferings are seen as not eradicable through the prevailing social institutions, but they are regarded as remediable through the teachings of Shembe. Hence, iTempeli, as I analyse it, is a place where these sufferings are freely shared and interpreted. The theme of courage provides a complex understanding of what it means to be umNazaretha, in the social appearance of the followers, as Isaiah Shembe highlights in the stanza above, and broadly in their way of life. Moreover, the chapter foregrounds the way in which amaNazaretha understand ubuNazaretha through a peculiar consciousness. In other words, for them to be able to practice work and rest throughout the six-days of work and one of rest cycle, in a society that does not do that, it requires a particular kind of consciousness that I call a Nazarite consciousness.

In the stanza above, Shembe gives us an image of the physical appearance of amaNazaretha "abangafaki lutho ezinyaweni zabo, nabangagundi emakhanda" "those who do not wear shoes, and do not cut their hair". For Sithole (2016: 153), the idea of dress reform was a big challenge to the missionaries' ideology. Sithole (2016: 153) quoted Nelly Wells [who had an interview with Isaiah Shembe at the time] that "the natives need not wear clothes nor pass Std 5 (grade 7 in the present South African basic education curriculum), to get to heaven" (Brown, 1992: 101, quoted in Sithole, 2016: 153). This went against the colonial teachings of missionaries in Zululand and Natal, who thought that "if some of the externals (appearance, dress and mannerisms) of Christian life were assumed, Christian faith and goodness will follow" (Unterhalter, 1981:124, quoted in Sithole, 2016: 153). Moreover, Unterhalter (1981: 124, cited in Sithole 2016: 153) argues that "Christian life came to be associated with conforming to manners, dress and aspirations of the missionaries." For Sithole (2016: 154) then, the definitive feature of Ibandla lamaNazaretha is its "non-conformance with the aspirations of missionaries in terms of dress and practice." This appearance "yokungakhundi ikhanda nokuhamba ngezinyawo edaweni eyingcwele" "of not cutting ones' hair", is peculiar to the Shembe community and in maintaining this appearance the members are obeying the teachings of Isaiah

Shembe. To maintain this image in a world that has been modernized seems like it is a challenge, at least to us who are observing.

"UbuNazaretha bufana nokungenwa" (Being a Nazarite is like being "possessed")

Isihlabelelo 143

Ukukholwa kwethu, (our belief)
Kulobo buNazaretha, (in the Nazarite journey)
Kuyilidwala elibushelelezi, (is like a slippery rock)
Lehlula abaningi (that many cannot walk)
Wena uyathanda ukusilandela (do you like to follow us?)
Lapho siyakhona (where we are going?)

Uboqala uthenge isibindi (first have/buy courage)
Lapha siyakhona (Where we are going)
Indlela incinyane (the road is narrow)
Inamatshe inameva (it is full of thorns)
Ihanjwa ngabambalwa (only a few can walk it)
Lapha siyakhona (where we are going)

The first question that I would often ask gathering Shembe followers' life histories is what it means to be umNazaretha for them. Firstly, the followers speak of what it means to be a Nazarite, that ubuNazaretha is different from being a Nazaretha/Nazarite. ubuNazaretha has a deeper idiomatic meaning for the followers. The followers' response was that ubuNazaretha is not something that you work towards or become; it is an embodiment, or something inherent. From this, I understood the challenges faced by the followers regarding explaining certain experiences and encounters in a way that would make sense to me. Perhaps, looking at people's lives for sense-making is a problem of the colonial gaze. The attempt here, I suppose, is not to consider partially or superficially what makes sense to me, but rather to understand ubuNazaretha for itself.

For Rev Mpanza, for instance, this is important because it forms part of liberating the mind:

> There are many ways of liberating a person, as there are many ways of imprisoning a person. One may be physically imprisoned and unable to do anything one wishes to do. However, one may be physically free but remain mentally incarcerated. It is very problematic for one to be physically free but be mentally imprisoned. When we say that Shembe is the religious liberator of African people, we do not necessarily refer to the kind of political liberation which can be compared to that which Mandela and others fought for. People are politically liberated, as we are. However their thinking can be compared to people who are physically enslaved. (Rev Mpanza, Interview, 16 March 2022)

In a YouTube recorded sermon preached by Mfundisi Gumede Ekhenani[15] on the 8th January 2023[16], Mfundisi Gumede preached about the journey of being umNazaretha, referencing Isihlabelelo 143: Ukukholwa kwethu (our Nazarite belief), which forms part of the teachings by Isaiah Shembe, who gave an account of his life as umNazaretha, in the context of South Africa in the 1920s, particularly in the time when Shembe wrote lesisihlabelelo[17]. Gumede reflects on his own journey as umNazaretha, particularly his early childhood. He begins with an account of his grandmother (his grandfather was a polygamist and unfortunately passed away when Mfundisi Gumede was much younger.) So, one Sabbath morning, his grandfather's eldest wife[18] forced the other wives to participate in a ceremony to remove Shembe's spirit from the main house. This caused tension among the wives, with some

[15] The Holy Mountain near the Ndwendwe village in Kwa-Zulu-Natal, that the Ebuhleni faction of the Nazarite Church go to for their Holy pilgrimage in January every year.
[16] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=at7ZufrWpeE (Accessed February 2024)
[17] Isikhonzi senhlupheko sasise Vunizitha Kwa-Zulu-Natal ngo-mhlaka 27 May 1927, kwafika lesi sihlabelelo (Izihlabelelo ZamaNazaretha: p175). The political climate during this period had intensified. Shepstone's divide-and-rule modernizing effect was rife (see Jeff Guy: Theophilus Shepstone and the Forging of Natal: African Autonomy and Settler Colonialism in the Making of Traditional Authority (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013), 74–81, 97–117. There was great tension between and among chiefdoms in Natal- "The Vative Administrative Act 1927 in which retribalisation was a national and social and political strategy "to shore up South Africans tribal order in the context of rapid black urbanisation and class-based resistance politics" (Nxumalo, 2023: 452). The point is lesihlabelelo came to Shembe amidst this societal change and political climate.
[18] The grandfather had four wives as he further explains (he did not specify the duration after the passing of his grandfather that this incident happened).

performing the ceremony while two others[19] refused and continued to obey the laws of the Sabbath. For example, the kindling fire and cooking on the Sabbath were the biggest points of contestation. This situation led to the grandmother leaving her house in the homestead, which she named emphoqweni (a place where she is forced to follow Shembe), and building another house not too far from the homestead called emlilweni (a place where kindling the fire is permitted, and drink tea) as she insisted that she could not stand being in a home where she could not have a hot cup of tea, forced by "umgeni" (a person or a spirit that takes over you)—this is a term the grandmother used to refer to Shembe in this context. This is evidence of the measures that the followers go to in order to act out the courage to practice Shembe's teachings in their everyday lives.

While Mfundisi Gumede tells the story, he emphasizes "ngikhuluma ngesibhindi maNazaretha, isibhindi saloluhambo maNazaretha" (I am talking about courage, the courage of being a Nazarite), bese ahlabelele (then he occasionally breaks into singing a specific line that speaks to a point he is making): "wena uyathanda ukusilandela? Lapho siyakhona? Qala uthenge isibhindi" (Do you want to follow us where we are going? First buy courage). He then expresses his gratitude to his three grandmothers who had the courage and refused to remove the spirit of Shembe from their homestead. Their courage made him continue this journey.

He calls this act of courage "ukugenwa": ubuNazaretha as something that has taken over your thinking and changes the way in which you conduct yourself in society. There are varied meanings of the term ukungenwa. In the isiZulu, culture ukungenwa is a practice of "levirate marriage," as depicted in a play by Neliswe Zulu (2011) *Isiko Nelungelo* (Culture and Right), where a widowed woman uThenjiwe is requested by her in-laws, after the passing of her husband, to marry the husband's brother to assume the duties of the deceased husband and raise her children. This practice can either be oppressive (if she does not want to marry the brother's husband) or liberating (if she does want to marry the brother's husband) (see Ntshangase, 2022: 37). In this case, ukungenwa kobuNazaretha, as expressed by Gumede, gives a contrasting description of ukungenwa to the practice that is seen as oppressive to Zulu women. Ukungenwa, in this context, borrowing Ntshangase's (2022:39) linguistic analysis of the term,

[19] Among these two was Mfundisi Gumede's immediate grandmother, one of whom was his direct grandmother who birthed his father, which means that they lived in her home in the yard with other homes that belonged to other wives.

is described in a 'masculine' active voice to demonstrate the power and liberation that comes with being umNazaretha.

Mfundisi Gumede gives an example of a sangoma who walks into a taxi wearing sangoma clothes (ibhayi) with isiphandla (animal skin bracelet) smelling like imphepho. The sangoma walks in with great confidence, not bothered by the other people's view of her in the taxi and how the smell is received. What matters to the sangoma at the time is following the ancestors who had called her into the practice of ubungoma and embracing that calling as something that has liberated her. Similarly, ubuNazaretha has that transformative power to change the individual and to embrace the practices that come with being umNazaretha. The confidence of embracing who he [Mfundisi Gumede] is and keeping the Sabbath amid a society that shuns upon it. Ukungenwa ukuba nesibhindi- being "possessed" is having courage.

The transformative power of ubuNazaretha will propel people watching you to think that you are possessed because of the courage that you would need to stand for the faith. Isihlabelelo 143 is important because it highlights the challenges which were faced by Shembe, and it also reflects the challenges faced by his followers in the following generations. The significance of narrative, as Peterson (2019: 346) argues, is that "narrative is a primary cognitive tool amongst humans that defines what it means to be human, and as such gives a coherent structure and meaning to our experiences." This coherence and narration of life for Bradbury (2020:3) provide a deeper understanding of personhood as "embodied, temporal, and relational." The self is free to be what Fanon sees as a "being-for-itself" in that it is not reactionary and does not seek validation from outside for its existence. The formulation of a mechanism of understanding the dynamism of a being-for-itself within the context of impartiality or "Othering" will provide clarity on how the followers continue to embody ubuNazaretha amidst their continued daily struggles. The umNazaretha consciousness maps a particular mode of being-in-the-world. The significance of narrative through testimonies has allowed the followers, through the practice of ubuNazaretha, to have a common understanding of belonging, resilience, hopefulness, meaning, and connectedness (with the living and non-living).

I read Isaiah Shembe's consciousness of courage, much like Hall's (2000: 19) "identification as a suture" which recognizes that there is always scarring; more so, for Black people, who

battle with alienation which, as Peterson (2019: 346) expresses, is "foregrounded as a persistent constituent of Black-senses-of-being, especially in relation to the land, the means of life, kin, space and the social-formation." The consciousness of courage allows for a combination of these many fragments into living wholes (Dhlomo, 1977). The move from this fragmentation to the whole coheres with Wilderson (1978: 99), writing on Biko's "envisaged self," which is a kind of consummate self rather than a deficient self. Most importantly, liberation is the ultimate motif which cannot operate from the vantage point of bondage (physical or mental bondage). Courage makes action antithetical to the condition of bondage. Therefore, courage is an important psychological weapon for use in the challenge of gaining freedom for those who are in bondage.

This making of the self requires what Peterson (2019: 347) calls "memory work that is recuperative and reparative" in the formation of the Black consciousness. The making of the true self is outside of Manganyi's mode-of-being-Black, which is an alienated mode of being, since blackness is Othered and in many ways seen as inferior.

As uMkhokheli Mpanza preached in one of the morning services, eNqobizitha, emphasizing, like Gumede, the importance of having the courage to walk this journey yobuNazaretha. This has been the spirit that she has lived by from her move from Ebuhleni to the NCG but also in her earlier life. In the more elaborate sermon, she mentions how many times she found solace in the words of Shembe kulesihlabelelo. This also solidified why she and Rev Mpanza saw it necessary to maintain Shembe's teachings at NCG. However, it requires a consciousness of courage to withstand the challenges that will come along the way. She explains:

> Uphinde uyaseluleka uShembe uthi ekuphileni kwethu sizo hamba kube khona ukungajabuli kuphinde kubekhona nokuhlupheka. Uyasitshela ukuthi ngalesosikhathi sokuhlupheka sizakubiza uJehova uyakufika asisindise. Bengisakhuluma nengelosi kuleviki, kukhona abathi mina ngikholwa ngani ukuthi le ingelosi kaNkulunkulu, ngichaze ke ukuthi sabona ngokuthi lengelosi yayisilaya ngezinto uShembe abekade asiluleka ngazo. Indlu ka Nkulunkulu idinga abantu abahlakaniphile. Idinga abantu abamesaba uJehovah abhazi ukuthi UNkulunkulu (Mkhokheli's sermon narrating a story about her life at Nqobizitha Temple, 5 March 2022).

> Shembe further tells us that in life, as we walk through this journey, there will be times of great joy, and great suffering. When these times of suffering come, call on Jehovah who will deliver us. We have long been warned and prepared of challenging times. It is in those times that are challenging that people leave ubuNazaretha.… Isaiah Shembe kulesihlabelelo, writes about the challenges of being umNazaretha. After a long day of travelling from Durban to Mount Nhlangakazi, as narrated by the followers, before the hymn is sung, during the Sabbath service. Shembe compares the journey of ubuNazaretha to walking on a slippery rock, which is a struggle to walk on, and only a few can walk on it. Shembe emphasizes that in order to walk this journey, one has to have courage. He concludes with a tone of victory and encouragement. He refers to the followers as heroes, who have the power to overcome the struggles and further protect those who struggle along the way. Here, Shembe is referred to as "isikhonzi senhlupheko.

This consciousness forms part of the broader discussions by many Black scholars who write and think through ideas of Black consciousness. By Black consciousness here, I follow Manganyi's (1973: 18) definition of Black consciousness as an "implicit recognition of mutual knowledge which leads to black solidarity." Every Black person, in this case, has a testimony, an individual story to tell which captures the feelings, thoughts, and impressions of all black people. In the Shembe context, it is from this knowledge that courage becomes the basis for embarking on this movement.

The Strength of not Cutting your Hair: "iziqaza, nesidwaba esinukayo" and Eating Clean

One of the most striking features of amaNazaretha is their physical appearance, not only on the Sabbath day but during the entire week as well. For example, men maintain their hair neatly unshaven, while women keep their natural hair without extensions. As expressed by Rev. Mpanza in one of our 2022 conversations: "My hair growth is massive, but I cannot cut my hair. You must be holy for life. There is strength in not cutting your hair." You can identify the followers by their unshaven and well-maintained hair. Some men I have observed and interacted with often wear "iziqaza" even with their work uniforms, like certain security guards at Wits whom I interviewed. The term "iziqaza" is commonly used in the isiZulu language, referring to a person perceived as backward, traditional, uncivilized, or illiterate. When used to describe a group of people, it is often recognized as derogatory.

For women who wear inhloko (a permanently fitted, colourfully beaded hat type) for married women, and with no wigs or extensions for younger women, often with no manicure or make-up and no pants. Isidwaba, like isiqaza, is often associated with backwardness. Some people even say that isidwaba, the black hard skirt, smells badly because it is thick and made of animal skin. In the first instance, the Shembe followers are Black and Zulu. Their embrace of these two identities makes them stand out; but to some people, this uniqueness is something that is outrageous because of how they regard modernity. This feeling that modernity means wearing imported and machine-made clothes speaks to the Fanonian concept of overdetermination. Fanon (1969: 194) argues that: "the Jew is not disliked as soon as he has been detected. But with me, things take on a new face. I am not given a second chance. I am overdetermined from the outside. I am a slave, not to the idea others have of me, but to my appearance."

In claiming that as a Black individual, unlike the Jewish person, he is overdetermined from without, Fanon is not merely comparing the experience of the Jewish individual and his own, but he is emphasizing that the Black body "precludes cognizance of their rationality and humanity, while reinforcing their perception as mere biological entities" (Jean-Marie, 2017: 205). For umNazaretha, being Zulu, with unshaven hair, walking barefoot, some women wearing Izidwaba, ibeshu and walking for miles are seen as backward and uneducated or uncivilized. Yet for Dhlamini, this is his sense of pride. The fact that they make it with their hands and isidwaba is something that they love. When they carry ischephu (hand-made grass mat) and walk to the temple, you can see the sense of pride and belonging from the members and followers in that space. Dhlamini expresses with great pride: "ngiwumNazaretha angeke bangenze lutho" (I am a Nazarite, they cannot do anything to me) (Interview, Dhlamini 24 October 2022).

Shembe's description of the Zulu people having their buttocks exposed, as quoted esihlabelelweni above, has a literal and metaphorical meaning. In its literal sense, when they wear their traditional clothes (ibheshu, for example), the animal skin only covers the front and leaves the back exposed. The second is that, because of colonization, black people have been left vulnerable, alienated, and exposed because they are subjects of exploitation. Shembe sees being remembered by God as the strength and confidence to be proud of. This appearance for Sikhakhane (umshumayeli at the Germiston Temple) has afforded him respect from his community members:

> This lifestyle sets you apart from other people because of the level of discipline that you have. Knowing firstly that, as umNazaretha I can't do one, two or three, that gets carried out daily. This I carry at home and in my community. In my daily interaction with people. To the point that you are well respected wherever you go, people do not do certain things around you because they know and understand who you are. For example, someone who smokes will not smoke in front of you. The biggest mark though that Shembe gave us of not cutting our hair gives us isithunzi kakhulu. You are respected by even older people because of how you look. This law of not shaving our hair we got from Isaiah Shembe, who got it from the Bible, from Moses' laws. So, such things we practice daily. When we do this, we get respected and not only us but our belief system as well. (Interview, Sikhakhane, 14 May 2022).

Moreover, this respect from the community means more to Tabani Sikhakhane as he lives in Orange Farm Township[20]. With a harsh background (I say this not to essentialize his pain), growing up with no parents made it difficult for Sikhakhane to get "structure" and "direction" in his life. He says that ubuNazaretha has helped him forge a life of value and discipline:

> There is a lot that I learnt in the church. One, I could differentiate between right and wrong. The person I was then, I am no longer. I could entertain sinful behaviours without any fear, but now I do not do that. Umchotswa, in other places, could drink alcohol, smoke, if they attend church then it's okay. Here we know that umNazaretha does not drink alcohol or even touch it with his hands. Because God lives in us. We are the temple of God. I have learnt a lot. I have learnt a lot about respect. I lost my parents at an early age; my guardians did not play a big enough role in shaping me in terms of values and how to conduct myself. UbuNazaretha became a mother and a father to me in terms of shaping who I am. (Interview, Sikhakhane, 14 May 2022).

In hymn 129, as referred to by Sithole (2016), "the vaccination controversy" (Hexham and Oosthuizen, 1996), John Mabuyakhulu tells of the arrival of medical doctors at Ekuphakameni to vaccinate amaNazaretha [in the 1920s]. This was against Shembe's wishes, since he did not believe in Western medicine. Only one man, Dladla, went with his family for a vaccination, claiming that he did not want to be arrested with his family. The vaccination issue created a

[20] A Township in the West of Johannesburg

huge dispute between Shembe and the authorities, but Shembe was adamant that his people should not be vaccinated. Today, the followers refuse to be vaccinated against the SARS-CoV virus that causes Covid-19, with the belief that it is not something that the prophet would have encouraged them to do. In relation to questions around vaccination, Dhlamini expressed the importance of ukuhlambuluka:

> We are not encouraged to even go to White hospitals as followers. However, if the situation forces you to go to hospital, when you come back you have to go through ukuhlambuluka, as a way to cleanse yourself from White contamination. We should live healthy lives. That way, we will not be prone to diseases easily. (Dhlamini, Interview 23 August 2022).

I suppose when Shembe in hymn 3 writes about the protection of ubuNazaretha, he refers to instances such as this one. For Isaiah Shembe, the government that prevented him and his followers from having freedom of movement and choice, was an enemy. Both hymn no. 3 and hymn no. 129 represent Shembe's resistance to the South African state of the 1920s. Umuntu oyiNazaretha akawusebenzisi umuthi, umaeya esibhedlela wajova noma enzile okuthile okumenza angahlambuluki, akahlambuluke kuqala kumhlambululi wakhe bese eya esontweni. Futhi umuntu oliNazaretha akangcwatshwa ngebhokisi. (A Shembe follower does not use Western medication, when he/she goes to the hospital and gets injected, he/she must go get cleansed at church by a church cleanser immediately after, before going to church—further. a Shembe follower does not get buried in a coffin) - (Law 10 and 11). This kind of commitment in terms of the clothes that the followers wear, and the refusal to drink any western medicine, all requires one to have courage to follow through with it. In a society that has been modernised, upholding this signifies the amount of courage that the followers have to live out their values and teachings of Shembe.

For Dr Xakaza (a member and reverend of the NCG, and an artist and Director at the Durban Art Gallery, by profession), ubuNazaretha has brought him a sense of clarity from a long-standing confusion that he grappled with from childhood. Dr Xakaza was born and raised in Kwa-Maphumulo in Kwa-Zulu-Natal in the 70s and 80s. Interestingly, this is also where I was born, and spent most of my early childhood. Xakaza and I bonded over this common background, and we fondly refer to each other as "umkhaya wam" or "owakithi", which means a person from my hometown. In South African history, Kwa-Maphumulo is famously known

for the Maphumulo Uprising. According to Jeff Guy (2006), the 1906 Maphumulo Uprising symbolized the social and political issues around ethnicity, identity and nationalism that have played a significant role in the history of Kwa-Zulu-Natal.[21]

Xakaza expresses how he felt the ripple effects of the Christian theses in the 70s:

> I am first going to tell you about my upbringing. That way you will get an understanding of where I come from and why I ended up where I am today. I grew up in confusion, I grew up a very confused child. I needed a solution to this. What do I mean by this? I grew up in a Christian household. I saw pictures of Jesus being White and I often wondered if this meant that God is White too. I am Black; how then do I follow White Jesus or White God? I associated everything that is linked to civilization with Whiteness. We called it a Shembe religion (inkolo kaShembe, umbhedo lowo). Growing up, Shembe had a large following in my area. But people did not want anything to do with him and what he stood for. This was confusing for me as a child. Meanwhile, seeing White people and how they lived, in my time, they had everything that was good. When they worked, they got paid well, they got paid well enough for what they worked for. They were never asked for their ID books; they were never stopped by the police like we were. Even dogs did not bite them like they would bite us. Does this mean that God loves White people more than us? Christianity and civilization are all associated with God. (Interview, Xakaza, 8 August 2022)

Mudimbe (1999: 5-8) sees this kind of confusion that Xakaza felt as a kind of delimitation of African culture, norms and systems, which formed part of the grand theses of Christianity. Mudimbe (1991: 4) argues that "the authorities of delimitation of incarnation have three overlapping powers; the colonial state, the sciences and Christianity." These powers are executed by the colonial state to transform "savage spaces" into "civilised settings" (Mudimbe, 1991:4). The missionaries then integrated Western historicity as the plan of salvation for a perishing "savage" people. The conversation of the true descendants of God's chosen people, which has been argued to be Israelites (the Black nation), shifted; instead, Western

[21] Guy examined the "physical and legal conflicts" of the uprising. He looked at the intersection between law, war and ritual, to reemphasize Zulu resistance to imperialism and the anti-colonial struggle. Briefly, Guy argues that the main cause of the uprising was the "colonial desire to stifle the extent of chiefly authority and prove the inability of Africans to function under their own law" (Guy, 2006: 276).

Christianity's history and reason became an important symbol of eternal "providence as well as the universal condition for salvation [freedom/liberty]" (Mudimbe, 1991: 5).

The significance of grappling with Christianity, for Xakaza, stems from the fact that in Kwa-Maphumulo, there still exists one of the largest mission stations in Africa, Kwa-Sizabantu Mission—Kwa-Stegen as we commonly refer to it—that functions and continues to expand. This mission, Kwa-Sizabantu Mission, was founded by Erlo Stegen in 1970. The impact of this mission in Kwa-Maphumulo changed the way of life for the people in the area. The introduction of Christianity saw a change in the cultural ways that people lived. Many people were converted and lived in the mission. The Whites who lived in the mission had a separate area from the Black labourers who worked as domestic workers in their households, while others worked in the factory that produces Aquella (a South African brand that produces different kinds of water i.e., flavoured, sparkling etc.) and many other products. Many young people around the area went to school in the mission and attended church there. Many saw Whiteness as pure and holy. They spent time following the rules of the mission and imitated much of the German culture and lifestyle. This history Xakaza and I share, since the mission played a crucial role in my childhood in Kwa-Maphumulo. Attending the youth camps and services in the mission was something we all looked forward to as we felt like doing so meant that we were closer to God.

As Xakaza continues:

> I saw how being White was better than being Black at the time. I was looking at how all these things were working together for White people. They had nice houses, flashy cars etc. This bothered me so much because I go out into society and society is kind to Whiteness and I go to church on Sunday and Jesus is White and God is White. It then became a painful realization to me that this heaven that people speak of, White people will still be there and be the dominant one. White people have privilege. I grew up before 1994. But then again, I feared that if I did not continue with Christianity, I would die and go to hell. This Jesus is White, so I must stick to this White Jesus. I was so bothered that this meant that there was no hope for Black people. Both on earth and in Heaven. (Rev Dr Xakaza, Life History Interview, 20 March 2022)

Xakaza's experiences highlight what Fanon (1969) calls the "inferiority complex": "The inferiority complex can be ascribed to a double process: first the economic, then internalization or epidermisation of this inferiority" (Fanon 1969: 13). This internalization becomes self-consciousness which is alienating, not just materially, for Xakaza and many others. Being an artist, it was in his landscape drawings that Xakaza found a sense of connection with the past but was also propelled to recreate it as a present which, as we will see, re-narrativized his experiences. The recurring themes of place and space are important to him.

Narrative and the Imagination: "Which brush can tell your tale?"[22]

Peterson (2019: 349) argues that narrative and the imagination, even in their flights of "fantasy," are an important impetus in "the production of knowledge, ideology and identity," especially because of the proficient ways in which they allow for complex intersections of the articulations between "time, space, social life and action." Rev Dr Xakaza, then, carries this past with him in his life when he left Kwa-Maphumulo for university. He then became an artist and historian. In his artwork, which focuses on landscapes, Xakaza draws on KZN's personal and collective histories. He explains that landscape painting, as a form/genre of art practice, allowed him to reconnect with himself and his home by capturing the beautiful mountains. Some mountains he draws as they appear, as though it is a photograph/picture, and other drawings of mountains he modified over the years, using his imagination. He says that: "rather than being a detached observer of the beautiful mountains that are my home and joy, I portray from a position of belonging" (Interview, Xakaza,8 August 2022). Moreover, he expresses,

> I grew up drawing, but I was very self-critical whenever I realised that my drawings were not as representative of what I wanted to represent. But being immersed in a rural environment, with all its sounds and stories that were often told around an open fire, might have stirred this sense of awareness about being in a place which seems to possess its own soul. This awareness was just in my sub-conscious—it took me years to focus on landscape as an artistic theme. As time went on, I started feeling that the landscape was not just a place, but I related to it in a special way, especially when I started moving away from Maphumulo in search of post-matric education and jobs. I felt as if I was losing part of myself and wanted to use art to reclaim it. But I also felt that I did not

[22] Inspired by Nontsizi Mgwetho's (2007) what pen can tell your tale

> really belong to my own landscape, since I was becoming increasingly aware that I was regarded as an inferior or sub-human being based on the Apartheid system at the time. But because art was never taught in most Black, rural schools, it was not easy to formulate such socio-political thoughts from an artistic perspective. (Interview, Xakaza, 8 August 2022)

Jacqueline Rose (1998: 3-6, cited in Peterson, 2019: 349) draws an important link between imagination and fantasy: as a "multi-dimensional act [that] involves introspection and projection, [in constant interaction] backward [past] and present glances." Fantasy, Rose maintains, is far from being simply "private and asocial, licentious and taboo." The place of fantasy cannot be ignored as something that is not less substantive for "engagements with and critiques of public affairs and social transformation" (Rose, 1988: 4). For Rose (1988: 4), when fantasy is engaged with critically, it becomes, through its potential, "transgressive poetics." This often makes fantasy the "pre-condition or psychic glue of social reality and the forging of the collective will." Unlike dreams, she expands, "that travel back from perception to unconscious, fantasy is always progressive…always heading for the world it only appears to have left behind" (Rose, 1988: 5-6). Similarly, for Xakaza, using his imagination, fantasy portrays the importance of place and space as an important site of memory in his work— an important site of memory and validation. Xakaza's work in many respects recognizes that inasmuch as "there is nothing that we must forget or let be forgotten, memory can be an unreliable mirror. It shifts and shifts, now and then emphasizing the dramatic, now and then leaving out detail" (Serote, 2011: 29). Xakaza is like Durant Sihlali, who was a fine artist[23] and who, through his use of memory, portrays his township landscape. In his commentary about his 1973 "water-colour series on township landscape—Pimville and Alexandra" (Peterson, 2019: 349) he expresses that:

> what really influenced my childhood was the fact that we used to live a nomadic life, moving from one area to another, and the memory of the past places used to haunt me. The only time I used to find satisfaction was when I had recorded the area in a drawing. Up to this very day I am concentrating mainly on that, not now recording for myself, but for the whole African population. (Kuhn, 1974: 52)

[23] https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/durant-basi-sihlali

Xakaza works much like Sihlali. He captures the temporariness of things, places and spaces, and they (Xakaza and Sihlali) seek, through the landscape, to redeem them for future generations. When I view Xakaza's landscapes, for example, and as Peterson (2019:350) expresses:

> the value of these bodies of works that not only show images of the past through the lens of the artist, but these images do also much more than that. In that, each time when they are viewed, they resurrect the past and make it come alive and continue to resonate in the present, allowing new ways of embodying experience and knowledge, remembering and dreaming. (Peterson, 2019: 350)

In this instance, Xakaza's landscapes serve as a significant reflection of the importance of narratives as that which transcends a simple reflection of historical narrative but rather "involves [the] intricate processes of mediation that refract experience and involve a myriad of interventions and choices related to point of view or perspective, selection, omission and intentions of all sorts" (Peterson, 2019: 350).

In the image below, Xakaza captures our hometown [Kwa-Maphumulo] at the time, and this resonates with me in a significant way, because today this place no longer looks the same.

Figure 3: Emabovini



Artist: Dr Mduduzi Xakaza[24]

[24] This artwork was shared with me by the artist Dr Xakaza. As he was explaining the inspiration behind his artworks

Xakaza (in our recent conversation on 24 June 2024), commenting on his painting above:

> This painting above was derived from a pencil sketch I made at Maphumulo. I was looking down towards emaBomvini and could see some homesteads in that laid back, peaceful rural environment. I could see that scene from eMasangweni taxi/bus stop (almost around that area). The reason, or rather the main inspiration around such a creation is, I suppose, nostalgia for that childhood place. I am encouraged by a deep sense of place (not just as space) to record such scenes, as a symbolic means of "freezing" time. Here, I play with notions of time and space as twin concepts. In order to enhance this technical strategy, I consciously estimate how much time virtually enters that space in the painting. Here, I benefit mainly from my former supervisor's articulation of one photograph I had to analyse for my PhD project. She was Prof. Patricia Hayes. I will show you the photograph taken by the late David Goldblatt if possible. So, "beyond" the mist, there is uncertainty. But I know that if one were to travel further into that unseen background, they would finally reach eThulini and beyond (after passing KwaMenyezwayo and Ndukwende). I am not sure exactly where Ndukwende is, but it is also either under the AmaBomvu or Luthuli tribal authorities.

Xakaza went to ubuNazaretha after he had decided to learn more about an able artist from his environs:

> I researched about an artist from my area, ngakamXhosa Kwa-Maphumulo. This artist was born in the Nazareth faith. He was born in this faith. I was doing a Master's at the time. I started following this artist and his artwork. I then became a Seventh-day Adventist but the only thing that attracted me to it was the Sabbath, and it was different from other denominations. But then I was still concerned that they used White Jesus and their prophetess is also White. (Interview Xakaza, 20 March 2022)

He could identify with Shembe, being Black and walking the earth, in ways that are not alienating. Shembe having a connection with spirituality and nature, has found expression in Xakaza's recent works where nature and the sky are connected.

In connection to a shared history and shared identity with Shembe, Xakaza expounded:

The fact that people started worshipping other gods outside of the God that Black people know was unsettling. It is important to be told by someone who looks like me, if I want a God who is of me and my God, I should look for it kubuNazaretha. I then realized that White missionaries introduced Christianity for their own benefit. I then realized also that the spirit of seeking for liberation stopped when Christianity was introduced and people lost the spirit of seeking liberation—turn the other cheek philosophy (phenomenon). This meant that we are not going to fight for our land and our rights because siyakholwa. The reason why you die in your community is because you kill each other. You will not succeed that way. If one person among you does something, you do not support each other. Your money and currency does not circulate among yourselves (Interview, Xakaza, 20 March 2022).

Figure 4: Misty Landscape at Menyezwayo, c. 2000. Oil on122e board.



Artist: Dr Xakaza[25].

[25] This artwork was shared with me by Dr Xakaza. He gave consent to the Tatham Art Gallery which has the physical artwork and a digitised version on their website. Collection: Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg (Photo courtesy Tatham Gallery) sourced June 2024.

Xakaza explains using his artwork above:

> From an African perspective, the sky also meant a realm that is overwhelmingly infinite and inaccessible—the abode of the dead, or even those who have not yet been mandated to start their earthly journeys. I thought this way because I had already started reclaiming my lost African heritage due to imposed Christianity and subsequent westernisation. I always felt alienated from myself, especially because I truly believed that the Jesus that Christianity presented was White and that we had been removed from our cultural identity and thrust into something which I was struggling to make sense of. This proved to be a long and difficult journey, as it involved ideas about Nomkhubulwane [a female deity of fertility] who was imagined to be dwelling in the sky, manifesting herself to mortal humans only occasionally and for a specific purpose. But what mattered to me significantly was also the idea that if earthly life was not separate from the spiritual, then the living was always united with the departed ancestral spirits. This, for me, meant that even the land was not separate from the sky, and I would always try to express this thought by inviting the viewer to experience landscapes with melting horizons which were, at times, not visible. But I think this also solved a technical challenge that I might have struggled with—earth and sky paintings with boring horizons and skies. It was at this point that I started conceptualizing the sky as an animated element within my compositions, always enhancing a mood that I consciously express in different paintings. The mood became my important tool of creating a stimulus that can really force the viewer to look at the painting or drawing more than twice. (This quotation is taken from an extended conversation and interview with Dr Xakaza by Mario Pissarra, May 17, 2021)

In a similar way that Xakaza felt, Lucky Dube (a reggae musician) speaks of the liberation that ubuNazaretha has brought for him:

> It wasn't the valley of death
> I was working in
> It was the valley of confusion
> For many years

Different religions, different beliefs
Undermining my culture
Looking down upon my tradition
Making fun of my language
Telling my children, they have no God
Finally, I can tell them about
Shembe is the way
Oh Shembe
Shembe (thank you for showing us the way)
Nobunazaretha
Oh Shembe
Shembe (thank you for healing my people)
Nobunazaretha
Oh Shembe
Shembe (thank you for showing us the way)
Nobunazaretha

The exclusion by others because they are viewed as "primitive" is what some members of Shembe feel that their factional ways of being in society expose them to. Referring to Isaiah Shembe as "umqali wendlela" (the one who paved the way for others to follow) gives this identification a face. Culturally, there is a notion that knowing where one comes from is the beginning of their journey towards where they are going. So "ukuzala ukuzelula amathambo" means that there is an extension of oneself through lineage.

For hooks (1989: 5), "speaking to power and domination looks at how the schism of private and public interferes with the role of intimacy as a factor that contributes to the humanisation of the individual." She argues that it is in those private spaces where we are often "most wounded, hurt, dehumanized, it is there that our true selves are taken away and terrorized and broken" (hooks, 1989: 5). When we reconcile with ourselves in private spaces, for instance, our "public reality and institutional structures of domination make the private space for oppression and exploitation real and concrete" (hooks, 1989: 5).

The isiZulu phrase “ukukhala akusizi” (complaining does not help) is countered by a more radical sense of “ingane engakali ifela embelekweni” (if you do not speak, you will not receive help/assistance). The idea is that when social structures are inherently anti-Black, the voices of Blacks are silenced, and their protests are disdained. At the same time, the fact that Blacks have agency, as Sithole (2016) argues in relation to umgidi wamaNazaretha (the sacred dance), the oppressive structures are not their fate. Through solidarity, Blacks could remake their society, albeit through un-thinking, re-imagining, their oppressive condition. This act of circumventing the oppressive structures which are anti-Black cannot be achieved through indifference or apathetic individualism, it can only be achieved through active participation and collaboration.

Part of being true and truthful to oneself and others is to be genuine. Therefore, the exploited, oppressed, and vulnerable work to expose the false reality to reclaim, recover, and discover the “self” that has been corrupted and violated (hooks, 2000). We revise the anti-Black colonial history, telling the past as we have learned through orality, theorising the present as we see it, feel it and experience it and not as we hope it to be (hooks, 2000). What is of significance here is how the Shembe followers continue to find ways of narrativizing their experiences through reflecting on Shembe’s teachings. These narratives and reflections take different forms, like song and painting, but most critically, they re-imagine Blackness in the world. This is evidence of the followers acting out of courage that enables them to live out the freedom that they long for.

For those who joined the church later in life, the same kind of courage is required as for members who were born into it. The narratives of Rev. Mpanza and Rev. Ntuli illustrate this, as they left the Ebuhleni faction to uphold the teachings of Isaiah Shembe, which they felt had been overshadowed by the tensions surrounding inheritance between the Ebuhleni and Ekuphakameni factions. For Rev. Mpanza and Rev. Ntuli, who grew up in the church, ubuNazaretha, fosters a sense of self-confidence, industriousness, and holy, clean living that ultimately leads to a transition to a celestial realm, where the stresses and troubles of this earth are neither seen nor felt. Rev. Mpanza's life journey aims to reconnect amaNazaretha with the original thoughts and practices of Isaiah Shembe.

Defending the church against changing practices from within

Rev Mpanza, is a key figure of Ibandla lamaNazaretha. He served as one of the high priests at Ebuhleni for many years. His mother was adopted by Isaiah Shembe, and she lived in the Shembe homestead for most of her life. This meant that Rev Mpanza and his brothers grew up in the church and were familiar with some of the teachings of Isaiah Shembe through their mother. Considering the politics of the church, Rev Mpanza was among others who left the Ekuphakameni (the headquarters) of the church to join Ebuhleni. He did not stay for long as he realized that the church Ebuhleni was no longer upholding the core values of ubuNazaretha as taught by Isaiah Shembe. On numerous occasions he narrated the story of how he left Ebuhleni. He further highlighted some parts of this story to me in our conversation at his home in Wyebank, Pinetown.

Rev Mpanza was a magistrate in 1992 in Newcastle and at the time Shembe the 3rd Amos Shembe was a leader of the church. Amos Shembe sent three men to Mpanza along with his brother, who was based in Newcastle at the time, to go to Ebuhleni on 9 September 1992. They were driven in a Nissan E20 (a minibus or taxi that was commonly used in those days) to Ebuhleni. They were famously called the "Mpanza boys" (Rev Mpanza, Interview, 19 March 2022). When they got to the main house in Ebuhleni, where Amos Shembe stayed, Rev Mpanza mentioned that Amos Shembe showed him and his brother his bedroom. As they walked in, Amos Shembe asked them what they saw in the room. They answered him by saying: "The room is a mess, and it is very untidy." Amos Shembe then said to them, "This mess and untidiness is a representation of what ubuNazaretha is currently. I have sent you here to see this and give you this message because "ukuwa nokuvuka kwebandla kuzobuzwa kunina" (the rise and fall of this church is in your hands). Rev Mpanza mentions this history because it was because of this message and experience that he left Ebuhleni to form the Nazarite Church of God, after realizing that he could not fix Ebuhleni itself without getting caught up in the family dynamics.

Rev Mpanza then continues, "the angel said to them [among other things], this Nazareth Faith is no longer what Isaiah Shembe taught, now there are sangomas in the temple. Before, izangoma were not allowed in the church because they make it dirty" (Interview, Rev Mpanza, 19 March 2022). In 2008, Amos Shembe again told them that Isaiah Shembe told him that they should build a new temple where God will dwell and teach his people. He feared for his life

because of the dynamics of the church Ebuhleni (Interview, Rev Mpanza 19 March 2022). On 4th January 2010, the angel reappeared and said he saw Shembe, the second standing esizibeni esikhulu, a pond/pool. It looked like he was baptizing people. However, when the angel asked him, he said that he was not baptizing anyone; these were people's tears [symbolic of the tears from people who seek to get help and counsel from Shembe]. When people come to Shembe, there are people [I suppose members, pastors] who stop them from going to him [Isaiah Shembe].

At the time of Rev Mpanza's revelation, there were a lot of wrongs that were going on. For example, baptized church members were drinking alcohol [recreationally, outside the church], people were entertaining izangoma [inside the church]. "A lot was going on," Rev Mpanza expresses with great emphasis. "They [church members from Ebuhleni] even started spreading lies that Shembe [the current leader] is God, and this is not true," Rev. Mpanza says. So, when Rev. Mpanza was told by the angel to build a temple and/or teach the original thought and practice of Isaiah Shembe, Rev Mpanza asked the angel: "How will I do this because I am not a Shembe by birth [since the church leadership is heredity]?" From then on, people (especially those from Ebuhleni) started hating him. (Interview, Rev Mpanza, 19 March 2022)

After much resistance and fear from Rev Mpanza, in May 2010, Mpanza was told [by an angel not to go to Umhlangano wangoJuly [the July conference]: "The church leadership is planning to kick you out on that conference." So, the angel told him not to go because the spirit of uShembe will no longer be with [him] because Mpanza will be defiled when he enters Ebuhleni. Because of the angel's message, Rev Mpanza then decided not to attend the conference. Shembe, the second, advised people to stop seeking for Shembe by spirit. The 26 March 2011 was the official date when Mpanza and Mkhokheli Mpanza were ordained. On 28 March 2011, Bab uThingolwekhosazane told them that Vimbeni Shembe had died, the then leader yasEbuhleni. The angel was working with them and instructing them what to do. The angel was showing that he was not alone at the time. Mpanza's mother was present at the ceremony [spiritually]. "Do you see that your child is being ordained today? the angel says to Rev Mpanza's mother. The angel then tells Mpanza, "Never allow people to call you God, because if you do that, then you will be cursed." (Interview, Rev Mpanza, 19 March 2022)

The battle for Rev Mpanza and his wife uMkhokheli, is to do what Isaiah Shembe did, maybe not as precisely as Isaiah Shembe did, but close enough to ensure its core values and principles. They both believe that in accommodating ways of life [I suppose like how other factions of the church are doing now], ubuNazaretha gets compromised. When the followers lose sight of the practices and teachings by modifying them, this will erase Isaiah Shembe's life as it was and prevent them from hearing what Isaiah Shembe continues to communicate with them, especially emigidini, as discussed in Chapter Seven.

This sentiment of the church (especially Ebuhleni) having lost sight of the core teachings and values of Isaiah Shembe is shared by Rev Ntuli. He says:

> I grew up Ebuhleni, my whole family is from Ebuhleni and growing up we knew that we do not question anything and when you do question things you are accused of all sorts of things. So, I started noticing that there are certain things that we did before, but we were no longer doing, like following the law. In the 80s, things were a lot different. So, I could not ask what we were doing at the time out of fear. Bab Melusi's arrival helped a lot. He came in at a time when things were a mess, and he helped resolve some of the questions I had. So now I can defend these teachings with that knowledge. We are given the power to fight for things here on earth. UbuNazaretha is something that is biblical and has been done away with over the years; this was removed by Christianity. Somehow, when a lie is told many times, it becomes truth and we no longer know what the truth really is. Seventy-five percent of people in South Africa are believers, but the question is what do they believe in? They believe that the Sabbath and the law were done away with. They rebel against God. They created a movement that has done away with God. They started by introducing Jesus to people—White Jesus. They told us to pray using this non-existent name. We may come across as always fighting and defending abantu baseBuhleni kodwa singamavikeli wombuso kaNkulunkulu (Interview, Rev Ntuli, 4 June 2022).

The narratives of Rev Mpanza and Rev Ntuli highlight how even within the church there is a level of courage that one needs to have to uphold the teachings of Isaiah Shembe. They both saw how staying Ebuhleni meant that they lost the values that were present before. This courage

has led them to NCG, where they continue to be guided by Isaiah Shembe. This is liberating for them even though they have been estranged from those still part of the Ebuhleni faction.

The Nazarite Church of God is usually seen as madness by people in Ebuhleni, who continue to write about them on Facebook and comment on their activities by pointing out the differences between what they [NCG] are doing in comparison to Ebuhleni. Part of what separates the teachings of Isaiah Shembe is around diet, which Rev Mpanza (Interview, 19 March 2022) mentions. This forms part of the more extended history of Isaiah Shembe's relationship with the then government and how he resisted specific laws that were passed in relation to food, vaccines, etc. This conversation at the time of the interviews happened in light of the Covid-19 vaccinations and, for instance, how some members from other factions were conforming to the government's call for immunization.

Conclusion

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the life histories and narratives of umfundisi uGumede, umshumayeli Skhakhane, umfundisi uXakaza, umfundisi uNtuli, umama Mkhokeli Mpanza, and umfundisi uMpanza to demonstrate how the practice of ubuNazaretha (guided by the teachings of Isaiah Shembe in izihlabelelelo) is possible through ukubanesibhindi, a consciousness of courage, which distinguishes it from other churches.

It highlights how Isaiah Shembe's teachings and the overall practice of ubuNazaretha has been misunderstood and marginalized (as madness or possession) by the broader community of scholars and those outside the Shembe church. The life histories of the followers reveal the liberatory power of practicing ubuNazaretha; its embodiment leads to individuals who have a different perspective on their daily circumstances. However, this practice and embodiment are made possible through a consciousness of courage. This liberatory theory—unlike other articulations—of Black life retrieves a constant return to a "place" (not just space), as Dr Xakaza emphasizes in his Emabomvini artwork, fostering belonging and Black selfhood/collective selfhood that transcends the interpellation imposed by the double consciousness of always reacting to whiteness.

While these narratives show an emergence from colonialism and the aftermath of it, ubuNazaretha is in the critique of colonialism, White supremacy, and racial capitalism;

ubuNazaretha maintains and embodies a crucial space of authentic thinking that insists on a different relationship to community. Lastly, to amaNazaretha, I emphasize in this chapter, through Isihlabelelo 200, like hooks (1989: 143) that walking this journey of seeking change, being liberated from exploitation and oppression requires a sort of "holding my sisters' hands" (hooks, 1989: 143) in order for liberation to be experienced. As Shembe (1940) writes:

Wozani maqhawe (Come all conquerors)
Hlabani umkhosi (celebrate)
Niwavikele amagwala (protect those who are feeble)
Hlomani ngamandla (be armed with power)

This hymn speaks to Shembe's situation at the time. In the hymn he emphasises the importance of the followers of ubuNazaretha to stand together against any form of oppression. By so doing, they will overcome any imposed laws, rules, dispossession, among other things that came with colonisation. Here, Shembe encourages the followers to uphold their beliefs like conquerors and help one another, especially those that are feeble and can easily be persuaded according to their circumstances. This is an important message of reinforcement as the question of work and employment is understood differently by followers in their everyday lives. Indeed, one will need courage to live out fully what Shembe conceptualises as work and, subsequently, rest as we will see in Chapter Five and Chapter Six.

Chapter Five

Implication of Work as the Imperative of an Individual

"The labour (of our/for our) bodies and the work of our hands" (Arendt, 1958)

Walenza iZulu

Kanye naloMhlaba

Ngumsebenzi wezandla zakhe

Ngoba elungile

He created the Heavens

And the earth

They are the work(s) of His hands

Because He is good

Introduction

This chapter centres on the need to understand work and its related practices as a critical spiritual intervention in work practice. The idea of remembering traces the origins of Sabbath observance as a teaching and a practice. The chapter addresses the value, meaning and experience of Sabbath keeping, its preparation related to clothing, food and the home. I introduce the service of ukuhlambuluka (a prayer of purification) and its significance as a practice of rest in the transitioning from the regular week into the Sabbath. This engagement is contextualised by the consideration of rest as a form of resistance and an understanding of the structure of the church service. The data presented and analysed here is mainly drawn from participant observations and interviews.

Understanding rest as a ritual, a symbolic act, and/or a practice among the amaNazaretha reflects the foundational values and teachings of the Shembe community. This draws from Han (2020), who discusses rituals as symbolic acts. Through the church's doctrine and collective practice, particularly observed on the Sabbath day in various temples, followers can grasp the

meaning of work and how it should be conducted to maintain the cycle of six workdays followed by one day of rest. This chapter focuses more explicitly on the six workdays of the followers, emphasizing their understanding of work in relation to how Isaiah Shembe describes it. The central point Shembe emphasizes is that precarity, under the neoliberal framework of work as labour or employment, is unavoidable or has a direct correlation and will leave those striving for sustenance and survival perpetually vulnerable, regardless of the circumstances or historical context.

In this chapter, I look at umthandazo wokuvuka (the morning prayer), and I analyse it under three broad themes, which help explain Shembe's notion of work. First, Isaiah Shembe's emphasis on "imisebenzi yezandla zethu", the work(s) of our hands as the key argument that Shembe presents on how work should be done. Second, his emphasis on "begging, hunger and dependency", which all comes because of not working with your hands. Third, the emphasis on one taking their time (six-days a week) to think about how they spend their time and how they work, which helps one truly form a self that is actualized, and capable. In this way, work becomes imperative for an individual to do alone (it is a personal journey).

These findings are drawn from the hymn book, specifically the morning prayer that specifies working with the hands. Working with your hands will lead to one having no need, and thus not being reliant on others. They also come from my engagement through interviews with the followers; some were interviewed in their place of work. Others on the Sabbath day during the lunch break. And others were interviewed during my time at Ebuhleni during the month of July 2022.

Shembe 's notion of work: imisebenzi yezandla zethu (the work(s) of our hands)

I locate my analysis of Shembe's notion of work, as written in the morning prayer, within the broader discussions about the meaning(s) of work and/labour as presented by labour scholars. These scholars include, but are not limited to: Comaroff and Comaroff (1987), Standing (2009), Denning (2010), Webster et al. (2010), Barchiesi (2011), Weeks (2011), Hunter (2012), Dawson (2014), Sefalafala (2018), and Kenny (2018). These scholars show, in various ways and in different contexts and sectors across history, the effect of labour, which is often associated with waged work, on poor Black workers, leaving most of these workers precarious. In my analysis of the prayer, coupled with the experiences and interpretations drawn from the conversations

that I had with the followers, I show how Shembe demonstrates how, (with great emphasis), on the one hand, the work of one's hands is non-alienating, autonomous and independent. It is through the work of one's hands that means one will not be in material or intellectual need, which Shembe equates to begging. On the other hand, when work is associated with labour by working for others in exchange for wages, then there is a disconnect between the body and the mind. One could argue that this disconnect shows how labouring bodies are not seen as fully human but rather as useful for production. These labouring bodies remain in a perpetual state of precarity, materially and intellectually (since there is no creativity that comes with working for others and your mind is not challenged or stimulated in any way). Through the work of one's hands there is synergy with the mind, which will be given the spirit of creativity and therefore never be in a position of need.

I witnessed the reading of the morning prayer when I was at Ebuhleni during the month of July 2022, where I stayed with Zama's family. For the month, the followers all stayed in emadokodweni, which is a combination of camp tents on one section of the yard and one-room brick houses on the other section of the yard, towards the entrance of Ebuhleni. We would wake early every morning to fetch water from the water tanks provided by the church to bathe and make breakfast. We used a one-pot paraffin stove to heat the water for bathing and to make tea and porridge. We only bathed with hot/warm water during the week, and we bathed with cold water on the Sabbath (as I will explain in Chapter Six). At around 08:45 am, one of abafundisi (the pastors) who was assigned to lead the morning prayer on that particular day, rang the bell loudly, calling out, "Sontweni, sontweni, sontweni," meaning that it is time for the morning prayer, and we should all come out emadokodweni to join the prayer. We would walk barefoot from emadokodweni to the temple for the prayer wearing umNazaretha (the white rope) with our headwraps and at 09:00 am, umfundisi would lead us all in prayer. The prayer was conducted communally, by all followers. The prayer was guided and explained when one should sit, kneel, sing and respond to the prayer. The prayer began with the umfundisi reading the introduction of the prayer:

Bandla elithobekileyo lika Menzi wezulu nomhlaba; sesiyamdumisa manje odunyiswayo imihla yonke. Amen.
He then instructed everyone: isilandelo sebandla (the reading by the congregation) to which we all read the next lines with him:

Nkulunkulu onamandla onke,
yise wabobonke abamkhonzayo busisa ukuvuka kwethu kwanamhlanje,
usigcine ngomusa wakho. Amen.

God who has all power
Father of all those who praise Him
bless us as we wake up today and keep us within your mercy. Amen.

This verse begins with a message of gratitude by the followers for the privilege and gift of life. The significance of this opening verse is that it is read and recited by everyone who is attending the service, and it places emphasis on the kind of God that the members are worshipping. This is like how hymn 60 in the prelude opens with the presentation and emphasis on the kind of God that the followers are approaching through prayer. He is the most powerful and has all the power to wake them up but also can give them strength to face the day. The call and response, in particular verses, highlight the power in the collective and community. It dispels all the doubt that one might have going into the day and reminds one that the spirit that woke you up can carry you through the daily activities. Like the verse above, the same power that God had when he created the heavens and the earth, He will transfer that power to create something beautiful for all those who trust in him to work in a similar way.

When it is not the holy month when people are gathered in Ebuhleni or at NCG for the Mpanza faction, the morning prayer is conducted by an individual or a family every morning before work, or before they begin with their daily activities. Some members conduct this prayer at 04:00 am to allow them enough time to go through the prayer and give them time to prepare for work, specifically for those who are “traditionally employed” like Mhlongo, Dhalmini, Mama Buthelezi, Dr Xakaza, Rev Ntuli and umshumayeli Sikhakhane. For those who work in the fields and have no specific work time, they conduct the prayer at 06:00 am or at 09:00 am every morning, like Zama’s family, Lindo Dube, Rev Mpanza and his family.

The lead pastor continues to read this section alone:

Ungaphuthi ukumkhonza uJehova uNkulunkulu wakho uThixo wakho, ngalemini akuvuse ngayo. Umkhonze ngayo yonke inhliziyo yakho, nangawo wonke umphefumulo wakho, okungokuka Jehova. Umkhonze ngokumthanda, noma uhamba endleleni mkhonze ngoba uthwelwe nguye nasekuhambeni kwakho, noma uhlezi endlini yakho Emini mkhonze
Do not forget to worship the Lord on this day. Worship him with all your heart and mind because they all belong to Him. Worship Him with love. Even when you work around your home because He gives you the ability to do so.

This verse serves as an instruction and reminder that the followers should never forget to praise the Lord throughout the day, ngoba eLungile (because he is good). The prayer then details how the followers should spend their day and the kind of work that they should be engaged in:

Noma usemsebenzini wezandla zakho mkhonze, ngokuba nguyena onika umphefumulo wakho ukukhuthala. Noma uthume indodana yakho nendodakazi yakho uyithume ngegama likeJehova.
Even when you are at work, particularly doing work with your hands, worship Him. Because he gave you the spirit of diligence. Even when you ask your son or daughter to assist you with something, do so in the name of Jehovah.

Shembe here begins to draw attention to the kind of work he is referring to in the prayer. He specifies that when you are engaged in/with the work of your hands, praise God. He links the work(s) of one's hands with praising God because it is through God that one receives the diligence and inspiration to work with one's hands. After the pastor has read this part, he reads, as instructed in the hymn, that the followers must kneel as the next parts are read:

Bandla elithobekileyo nelihloniphekayo likaMenzi wezulu nomhlaba; uMenzi makavume ukubusisa ukuguqa kwethu nokuzithoba kwethu. Amen
Holy church may the Lord bless us as we all kneel.
Siyabonga Nkosi Jehova ukusivusa kwakho Nkosi yamakhosi. Vuka nathi Nkosi Jehova ngale nsasa yanamhlanje, usinike izingqondo eziphaphemeyo.
Thank you, Lord for waking us up today, Lord of Lords. Awake with us this morning and give us alert minds.

Usinike ukukhuthala Nkosi Jehova emisebenzini yokusiphilisa, ubuthongo bokuvilapha bungasembathi.
We thank you, Lord, for waking us up. Lord Jehovah, give us alert minds. Give us diligence in our duties/work that is meant to sustain our lives. May the sleep of indolence not shroud us. Lord Jehovah, give us a spirit of diligence.

Here, Shembe shows how alert minds or the significance of having awakened minds will guide the kind of work that is needed for that day. Without this guidance and alertness, one will not know what to do for the day. This encourages them to not be lazy at any point but to work diligently in order to allow for God's guidance in what they ploughed. It also means that when God is involved, then there will be more than enough produce to go by and their minds will be fixated on God.

Nkosi Jehova usinike umoya wokukhuthala, silime, sihlakule, silinde esikulimileyo nesikuhlakulileyo Uyibusise Nkosi Jehova imisebenzi yezandla zethu. Siyakuncenga ukwamukele ukuncenga kwethu, kungabi ngokusho kwethu, kube ngokusho kwakho Nkosi yethu, Thixo wethu
Please give the spirit of diligence, to plough, cultivate and wait for what we have cultivated. Bless the work of our hand(s). We beg you to accept our plea. May it all be for your sake. When awakened of alert minds have been given to them, they will be able to ukulima, ukuhlakula, nokulinda abakuhlakulileyo (plough, cultivate and wait for what we have ploughed and cultivated). They will know the time for each specific activity as guided by God, which will be made possible through having alert minds.

Emphasis is placed here on God to bless the works of their hands in a tone that deeply pleads to show the importance of this kind of blessing that comes from God. It then specifies that the Lord gives them diligence to ekulimani kwabo (plough), ukuhlakula (cultivate) and silinde esikuhlakulileyo (wait for what they have ploughed). This is a detailed instruction on the kind of work of the hands that should be done by the followers. They are encouraged to work for self-sustenance and for the nourishment of their bodies and minds.

Ningavilaphi, yisono ukuvilapha; umuntu ovilaphayo ufana nenja ehlala ngokucela ukudla kubantu. Ekupheleni kwalo mthandazo thabatha igeja ulime, uzophila ngakho, ungahambi ucela ukudla kubantu.
Do not be lazy, it is a sin to be lazy. Anyone who is lazy is like a dog that goes around begging for food from people. At the end of this prayer, take your Plow and plough the fields; you will live by the food of this labour. Do not go around asking for food from people.

Noma libalele lima, ngoba awusazi isikhathi uNkulunkulu azonisa izulu ngaso. Noma liyana lima, uhlakule, ulinde, kungonakali okulimileyo nokuhlakulileyo. Uboba uyezwa, ungabi yisedeleli sala mazwi
Even when it is sunny/hot, plough because you do not know when God will send the rain. Even when it is raining cultivate what you have ploughed and wait for what you have cultivated so that it does not get ruined. I trust that you hear these words and do not depart from them.

Shembe further highlights the importance of working for six days, regardless of the weather conditions. He says, “Keep doing your work because you will never know when it might rain and rain for farming is good because it means that the crops will grow and people will be able to eat what they have ploughed. So, if you do not plough when it is time to plough when the rain comes, you will have nothing to look forward to when the rain ends because you have not put in the work. This will lead to you asking for food from others, because you will not have any when everyone else has got their own.”

Uboba namahloni ukuhamba ucela ukudla kubantu kanti uNkulunkulu ukuphile izandla zakho ukuba usebenze ngazo, ungahambi ucela ngazo ukudla. Manjeke wena sewuhamba ucela ukudla ngazo na! Awusebenzi ngani ngazo!
You should be ashamed when you go around begging for food when God gave you hands that will allow you to feed yourself. Do not use the same hands to go around begging for food. Why do you not work with those hands?

Shembe places emphasis on the importance of working with one’s hands and how that is linked to being able to live. This can be interpreted in two ways. The first being the food that comes from farming generally. The second way is that the same hands that they could use for ploughing to feed themselves, as instructed, are used to ask for food from others.

Bonke abavilaphayo bayolahlwa. Igazi labo liyobizwa esandleni sabo,aliyikubizwa esandleni sikaNkulunkulu, ngoba bamthela ihlazo uNulunkulu ngokuvilapha kwabo. uNkulunkulu ubaphile izandla zabo baziginela ukuhamba becela ngazo ukudla. Bamthela ihlazo uNkulunkulu. Usinike izinhliziyo zokugcina imithetho yakho, ngale mini osivuse ngayo ebuthongweni, ebesingenamandla okuzivukela kubo ngaphandle kwakho
Everyone who is lazy will be damned. Their blood will be in their own hands, not on God. Because they have embarrassed God by going around asking for food.

Uma ungumfundisi ubozifundisa wena ukukhuthala, ukuze abantu babonele kuwe ukuthi wathi uNkulunkulu akusetshenzwe. Uma wena mfundisi sewuyinhloko yokuvilapha kubantu awuzukuba umthwalo phezu kwabo na? Futhi wena uzophila ngani? Kuzoba ihlazo elingakanani uma wena uhamba ucela ukudla kubantu na?
When you are a leader, like pastors, teach yourself first how to work and be diligent. Set an example for the rest of the followers that this is how it is done. When you become a representative of laziness, you will be a burden on the followers. How will you live? It will be even more shameful for you to go around begging for food.

Here he turns to the leaders of the church, emphasising that they should lead by example. As leaders, they are also expected to work with their hands and not wait for the church or any member of the community to provide for them. This is contrary to how most leaders and pastors in Pentecostal churches are seen and instructed. The church leaders are often taken care of by the church members. They do not necessarily work but receive money from the tithes and offerings that the church members give every month. In addition, church leaders receive donations from church members in the form of cars, homes and groceries, for example, during the festive season.

Uma wena-ke uyisizukulwane sika-Adam no-Eva, okwathiwa kuye ensimini yase Eden lima, ulinde, ubonakala uthabatha isimo sobunja, uyazethuka wena ngoku ngathandi ukusebenza.
As the descendant of Adam and Eve who are said to have worked the land in the garden of Eden, who also ploughed, cultivated and waited for what they cultivated, and you do not do the same. You are bringing a curse upon yourself for not wanting to work in the same way.

Ngokuba kwathiwa umuntu uyokudla umvuzo wezi thukuthuku zakhe, washo uThixo kaAdam. Wathi uNkulunkulu ngokuqinisa umuntu uyokudla ejulukile. Uyawaphikisa wena lamazwi na?
It has been said before that a person will eat from the fruits of their own labour, said the Lord of Adam. He said, through toil and hard work, a person will eat from the sweat and toil of their own labour. Are you going against these words?

Uyathokoza yini ngawe uNkulunkulu uma udla ukudla ungakusebenzanga, ungakujululanga ebusweni bakho. Uthanda ukudla ukudla ungakujulukelanga; ubeka isono phezu kwabakuncishayo, kanti isono sakho.
Does Jehova rejoice when He sees you eat the fruit that you did not work for? You like to feed off/eat food that you have not worked for? You are putting a burden on those who will not give you the food that you ask for; meanwhile this is your own burden.

Amehlo kaNkulunkulu ayathokoza yini ngawe, uma udla ukudla ungakujulukelanga, ukwebile loko kudla.
When you eat food that you have not worked hard for, know that you have stolen that food.

uNkulunkulu akathokozi uma ebona udla ukudla ungakusebenzanga nakancane. Noma uyintombazana uyivila, uyavama ukukhathaza ngokuthatha izinto zamanye amantombazana. Wena-ke ungeneleni esimilweni esibi kangaka sokuba uNkulunkulu akubone ususizini nobuso bakho bunyukubele ngenxa yokulamba?
Even as a young girl, do not be lazy. You will be a nuisance among others when you are lazy. Why do you allow yourself to be troubled because you do not have food and your face looks sad because you do not have food?
Uzothi uNkulunkulu ulanjiswe yini, nazi izandla zakho njena owathi uNkulunkulu kaAdam lima, ulinde, uphumule ngosuku lwesiKhombisa? Izinsuku eziyiThupha uzisebenze zonke, ungaphuli nalunye.
What will be your reason for being hungry when you have hands to work? When the Lord of Adam said plough, cultivate and wait for what you have cultivated and rest on the seventh day? Six days you should labour and on the seventh day you should rest.

Uma ulwaphula olunye kulezi eziyisiThupha, athi uNkulunkulu zisebenze, uyakuluvusa ngani, uyakuthi awulusebenzanga ngani? Ngokuba iyona Imithetho eliShumi athi uNkulunkulu ungayaphuli. Mesabe uJehova ugcine Imithetho yakhe. Amen.
If you break any of these days by not working, how will you account for it in front of God? Fear (respect) the Lord and keep His commandments. Amen.

The prayer ends with this hymn that is sung by congregation:

Isihlabelelo somthandazo wokuvuka
Vuka nathi Sokhanyiso
Ngalemini yakho
Khanyisela amehlo ethu
Ne'nhliziyo zethu

Hamba nathi endleleni
Esizohamba ngayo
Usivikele emazinyweni
Alezo sitha zethu

Owasinikela ebuhlungwini bazo
Ngenxa yezono zethu,
Mabukhishwe ubuhlungu bazo
Ngalelo gama lakho.

Ibusise Nkosi baba.
Imisebenzi yezandla zethu
Singadingisingesweli
Thina bantu bakho

Bless Lord our Father
The work(s) of our hands
That we will have neither need nor want,

Singalibali ngalemini

Ukudumisa wena,
Ngemizuzu nezikhathi
Masidumise wena

The morning prayer presents Shembe's notion of work and the work ethic that Shembe insists that the followers should follow. The Shembe "work ethic" imisebenzi yezandla zethu: ukulima, ukuhlakula nokulinda (to plough, cultivate what they have ploughed and wait for what they have cultivated), is a direct or physical explanation of the work of one's hands. The significance of Shembe's emphasis on, imisebenzi yezandla zethu (work of one's hands) links to a broader history of how industrialisation was introduced in South Africa through the introduction of the factory, for instance. Pre-colonisation, the Nguni people worked with their hands, as Shembe writes in the prayer.

After my exposure to and connection with the morning prayer, I spoke to the followers of the church to get a deeper sense of how they interpret this prayer in their daily lives. With the context and history of industrialisation as stated in the introduction to the history of labour in Zululand above, I was interested to see how the followers made sense of Shembe's notion of work in their current context. For the interviews that I conducted during the month of July with followers of the church, I carried the hymn with me so that we could reference it according to the points that they would make. Often, the hymn was not used as the followers had memorised the prayer and had no problem with reciting word for word the parts that were more relevant to them. This was especially so for the followers that I spoke to in their place of employment, like Dhlamini, Mhlongo and Xakaza. I had a conversation with Rev Ntuli and Rev Sikhakhane on the Sabbath during the lunch break between midday and 2:00 pm at the Germiston temple in Johannesburg, and I spoke to Zama at her home in Nanda, Durban.

Mhlongo is a young male from eMsinga north of KwaZulu-Natal. He is married with children who live in KwaZulu-Natal. He currently lives in Johannesburg at the Nancefield hostel in Soweto, a township in the South of Johannesburg. When he is in Johannesburg, he attends the Sandanezwe temple in Doornfontein, Johannesburg CBD. Bab Dhlamini is a middle-aged male who is from Olundi, north of KwaZulu-Natal. He is married with children who live in Kwa-Zulu-Natal. He takes care of his elderly mother and sisters who live with his mother in Kwa-Zulu-Natal. He works as a security guard at Wits and lives in Soweto, south of

Johannesburg. He attends church at the Sandanezwe temple in Doornfontein, Johannesburg CBD.

Rev Ntuli is a middle-aged male from Eshowe, KwaZulu-Natal. He is married with children that he lives with in Germiston, Gauteng, where he works. He is part of the NGC under the leadership of Rev Mpanza, and Ntuli is the leader of the Johannesburg temple. Mshumayeli Sikhakane is a young male who is married with children. He lives with his family in Orange Farm, south of Johannesburg. He is part of NGC under Rev Mpanza's leadership. Mama Buthelezi (Interview, 8 March 2021), who was mentioned in Chapter Four, is a schoolteacher and has a diploma in education. The other followers, like Xakaza, Lindo Dube and Zama Mthethwa I mentioned in detail in Chapter Four.

In my conversation with Mhlongo I wanted to learn about his views on work and understand the kind of work he does. He also runs a small business (a convenience store) in the hostel where he resides in Nancefield, Soweto. He has a plot back home in KZN, where his wife and children live, and he mentions that balimile (they farm, as a family)—they engage in agriculture, but this is for food and sustenance rather than for business purposes. For him, this part of the prayer that emphasises, ukulima, ukuhlakula, nokulinda esikuhlakulayo—to plough, to cultivate and to wait for what we have cultivated—of the prayer resonates more, and with great pride and confidence, he says:

You see, uShembe was powerful and clear. Listen to what he says in this section of the prayer, the ending is what makes me want to get out [get up] and go work in the fields. This he says while reciting the morning prayer to me: "thabatha igeja ulime (after this prayer take your hoe (ploughing tool) and till the land)." How inspiring is that? He looks at me, "Go work, do not wander around", Mhlongo (Interview, September 2022)

In the lengthier conversation about this, Mhlongo (in 2022) mentions that the only reason he came to Johannesburg was to work and earn money for a more stable income, as this is necessary to support his family. Succumbing to the pressure of being young and employed like Zama, he arrived in Johannesburg seeking employment. Moreover, due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the situation at home changed, and he was forced to take this Wits security

job. As he reflected on this verse, he thought deeply, sighed heavily, and with a sense of despair, he expressed:

When you see me here, I am not here in spirit. Yes, my physical body is here, but my mind is not. In fact, this work damages my mind. Thinking is not required for this job. I am not myself when I am here at all, but what can we do?

Then, in a more enthusiastic tone, using hand gestures, he says:

When I am off work, on my off days, I am the happiest. That is where the morning prayer, that verse, gives me the power (strength) to go and work. I make sure the business is running well. I buy stock, talk to customers, and call home to ensure that they have everything they need. Yabo nje (you see), this is what this verse means: work for yourself.

Mhlongo's spirit resonates with working independently, highlighting that work for him is not only a physical act, but it is also a spiritual act. Work should be enabling rather than (dis)abling, demotivating and unfulfilling. Mhlongo feels particularly demotivated and disenfranchised when he is at Wits. This further speaks to the point that labouring bodies do not find fulfilment in the kinds of labour that they perform for others. For him, when he is at Wits, he is there to primarily earn a wage—for survival—and working solely for survival places one in a vulnerable position of precarity. When the focus shifts to the wage (which is earned by working for others), it can never be sufficient—it can never be equated to anything meaningful, as Barchiesi (2011) argues. Examining Mhlongo's interpretation of Shembe's notion of work imisebenzi yezandla zethu: ukulima, ukuhlakula, nokulinda (the work of our hands), one gains a clear understanding of how some followers interpret Shembe's notion of work in its literal sense of working the land. In addition, it serves as a reminder of the importance of people owning land to its spiritual connection for work and rest in the context of the church followers.

This is like the migrant worker in the Comaroff and Comaroff (1987) study, who struggles (like Mhlongo did during Covid-19). The relationship that he has with his body has been seen by capitalism as a labouring body and usable for cheap labour, unlike working with your hands, which leads to fulfilment and production for oneself. Just as Mhlongo feels a sense of despair when he is at Wits, he also feels useless. However, he needs the job to survive or at least recover

what he lost during Covid-19. He highlights how wage labour dehumanizes you since it sees the Black body as a non-being.

Ukulima, ukuhlakula, nokulinda okuhlakulileyo.

Ukulima, which means to plough, goes hand in hand with ukuhlakula (cultivating) and nokulinda (waiting for what you have cultivated). This work ethic reminds some of the followers that they need to work in the fields in order to have food on their tables. It also means that the labour process requires one to be diligent in that they have to take time to care for the work that they have produced, so that it does not get ruined. They must also see its end product when it sprouts. I observed this process of cultivating on numerous occasions throughout my time with amaNazaretha. First, I saw how the followers care for the temples by mowing the grass, repainting the white stones, and ensuring that the temple is always clean for the Sabbath day. This cleaning happens on Sundays, with volunteers dedicating their time to maintaining the temple. It occurs in all temples in Ebuhleni and at NCG. The next instance of cultivation takes place in July. Here, members tend to the land in Ebuhleni, nurturing the crops they have planted to ensure they grow well and bear good fruit suitable for eating. Time spent here is not driven by the pressure to complete tasks; instead, it is used without rush, with focus and accuracy. When a member feels tired or has finished caring for a particular crop, they leave without feeling pressured to complete everything in one day or week. They are more focused on tasks than on time.

Speaking to Mhlongo on this work ethic, he mentioned its importance in his life as he explains:

When you have farmed (ploughed) and cultivated what you ploughed, you then understand what you have invested, and that reflects what you will reap. Therefore, you cannot expect to reap what you have not sown or rely on faith for you to produce anything different from what you have or have not sown. The blessing of working for ourselves is that we are always prepared to receive the fruits of our “labour,” as that is the principle of how it works. The idea of waiting for what you have cultivated, and in effect reaping that which you have cultivated, is significant in that it is not time wasted (in waiting) or anticipation but rather time that allows for a synergy of nature to reward you with the fruits of that which you have sown. This allows things to flow naturally, making time valuable according to what is needed. Unlike industrialization, which relies on mass production and is profit-driven, this fosters a

synchronicity between time and nature. It also shows the independence of working with your hands, so that there is no rush for production, but rather there is an order in how things flow naturally.

However, with the same sigh of despair as Mhlongo, Rev Ntuli, from NCG at the Germiston temple, reflects on how this process of ploughing, cultivating and waiting for what one has cultivated has changed over time. Now he says, "we are working in factories and/or offices, times are different now. But we are significantly encouraged to go to work, emasimini with our hands by Shembe" (Interview, Rev Ntuli, 12 March 2022).

Rev Ntuli further recalled a quote that he read from Gunner's work (2002), where Gunner quoted how Shembe made an example of when and how people moved from working from home to working in factories and how this made them neglect their duties at home like milking cows, cultivating their crops etc. The lesson that Rev Ntuli says that he draws from this prayer is that even while he cannot work in the fields as he would wish, he is encouraged to be trustworthy at his place of work and work diligently and effectively. Rev Ntuli further adds that:

It is not a sin to work for someone else, but we are definitely encouraged to rather work for ourselves. It is written in many places in the hymns. We do also emphasize that people should work for themselves because, in all honesty, working for others is not nice at all. In fact, the prophet was so strict towards those who worked on the Sabbath that when they got paid at the end of the month, they should set aside the earnings of the Sabbath day because it does not have any blessing to you as you broke the law of keeping the Sabbath. This shows that the prophet would rather have us work for ourselves so that we do not break the law of God; you earn money by breaking the law of God by disrespecting God; that money has no blessing and should not even be offered at church (Interview, Rev Ntuli, 12 March 2022).

Mhlongo also spoke about the connection between money earned by working for others, whether in the office, service work or firms and factories. Mhlongo says that:

You cannot offer wages that you have not worked for. In this context, the works of our hands include the works that one does creatively, thoughtfully and intentionally. Personification of

the work of our hands involves thought and soul, something that one brings oneself into. It is a physical and spiritual act that enables the doer to think more creatively, intentionally, purposefully, thoughtfully. “Imisebenzi yezandla zethu” then warrants blessings from the one who blesses us with the ability to produce work that is in accordance with God (Interview, Mhlongo, 14 September 2022).

On the other hand, Mama Buthelezi interprets the prayer in relation to her profession as a schoolteacher. She says:

Kakhulukazi umPropheti wasi chazela ukuthi asisebenze umuntu akanga phili ngokucela, umuntu kufanele azisebenzele. Bese kuya ngokuthi umuntu ufanelwe yini. Okubaluleke kakhulu ukuthi umuntu alime, thina sibona ukuthi ukulima ngesikathi samanje ukuthi kuya ngokuthi ufundele muphi umsebenzi bese uyasebenza. Kodwa okubaluleke kakhulu ukuthi ungaceli ngoba uma ucela usuke ubeka icala kubantu abakungcishayo, kubhalilwe nakho lokho emthandazweni wokuvuka ukuthi ukusebenza kusho ukuthini (Interview, Buthelezi, 8 March 2021).

The prophet told us that it is important to work with our hands. A person must not live by begging or asking others for help just to eat. A person must work for themselves. This work varies based on skills, talents, and capabilities. What is most important is that a person must farm. In modern times, I interpret this as the need to attend school, receive a good education, and then seek employment based on what you have studied. To me, what stands out is that you should not go around asking people for help, especially for food. This places a serious burden on those from whom you ask for assistance, as it can weigh heavily on those who are unable to provide it. (Interview, Mama Buthelezi, 8 March 2021)

Work of your hands as self-employment?

In a different conversation with a middle-aged man, Lindo Dube (Interview, in March 2021), who is now a farmer, the concept of work as presented by Shembe has also played a significant role for him. He never thought work and his spiritual life could coexist, and he interprets it this way:

> We are given strict instruction on work and the importance of working for yourself [umNazereth]. Depending on what you are good at. Some people do different kinds of work here that I know. Some people own bakeries, butcher shops and some work in salons, for example. There are challenges there, because if people have to do certain things that go against the church laws, then they have to make sure that they do the "ukuhlabuluka" prayer of purification. We have a period where we do not eat bread in church in October. We do not believe in cutting our hair, but if you work in a salon and someone wants a haircut, you do it. But after having done all this, it is important to come to the church on the Sabbath and go through the cleansing process. I work for myself; I do not have a problem depending on people and my offerings are accepted. (Lindo Dube, Wyebank-Pinetown, 2021)

I suppose for Lindo Dube, although self-employment is essential for self-dependence, it also has a downside to it. Principal to capitalism is the element of maximising profit and minimising loss. Self-employment tends to lead towards this system of maximising profit and minimising loss, specifically through the outsourcing of labour for one's gain, and through taking up executive power as a strategy to reduce wages for those lying outside the executive power structures of your establishment. For Lindo, there are other challenges that come with self-employment: for bakeries, his concern is: what do they do during the Holy Months when they cannot sell that kind of food because of the fasting? In butcher shops, people sell pork, and pork is something that the members should not eat. With regard to salons, hair is not allowed to be cut. For men, how do they deal with this situation in their business? Shembe seems to suggest that work cannot be outsourced, you must work with your own hands as it is your duty to use your hands in order to produce and create something meaningful for yourself.

The conversation with Lindo Dube reminds me of the interview conducted by Comaroff and Comaroff (1987: 78) with a man in Barolong. The migrant worker left factory work and decided to go back to his homeland to work for himself. The idea of working for oneself as opposed to working for someone else became a crucial distinction for the Comaroffs, between what the community perceived as work and what they perceived as labour. As cited below, the man in the Barolong community explains:

Here I struggle, but I work for myself (itirela; the reflexive of direla). The soil is stony and there is no rain. I struggle, but I call no one "boss". Out there, where we labour (bereka) for

whites, they pay us money. But the mine, like the grave, has use only for your body. When it is done with you, it spits you out, and you are finished useless (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1987: 78-9).

The word "itirela" means to do things for yourself or work for yourself. In this context, work is an individual imperative. Comaroff and Comaroff (1987) emphasise the difference between alienated wage labour for others and constitutive work within meaningful social relations. Kenny (2018) argues that while the Comaroffs set up this important distinction between alienated wage labour and meaningful social work, the meanings of work changed historically with workers' struggle. She shows how the collective struggle of Black workers from the 1970s expanded the meaning of even wage labour toward a notion of constitutive personhood through collective action itself (as exceeding the wage relation). In the context of amaNazaretha, the meaning of work is unalienated labour, but it is more than the simple distinction with wage labour it is working with one's hands. It is not being dependent on others. And it is recuperating time through different temporalities. Further, as will be seen in the following chapter, this notion of work is coupled with the centrality of rest as essential for personhood, and an individual is made through understanding and practising rest. This idea of rest is discussed in Chapter Six.

Work and the land

Shembe's notion of work is linked to broader discussions about the significance of Black people owning land. The point is that nonalienated labour, as Shembe presents, requires connection to the land. Thus, when land was taken from people, it felt as though they had lost their very essence, as painfully noted by Plaatjie (1916: 1): "Awaking on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth." Shembe's "work ethic" is thus different from the Protestant work ethic. The Protestant work ethic cultivates the spirit of industriousness. This is a spirit that is driven by economic behaviour, that promotes hard work, self-reliance etc., with financial success and prosperity as signs of God's favour. Shembe did not emphasize hard work in the abstract for a later reward as the protestant work ethic demanded (Weber 1908; Barchiesi 2011); instead he turned to the immediate work of one's own hands for oneself that constituted the world around people.

Shembe's notion of the "work of our hands" emphasizes the type of work followers should engage in, which importantly includes how land plays a significant role in an individual's life regarding ancestral and spiritual connections. The question of land resurfaces concerning work or activity. Shembe reminds followers of what they have lost due to land dispossession, as well as the extent of that loss concerning work. This underlines the importance of land for Shembe, particularly the fact that when one enters Ebuhleni any day, shoes cannot be worn, as this indicates the land is holy ground, especially in any area of the church.

La magama uShembe wabe ewaqambela isizwe samaZulu ukuba sithi uma sidumisa uNkulunkulu siwahlabelele, kodwa enomlayezo othile. Isihlabelelo 183, singumlayezo ngezizwe ezifuna izwe lakwaZulu.

Shembe wrote these words for the Zulu nation. They were written for their time of worship so that they can sing them, and they carry a significant message (Dube, 1936: 29).

Dube in this quote makes it clear that, within the morning prayer, Shembe not only instructed his followers spiritually but also instructed them politically. He warns them about people who will come and take over their land. This will affect the ways in which they work and rest. Moreover, they will take over their livelihood and change the Zulu way of life.

In hymn 183, Shembe is more explicit about the effect and the impact that the loss of land had on Black people. He expresses the agony of land being taken from people, just as Plaatjie and Mathiane (2016) describe their firsthand encounters with losing land and being dispossessed.

Isihlabelelo 183
Lalela Zulu
Lalela abantu bengiphethe
Ngezwe lethu

Listen Zulu
Listen to people ruling me

About (in) our land

Siyazizwa izizwe zivungama
Zivungama ngawe
Njengezinyoni

Sisho izinyoni sisho amahlokohloko
Acekezela insimu
kaDingana noSenzangakhona

Ayiqedile mamo!
Sizwa ngoMnyayiza
kaNdabuko

We hear the nations grumbling
Grumbling about you
Like a bird

We mean the birds, the weaver birds
They destroyed Dingana and Senzangakhona's field

They destroyed it completely
We heard from Mnyayiza
Son of Ndabuko

The metaphor of the fields and the weaver birds refers to the South African land that has been confiscated by White people, like how weaver birds invade fields and feed on what has been sown there. "He likens them to weaver birds who are notorious for destroying people's fields" (Sithole 2014: 3). This is what the colonial invasion did to Black people, who, one moment, owned and worked the land, and the next, saw it taken by those who did not work the land. There is a connection here with land, work, and eating from the land—sowing and reaping what you have sown. Those who behaved like the weaver bird led to an injunction: one could not feed off what they had not worked for. This is because they had hands to provide for themselves. Continuing the allegory of the weaver bird, one might ask: how does one eat food

when they have not worked for it? Food is produced and prepared by hand, and those who have hands should be able to produce and prepare their own food. By behaving exactly like the weaver birds, some White people are eating and benefitting from things they have not worked for.

Moreover, as Sithole (2014) expands that hymn 183 above, it is a political hymn. Shembe uses examples from nature to illustrate his point about the extent of this invasion. As Gerard Sekoto's "song of the pick" depicts a white man standing/watching Black workers labour for Whites. Like the weaver bird who invades people's fields and feeds on what is sowed there as if it belongs to them (Sithole, 2014). This Sithole (2014) as he makes an argument for Shembe's hymns to be read as African literary texts speak to the poem by Kofi Awooner, a poet from Ghana. In his poem titled "the weaver bird", he also warns the Black people in Ghana about the invasion of whites in their land (Sithole, 2014: 7).

This work ethic, then, lies at the centre of reclaiming the land as a spiritual necessity for productive activity and meaningful living. The conversation I had with Rev. Ntuli and umshumayeli Sikhakhane concluded with the practicality of this model, considering everything happening around us. For them, this model extends beyond the idea of work, as it also serves as a lifestyle guide:

Yes, I see it as practical. Firstly, we have to get the land back! It takes time, but when that happens, we need that land. The land issue presents a significant challenge. Even back home in the rural areas, there are chiefs who own the land and make it difficult for individuals to acquire it. While it can happen, it is not easy. We keep it in mind and hope for it to happen, but it's not straightforward. The prophet was very broad in his teachings. By encouraging various aspects of people's lives, I see individuals diligently mastering their crafts in many fields, like accounting, teaching, and medicine. This helps us gain the skills needed to establish our own networks and, ideally, create a self-sufficient community that doesn't rely on the government. Of course, not all of us can be farmers, and it would be unusual for amaNazaretha to be just that group of farmers. Our children need education, but they attend schools where they are taught by non-believers and served pork, which goes against our beliefs. Education and self-employment are crucial, and we do need to be influential (Interview, Rev Sikhakhane, 13 March 2022).

Rev Sikhakhane explained, then, how Shembe's teachings translated into today's conditions. He emphasised the self-sufficiency of the community, not necessarily only direct work on the land under current conditions but the importance of working with dedication where one is placed. Education plays a big role today and people need to be educated.
Adding to the importance of education them as amaNazaretha being in a position of influence Rev Ntuli adds:

We are needed everywhere. The Prophet was truly remarkable, his teachings are timeless. His arrival in 1910, he had a strict no smoking and no drinking rule—then people didn't know the side effects of doing so. Only now we see that smoking causes cancer, so him encouraging that was avoiding people being ill and dying before their time. If we had truly focused on his teachings as a Black nation, we would be far, but we protested school and took lightly what he taught (Interview, Rev Ntuli, 26 March 2022).

For Rev Ntuli (whom I interviewed in 2022), the Shembe work ethic is a reminder of the land that was lost. This is important because it has affected how people work. "The prophet clarified the issue of work by stating that it is not a sin to work for others." This is indeed true, since in my conversation with Mhlongo, at Wits (whom I interviewed in 2022) on this matter, he explained that it is not a crime to work for others. However, Mhlongo explains that every time uNyazi (the current leader of the Ebuhleni faction) takes out a blessing at the end of the Sabbath, he does not give a blessing to those that are employed, he makes a special prayer for those that work on their own. Omama who have the dress-making (church attire) business, and anyone else who tries to emulate the work instruction in their lives, Shembe, blesses them more. He merely asks that those who work for others be protected in their workplaces.

Rev Ntuli (Interview in March 2022) then adds that:

Shembe was emphasizing that people should work using their own hands rather. He emphasised that working is the biggest blessing. He says this in our morning prayer that when we are done with this prayer: "thabatha igeja lakho ulime" for this is what you will live by. He refused that we go around asking for things from people—it is a big sin to go around asking people for food. God gave your hands to work and not to go around asking for food with them.
Mama Buthelezi sees the benefit and importance of amaNazaretha specifically to own land, because it is also linked to the strict diet that must be followed:

Bese ngokuzisebenza kakhulu thina amaNazaretha sidla ukudla okuyingcwele, ukudla fanele kube ukudla okungcwele asingeni kunoma imaphi ama Restaurants ngoba asiyidli ingulube for example, lokho kukhuthaza ukuthi asifuye izilwane ezingcwele. Nokuthi ke kugcina umnotho wethu la ebu Nazaretha ngoba sithenga ukudla kwethu. Kodwa okwamanje emadolobheni sithenga kumasulumani halaal inyama ethandazelwe. Siyakhala futhi manje, ngoba lokho kudla kuHealthy and we build community around here (Interview, Mama Buthelezi, 2021).

As Nazarites, we eat clean, holy food. This becomes a challenge when we do not farm our own. We cannot go to just any restaurant; we have to ensure that the restaurant serves the kind of food we eat as Nazarites. For example, when we farm and produce our own food and livestock, we don't worry about what we're eating because we know we farmed and produced it ourselves. Furthermore, we maintain wealth within the church because we, as Nazarites, buy from one another. But for now, as someone living in Durban City, we have no choice but to buy food. We purchase from Muslim shops because their food is pure (halaal) and healthy (Interview, Mama Buthelezi, 2021).

Mama Buthelezi here highlights how Isaiah Shembe gave them strict instructions to work for themselves, if possible. He said that when we do not do that, we risk becoming like beggars who rely on people for food and money. A person needs to work for themselves. Of course, this all depends on what a person is good at and what a person can do. He encouraged followers to "ukulima" farm, harvest your own food and sustain your own food. But what I understand about "ukulima" farming right now is for some to go to University to get a qualification so that you can work and do good at the work that you do. The most important thing is that you do not beg or ask from people because not only are you detrimental to yourself, but you are also putting a burden on the person you are asking from as well if they cannot help you.

She further says that for her, she sees the significance of ukulima—when Shembe says this is what you live by, when it comes to diet. They follow a strict diet as followers, and it is difficult to buy from shops because they do not know what could be put in the food etc. This suggestion has an implication for health. It would be easier for them to eat food they have cultivated themselves, and this is what the prayer reminds her of. However, since she lives in town, she buys food from Somalians, halaal food, because it is prayed for. Here, ukulima nokuhlakula nokulinda, allows members to eat in line with the diet prescribed by Shembe. (He used to eat

corn so that he would be strong and fit to move around.) This not only highlights the significance of the followers to own land but is necessary for the diet that they are required to follow in order to have clear minds to work and listen to God's guidance about their lives. This lifestyle requires autonomy, independence and self-sufficiency in order to follow it accurately.

Imisebenzi yezandla zethu: autonomous, independent and not begging.

Following my conversation with Mhlongo—who expressed his dissatisfaction with the monotonous work that he does as a security guard—it is clear that the morning prayer affects how he relates to the work that he does when he is at Wits. He longs for independence and a level of autonomy when he works. He notes:

Unlike you, who must wait for your employer to pay you a salary irrespective of the effort you've put in—I look at you here and at the University, and I feel for you. That is not living, and that is not how things should be. I feel freer and more comfortable when I am working for myself. I know I will earn more than what the University pays me. However, due to circumstances, especially after Covid-19, I had to work here full-time to make a living, but I know for certain that this is not where I belong.

The key experiences that I draw from both Linda Dube and Mhlongo's interpretation of the prayer and how they practice it in their lives is in their recognition of the alienating nature of wage labour. Mhlongo, finds himself alienated from himself: "My body is here, but my mind is not here." This shows a disconnect with space but also that "being here kills his mind"—that awareness that labour here takes away his ability to think. This includes alienation from the work itself. For example, as we were talking, we got interrupted by two students, one who had a student card and the other did not, so they asked him to allow her access into the library. He answered by telling them to sign the register, and he would open for them. As they walked away, he came back to the conversation, "You see, I just sit here and open and close for people." Ayikho into entheni lapho, meaning there is nothing of significance/value that I am doing. (Interview, Mhlongo, Wits University, 2022)

He settles this alienation, though, when he works for himself back home in the fields and in his shop at Nancefield. Somehow, he comes alive. He feels the drive to do more work but also a

sense that this work allows him to be himself fully, similar to how the migrant worker in the Comaroff and Comaroff study (1987) felt.

My conversation with Zama[26], a young woman who has been a church member from an early age, speaks to the reality and conflict of living in South Africa. Firstly, it is difficult as a woman but also as a member of a church that exists in a neo-liberal world. That makes it difficult to take seriously Shembe's instructions, because such inventions go against the mass market and a techno-reliant modernity which replaces craftsmanship with automaticity.

Like most conversations among young people, the question of what one is doing with their life is bound to arise. Sometimes, this question is asked to measure where someone stands in terms of success compared to the person asking or as a means of finding comfort if we share similar situations. Either way, it can be an unsettling question for those who feel they are not where they believe they should be. During my conversation with Zama, I recognized my position as a young woman currently pursuing a PhD at Wits. With this awareness, I aimed to frame the question in a way that did not look for her to proclaim her success but rather as an opportunity to get to know her better. She responded:

I am currently not doing anything. I am an unemployed graduate with a degree in Education from UNISA. I chose to study education with the hope that it would improve my chances of finding a job, as teachers are in demand—that's what I thought when I registered for this degree. It has been two years since I completed my degree, and there is still no hope. I have a family to support. My children are in school, and we rely on my mother's financial support. Ma sells imvunulo enhle esontweni (the traditional attire that church members wear during imigidi (the sacred dance—see Chapter Seven).

She pauses for a moment to call her daughter: "Weh Hle, go to the bedroom and get me pictures in the bottom drawer, ubuhlalu (beads), and clothes uGogo makes, kuKrist sheshisa."… Her daughter comes in a few moments later with everything that was requested. "Sawubona mama," she greets me. Zama then takes out the clothes and pictures from a huge plastic bag and shows me the beautiful beads and skirts that her mother made. "Look," she says, "this was all made by hand by my mother. She has been doing this for as long as I have lived. She sells this to

[26] Not her real name. She has played an important role during my fieldwork. I stayed at her home; "edokodweni" can either be a camp tent, mud house or brick house, Ebuhleni during the month of July. We spent a lot of time together. Most of the conversations happened over a period of time.

church members, and they buy a lot, especially when there are certain conferences that we need to attend which always require specific attires and beads. She never runs out of business. Well," with a deep sigh, she continues, "it was only this year [2020] really with Covid-19 that things slowed down because uNyazi cancelled all the events, major events that would normally take place."

While she thinks about the events that they normally have, she pulls out some pictures, and as we page through the pictures, she explains, "You see here, we were on our way to Ehlangakazi, for our January conference. This is so much fun, there are over 10000 people who go. Anyway, all I want now is to get a job and be able to take care of my family. Plus, it is difficult to live when you are unemployed. I cannot buy the outfits I want, neither can I look how I want to look or even get married, because I do not want to be anyone's wife without my own things. Imagine being solely dependent. No, I cannot do that.

This conversation between Zama and me revealed her reality as an unemployed graduate and the experiences and the effect that unemployment has had on her. It constitutes the reality of precarity faced by several young South Africans. It also indicates the way we have come to view ourselves as people who have been accepted by the system through education and employment (see Sefalafala, 2020), from which we feel validated and worthy to be taken seriously by others. The need for employment is important, indeed, in as far as we think of "survival." However, Shembe's distinction of work in the morning prayer emphasises the practice of one's culture, and shifts work from 'necessity' (Arendt, 1958) to deeper connections with the individual, since work is a contributing factor to what it means to be human.

In Zama's case, work which she perceives as employment is important for her in order to make money to support her family. Work, in this case, "directly affects the ongoing becoming of persons; personhood is, in itself, public, political, creative, generative and constitutive of social relations" (Kenny, 2018: 207). This exclusion from paid employment leaves many feeling unworthy and vulnerable. However, for Zama, in hindsight, this exclusion from traditional jobs should serve as a moment of reflection and understanding, perhaps not just for Zama but also for the church followers who find themselves in a similar situation, urging them to think critically about the morning prayer regarding work. In Zama's quote above, she counterposes her own lack of wage work to her mother's practice of working with her hands to make beautiful garments. The latter is what Shembe found reparative, unlike labour scholars who

have analysed the meaningfulness of waged work as jobs became more precarious (Kenny 2018; Sefalafala 2020).

The distinction between work and waged-labour for Shembe is made clearer by an example recorded by Papini (1999:250), which illustrates that Shembe held strong views against the labour movement aiming to combat the exploitation and oppression associated with factory work. In light of the fact that 1929 witnessed the formation of the Industrial Commercial Union ICU, a labour movement which sought to address maltreatment and unfairness of a Black workforce across South Africa, and Southern Africa (Steward, 2021). Officials like Constable McKenzie from the Ndwendwe magistrate, "an ill-disposed police sergeant Craddock", and a Native constable were sent to visit Shembe at Nhlangakazi on several occasions (Papini, 1999: 250). McKenzie, anxious about Shembe's large following across the country, insisted that there must be "a very careful watching" (Papini, 1999: 251) on Shembe and the activities that happen at Nhlangakazi. Shembe's following and number attracted labour movements and officials such as Mnyaiza kaNdabuke, "who was both a nephew of Solomons grandfather Cetshwayo, and a recruiter of workers" (Cabrita, 2009:612), and others were interested in recruiting Shembe because of his recognised influence over many people in across South Africa. However, Shembe strongly disagreed with officials who tried to involve him in their labour initiatives (Papini, 1999). With his refusal to participate in the growing movement of Black workers and labourers, the Black political elite referred to Shembe as "the madman, son of Mayekisa," because of his insistence on avoiding participation in labour politics (Papini, 1999: 253).

Zama desires employment, like many other young South Africans navigating this economic landscape. Shembe seems to remind her—or us—that this mindset creates precarious individuals who rely on others for self-worth, purpose, and earnings. For Zama, this is even more pronounced because her mother supported their family for years by practising the teachings of Isaiah Shembe regarding work. Zama showed me the beautiful garments that her mother continues to design and hand-make to sell to church members during the holy months. This kind of work sustained their family, and it is work that even Zama is proud of because of how beautifully it is crafted.

When the Sabbath was over, I spent my six weekdays speaking to the members of the church, some in their workplaces, for those who were employed, others in their homes for those who were unemployed and/or worked from their homes, and others we had conversations at

Ebuhleni during the month of July on days that had no activities. Apart from members noting the usefulness of the prayer as a key ritual of their morning routine, the conversations that I had with them afforded them the opportunity to reflect on what Shembe meant. A lazy person is like a dog that survives by begging for food from humans. At the end of this prayer, Shembe said, take your hoe and till; that is how you will live, and refrain from begging for food from others.

For Dr Xakaza[27] (interviewed in 2021), for instance, what propels him to take this instruction seriously at work is the idea of being hungry (poverty in a broader context); and not being in a position to blame anyone else but himself[28]. Rev Xakaza, who memorised these particular words and speaks with great emphasis, says: "work for six days (it is written there, he emphasises). Work for six days, he repeats. In these days that the Lord has given you, - so that you do not go hungry; because if you do go hungry, who will you blame?" he asks, taken from stanza 39 of the Morning prayer Shembe asks:

Uzothi uNkulunkulu ulanjiswe yini? Nazi izandla zakho njena owathi uNkulunkulu kaAdam, lima, ulinde, uphumule ngosuku lwesikhombisa".

God is going to say, what is causing you to starve, because you have hands with which the God of Adam said you should plough, and watch and rest on the seventh day.

This follows a verse where Shembe speaks to women. In particular, he says:

God does not rejoice if he sees you eating food that you have not worked for, even the smallest amount of work. Even you, lazy girl, will make a nuisance of yourself by taking the belongings and food from other girls. It is even visible in your face when you are hungry, you take up a face and character of sorrow and your face is haggard from hunger? (Morning prayer – Shembe 1940)

[27] I spoke to Rev Xakaza for over four hours in his office at the Art Gallery in Durban Central. He is a Director at the Gallery. Dr Xakaza, has given me permission to use his real name in the research. Especially in Chapter Four, where he shared his personal life and artworks.

[28] In a sermon that Rev Mpanza preached he spoke against the verse in Matthew that encourages people to be poor. Blessed are the poor for yours is the kingdom, blessed are you who hunger now because you will be satisfied—he says that the missionaries instil these values in us (the Black and poor) to accept the status of being poor and hungry but that is not the instruction that Shembe gives. Mpanza strongly argued, with great emphasis, in this sermon, that there is no blessing in this logic.

This resonates with Rev Xakaza particularly because he does not want to find himself in a position where he has to beg for food from others when he can work for himself. Begging and dependency in nature creates vulnerable subjects. The hierarchical labour relations and the tradition of workplaces create a sense of dependency. One works to earn a salary at the end of the month. Often this is a salary that they had no active role in determining.

Uboba namahloni ukuhamba ucela ukudla kubantu kanti uNkulunkulu ukuphile izandla zakho ukuba usebenze ngazo, ungahambi ucela ngazo ukudla. Manjeke wena sewuhamba ucela ukudla ngazo na? Awusebenzi ngani ngazo? Be ashamed of yourself when you go around asking for food from people. When God has given you hands to work, why don't you use those hands to work?

Liberation of time: taking time to cultivate

Andre Gorz (1982:2-3) speaks of the “liberation of time/liberation as time” as a way to consider the abolition of work. He acknowledges, like many labour scholars, that “work has not always existed in the way it is currently understood” (Gorz, 1982: 2-3). This form of industrial work emerged with the rise of capitalism and the development of the proletariat; it is now viewed as an activity performed for someone else, in exchange for a wage based on schedules and forms dictated by the employer, and for a purpose not chosen by the worker. Nowadays, "work" almost exclusively refers to activities done for wages. The terms work and job have become interchangeable. Work has become merely a means to earn money rather than an activity valued in itself. In a sense, earning money through work can be viewed as an unethical act driven by the capitalistic logic of precarity. This situation fosters dependency and restricts freedom for those who engage in it.

It seems that the way the older generation (Mpanza, Mrs. Mpanza, Dhlamini, Fikile Buthelezi, Lindo Dube, Xakaza, Mabaso) understand or practice work that differs from that of the younger generation (Zama Mthethwa, Mhlongo, Sikhakhane, Ntuli, Shuku). Young people want to participate in the labour force, whereas the older generation is more inclined to adhere to the guidance of the Prophet. For instance, Zama’s mother is involved in home production; many older preachers tend to be more entrepreneurial and are in their mid-forties. Meanwhile, younger individuals are encouraged to pursue education; however, their identity is rooted in their pride in being members of the church.

This, for Rev Xakaza, gives him a sense of accountability and responsibility to own his everyday life. Even though Xakaza is employed as a director for the Durban Art Gallery, in terms of the creative work that he does, he does not feel as though he is working for someone else. For Xakaza, the creative space at the gallery allows him not to feel like he is dependent but that he is able to create artworks that capture the village that he comes from, to tell a story about the area. So, he is not alienated from the work he is producing but rather is fulfilled. His mind is always activated because he has the opportunity to produce and create works that resonate with him the most. In a sense then, as Shembe instructs above, how will you take accountability for your time? In similar ways, Han (2020) speaks of atemporal crisis which is caused by dyschronicity, which ultimately tempers with the rhythm of time and order which thus "falls out of step" (Han, 2020: 24). This dyschronicity lets time "whizz without direction" (Han, 2020: 24) and the person feels like they have done nothing meaningful with the time they have been given.

Taking time to cultivate in the way that Shembe suggests as an important intervention on how people should be spending their time, but also how, when one follows the laws of nature, then there will always be synergy with time. It is in the chasing of industrial time that time itself falls out of step, as Han (2020: 24) argues. It also brings meaning into one's life as they can account for the things that they do with their time.

Conclusion

The prayer presents three fundamental points. First, it emphasizes the connection between man and God. As Shembe points out in the stanza of hymn 160 referenced in the prelude, God created the heavens and the earth with His hands. Similarly, people on earth emulate this by working with their hands, and thus, Shembe asks the Lord to bless the work of their hands. Second, in this hymn, Shembe asserts that once God has blessed their work, the followers will not experience need or want. This concept of lacking nothing broadly addresses issues related to precarity, suggesting that the efforts of one's hands do not leave them in a precarious state of "ukudinga, nokuswela." Third, once this is accomplished, the follower will not be so reliant on others as to burden them. This chapter addresses the overall question that this study seeks to understand: Shembe's response to the human condition. Shembe makes a theological inquiry that views theology as a potential response to precarity. The Sabbath theology is a theology of

work and rest, but it also serves as an instruction: “thou shalt work and thou shalt rest." Shembe adopts the Sabbath as a response to the human condition and as a way for Black people, in particular, to make sense of their existence in the world.

The meaning of work includes three aspects: working with one’s hands, which emphasises non-alienated labour; working through self-sufficiency and not being dependent on others, not begging; and, working in a way as to reclaim time, through the notion of ‘cultivation.’ As we saw, these ideas of work are linked fundamentally to the centrality of land as a means of enabling the conjoined notions of work for Shembe. As will be seen in the next chapter, rest, in this context, interrupts work. It takes us away from the process of production. Rest disrupts this process by not allowing work or the cycle to continue perpetually. Work must be interrupted to bring balance to human life, and rest must be encouraged as a response to precarity.

Chapter Six

Rest as a Communal and Collective Set of Practices

Nabangena nezicathulo
Endlini kaJehova
Beyiphendula indlu yomdlalo
Ngokwephula imithetho

Those who enter
The house of the Lord,
Wearing shoes,
Turning it into a circus

Introduction

This chapter centres on the need to understand rest and its related practices as a critical spiritual intervention in work practice. The idea of remembering traces the origins of Sabbath observance as a teaching and a practice. The chapter addresses the value, meaning and experience of Sabbath keeping, its preparation related to clothing, food and the home. I introduce the service of ukuhlambuluka (a prayer of purification) and its significance as a practice of rest in the transitioning from the regular week into the Sabbath. This engagement is contextualised by the consideration of rest as a form of resistance and an understanding of the structure of the church service. The data presented and analysed here are mainly drawn from participant observations and interviews.

In this chapter, I engage more directly with the concept of rest in relation to work, which arises from conversations with followers and individuals interested in the church's understanding of rest. Rest serves as a release from both the burdens carried in the heart and the physical weight lifted. My active participation during the Sabbath services at NCG temples in Johannesburg and KZN, along with my experiences at July Ebuhleni and Marianhill, inform my perspective. As noted in the previous stanza, Shembe clearly distinguishes between the representation of the temple and how individuals should present themselves upon entering it. Shembe suggests that those who wear shoes in the house of the Lord turn it into a circus. Much like Moses, who

spoke to God in the biblical story of the burning bush, God instructed him to remove his shoes because the ground he stood on was holy (Exodus 3:2-5). Similarly, Shembe urges followers not to wear shoes in the temple, emphasizing that the ground is sacred. In this chapter, I illustrate how the temple symbolizes a physical and mental space of rest, where resistance and resilience become vital acts of liberation. “Listening to the ground” becomes an essential practice, as Makhathini (2023: 4) notes; through the act of sitting on the floor, kneeling, and walking barefoot, one engages in a spiritual practice of listening to the ground as a source of guidance.

As I have experienced worshipping in the temples during my time with Ibandla lamaNazaretha, walking barefoot brought a sense of peace and connection to the ground. This embodies the representation of the Sabbath rest amid the disruptive and chaotic life that unfolds over the course of six days. Therefore, the Sabbath is a crucial aspect of the church and its members because it provides them with a space to find rest and peace.

Moreover, these engagements clarify the church's position on work as a key factor contributing to the precarity of black lives. In my exploration of the theory of rest, I identify the implications of rest in the doctrine found in Umthandazo weSabatha (the Sabbath Prayer). Additionally, I examine how these doctrinal teachings translate into practices of rest within the church and its members’ lives. Similarly, I engage with the doctrinal teachings of work (in Chapter Five) found in Umthandazo Wokuvuka (Morning Prayer) and investigate how these lessons translate into the practices of work within the church and among its members.

My reading of rest and work shows the interrelatedness of the two as mutually constituting activities that occur in a circular form—after every six days of work, comes one day of rest, and this arrangement is regarded as providing value to work and invoking rest, as we will see. Through the analysis of the prayers, the chapter explicates the idea of preparation as a transition between the two [rest and work]. Umthandazo weSabatha (the Sabbath Prayer), noMthandazo wokuVuka (the Morning Prayer) indicates how rest and work are neither leisure nor labour and why that is the case in the doctrine and practice as understood and instructed by Isaiah Shembe and subsequent generations.

This transition from the week to rest is achievable through the process of “ukuhlambuluka” (prayer of purification), as performed by the church and its members. This important mediation

process of recentring exists between rest and work. On one hand, “ukuhlambuluka” acknowledges the challenging reality of the “six days of work” from which members come. On the other hand, it represents a conscious and spiritual shift in energy, enabling one to be fully present on the Sabbath as a day of rest. This practice allows members to immerse themselves in the activities and joys of the Sabbath, while expressing gratitude for the week that has concluded, with all its challenges.

In this chapter, I analyse the concept of rest found in Umthandazo weSabatha, the Sabbath prayer. Through an Arendtian (1958) lens of creative action as a possibility of freedom and what it means to be human, I demonstrate how Shembe links wearing shoes in the house of the Lord, as the missionaries did, to something that is no longer natural (unnatural). Similarly, in relation to work, Shembe resists the labour market and emphasizes that God has called him to guide his people back. Shembe’s focus on work is evident here as well. For instance, he worked as a herdsman on a farm, and later in a factory, gaining insights from what he observed there (Papini, 1991). He illustrates that God himself was a worker (Genesis 1), having created the heavens and the earth with his hands. God defined work. Shembe is therefore concerned with how people define work when they lack the resources that God provided. He suggests that despite these challenges, people should learn to be self-reliant, and he has been sent to restore their dignity through work.

Isaiah Shembe identifies the precarity of the human condition with his conceptualizations of theology - he sees the theory of the Sabbath Rest as an important interrogation that critiques the insecurity of the human condition, particularly the Black human condition. Shembe’s doctrinal teachings rest upon three key prayers, although here I will address two that speak directly to rest and work: umthandazo wokuvuka (The Morning Prayer); umthandazo wokulala (Evening Prayer) and umthandazo weSabatha (Sabbath prayer). These prayers play a significant role in practising obedience as they account for time in the six days’ work and one-day rest cycle. Umthandazo wokuvuka (Morning Prayer) instructs how people should work. At the core of this prayer, Shembe calls his followers to return to the land to understand work in a similar way to his calls for his followers to return to the land, by collectively gathering in open temples in order to understand rest. This he does by emphasizing God’s blessings to be poured upon “imisebenzi yezandla zethu [zabo]” (the work of our [one’s] hands) as the work ethic that is practised through “ukulima, ukuhlakula, nokulinda okuhlakulileyo” (ploughing, cultivating and waiting for that which you have ploughed and cultivated). In the same way, umthandazo

weSabatha (Sabbath Prayer) is a deliberate instruction to put work aside and focus on the divine message which reveals that it is through rest that a particular kind of work is encouraged, and precarity is proscribed.

It is worth noting that Chapter Five and Six form two parts of this related argument. As we saw, Chapter Five looks at work and the kinds of work followers are engaged in. Chapter Six looks at rest and a continuation of the cycle that Shembe speaks of.

The meaning of rest

The meaning of "rest" or the need for rest has been advocated by many scholars, in a variety of ways, in recent years. The underlying thread to this advocacy of rest scholarship is the realisation of extreme exhaustion, or "collective exhaustion for black people" specifically, as Hersey[29] (2016: 6) captures. Exhaustion from the "terror of poverty, exhaustion from white supremacy and capitalism" (Hersey, 2016: 6). The terror of poverty is made manifest through our everyday experiences of being part of labour and production in attempts to gain some form of security through employment, education and in various engagements. The advocacy of rest in scholarship around labour has led some scholars to theorise about a post-work society (Denning, 2010; Barchiesi, 2011; Weeks, 2011), with others focussing on the importance of more time off work as a response to long working hours, i.e., three-day work weeks. Interestingly, for Hersey (2016), napping is a necessary act in the process of disrupting capitalism; napping may be extended to mean refusing to operate as a machine continuously.
For Shembe, the intention of rest is not one that is formulated from a position of exhaustion as Hersey (2016) outlines; neither is it formulated as a means of disrupting capitalism by examining a post-work society as labour scholars suggest. Rather, rest, for Shembe, is to provide order and rhythm that has been put off pace by capitalism, which created time as a form of acceleration towards an end (Han, 2017). Rest and work then, should be viewed in a cyclical fashion which seeks to put time in order, as Han (2017) writes about time without scent, in other words, time that is not in sync with the rhythm of nature. Hence, according to Shembe, as written in the book that members receive after they have accepted the Nazarite faith:

[29] Bishop of Nap and founder of the NAP Ministries (3 October 2022- NPR Podcast)

Ukhethe inkosi?, uthenge umNazaretha, uthathe ithikithi, uvume izono, ubhajadiswe. Uvula amasango omuzi wasEkuphameni. Ugcine isabatha, geza umzimba wakho ntambama ngolwesihlanu, ucishe umlilo ukushona kwelanga udle ukudla okubandayo ngosuku lwesabatha, uze ubase umlilo ukushona kwelanga ngesabatha.

Do you choose the Lord?, buy the white robe, take your ticket, confess your sins and get baptized. Open the gates of the holy city, and keep the Sabbath, wash your body on Friday before sunset, and turn off the stove (no cooking) on the Sabbath, eat cold food and only cook after the sun sets on Sabbath. (Imithetho yasEkuphakameni yomProphet Isaiah Shembe: The doctrine of the Shembe Church by Isaiah Shembe).[30]

> This first instruction given to the new members of the church is directly linked to the Sabbath observance and the importance of its practice. By choosing the Lord of amaNazaretha, they should be conscious of the time of the Sabbath, which begins when the sun sets on Friday. Being part of Ibandla lamaNazaretha means that one should be familiar with the fundamental notion of the Sabbath, and be committed to keeping its practices by understanding it fully. One must be baptised and keep the Sabbath Holy. Unlike the Roman Catholic practice of child baptism, Shembe conducted adult baptism. Baptism in this context means "a person's initiation into a new role which is deemed as difficult" (Steven, 2019: 130). One is initiated into ubuNazaretha and accepts the challenges that will come with being umNazaretha, which begins with the observance of the Sabbath. The significance of adult baptism as practised by Isaiah Shembe is in contrast with the teaching and practice of the Roman Catholic Baptism (and other denominations which adopted this practice), which promotes baptism of a child by sprinkling water on the child's forehead.

For Shembe, according to Mpanza (in an interview in 2021), child baptism is not a good way to initiate a person into a practice or a movement. For Mpanza, baptism serves two purposes. First, it is a renewal of the mind, body and spirit which is symbolized by the physical dipping

[30] The above quotation is taken from one of the laws of the church that is given to the members of the church after baptism. There are three different booklets given to members. Women are given a book which they use under 14 and men are given a book for their own service, under 23 and young maidens under 25.

of the individual in water, which shows that the individual has now been cleansed and in essence made anew. The second, from being renewed, the individual can embark on a new journey which requires a physical change and practice since it will have implications on their changed lifestyle (diet, clothes, day of worship etc.). This is also met with great contestation from the community and family members who are not part of the church, and do not follow the Sabbath teachings. Baptism, which begins with the teachings and understanding of the church and its doctrine, becomes a decision that one takes from an informed perspective.

Isaiah Shembe follows this process of baptism by specifying that being part of the church means that one must observe the Saturday Sabbath rest. Shembe further details that before you observe it, you prepare for it by bathing, cooking and cleaning before the sunset on Friday. This indicates order and structure in the church. This also means that the Sabbath requires one to prepare for it since it is a special day. Mpanza refers to the Bible in relation to the Sabbath observance. The instruction for Sabbath preparation and observance is taken from the Bible. For Mpanza, the Sabbath is a central component of God's covenant with His people and is a gift that was given to God's people. Mpanza emphasized that this is proclaimed in the book of Exodus 31. Mpanza's interpretation is that God commanded that His people celebrate and keep the Sabbath for generations to come. It serves as a reminder of God and creation, following the biblical understanding of creation, which is that God created the earth in six days and on the Sabbath day He rested (the Book of Genesis 1). Moreover, the Sabbath, which is translated as "rest" in Hebrew, means to "cease or stop work" (Gallagher, 2019: 2). The Sabbath is a point at which work is completed. Ultimately, the Nazaretha consciousness, as discussed in Chapter Four, is gained through the ritual of baptism at the initial stage of accepting ubuNazaretha, and is reinforced with the observance and collective practice of rest in various temples where the followers gather every Saturday.

Space of rest: emaTemplini ayingcwele

The controversy behind the space of worship for amaNazaretha dates back to the time the church was founded. As Senzo Gatsheni explained in our conversation (in 2023) that Isaiah Shembe spent a lot of time at Holy Mountian in Nhlangakazi, where they go for the January pilgrimage every year. On this mountain Shembe, connects with Shembe the spirit, "the one that the followers always call "uyingcwele, uyingcwele" when Shembe, who is in flesh (uNyazi, Thingo, Langa etc), enters the temple. This idea of outdoor or open space worship

was used by the missionaries to disregard Shembe and the message that he was communicating to people around KZN. When they were seen gathered under trees in open spaces, they considered him a political activist who was against colonial rule. The missionaries denied Shembe a church structure because they were not sure about his intentions. According to missionaries, if they are a real church they should worship outside, under trees to show that they are a church. Then they were given an instruction by the missionaries that there should be a sign that indicated that their gathering was a church gathering and not a political gathering. This was when the idea of the pastor calling out "sontweni, sontweni, sontweni" three times to call people into the temple originated. Then people will come and gather. Sabbath observance happens in a particular space and place. For amaNazaretha, this space is a temple which is usually found in open spaces in various parts of the cities/rural areas. The White missionaries, seeing Shembe and his followers gathered in open spaces and/or on a particular mountain, did not recognise amaNazaretha as a church that is registered under the American board of churches. The missionaries saw the church as a political party and warned other Zulu natives who were part of the mission churches against joining the party. The church then became independent of all the churches. Sikhakhane explained what he understood about them worshipping outside:

How we even came about to worship outside was, because they denied that he has a temple because what was required at the time was to have a cross on the church house and abide by the rules and regulations of the missionaries for you to have a temple. So that's how people have crosses at church. He had to comply we the laws of the time. The most important lesson to draw here is the spirit of resilience and resistance in doing what's right. He taught us to not conform throughout his life to societal norms if it means compromising the law and teachings of God (Interview, Sikhakhane, 13 March 2022).

The idea of what a temple is and the significance of the followers worshipping outside was thoroughly discussed in the long-standing court dispute between the Ebuhleni and Ekuphakameni faction. The two factions are fighting for the rightful inheritance of the church between Mduduzi Shembe and Vela Shembe. During the cross-examination in the case of the dispute between the Ebuhleni faction led by uNyazi and Ekuphakameni led by uNcoyincoyi on the 13th of April 2018 in the KwaZulu-Natal High Court in Durban, Mr Choudree, who was the

cross-examiner during the case, sought clarity from the church representatives on what they understood to be a temple/church. Mduduzi Shembe replied:

We, as Nazareth's, commonly refer to it as the temple. The temple to us symbolises a holy place. It is built in the following manner. A circle of stones is laid which is painted in white by a distemper paint like our Nazareth garments. Then there would be various gates through which males would enter and depart from the temple, the females as well as the children. Of cardinal importance regarding the temple is that it is regarded as a holy place. Also, any place where there is our leader as the Nazareth's, that place automatically gets referred to as a temple. We call that place holy. If Shembe were to step in here, we would kneel to symbolise that the place is now holy. If Shembe were to cross the road, we would walk across and kneel before him. And any place where Shembe's presence is, that place is regarded as a temple. Now dealing with the church. A church is normally a built structure. Commonly we Nazareth's do not have that. There are only two titular heads who built churches, possibly one or two, because I am not too certain what the place would relate to the founder. When we used to go to church, Ekuphakameni was built by JG Shembe. Ebuhleni, we do not have church structures, we have temples. Now we understand churches in the Western tradition to be a structure with a room, a bit like this temple of justice, a structure with a roof, doors, pews, in which the congregants are seated, etcetera. Other denominations would have this structure that we call churches. However, when it comes to us, the Nazareth's, that would not be possible considering the numbers of the congregants (Appeal—The court case: 2011, at the Durban high court.)

In this description above, Mduduzi Shembe (uNyazi, the leader of the Ebuhleni faction) explains the difference between a church and a temple. The temple as it stands becomes a place of rest for the followers and a demonstration of their connection with the spirit of Shembe, who connected with God in the open spaces. Although the temple has been described in various ways by followers and the leaders, the idea of outside worship with followers sitting under the tree in a circle in some temples has an effect on the way in which the service runs and the conversations and testimonies that take place during the day. For me, it had a calming and restful effect as the connection with nature soothed my mind toward a state of mindfulness.

Moreover, the act of worshipping under trees became an attraction point for most people who are not part of the church. For example, uNyazi, on the last Sabbath of July in 2022, Ebuhleni, after he had walked into the Temple addressing thousands of people who were attending the

Sabbath, in fact, it was so full that I could not even see where he was standing. I could only hear his voice through the speakers placed around the temple. In admiration of the number of people who were there, he remarked:

Yayinhle into yenu maNazaretha, abantu bayanda kunokuba bangciphe. Kwenzeka kahle bangasiniki indlu yesonto, bebezo ngenamphi bonke labantu.

Nazarites, you all look beautiful. There are so many people here. It is good that we were never given a church house. Even if we were, there would be no hall big enough to accommodate this many people all the time.

This was followed by a crowd of people chanting, "ameen, uyingciwele[31]" "you are holy. While worshipping outside has its benefits in relation to the idea of rest, it also has its own challenges.

Rev Mpanza (2022) explained that to him this serves as a reminder of the government's refusal to recognize the church and its Prophet. It also mirrors the Ekuphakameni mountain, which stands as an open door, marked by white stones that indicate the entrances to both the temple and the mountain, capable of accommodating many attendees for the service. Worshipping outdoors is an act of resistance which comes with its challenges. Rev Ntuli points out that worshipping outside is especially challenging when it takes place in the city:

We have bigger issues to worry about. Here, for example, we are in a camp in this temple—worshipping outside is not easy. We must worry about connecting the speakers to electricity, toilets for members. When the weather is bad—especially here being at 5 degrees—we worry about us getting cold and the children as well. When it rains, we worry, but we continue to worship under those conditions. There are many obstacles to a newly formed church[32] we are building from the ground up. This will come with many challenges we need to address. We make it work without a designated place of worship. People host parties around us, throw baby showers, and make noise, yet we worship through it all. We face a physical space challenge (Interview, Rev Ntuli, 13 March 2022).

[31] A famous phrase that is used in church when uNyazi speaks (see Lucky Dube's song on ubuNazaretha)
[32] This is particularly the faction that Rev Mpanza formed in 2011—Nazarite Church of God—which is based strictly on the teachings of Isaiah Shembe.

As I attended the temples, not only the Germiston Temple, but also the Sandanezwe Temple, which is located next to a Taxi Rank in Doornfontein Town, Johannesburg, I witnessed first-hand the difficulty of worshipping outside the city, particularly where people are engaged in many activities on the Sabbath day around the temple. During my visit to the Germiston temple, for instance, I remember arriving at 08:30 am, to avoid being late (like I had been in Pinetown before). It was a quiet and very hot morning, with not much activity or movement around the area. I thought to myself at the time that the church had picked a perfect area because it is quiet. The church service started at 09:00 am, with all of us kneeling on the floor facing Rev Ntuli, who was in front of us, with a speaker in the middle and a microphone with which he was using for the Sabbath prayer. As he began at a very slow pace, "mbongeni uJehovah maNazaretha…praise the Lord Nazarite," the area was quiet and the echo of the prayer was loud as though people around the area were part of the programme. By the time the second service began at 1:00 pm, people were playing music in their homes loudly and were passing by talking and laughing, some coming from funerals, others going out judging by their outfits, some occasionally stopping to stare and take pictures of the setting and the members.

By the time the sermon began, which in this temple is streamed live from Rev. Mpanza in Pinetown, we all leaned toward the speaker to hear the sermon because of the noise. At times, the speaker's connection dropped, but the members continued to listen attentively. With music playing across the street, I found myself involuntarily nodding to the beat of some good songs being played nearby, spending half of the sermon chiding myself internally for doing so. However, the members seemed unfazed by the noise, continuing to listen attentively and occasionally laughing at some of the jokes Rev. Mpanza made during the sermon. By my third or fourth visit, I had become accustomed to it as well and could concentrate even better on the service and activities in the temple. Rev. Ntuli drew inspiration from this experience of worshipping outside, suggesting that, in his view, people admire them for worshipping God despite the challenges and circumstances surrounding them. He said, "People around here see us worshipping outside religiously without fail." (Rev. Ntuli, Interview, 19 March 2022).

Mshumayeli Sikhakhane elaborated on their experience of worshipping outside, despite these challenges highlighted by Rev Ntuli:

We have faced the rain, cold, heat, and literally asked people for connection. We must ensure that, as much as we are in a camp, our gospel remains pure and truthful; otherwise, it will be a

waste. That is what encourages me to continue to worship outside regardless of the conditions that we face every Sabbath. (Interview, Sikhakhane, 19 March 2022)

The camp analogy, for the Johannesburg temples, speaks to the temporality of their Sabbath worshipping structure. Since many of the followers work in Johannesburg, they know they have their main temple in KwaZulu-Natal, where they are more at liberty to worship in a quieter and more conducive environment.

For Sikhakhane, this is a lesson on resilience and resistance which I see as an act of rest which seeks to achieve liberation for those who practice it:

The prophet was ahead of his time. He spoke the truth all the time. And this truth, the colonizers did not like. It was so disappointing that his best friend, John Dube, after the passing of the prophet, was one of the people who orchestrated that the teachings of the prophet should be done away with. Ilanga laseNatal wrote that Isaiah Shembe jumped from a mountain trying to fly claiming to be God, which were all lies; they were trying to kill his character by making him seem like an insane person. This was taught in schools. Missionaries could see that he was a problem and were threatened by his teachings; he suffered greatly at the hands of missionaries. (Interview, Sikhakhane, 19 March 2022)

This nonviolent form of resistance practised by the church and its members offers an alternative perspective on resistance. It represents resistance that does not react to or interact with conflict through aggression. Guided by the messages written in izihlabelelo on the Sabbath, the followers create a space of peace and connectedness with other realms (Makhathini, 2023). Their resilience against persecution from the government, missionaries, and the press leads the followers of Shembe to associate their denomination with the liberation movement, while adopting a nonviolent approach to combatting oppression and authoritarianism. Thus, as Friday evening approaches, the followers eagerly anticipate the Sabbath, which symbolizes their liberation and serves as a time to celebrate that freedom.

The way in which you enter the temple is important for amaNazaretha. In Isaiah Shembe's conversation with John Dube (1936), he emphasizes that people who walk barefoot are closer to nature and the ground itself. It is not a sign of lack but rather an attachment and connection to the soil that God created. By putting on shoes, we alienate ourselves from the ground and

the soil. Shoes are confining and isolating, preventing individuals from being one with God. They also distance people from their culture. The Nazarites are set apart, showcasing the beauty of naturalness. Shoes disrupt this naturalness. He sees this as a transgression of the laws of nature, much like the factory alienates individuals, removing them from working in nature, making the factory a disruption of life's rhythm.

Time of rest: umkhosi weSabatha (the Sabbath day is a day of celebration)

The time of rest has two significant roles for the followers and, according to Shembe, it has been written about in the hymn. It is a specific day[33], which is blessed, hallowed and set aside by God for His children, as written in the Ten Commandments. It is also a special event that everyone should look forward to because of the blessings that come with observing the Sabbath rest. Isaiah Shembe's familiarity with the Bible is often misinterpreted by many scholars who located him within the African Independent Church context, as discussed in Chapter Three.

The Sabbath observance was also a custom or practice that came from the pre-colonial Nguni society, according to Atkins (1993). Reading Atkins' (1993) analysis of the Nguni societies in relation to time using the "luna," the moon cycle, shows how Mbiti (1969: 16) expressed the measurement of time in accordance with events for Africans. This means that, for Africans, "time is simply a composition of events which have occurred, those which are inevitable, or immediately to occur. What has not taken place or what has no likelihood of an immediate occurrence falls into the category of no-time" (Mbiti, 1969: 16). Atkins (1993) further notes that the main conflict which came with industrialization in Zululand, specifically with wages and labour, was the change of the Saturday Sabbath rest to Sunday which took away the day of rest which society was accustomed to at the time. This Saturday Sabbath rest observance was a significant practice not only for its spiritual connection or fulfilment of doctrinal instruction, but rather because it also served as a fundamental measurement of time, a time to work and a time to rest cycle. As written in the Sabbath prayer:

YiSabatha namhla bantu nonke nina enimesabayo uJehova, nina nabantwana benu, gcinani umthetho weSabatha. Ngokuba kuyintokozo enkulu kuNkulunkulu ukugcina iSabatha. Mina

[33] There have been many debates among the religious community on the specific day of worship (see Masikane, 2017; see also Gallagher, 2016).

ngiyanincenga maNazaretha ngegama leNkosi uJehova, ningazenzi lukhuni izinhliziyo zenu bantwana bakaSenzangakhona. Ekunincengeni kwami ngegama leNkosi uJehova, gcinani iSabatha lika Jehova, lingu Mkhosi[34] kaJehova oyingcwele. (Izihlabelelo ZamaNazaretha, Umthandazo weSabatha—The Sabbath Prayer)

It is the Sabbath day today. You and your children (household) should keep the laws of the Sabbath. This brings great joy to the Lord when people keep the Sabbath holy. I [Isaiah Shembe] am begging you Nazarites, do not harden your hearts, children of Senzangakhona[35]. In my begging you, remember that the Sabbath is a [festival-ceremony], a holy ceremony of the Lord (The hymn book, Morning Prayer- Shembe 1940).

Isaiah Shembe here describes what the Sabbath is and what it means to him and what it should mean for those who observe it. He calls it umkhosi—which means a celebration/festival that is highly anticipated by people. It is a huge celebration that people look forward to attending and want to be part of. The Sabbath day is seen or written as a day of celebration/an event of celebration. It is by invitation that one enters the Sabbath. The use of the words "umkhosi" and "zilili" emphasizes how big an event the day is. The metaphor of the Sabbath being thought of as "umkhosi," highlights the significance of the Sabbath day as an event that requires preparation and one which is preoccupied with planning ahead. This is then a way to enter the Sabbath and follow instructions given to keep the Sabbath; like an important event, there is a protocol to follow when invited to a Sabbath.

In one sermon by Rev Mpanza (31 August 2021, Nqobizitha Temple), he explained the joy of the Sabbath and how Isaiah Shembe wrote various hymns about the day. He recalled one sermon preached by Isaiah Shembe (this was documented—recorded then on a cassette (tape recorder). The prophet [Isaiah Shembe] informed the congregation and said:

My children, as you all heard thunder last night, we were visited by the great heavenly being, the angel Zilili. Zilili said he/she had been sent to inform us that Jehovah had taken the Sabbath from earth and placed it in the firmament, because people did not want to keep it any more.

[34] This is an event or festival that is well celebrated. It is associated in Zululand with umkhosi womhlanga, which dates to the 1940s. This is a celebration of maidens' purity. Fundamentally, it is a spectacle to marvel at and motivate others to join.

[35] King Senzangakhona was King Shaka's father. Shaka established the Zulu Kingdom in 1818.

After this meeting, the congregation proceeded to Ekuphakameni.[36] When the Prophet got to Ekuphakameni he also explained to the Nazarites there what the angel Zilili had said. He said from that Friday onwards they had to prepare for the Sabbath. It was from this incident that the Prophet composed the hymn 212 below iSabatha uZilili (Shembe, 1940).

The Sabbath kulesisihlabelelo is described as a comforter to those who may have been in agony, pain, or turmoil in the six days. It appears this hymn came to Shembe when he was in agony, pain, and needed comfort that would console him from the traumas of the conditions he was experiencing at the time this hymn was written in 1920. The Sabbath rest, the completion of the week, and a reminder of God's presence in people's lives came as a comforter to him at the time. This cyclical fashion of time almost puts things back in their place even when one has been emotionally distressed:

Isihlabelelo 212:
ISabatha nguZilili (The Sabbath is like a comforter)
Liyameseka uSimakade, (it is coming from God)
Sivukile ngoku bakhonzi (We have been enlightened follower Masigcine iSabatha (To observe/keep the Sabbath)
Bonganini webagezwa (Give thanks, you who have been cleansed)
Ngalensipho yakhe, (by his (God) soap)
Senigezwe sekuphelele (You have been cleansed, and it is completed/finished)
Anisadingi lutho (You are no longer in need).

This hymn personifies the Sabbath day as a person who comforts another. A person who is comforted or needs comfort is one who has been troubled or has been in distress. In understanding how Shembe was met with great resistance—as stated above by Rev Mpanza in his sermon on the change of the worship day—in this hymn the Sabbath serves as that comforter for being prosecuted for following God's instruction. He further writes that "sivukile ngokubakhozi." This means that they had been deceived for long, and now they are free from the deception. The deception in this concept is the way in which the Sabbath was kept and practised, but this also made them change the way they connected with God through rest and

[36] It is a place in Inanda, Durban, where the headquarters of the church are located.

their understanding of work. For this great victory of liberation, they should express their gratitude for being cleansed (mentally) from the dirt of deception.

The Sabbath is the day of completion. The Sabbath comes weekly and serves as a solution to all the precarity and insecurity of longing and wanting liberation. So then, the Sabbath, for Shembe, is a day of liberation where people are freed from their burdens and the pressures of the week. By collectively gathering on the Sabbath day, the followers provide support to one another regarding the importance of the rest. Rest, here is seen as a special event where everyone is invited to be part of every Saturday. The framing of the Sabbath as an event/festival means that it is a celebration that everyone should look forward to attending and being a part of every week.

Izihlabelelo, which is written about the Sabbath, is often celebratory. Like this hymn below, which was sung at the Germiston, and the hymn was led by amakhosazane (the young maidens), who sang it softly with the rest of the members clapping hands while others backed them with the (musical horn) vuvuzela-like horn, and a drum struck following the rhythm of their feet as they danced:

Isihlabelelo 188: (umgidi (festival) we Sabatha)
Simenyiwe thina sonke (we are all invited)
Simenywe yiNkosi yeSabatha (by the Lord of the Sabbath)
Size sisindiswe (to be saved)
Ngaleli Sabatha (on this day)

Qiniselani webakhonzi (hold on/be strong believers)
Kulo leli sabatha (on this day)
Lingumkhosi wentethelelo (it is a festival of forgiveness/reconnection/reconciliation)
Salenzelwa nguMenzi wethu (made for us by our Creator)

The hymn emphasizes that we are all invited to be part of the Sabbath festival. People should be part of the Sabbath for many reasons: it will give them rest and forgiveness, among other things. The teaching and observance of the Sabbath rest is a much-anticipated day by many of the followers. And in a conversation that I had with Rev Ntuli and Rev Sikhakhane about what this day means to them as followers and leaders of the church, they both expressed that this

day is a central part of their lives. For Rev. Ntuli: “It is not a day that catches one off-guard but a day that one anticipates and looks forward to.” Followers emphasized how important the Sabbath rest is, not only because it is an instruction but also because the feeling they get after the Sabbath day is empowering to them, and it gives them strength to face the week. Rev Ntuli and Sikhakhane at the Germiston temple expanded in-depth through our discussion. Sikhakhane elaborated below:

Firstly, the Sabbath is a very big and important thing, as the Bible says that the Creator himself rested on the Sabbath day after creating the universe. We are resting from work that concerns us. But as a leader, the work of God does not have a stop. We are like cars. For example, the engine runs and runs but at a certain point it needs to be serviced as it wears out. In a similar way, the Sabbath day is for us, where we come to regain our strength (zizokhongozelela umoya oyingcwele). The Sabbath reminds us that we are God’s children as he has the Sabbath as a main indicator/mark/covenant between him and his children that his children will be seen by observing this day. We have a closer relationship with our creator. It is an important day. I look forward to the Sabbath all the time. (Interview, Sikhakhane, 26 March 2022)

From Sikhakhane’s understanding of the Sabbath, I see how rest means to bring strength to continue to face everyday life. Like the analogy of a car that needs to be serviced, rest provides that extra renewal of strength to continue to function. This pause in a running machine, or movement of time, is necessary as it continues the cycle and rhythm of time.

The Sabbath is hallowed, blessed, is a day of remembrance. The importance of rest being a day of remembrance is that, because of the acceleration of our day-to-day lives, it is easy to forget the day of rest, while aiming to achieve and meet our secular goals. Hence, the biblical instruction writes “Remember the Sabbath day” in Exodus 20:4, Moses was cognisant of the fact that people can be easily absorbed in their everyday activities and forget to renew their strength on the Sabbath day.

As pointed out earlier, the theology of the Sabbath is a crucial point of distinction for the church, notwithstanding other denominations that embrace the Sabbath. During the services, the teaching of the observance of the Sabbath is often reinforced and reiterated through sermons by various preachers. Not only is this meant for the older members, but it is also intended for young people and new converts to be rooted in the framing doctrine of the church. This part of

the service is one of several where the leaders of the church exercise their agency to offer intellectual and religious thought in ensuring uniformity of understanding and practice. Here, a preacher takes the platform to speak as a keynote speaker.

The symbolism of the sunset on Friday evening reminds the followers in their different homes that the Sabbath has begun. It indicates the collective rest that the followers should be in even though they are in their homes when the Sabbath begins. The symbolism of the sunset is not only a reminder to the Nazarites but also to all the Sabbath keepers from different denominations. For the Seventh-Day Adventists, this tradition is also kept, where all the preparations are done before the sun sets on Friday. The Judaic preparations follow a similar tradition. The sunset is the beginning of the Sabbath rest and calls for all the observers to enter into rest; broadly showing how rest is communal and collective.

The practice of rest

The body of work focused on the Sabbath day, primarily authored by Jewish or Judaic scholars (Robinson, 1978; Weinberger, 1990; Piamenta 2000), emphasizes the importance of preparing for the Sabbath as instructed in the Bible. Since this is a holy day of rest, members must fully experience relaxation and relief from weekly concerns and routine pressures, such as cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry, for example. As God instructs, the Sabbath day is a holy day of rest, and all observers spend time preparing for this respite.

In one of the sermons preached by Rev Mpanza in 2022, he talked about the history of the Sabbath and how Shembe started observing the Sabbath. He narrated that when the Prophet Isaiah Shembe [at the time] had explained to the congregation the message of the angel [a message relating to the Sabbath day], some of the clergy [people who were part of the congregation] opposed him, saying; “there is nothing like that, do you not see that this person is rebelling [against the message by the missionaries for the Sunday worship]. The Sabbath was nailed to the cross”, they argued (Rev Mpanza, sermon, 13 March 2022).

Embracing rest in its relationship with work in Shembe’s context is inherently a deliberate form of resistance to the convention and the secular notions that define the common understanding of work and rest. In addition, Shembe is resisting the separation of work from rest. He recognises the two (work and rest) as non–optional facets that complete the seven-day week.

For Isaiah Shembe, part of what sets him and the church apart from the African Independent Churches, for instance, is the restoration of the practice and observance of the Saturday Sabbath rest as differentiated from work (which is embedded in the narrative of the Bible, the Zulu context and his own experiences). Isaiah Shembe was then seen by the White colonialists as being rebellious against the missionaries but also against the labour production system, which required that labourers should work on Saturday as well (Sundkler, 1948). In many of Mpanza's sermons, he draws on the history and narratives of Isaiah Shembe to emphasize to the congregation what the prophet, whom he often refers to as uBabamkhulu[37], said in detail.

Rev Mpanza continued:
Isaiah Shembe then said to those who were accusing him of rebelling: "My children we have made a covenant with Jehovah that we will keep the Sabbath; an agreement with Jehovah cannot be broken." But these clergy disputed this, saying all this talk is clear signs of rebellion by Isaiah Shembe. Finally, these unhappy clergy left the Church of the Nazarites, and returned to their former churches. There is much talk from those who do not like to stand up for the Truth, they say the Sabbath is just a thing for the Shembeites and this is not true. (Rev Mpanza, Nqobizitha Temple, September 2021)

Interested in this history that Mpanza said during the service,[38] to follow up on when we have our check-in meetings before the Radio Station recordings that take place on Sunday evenings. It had become a routine for us to have a check-in meeting an hour before the radio station broadcast to reflect on his sermons or anything that I found interesting about the Sabbath. Some of the conversations became topics for the following week to be discussed, like the conversation that I was part of about the misconceptions of the church from the lens of the academy.

Isaiah Shembe was seen as a rebellious person, and this narrative was driven by the missionaries. Among many things that they did to Isaiah Shembe, is that they did not even give him a church building, even to register the church as an organization, like all the other churches were receiving at the time (Mpanza, 2021). It was only the African Independent Churches (or Orthodox churches) that were given church buildings because they kept the fundamental

[37]Grandfather, who often provides guidance and counsel in the family.
[38] The idea of me taking notes impressed Rev Mpanza and every time we would speak he would tell me to make a note of what he was saying, and sometimes even spell out some Zulu words for me to write down.

teachings of the missionaries, through practice and doctrine. This act of resistance by Shembe to the Sunday worship that was used by the missionaries, even though portrayed as rebellion or madness by the missionaries, shows that he was driven by the consciousness of courage that he had when Isihlabelelo 143, in Chapter Four shows. This is an act of freedom from the bondage of mission education and resistance to subjugation. This forms part of the elements of rest as a liberatory practice that frees the one who does it but is seen as rebellion/resistance or madness by the onlookers.

For the Shembe members, this is an instruction taken seriously, viewed as both a biblical mandate and guidance from Isaiah Shembe. During a lunch conversation with Mama Buthelezi one Sabbath at the Nqobizitha Temple in Pinetown, I asked her how she was preparing for the Sabbath. She replied:

I work, and my husband also works. Some Fridays or Thursdays I get home late, and he gets home early, so he must help prepare for the Sabbath. He must cook and clean, and I will finish the rest if I get home before the sun sets. If he does not, and I am home late, I will not be able to do it, and we will not eat on Friday night and Saturday, so it's also for his own good (Interview, Mama Buthelezi, August 2021).

This indicates that the instruction of Sabbath rest was given to all the members of the household.

The preparation of Sabbath clothes, food and home

The first preparation is the clothes to be worn on the Sabbath day: the dress for women and ibheshu (A Zulu apron worn by men made of calfskin to cover the back and animal fur in front) and umNazaretha (a white rope that men, women and maidens wear). People look beautiful each day. They often wear bright and colourful dresses; these are tailored by the members. The extent of the beauty of the garments is mostly seen during the Holy month of July. During the month I spent in Ebuhleni, Zama showed me a Nazarite page on Facebook that showcased the clothes that they wear. The garments resemble those that are worn by Nigerian women (the Buba - worn by women). The garment (as a complete dress) is distinctive so that you cannot buy it in a shop, but rather, the dressmakers (who are members of the church) buy material from the shops and a tailor makes each garment for the follower and member according to the overall style the church women like. The garment makes it easier for one to identify a Nazarite

woman even when they are outside the Temple. Dressing up in this way makes the Sabbath beautiful and honours the invitation that Isaiah Shembe speaks of above. I recall one Sabbath in Sandanezwe Temple in Johannesburg (November 2022) where I wore a black dress and headwrap and the elderly woman whom I sat next to, sharing the hymn book—being instructed through the programme in terms of kneeling, offering, occasionally commenting about the hot sun. She politely said to me when the Sabbath programme had ended: "Thank you for coming to this Sabbath; when you come back next time do not wear a black dress, wear brighter colours, it is a good day, and not a sombre day."

In hindsight, what she was telling me is that black is a sombre colour that represents death or funeral. The Sabbath day is meant for us to look beautiful or make an effort to look nice. This idea formed part of my internal conflict of being an outsider who is a researcher in this community and, not wanting to draw any attention to myself, I had dressed down. This translated to the members as though I had not made an effort to honour the Sabbath day. It also had the opposite effect of what I was trying to avoid. People perceived it as me not dressing well, drawing even more unwanted attention to myself. This is not to say that other people who are visiting the church wore the same garments that the members wore, but they did not wear black the way I did on the day. When entering the Temple, umNazaretha (a white garment) is worn on top of the dresses. All this needs to be prepared before the sunset on Friday.

The preparation of food before the sunset directly follows the scripture in Exodus 35: 3: "Thou shall not kindle a fire on the Sabbath." This, according to Robinson (1978), is linked to the case of wood gatherers in ancient Israel, where the act of gathering wood and lighting fires to prepare food is doing work on the Sabbath. And some of the modern-day Sabbath keepers see the advancement of technology through electricity and stoves as making this practice irrelevant. However, for the Nazarites, this instruction is kept. And thus, among the many associations of the church, food is one of the markers of a true Nazarite. It is known in a church that members eat "cold food" on the Sabbath day because they are prohibited from using any fire on the Sabbath day. When the sun sets, the members are expected to not use any stoves, kettles, microwaves etc.

People deep clean their homes in preparation for the Sabbath. It must be so clean as though an important guest is coming over, as explained by Mkhokheli Mpanza in one of her sermons eNqobizitha. Here, the Sabbath observers and keepers spend the second half of the week

preparing/thinking about the Sabbath. In conversations that I have had with the members and by my own observation, especially during the time spent Ebuhleni during in July 2021, as well as my experience as a Sabbath keeper, Thursday and Friday are spent preparing for the Sabbath. For example, when a person who works a full-time job and comes late from work, the cooking for the Sabbath begins either on Thursday evening after work, or on Friday mornings before the person goes to work. Other followers would clean the house on Friday and cook and prepare clothes for church on the Sabbath. Others would take the last bath with hot water on Friday afternoon before the sunset so that when the sun sets, they are ready for the Sabbath and all the preparations have been made.

When all the preparations are completed, and the sun sets, everything is in place and members are ready to enter the Sabbath rest, and to go to the Temple in the morning. The church service is a whole day service with different services and activities happening throughout the day. There are some differences in the way the service is run in different temples. For example, how the service is run at Nqobizitha in Pinetown is different from how it is run in Germiston Temple, even though they are one faction. Similarly, in Ebuhleni during July, the Sabbath is run differently from how it is run in Sandanezwe (Kwa-Zulu Natal) Temple in Doornfontein temple (Gauteng). The key elements of the Sabbath are the reading of the hymn (as a reinforcement of the doctrine of rest) and the main prayers, and these are performed in the same manner across the provinces.

In all the temples, the service begins at 09:00 am, and members begin to arrive from 08:30 am. The members then put on umNazaretha (the white rope) outside the temple, leave their bags in their cars, and carry the hymn book, iscephu (grass mat) and money for offering in the temple. When 09:00 am strikes, one leader will ring a bell and call out “Sontweni!, sontweni!, Sontweni” (meaning it’s time for church). With complete silence all around, people kneel outside (if some people are still getting dressed in the parking lot or they are walking towards the temple, they stop to kneel wherever they are). As they are directed into the temple by the ushers, each usher looks at what you are carrying as you walk in and directs you to your seat. Men, women and amakhosazane (the maidens) have different entrances. At each entrance, everyone kneels and prays the prayer of spiritual purification (ukuhlambuluka), before entering. When I was running late on my first Sabbath at Nqobizitha, a woman approached me and beckoned me. She would later recall the encounter.

Mama Fikile Buthelezi[39] and I were late, so we proceeded to the Temple and the service had already begun. She (Mama Fikile) directed me to where I should sit. I was in the left section where women were sitting. Mama Fikile asked me when we were outside if I was married, and she put me in the middle section, where single women sat. As the service continued, I noticed that, as I had anticipated, I was black sheep as everyone was beautifully dressed in white ropes known as (umNazaretha), and umqhele (animal fur that is worn by Zulu men) on their heads and inhloko (beaded hat) for the married women over their heads. The young maidens in front of us were fully covered with a white cloth over their heads. The service at the time was being led by uMama Umkhokheli, who—as I later learned—is Rev Mpanza's wife. She was reading to the church the laws of Prophet Isaiah Shembe as a reminder of what the church stands for but also about how the Sabbath should be observed. Mama Umkhokheli, was kneeling on the left side of the Temple; in front of her were amakhosazane (young maidens) of ages 8-21[40] sitting on the floor with white robes on and white clothes covering their faces. On the right-hand side were men and us on the left.

Upon my arrival that morning, I tried to reach Rev. Mabaso, but because I was late, he was not picking up. I eventually got to the church. As I stepped out of the car, a young man approached me, "Welcome to the church, noma ungazi shiya emotweni izicathulo zakho" meaning, "Please leave your shoes in the car." I remembered that, indeed, the church does not allow shoes in the Temple. I quickly removed my shoes, and I was received by Mama Fikile Buthelezi. With great excitement that we shared the same name, she mentioned that Rev Mabaso had informed them about my arrival at a church meeting months ago. With a very warm welcome, she embraced me and directed me to uMama Umhlabululi, who would help instruct me on what to do before I enter the Temple (this included a short prayer —a prayer of mindfulness—and R2 offering embengeni which she carries). Mama Fikile then showed me where uMama umhlabululi (the designated person who helps with the prayer of purification) was, and that I should speak to her before going in. She went to a different elderly woman to do the same thing. The woman called her to come quickly as she was already late. "Sheshisa Fikile, indaba yokuba Late ayilungile"; being late is not a good thing.

[39] We have the same name. I met her outside the church. I soon got to know her through research as one of the people I had a conversation with about her experience as a follower.
[40] Amakhosazane are young maidens who are virgins according to the church. The young girls are taken for virginity testing during the month of July Ebuhleni, and sit in front of every service next to the preacher and play a big role in the church as a whole.

The boundary of work and rest

The first activity is an opening prayer run by the one chosen on that Sabbath to run that segment, then we all follow the guide from the prayer. The Sabbath prayer gives a framework (doctrine/theory) of what the Sabbath day is, why the Sabbath day is important, who the Sabbath day is for and how the Sabbath day should be spent (what to do on the Sabbath day)—bringing together the theory and practice of rest. For example, the morning prayer is divided into three parts: Isihlabelelo "song", "isifundo" teaching/lesson and the umthandazo "prayer." This prayer has 70 stanzas, it begins with a song, then a prayer. It will give guidance on when to kneel or sit. Different preachers lead these prayers in different Temples, and according to the month and place. For example, at Ebuhleni during July, one of the senior preachers of the church would lead this prayer. The preachers reading the prayer bring different personalities and charisma to this otherwise long prayer.

I witnessed this in various Temples in Johannesburg, Mpumalanga and Durban. Many people looked forward to Ps Ntombela's[41] reading of the prayer Ebuhleni on the final Sabbath of July 2022. Since we lived inside the yard emadokodweni (houses inside the headquarters), we went to church on time that morning, so that we did not miss the prayer. I was just as fascinated with his way of reading as everyone else was. He read it with so much rigour, which was entertaining; he, in many ways, enlivened this prayer. There are parts where the Prophet is reprimanding the followers, parts where he sounds harsh and strict and parts where he is loving and admiring the members for being part of the Sabbath worship.

For example, exclaiming in a joyous and loud tone, he reads," iSabatha namuhla bantu nonke nina enimesabayo uJehovah…". Today is the Sabbath day for all people who fear the Lord. Reading it this way made the celebration of the day even better. I felt happy to be part of the service. The reminder made me feel proud of being in a group of people who are part of the Sabbath day. I understood that this meant it is the Sabbath, and we should all be happy to be part of it. This gave me a sense of being part of a collective that is likeminded and are seeking for rest. Rest as an individual activity of leisure but rather rest as a communal activity where people joyously gather to celebrate liberation.

[41] Ps Ntombela is a famous reverend in the church and is known for being strict and his witty sense of humour. He holds a high-ranking position in the church Ebuhleni. We woke up early this morning. Rushing to be seated by the time he started reading the prayer.

Then in a different section he read in a tone that was reprimanding and deep:
“Ungasebenzi umsebenzi ngalo; uma usebenza umsebenzi ngalo, uyalethuka iSabatha likaJehovah (Do not do any labour on this day, for if you do, you curse the Sabbath) …”

This statement felt like a parent reprimanding a child not to do wrong. Then in a loving tone he read:

Lapho bebuthene khona begcina isabatha akababheki ngamehlo akhe (where they are gathered observing the Sabbath) [with a charming low tone, almost to enact the wedding scene] ubabheka njengo makoti ehlonipha umyeni wakhe.” Where they are gathered observing the Sabbath the Lord does not look at them with his eyes, he looks at them like a bride respecting her groom (he looks at them like a bride looks at the groom on her wedding day [Ebuhleni Temple, July 2022—fieldnotes].

People were chuckling at his charisma and enthusiasm in some sections of the prayer. However, this enlivened the Sabbath prayer. Thousands of people kneeling quietly, listening to this reading signified the importance of how the Sabbath rest is a communal activity. With people having gone through the week, the humility of the Sabbath rest reminds us of our need for God, and the need for collective support, and how we all face different challenges, but we can still hold each other through it all empathetically.

The reading of the prayer begins with a hymn prayer led by a pastor who is also kneeling in front like Rev Ntombela:

Mbongeni uJehovah maNazaretha
Nezizukulwane zenu
Ngokuba umusa wakhe.
Uhlezi phakade

Worship Jehovah, Nazarite
From generation to generation.
Because his mercy
Endures forever.

When the hymn has been sung, the reader begins with isifundo:

Isihlabelelo 200

Lithi izwi lika Simakade (the word says)

Kinina bantu bakhe: (to all of us)

Ningasebenzi ngeSabatha (do not do any work on the Sabbath day)

Nina bantu bakhe

Isifundo:

Ungasebenzi umsebenzi ngalo; uma usebenza umsebenzi ngalo, uyalethuka iSabatha lika Jehovah. Lo ngumthetho wokuthi uyakusebenza izinsuku eziyisiThupha kuphela. Ngosuku lwesikhombisa usuku lokuphumula wena nabendlu yakho

Do not do any work on the Sabbath. If you do, you are bringing an insult to the Sabbath day. This is the law of the Lord saying, do not do any work on the Sabbath—six days thou shall labour; the seventh day is the day of rest, for you and your household.

Isifundo (lesson) continued:

Nibolalela kahle ukwabiwa kwezwi likaJehova, ningabothwala umthwalo ngeSabatha likaJehova.

Listen very carefully to the word of God, do not carry any load (burden/problem) on the Sabbath day.

Rev Sikhakhane then added:

He [the prophet] further says that where there are those gathered on the Sabbath, God does not look at them with his eyes but looks at them as a bride respecting his husband. So, this gives us a picture of how precious the Sabbath is, like a bride respects her husband. So, it is a big and precious day for us. It is a reset for us to continue working. We all work in different places here. Some are employed, self-employed, etcetera. So, the Sabbath is a day of rest from all of that physical labour but, most importantly, it is a day that revives and revitalises, refreshes, reconnects, regains new strength; it enables us to be able to go back to work.

There are two interpretations to this lesson. One is on a physical level, something I have experienced on two occasions (Ebuhleni KZN and at Sandanezwe temple, Johannesburg). As I walked towards the temple, I carried my backpack with my blanket and hymn book. Rushing towards the entrance, the usher reminded me politely: “Ungawupathi umthwalo ngeSabatha, shiya isikhwama ngaphandla, awuthwalwa umthwalo ngeSabatha” (“Do not carry your bag on your back like that. Leave your bag here at the entrance, you are not meant to carry anything heavy on the Sabbath”). In my haste and anxiety to go in, this reminded me that, indeed, it is the Sabbath day, and I am meant to be as light as possible. It also came as a reminder of presence. I knew that I was not meant to carry a bag like that, having been told by umshumayeli during the July conference in Ebuhleni in 2022 when I did carry a heavy bag. Somehow, I had forgotten that. It signifies to me that the Sabbath rest is in fact a communal day of rest. The usher was aware that I was carrying a load, and he reminded me to let it go. Just as we carry many things in our hearts when we go to the Temple, it is a reminder to let that go and be in the Sabbath rest completely and fully. This coincided with what umama khokheli uMpanza, at Nqobizitha Temple in Pinetown preached during the morning service:

> Owayengifundisa wayesho ukuthi ungasebenzi lutho ngalo, ngezandla zakho nangenhliziyo yakho ungakusebenzi okubi, ungawubasi umlilo ngeSabatha, ungakudli ukudla okushisayo noma okuphekwe ngeSabatha. Kwaku yinto engase ngiyazi engangiyifundisiwe kuleli Bandla, kodwa owaye ngifundisa wabe esethi kukhona abagcina iSabatha bangawubasi umlilo emzini yabo, bangasebenzi imisebenzi emzini yabo, bangakudli nokudla okuphekwe ngeSabatha; kodwa bese umlilo bawubasa ezinhlizweni zabo bese bengena nawo emaTempelini, kodwa bona bethi baligcinile iSabatha ngoba umlilo ungekho, kodwa izinhliziyo zabo umlilo ubasiwe futhi bayasebenza ngeSabatha. (Sermon by Mama Mkhokheli Mpanza)

The person who taught me about the Sabbath told me that I should not do any labour on the Sabbath, with your hands or your heart/mind—do not think what is outside the Sabbath. I knew this very well because I was taught thoroughly. He further said that on the Sabbath day no one should use fire/heat in your house, do not do any work in your house, do not eat warmed up/hot food, or food that has been cooked or prepared on the Sabbath day. However, some people may observe this physically, but they come to the Temple with burning/heated hearts, and that is labour—to have a heavy heart, that is carrying all the worries and cares of the world—that is not needed when you enter the Temple on the Sabbath.

This experience by uMkhokheli and her understanding of the instruction of kindling fire as not just a physical activity but also as fire that is carried in the heart and brought to the Temple on the Sabbath day reveals that feelings of anxiety, worry, care even anger are labour performed by the heart or mind, and oppressive labour is burdensome. The significance of this analysis by uMkhokheli is the awareness of the fact that people should be present on the Sabbath to feel the peace and rest that comes with the day. It also speaks to the importance of the practice of ukuhlambuluka, which not only allows one to shift from work to rest but also encourages the mental and spiritual shift of releasing one from harbouring burdens that will take away from the Sabbath.

Firstly, and what seems to be the most distinctive and shunned practice among the many laws of Sabbath keeping, is the use of heat "ukubasa umlilo" (with some contradictions, which I will not discuss) on the Sabbath day. This means that no hot water should be used, and no tea or coffee should be consumed, even on the coldest Sabbath day. I recall one cold Sabbath afternoon at the Nqobizitha temple, uMkhokheli, Rev Mpanza's wife and co-founder of this church, was speaking to the congregation following an hour-long sermon preached by Rev Mpanza. We had sat for a while listening to her narrate a story about how Rev Mpanza had lost his wallet in Empangeni (north of KwaZulu-Natal) and a stranger brought it back to their doorstep some months back. I guess, sensing the agitation of people wanting to go home, she jokingly responded, saying, "Khululekani (relax), we will sit for a little while longer, I am saving you all from the temptation of boiling the kettle before the sunset to make a cup of tea because it is so cold—and breaking the Sabbath." Little did I know then that I was yet to experience the most brutal cold winter mornings at uMkhumbiwezulu Temple in Johannesburg, where the worship happens outside (with no shelter) and very close to umhlanga (meaning that it is close to the river).

In fact, the last cooking, ironing and hot bath that dedicated members take is on Friday before sunset. If anyone does any of these, that person would have broken the Sabbath, as it is considered a form of work. In my observation, this practice has become the most kept, even if a member is unfortunate enough to be employed by a company that expects them to work on the Sabbath day (i.e., security guards, nurses, doctors, retail workers), that member will keep this particular law, even though they go to work, they do not eat hot food, or food prepared on the day (from restaurants), and they do the Sabbath prayer before work. This is what Dhlamini

(in a 2022 interview) expressed, as he works on the Sabbath day some weekends. This practice sets this day apart. Whether one approaches it with much dread on those cold winter days, or joy on a hot summer's day, it is the most practical reminder of the importance and sacredness of the Sabbath day. For members like Dhlamini, ukuhlambuluka becomes a fundamental process which enables him to be part of the rest.

The connection between the Sabbath preparation, in terms of food and cleaning and not engaging in day-to-day activities, shows how rest is a state that has to be entered through various practices in order for the individual to experience its essence. Hence, the process of ukuhlambuluka, before one enters the temple, is an important prayer of purification that allows one to be mentally present in the practice of rest.

Ukuhlambuluka is a ritual of "spiritual purification" (Edwards et al., 2006; Mutwa, 2013) that is practiced in many traditional ceremonies, mostly ancestral ceremonies. It is understood as a healing process that is conducted by a spiritual healer, in this context. For Ibandla lamaNazaretha, ukuhlambuluka is understood and practised differently. It is a practice that does not require a spiritual leader; for example, it is something that the individual does for themselves. Ukuhlambuluka [as a spiritual purification] is an essential practice in the church, especially on the Sabbath day. It is a prayer and offering that is done at the entrance of the Temple before going in for the Sabbath programme. On many occasions when I went to the Temple, I wore umNazaretha [the white robe that I was given by Rev Mpanza during fieldwork]. He would tell you to ask God to be with you as you enter the Sabbath so that you may be fully present throughout the day. Then you kneel and do the prayer and walk in to sit where you have been directed. During the offering service, Umshumayeli would come back around with an imbenge (offering basket) to collect the R2 offering for ukuhlambuluka.

Looking at this practice, I asked Mhlongo to explain the meaning of ukuhlambuluka (in a conversation). He described ukuhlambuluka using an analogy of doing laundry (this is not to say that this is a literal labour process but simply an example he thought would better explain what he means):

Uyabona mawuwenza iwashing, angithi uqale uthathe impahla yakho uyifake emanzini anensipho, uyiwashe bese iclean kahle, uyayithatha bese uyihlambulule namanzi aclean, ukuhlambulula into enjalo ke

When you do your laundry, by hand, for example, there is a process where you put soap [washing powder] and use a lot of force to remove the dirt from the clothes. Then you rinse what has already been washed, with clean/clear water. That is what ukuhlambuluka is (Interview, Mhlongo, September 2023).

This is why "ukuhlambuluka" becomes an important practice, because with all the things that happen during the week and even on the Sabbath day, ukuhlambuluka gives you that opportunity to be fully immersed and engaged in what the Sabbath means and what it will consequently do for your well-being.

The practice of ukuhlambuluka understands that the week (6 days) has many challenges. Ukuhlabuluka is a process of (re)centering, and shifting from time—the time of work and the time of rest. One moves into rest. Through ukuhlambuluka, one recognizes that many things that happen during the week are beyond one's control and that these many things may even separate one from the theology of Shembe in intention and practice. It recognizes that work can also be a source of disobedience to the follower of Shembe and this usually occurs when the follower is engaged in precarious work. An example of precarious work is work which makes one work seven days a week, and not even have time to perform ukuhlambuluka. The practice of ukuhlambuluka highlights rest not only as a practice but also at a different time, distinct from the other days. Understanding this shift is essential as it requires a different mindset. Ukuhlambuluka brings this difference of time into being.

While rest and the preparation of the Sabbath require laborious activities from the followers, this indicates that rest is not inactivity but rather a different kind of activity with a spiritual connection, like work.

Conclusion

For Isaiah Shembe, rest as liberation, both in theory and practice, carries much more than leisure time or time off work. If we use the logic from the point of view of the biblical story of creation, when God created a human being, the first activity that the first humans did was to rest during the Sabbath. They first rested and then worked for six days. This signifies that rest itself is an act of liberation, whereby people rest not because they are tired but because they are

experiencing and exercising their liberation. This is a different interpretation to the analysis that engages rest from the point of view of exhaustion, where sleeping is seen as rest from fatigue. In the case of Shembe, one enters work from a position of being liberated and not from the position of duty, which could be oppressive duty or non-oppressive duty. Rest is then a conscious liberating activity, and the Sabbath serves as this reminder to those who observe it. To rest then is to acknowledge that you are liberated.

However, with the rise of capitalism and industrialisation, the devaluation of the Sabbath rest took away this first human experience of liberation or of being liberated. Isaiah Shembe's revitalisation of rest as a response to precarity for black people symbolises the forgotten practice of rest as a source of liberation. In fact, the biblical instruction for the Sabbath as written in Exodus 20, begins with the words "remember"; "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy", as a preemption that people will forget the Sabbath rest and to remind them that they are free. My interpretation of Shembe's theology of the Sabbath rest highlights three things: first, Shembe's theology is a fundamental instruction on obedience; second, it is an instruction on rest in relation to work; and third, it is an instruction on time, the value of time and how people should make use of their time, and temporality as past time and present time (Mbiti, 1979). This chapter argues that rest is a collection of practices and a communal encounter that, among other purposes, informs individuals' attitudes toward work. Sabbath rest entails activities that reinforce the faith required on the days of the working week. Ukuhlambuluka is an essential service that marks the spiritual nature of rest. It marks the distinction between work and rest and how they relate. However, as noted in the Sabbath prayer, Shembe emphasises that the followers should remember the Sabbath. Showing the importance of memory, remembering as an integral part, understanding rest as a liberatory practice, as I explore in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven

Remembrance: Remembering and Being Remembered

Wayikhumbula i-Africa
Ngoba elungile
Akalibalanga abantu bakhe
Ngoba elungile

He (God) remembered Africa,
Because He is good
He did not forget His people,
Because He is good

Notes from the "field"

It is currently 09:30 am in Amsterdam, Mpumalanga. I have just arrived at the Amsterdam Community Hall where "inkonzo yesikhumbuzo sikaBhombhela[42]" will take place. I left Johannesburg at about 05:00 am. Rev Phana Mabaso told me to arrive before 09:00 am, as umgidi (the sacred dance) would begin promptly at 09:00 am. Getting there, I am relieved that umgidi has not started. It is always awkward to arrive late here because of the processes that must be followed in the temple. As I catch my breath from the ±4-hour drive, I see people outside the parking area preparing their beautiful garments for umgidi. In this view, men are in black pleated skirts, white shirts, black boots, and helmets.

Unaware, I parked where some men were preparing for umgidi. Some were getting dressed, some were brushing their teeth outside with a cup of water to rinse their mouths, some were combing their hair, and others were helping each other put on their garments. I immediately panicked. In my panic, I wrote frantically on my notepad, scribbling really…to avoid any eye contact with the men getting dressed. I had just arrived. I don't want to be kicked out. I do not

[42] 2 May 1936: Isaiah Shembe passed away. He was referred to as Bhombhela, which is a train, to emphasize that he was a traveller and healer of different people and nations across the country.

want to break any rules. Most importantly, I do not want to make anyone feel uncomfortable. As I scribble, I hear a knock on the window. In an unusually nervous, high-pitched voice, I respond, "Yebo"… still avoiding direct eye contact with whoever is knocking. I quickly rolled down the window. Rev Mabaso, unaware of my panic, greets and welcomes me with a big, warm smile on his face. I respectfully step out of the car to speak to him as he is about to give me details of what they have been doing and the coming sessions. This calms me. And in reciprocation of his energy, excitement kicks in, as he expresses excitement about seeing me there. As he was about to briefly explain the procedure of the day—since this was my first encounter with umgidi[43]—he was called by Rev Mpanza in the main hall. This interruption happened before I could ask where I should sit and if I should wear umNazaretha or not.

I continue to stand outside, as though I am still talking to Rev Mabaso. A church member with a big bottle of water walks around, sprinkling water around the field, ubehlambulula isigcawu (purifying/cleansing the area). Shortly after, a bell rings, and people kneel where they are, and an announcement is made: "Lithi izwi leNkosi, ayiphume imigidi![44]" This is then followed by a loud response from everyone in the area, "Aaaaameeeeeen!" The man who was cleansing the area is followed by two other men dressed in "isikotshi," holding two big baskets which are placed at the centre of the (isigcawu) barricaded area. After putting those down, a large group of men, dressed in isikoshi carrying ihawu and umbrellas, all kneel in front as they individually place what looks like a coin in the basket.

While I was contemplating whether to wear umNazaretha or not, I noticed a family wearing umNazaretha walking towards the Hall. I quickly followed them, asking them where we should go. As we walk around, there is a designated person (umshumayeli) standing at every corner, from the car park, around the make-shift tents and campervans, around the hall all the way to isigcawu (where umgidi will take place) leading towards the baskets where we place our offering in the basket. At the last point/stop before heading towards the basket, umshumayeli stops me: "Ninjani sisi, all you do is follow those two people (pointing, bending his index

[43] The sacred dance of amaNazaretha. Umgidi here, is different from that of the Xhosa celebration of the return of young men from being circumcised.
[44] The word of iNkosi says the sacred dance may begin. This is often said by the leader, in this instance, Rev Mpanza. Ebuhleni it is uNyazi who makes this announcement. Guided by the spirit, to show that everyone (non-living family members and Shembe) is ready for umgidi.

finger[45]). In the basket, put in R2, then make a short prayer wokuhlambulukela umgidi." He instructs me. With my head bent down, without making any direct contact, as a sign of respect, I ask if it is necessary for me to go to the front even though I am just there to observe and not necessarily participate. He answers, "Yes… umgidi owawo wonke umuntu (the sacred dance is for everyone, whether you are observing or participating)".

I continue walking with my head directly facing the ground, and body slightly bending over, while I occasionally look up to see how far I am from the baskets. I passed by isgcawu sesikotshi (the dress that the men I found earlier were wearing), and I was about to reach the front where isgcawu somama (the women group who wear an isiwaba esikhulu—a long loinskirt—with a red cotton wrap called isicwayo which covers their chest) was on my left: I hear someone whispering… "Eey shhh, shhh"—a sound a person makes when they want to get someone's attention without making noise. Then an older woman rushes towards me and asks: "Where are you going?" I, like umshumayeli, point to the front, bending my index finger. "With that dress, in front?" she continues…. "No, don't go there, you are not allowed to go there" she says. "Come", she walks with me towards isigcawu somama, "stand here and watch the women besina (dance)." Without even responding much to her, I quickly walk away from her and make my way to the fence where I see observers sitting. Of course, this frustrates me as I initially had no intention of going in front in any case, but also the frustration of going all the way to the front only to be turned back in that way. I ask a child to kindly get me a chair inside the hall where I will sit and observe. As umgidi begins, I pause my frustrations and enjoy watching the beautiful dance that I am seeing on the field. As the sound of the drum, the famous beat of the imbomu (the kudu horn) cuts across the field, I see more people from outside coming in to watch. This session goes on until 2:30 pm. At that point, Rev Mpanza stands up and announces that the dance should stop, and people should take a short lunch break.

It is now around 3:30 pm, and they reconvene to continue with umgidi. I must prepare to leave, as I am driving back to Johannesburg alone and need to leave early. The road between Amsterdam and Ermelo has terrible potholes, I remember. At about 5:30 pm, I quickly rushed to the car, again going around the back of the Hall to the car. Now, the biggest challenge is driving out; how I came in has been barricaded ngoba kuyasinwa, and there are tents around

[45] You cannot fully point your finger towards the holy area, or at any holy object, or elders, as a sign of respect. I was politely taught by uMkhokheli Ntuli at the Germiston Temple one afternoon as I unknowingly pointed at the front of the temple in one of our conversations.

the back of the hall. I approached one of abashumayeli to help me drive out. One of them very kindly directs me through a very narrow pathway next to the tents, right around the back of the Hall, towards the gate. As I express my deepest gratitude for his assistance, Rev Xakaza, who has also been helpful in giving me information, rushes to the car to have a quick chat before I leave. I was initially concerned about me leaving that late (it was already 6:10 pm), but there was nowhere for me to sleep in the community hall where other church members were camping. Worried about how unsafe the road is, especially since the evening is drawing closer—with no streetlights and only one petrol station in the next town—I anxiously get in the car and drive off. At that point, my phone was running on 5% battery life, having used it throughout the day to record and take pictures and videos. No navigation, no emergency contact, no one to drive with me through the dark alley. I drive, hoping for the best, only for my biggest fears to be realised in ways that words are inadequate to express. (Fikile Masikane, Fieldnote, 30 April 2022)

Introduction

I begin this chapter with a reflection on my trip to Amsterdam[46] in Mpumalanga on the weekend of 2 May 2022[47]. The Nazarite Church of God (NCG) chose to commemorate this day in Amsterdam Mpumalanga this particular year as part of their annual commemoration of Isaiah Shembe, who passed away on 2 May 1936. According to Rev Mpanza (in an interview in 2022), they commemorate Isaiah Shembe in various ways yearly, to show the multiplicity of his life and ministry, which has expanded beyond Kwa-Zulu-Natal. The weekend spent in the Amsterdam community hall in Mpumalanga attracted community members who predominantly speak siSwati to redress the incorrect yet dominant narrative that the church was solely founded upon Zulu traditions that promote some form of Zulu Nationalism (Sithole, 2016). Instead, circulating umgidi shows that Shembe, who travelled by foot at the time [as emphasised by Mpanza], was concerned with the suffering of Black people in general, and made it his mission to provide healing to as many people as he could reach, regardless of language and location (Interview with Rev Mpanza; July 2022). Imigidi is undertaken as a

[46] It is a small town in Mpumalanga, 77km east of Ermelo. It is near the Eswatini border, and it has a large Swazi population as a result of its proximity to Eswatini.

[47] In South Africa, 1 May is a public holiday (Workers Day). Depending on when the day is, it will either be a weekend-long commemoration, or, if it is during the weekend, it will be celebrated on the weekend of the end of April. This particular year, the 2nd was on a long weekend, so the members had travelled to Mpumalanga for the weekend.

heightened exercise and/or experience of rest which unfolds in the rest of the context. For example, at the Nqobizitha temple imigidi, takes place every Sabbath.

Umgidi wamaNazaretha (the sacred dance) forms part of the many things that the church is known for. Umgidi wamaNazaretha's distinctive and unique culture of dress, song and overall production is one of the main attractions bringing bystanders to the church [like me on this day], participants of umgidi [usually fully baptised members of the church] and the academic community like Gunner (1987) and Muller (1994) who have written about the church extensively. The sacred dance first appeared in Ilanga laseNatal in the 1920s, covered by John Langalibalele Dube. This vast coverage and attention to the church and its activities over the years made me look forward to witnessing umgidi and experiencing its beauty in person. The permission granted by the church to record and take pictures made me comfortable to use my phone openly.

Umgidi wamaNazaretha has been analysed by many scholars as a form of political militancy against, or as a response by amaNazaretha to the oppression by the colonial state (Sithole, 2016). This is perhaps informed by the war-like form in which the dance takes place. The members stand in a long row, holding objects like ihawu nomkhonto (shields and umbrellas), which resemble the weapons that amabutho akwaZulu (the Zulu regiments) used during warfare. However, Sithole (2016) argues that interpreting umgidi wamaNazaretha as political intent is a false interpretation of what umgidi is and is also a misrepresentation of what the members say about their motivations and reasons for participating in umgidi. Sithole (2016: 153) insists that this interpretation takes away the "agency" of the members and dilutes the "spiritual weight" of umgidi. It further assumes, in Kelly citing Cabrita's commentary (2016: 143), "that all black lives are determined by the overpowering white presence, and all subsequent action is shaped in response to this presence by political intent."

Thinking critically about Sithole's argument, this chapter analyses two of the most essential worship practices of the church: the annual January pilgrimage and the July festival in which umgidi wamaNazaretha is the central part of the activities carried out during these ceremonies. My interpretation of the members' agency in accordance with Sithole's intervention, is that the coordination of umgidi as a dance, happens on its own accord. It has deeper spiritual meanings in which the coordination is embedded with the spiritual realm. As Marshall (2009) highlights,

religious beliefs cannot be reducible to political militancy or ideology, but they contribute to the historical conditions in which the complex field of political practice and representation are produced. There are no political motifs that structure how the dance is performed. An individual who participates in umgidi does so with the understanding that it is a form of spiritual offering that forms part of an essential dialogue between themselves and their family members who have passed away. The member, as a participant of umgidi, remembers and/recognizes the spirit of the "living dead", which leads to a personal continuation of life (Mbiti, 1975: 117).

Furthermore, isicghawu, which is often located on top of the mountain in the sacred village, Ebuhleni (in other contexts it is in a secluded mountain/area in that region). The ground on which the dances usually take place (isicghawu) also simulates a place in which wars and battles in Zululand historically occurred, like the destruction of the Zulu Kingdom, the battle of Isandlwana: 1879-1896 (Guy, 1977), Maphumulo Uprising (Guy, 2006) to name a few. Izicghawu thus holds a twofold symbolism. It becomes a place of negotiation, restoration, and reconnection in the Shembe context and a memory of war and terrain of bloodshed in politics.

Following this logic, it is apparent that Shembe recognises isigchawu as a place for seeking the extension and continuation of life. In contrast, politics recount isigchawu as a place of carnage and an end of life. Isicghawu surfaces as a place where memory lives and is accessed through the ceremony of remembrance. In this last stanza of isihlabelelo 60 quoted above, Isaiah Shembe emphasises that God himself remembered Africa and his people, who have now been invaded and made to feel inferior in their own land, Africa. This emphasis on the specific geographical location, shows the importance of place and space as an important feature of belonging. This connection between place and space further highlights the value and significance of both remembering but also being remembered by God, because this experience of invasion and oppression left Black people feeling alienated or deserted by God, who allowed such an invasion to occur. Memory and rest are interlinked and serve as an important liberatory act which requires space/place to be accessed for liberation to reach its full potential.

This understanding is fundamental in my engagement with "place" as a site of memory (Morrison, 1987). Informed by my observation of imigidi as well as my interaction with the church members who participate in imigidi, the common understanding and reason for participating in umgidi has a dual dimension. On the one hand, the followers are remembering

Isaiah Shembe through the commemoration of his life and that of his successors based on what they represent. On the other, they bring supplications of what they desire Shembe to remember them for in their everyday life, with the recognition of the difficulties of precarity brought about by the destruction.

Whether they are remembering Isaiah Shembe through commemorative events like 2 May, isikhumbuzo sika baba uThingolwekhosazane 25 September, Shembe the third; or want to be remembered by Shembe for various reasons; being remembered here is depicted by uhambo lwaseNtabeni (the January pilgrimage) which also entails isikhumbuzo sesivumelwano (a renewal of the vows of commitment) to Shembe and the movement. Here, the members are seen carrying a grass-like crown on their heads as they walk up the mountain; this is called umphongologo wesivumelwano (crown-like) July-festival. The relationship between remembering and being remembered affirms, for the members, a relationship between seeing Shembe and being seen by Shembe. This is a continuous negotiation of the past that filters into the present through memory.

These two modalities of remembrance (remembering and being remembered) present memory as a compelling response to the question of precarity as a condition of Blackness. Through memory, the participants in umgidi return to the past, and by practising rest, their emancipation is consequently experienced in the continuous present. Memories of Shembe and his successors' lived experiences (shared through storytelling) allow them to revisit spaces and places where these experiences occurred, like Nhlangakazi, Harrismith, and Swaziland, among others. This telling of the story is important as an act of "recuperation and in the making of empowering memories" (Peterson, 2019: 349).

> Narrative and the imagination, then, even in their flights of fantasy, are important catalysts in the production of knowledge, ideology and identity, especially because of the dexterous ways in which they allow for complex calibrations of the articulations between time, space, social life and action (Peterson, 2019: 349).

Narrative, whether it was in attempts to retrieve, and reconstruct restorative, dignified apprehensions of pre-colonial cultural practices and politics, the intent is not to apprehend the past as it really was, but to seize hold of memory as it flashes up at any moment of danger

(Benjamin, 1973:257). Given the absence of rich conventional archives of the church, that are easily susceptible to a narrow, possibly biased recollection, the followers become curators of a living and mobile archive.

This memorial exercise does not reach its end on the recollection of the few dead leaders, it aims to reveal itself as a collective memorial programme where the living participants are not observers or imagining the past, but they become the partakers in those moments through occupying the same places from which those moments occurred. The different places revisited become repositories that continue to record these experiences as significant and practical points of reference. This curatorial work is part of "uncovering memory" and is an essential symbol through which the Shembe community [re]invents itself to signify how "memory resists erasure" (Gqola, 2010: 15). For Gqola, this process of "uncovering memory and history demands critical attentiveness to the uses [in this case, practices/places] of the past to negotiate positions of the present" (2010: 15). Hence, my centrality of remembrance in this chapter, which I conceptualise in conversation with memory (remembering and being remembered), as presented by the church, offers an engaged and engaging mode of understanding of the significant place of memory in constructing and reconstructing Black communities, which the European incursion has disrupted. It is also an important mode in the process of the (re)making of "selfhood/personhood" through heritage.[48] Lastly, I illustrate the importance of removing the gaze of seeing imigidi yamaNazaretha as a spectacle that is in dialogue with colonisation. I also recommend thinking beyond double consciousness to shift to thought that does not always respond to colonialism as an ontological condition of Black positionality. Instead, what this chapter aims to emphasize is that Shembe's connection or the praxis of rest will enrich our understanding of ubuNazaretha as a liberation movement.

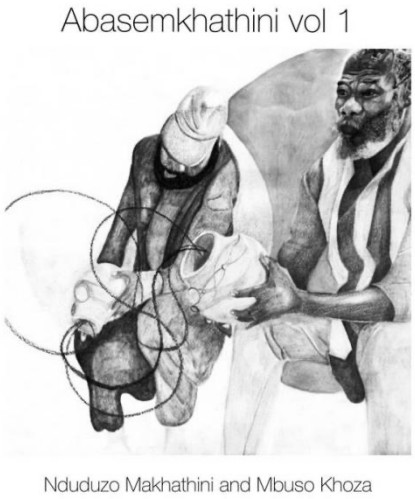
Given the contextualisation above, the following section elaborates on the research findings and in conversation with scholars who have attended to the ideas around re-memory (Morrison, 1983), remembering and remembrance, as discussed in Chapter Three. I intend to show how the production of umgidi (the dance) and isigchawu (the place/ground that the dances take place on) requires "attentive listening" practice (Maphuvayenda and Masikane, 2023: 28). Consequently, umgidi should be observed as a ceremony of aural and sonic reception rather

[48] I define heritage in a similar way to Mbongiseni Buthelezi does in his (2012) PhD thesis Sifuna Umlando wethu" (we are searching for our history): on the basis of "who am I?" and "where am I coming from?" in many order to determine where we are going.

than a mere visually and choreographically pleasing spectacle, since place never forgets, and the ground, isigchawu, in this context, always speaks.

From my observation of how the members who participate in umgidi exercise their power of attentive listening is captivating in that it highlights how accessing listening is "a necessary step in investigating aural experiences", as Droumeva (2016: 73) notes. In the context of umgidi wamaNazaretha and the followers who participate in it, they have an aural experience of umgidi; this is then translated into dance form, and further directs the precise pace of movement and procession in the sacred dance. In the sacred dance, I attentively listen to the "living dead" as I explain with the musical ensemble *Emkhathini* by Khoza and Mkhathini (2022). It is through sound, particularly, that the members make sense of their everyday experience, and, fundamentally, it affords them a "particular way of paying attention [in which] soundscape [becomes] an active element in orienting [the members] both in regard to place and in [their] social relations with others" (Feld, 1993 cited in Droumeva, 2016: 73).

Figure 5: Emkhathini: a place and space of re-memory



Album cover: abasemkhathini[49]

I theorize the practice of remembrance (remembering and being remembered) by the church, as the work of Mbuso Khoza and Nduduzo Mkhathini- *Abasemkhathini* (2022) inspires: to signify the meeting point of communication for "transformation" (Fanon, 1959) and

[49] This album cover was sourced from the show sold via web tickets a show by Nduduzo Makhathini and Mbuso Khoza launched in 24 September 2023. Sourced April 2024. https://musicbrainz.org/release/233d7ef0-903b-4cac-9a1c-c998547dcd86

"transfiguration" (Gilroy, 1993) and "liberatory practices" (hooks, 1991a: 2). This musical ensemble "abasemkhathini" explains the connection that this chapter makes between both iNtaba yaseNhlangakazi as a place of remembering and July festivals, for its significance of listening, which both centre umgidi as a fundamental "practice of refusal" (Campt, 2019: 80) "that names the urgency of rethinking the time, space and vocabulary of what constitutes theory as well as what it means to refuse, the terms given to us to name these struggles," or example, precarity, vulnerability, Black, barbaric, uncivilized, illiterate, hope, faith, future, in the context of this research.

> uMkhathi, which is a space (also a place and time) that became knowable to our ancestors as a fundamental cosmological point of departure. Upon various engagements with uMkhathi, our ancestors also discovered that, in such a paradigm, their thoughts (as signals) were an invocation of primordial selves. eMkhathini is where space is—the middle of space while also invoking notions of time (Words: Mbuso Khoza released 25 December 2022, narrator- Nduduzo Mkhathini).

With this foregrounding, the following section looks at umgidi wamaNazaretha as a point of communication between the living dead and the living as an expression of the continuity of life. Hence, in Isihlabelelo 188, in which the context is given by Galilee Shembe in the context of the hymn stated that when Isaiah Shembe "wrote" (through his assistants) lesi sihlabelelo safika esikhonzini senhlupheko kuShembe eZibindlela (which means ignore the journey difficulty/challenges along the way), in December 1931, uMprofethi wakhipha lokhu kubonga kwalesi sihlabelelo egula kakhulu. Ngaleyo mini wabonga iNkosi sengathi akaguli. Wayengakwazi nokusukuma phansi: wathi simenyiwe thina sonke, simenywe yiNkosi yeSabatha. This is sung to open umgidi (at the Nazarite Church of God). It says that a person is invited to this space—emkhathini. The emphasis on the description of the kind of God that is calling them, is to help them understand that this is a God who has given them rest, which is symbolised by the Sabbath, to show that he gives/already gave freedom. Sibiziwe—we are called, by abantu abaseMkhathini, to participate in a process of reasoning, negotiating to present "the most pressing daily issues" around violence, pain, trauma, dispossession, sicknesses. We then engage "in a critical process of theorizing that enables and empowers" (hooks, 1991a: 15). We are called to reason/negotiate/understand and find resolutions. When you are called to reason, you must be prepared, be in contact with your reality; state your case

precisely as it is, locate it. Isaiah Shembe further says elsewhere in hymn 31: weludlawu lwezulu woza ungephule, sengishile sekwanele hawukelumoya. Mhawukeli wezinyembezi, hawukelumoya wami. Pain is named. Naming that vulnerability is where healing starts. It's a place of critical reflection, negotiation and healing.

Remembering

> I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Somethings just stay. I used to think it was my re-memory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, its gone, but the place the picture of it—stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean, even if I do not think about it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened (Morrison, 1987: 43).

In the excerpt above, Sethe [the slave and protagonist] in Toni Morrison's 1987 novel *Beloved*, as discussed in Chapter Three, explains to Denver, her daughter, how memory works. In this excerpt Sethe explains how memory has a location; it is linked to space (out there in the world) and a physical place (that is never going away and is there waiting for you). Even if the place can visually disappear/change over time, or be burnt down, as a deliberate act of "erasure and exclusion," an unethical act of "unremembering" (Gqola 2010: 8), the physical place itself becomes a repository that never forgets what happened. Like Xakaza's misty landscape shows, as discussed in Chapter Four, capturing the mountains of Kwa-Maphumulo as a reminder of belonging and the importance of place (not just space), to mitigate his sense of alienation and inferiority in his childhood land, home and place of birth. As Morrison elaborates in *Site of Memory* (1987), memory is not about remembering what happened in that place precisely for documenting purposes, something that would usually require an individual who was present at the place to witness that occurrence, but memory stores the association of space and what that place signifies is then what is engraved and remains in the place. Since place never forgets, it offers those who interact with it a possibility to return to it, to sort for assimilation and that which remains of it, and becomes a useful tool to construct the present (Gqola, 2010: 8-9).

Morrison's theorization of rememory here shows that we are in constant interaction with the past.

For example, F.W. De Klerk's final speech to South Africans before his death broadcast by the SABC on the 11 November 2021[50] revisits the brutality of the apartheid regime in South Africa. This revisit reminded us, not because we had forgotten, of the legacy of the apartheid regime whose ripple effects are still prevalent today. Watching this broadcast with my mother in Senaoaone, Soweto, evoked some painful memories of the past, for her and others who interacted with the speech in various ways, as seen in the comments section of the YouTube video online. Stories of police brutality and the geographic location of Soweto, its formation and what it is now, became a site of memory for her. The suffering and the indignity of apartheid resurfaced; the experiences of this tragic past felt to her like a relived experience, not because she was there necessarily but through a rememory that belongs to someone else (Morrison, 1987). The place being there, means that it is always there and is waiting for you. The visualization of these places as depicted by Percy Mtwa and Mbongeni Ngema's film *Woza Albert!* (1981), and more so, Mbongeni Ngema's *Sarafina* (1992) which was recorded in Soweto, are among some of the examples that provide us (who did not live under apartheid) with a glimpse of these gruesome experiences which are encoded in our memories and thus the place Soweto becomes a "site of memory".

In a similar way to Soweto is a site of memory, Nhlangakazi for amaNazaretha serves a similar purpose. By the members going to Nhlangakazi in January, they seek to remember Shembe, who founded ubuNazaretha, and ultimately share the same spirit, energy and strength that he received from this mountain as a good way to start the year.

Uhambo lwaseNtabeni: The place always remembers

[50] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snmxTq9rBG0

Figure 6: Holy pilgrimage climb mount Nhlangakazi



Greg MarinivichPhotographic Collection (1997)[51]

The annual January Pilgrimage is one of the many examples of how the followers remember iNhlangakazi as Isaiah Shembe's meeting place with God. In the telling and retelling of Isaiah Shembe's annual journey to mount Nhlangakazi, the conversation and experience of Isaiah Shembe of God on the mountain make this place a memorial site in which the members go to channel that spirit of overcoming/conquering like Shembe did. In a sermon preached by Rev Mpanza, on 5 May 2023, he speaks about Shembe's isolation on this mountain. He says that Shembe only had water with him since he was homeless and displaced. When his water ran out, he went to the bottom of the mountain to get more water from the surrounding village, Ndwendwe. When the villagers saw him, he was hunted by community members, and they beat him up as they did not understand what he was doing alone on top of the mountain. He was further beaten by some White soldiers who also saw him there at a different time. He spent 14 days on top of the mountain, fighting and wrestling with many spirits until induna yakwaKhuzwayo—whose house and family still live at the bottom of the Nhlangakazi mountain—told the people not to beat him up but rather to give him amasi[52] (fermented milk and pap) to sustain him. After 14 days of waiting, Shembe heard a loud sound, and this sound meant that God had arrived as promised. In this interaction with God, Shembe began his journey of preaching, and purchased land in different parts of KwaZulu-Natal, which became

[51] This photograph was sourced from the University of Cape Town Libraries Special Collections to replaces Manuscripts and Archive sourced April 2024. https://ibali.uct.ac.za/s/uct-photography/item?Search=&property%5B0%5D%5Bproperty%5D=3&property%5B0%5D%5Btype%5D=eq&property%5B0%5D%5Btext%5D=Shembe%20Church&page=2

[52] A staple food for amaNazaretha on the Sabbath and during the months of July and January

his home, and many temples were formed. It also became an annual meeting place in which Shembe travelled with his followers to meet God and receive blessings for the year.

Rev Mpanza annually reminds his Facebook followers of the significance of the pilgrimage. He further wishes them a good journey to Mount Nhlangakazi as it is an important part of church history, and a memory of Shembe who drew his strength from God, and renewed his covenant with God and sourced guidance for the year ahead. As posted, he writes "njalo ngoJanuary iBandla lamaNazaretha libonakala lithwele umphongolo wesivumelwano lihamba ngezinyawo libheke entabeni yaseNhlangakazi" (translation) (Rev Mpanza, 2013). Every year in January, the Nazarites are seen walking to mount Nhlangakazi. Rev Mpanza wrote in a Facebook post:

> Loluhambo oluvama ukuhanjwa ngezinyawo lunzima kakhulu. Siyacela kuNkulunkulu waseKuphakameni ukuba ahambe nabo abantu bakhe kuloluhambo, bangaguli, bangafi, bangavelelwa lutho olubi noluzojabulisa izitha zobuNazaretha! Izitha ziyajabula kakhulu uma kuba nesigameko kuleliBandla, amaphepha acebe ngamanga ekhuluma izinto ezingayilo iqiniso. Sengathi uNkulunkulu angavuka abulwele ubuNazaretha, ahambe phambi kwabo njalo, izitha zingabuvukeli. Sengathi uJehova engafaka kithi umoya wokukholwa, nabantwana boMprofethi bengatholakali bebanga lentaba engcwele, ngoba izitha ziyajabula uma zibabona bexabana, belwa. Sengathi uMoya waseZulwini ungabuyela kithi sonke njengamaNazaretha, sibuyele sibe yilelo bumba lika simende. Asijabhise izitha ngokuzwana. NamaNazaretha azothatha uhambo olude eya eKhenani uNkulunkulu waseKuphakameni ahambe nawo, abavikele elangeni nasezimvuleni, nakuzo zonke izingozi ezingase zibehlele.
>
> The walk, which is usually walked barefooted, is long and difficult. We ask the God of Ekuphakameni, to remember us. We must not get sick, no one should die, and no evil should come upon them, that will bring joy to the enemies of the church. The enemies tend to rejoice when things do not go well for the Nazarites. The media houses succeed in reporting lies about this pilgrimage. I pray God will fight for us and walk before us. I pray for the spirit of unity among the children of Isaiah Shembe, that they do not fight over the mountain. We should go back to being a unity. May God protect everyone

> going to Khenani from the scorching sun, the rains, and every danger that they may come across.

Mpanza, in his Facebook post remembers the hardships that Shembe faced, the brutality by community members and Whites. He compares Isaiah Shembe's experience to the current church's experience of going to the mountain. The harassment by media outlets who are looking for something bad to report on about the journey, for instance, people dying or getting injured along the three-day walk to the mountain. He refers to the fight among the different factions, and the way in which members of the public who do not belong to the church react to the journey. He prays that Shembe, who suffered a similar brutality, will remember them on this journey.

Gunner (1988) writes about the surveillance and harassment that Isaiah Shembe and his early church were constantly subjected to. However, the growing numbers of the church frustrated many of the European officials who wanted "to crush him out of existence" (noted by Wells, in Papini, 1992: 249). Papini further notes that in 1921, a Sergeant Craddock concluded a report on the "Movements of Religious Bodies in Natal", which directly addressed the Shembe Church, without a shred of doubt that real Christianity is unknown in these denominations, much to the detriment of the congregation. On prompting, a native Constable was sent on the annual Nhlangakazi pilgrimage in January to observe the proceedings on the Holy Mountain. However, the outcome by the Magistrate court was that "there appears to be nothing which would justify the Shembe's activities are of a political nature" (Gunner, 1988: 87). They continued to surveil his actions during the July activities to further place accusations against him in order to shut down the church. Shembe was constantly summoned to meetings and explanations of why and who allowed him to host such big ceremonies (Gunner, 1988). The black elites called him "the madman of Mayekisa" and the English-reading public called him "the remarkable Zulu native faith doctor" (Gunner, 1988: 87).

It is no wonder then that Isaiah Shembe wrote Isihlabelelo 3 below, which is said to be a prayer that Shembe made before going to Nhlangakazi in which he asked God to bless ubuNazaretha from all the challenges that Gunner (1988) speaks of above. This hymn is then sung by followers before they embark on this journey.

Isihlabelelo 3: Nkosi bubusise lobuNazaretha

Nkosi, Nkosi bubusise (God bless ubuNazaretha)
Lobu buNazaretha
Uchoboze isitha zabo,
Zingabuvukeli (protect it from its enemies)

Noma siya entabeni (as we go up the mountain)
Owasikhethela yona (that you chose for us)
Ethiwa iNhlangakazi (Mount Nhlangakazi)
Bungakhubeki (may it not be harmed)

The route that is taken by the followers is the route that Isaiah Shembe took from Ekuphakameni to Nhlangakazi. This is drawn from Shembe's story, as captured in his testimony quoted by Faye:

> I stayed with my father Mayekisa at home until I came of age. I remember when I left home, I also remember when God's voice first came to me. My father Mayekisa left Ntabamhlophe and migrated to the Free State near Ntabazwe (Harrismith). He built a home on the farm of Coenraad Grabe, called Buwelshoek. I was an adolescent then. We arrived and built our home there. The war between the English and Cetswayo was fought while we were at Coenraads. We were uprooted by the Anglo-Boer War. My father died before the fight between Dinizulu and Zibhebhe (June 1888). (Isaiah Shembe's testimony, in Faye 1999: 261)

This is the route that the followers take to the Mountain from Inanda:

> I set out; I came to Natal, immediately after the Bhambhatha war (1906), to preach there, starting at Botha's Hill. I preached through Ndwendwe (30kms from Inanda). I went further on, to the Ndlovu area at Maphumulo. I crossed many rivers until I arrived over the Tugela. I went supplicating for the many sick, in the name of the Lord. Some were healed. Some were helped although they were not healed. I laid hands on them (Isaiah Shembe's testimony, in Faye 1999: 261)

These places and routes record the essence of each place as a site of memory in which the hope to retrieve what the place is associated with would be gathered by the members as they continuously make sense of the present. This January pilgrimage further shows that the followers of the church harbour the spirit of people who walked the earth before them. By this journey to the mountain every year, they indicate that they depend on those who lived before them for meaning making. This makes the mountain a place that is a repository and a space for reconstructing memory and keeping in touch with the ancestors, that once lived and walked the mountain before the colonial invasion.

The followers today recreate their own memories of uhambo lwaseNhlangakazi (journey to Mount Nhlangakazi) in relation to Isaiah Shembe, captured by some young people of the church through vlogs on TikTok and YouTube. They give us access to the journey from their point of view, which gives them agency, as we follow along with them through the difficult moments when they are tired, with sores on their feet from the tar road, to the joyous singing and dancing along the way at half-way points, all the way to the top of the mountain. Their taciturnity provides us with an insight into what the journey to Mount Nhlangakazi means to them as followers of Shembe. It further highlights ubuNazaretha as an embodiment of the past that must be continuously remembered, and not be remembered to be forgotten like:

> Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It is never going away. Even if the whole farm—every tree and grass blade of it dies. The picture is still there and what is more, if you go there, you who was never there—if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you. So, Denver, you can't never go there. Never. Because even though it's all over-over and done with—it's going to always be there waiting for you. That's how come I had to get all my children out. No matter what. Denver picking her fingernails. If it's still there waiting, that must mean nothing ever dies. Sethe looked at Denver's face. "Nothing ever does." (Morrison, 1983: 46).

Sethe wishes to forget the place that she never thought she would escape. In *Beloved,* the ghost that comes back represents what needs to be forgotten, that place she wished to be burnt. This excerpt highlights that places never forget, and people's spirits never die. Their spirits linger in the places and spaces they existed and continue to filter through the living. In concordance,

the January Pilgrimage is an important pilgrimage for the collective memory of Black people of Shembe's denomination.

The remembrance of the victimization of Isaiah Shembe recalls the fundamental issue of the land. The mountains that once belonged to the Zulu people in this context, were taken away from them, leaving them dispossessed and displaced. The fact that the spirit of those who lived before is encoded in the land is enough to restrict that association. Like Rev Ntuli in our interview in March 2022, they emphasised that the land is important for them to be able to work, and working in a place where those who have come before them will allow them to work with their hands in ways that will inspire them to produce work that is good and invokes creativity.

Of deeper spiritual significance for the Nguni people's connection to the land is that the land of their birth is a place in which inkaba (the umbilical cord or navel) is buried (Mkhize and Ntsekhe, 2023: 406). This is a practice of the burying of the umbilical cord, after it falls off, in the family homeland, which then makes the homeland a place where one's life begins in the physical. The umbilical cord is a "biological and spiritual symbol of origin" (Mkhize and Ntsekhe, 2023: 407). The homeland is where one belongs among one's people and family. This is a formal ritual that is practised:

> the umbilical cord is planted in the locus of the child's birthplace or wherever their ancestral belonging is located. The site of the cord's burial acts as a kind of birth marker and spatial-spiritual connection with both the earth and the specific home site (ekhaya/kithi). The planting of the cord is a sacred ritual that continues to this day. It symbolically links the baby's arrival with the earth soil in which ancestors are also planted after they depart (Mkhize and Ntsekhe, 2023: 408).

For example, inkaba yam (my umbilical cord) was buried in Kwa-Maphumulo-KZN, as that is my place of origin together with my ancestry. However, because of the history of displacement, my family was moved from Kranskop (where my great-grandparents are buried). Some moved to Msinga, Greytown, Pomeroy, Ndwendwe, until my grandparents' generation who settled in Kwa-Maphumulo. Correspondingly, Gogo uNombhosho, in Mathiane's narration above, shows this history of movement. As she continues to move from mountain to mountain, she sees dead bodies everywhere, from the aftermath of war, bodies that were never buried with dignity. The memory of the regiments, some she knew by name, which ended by being buried

on those mountains, shows that the mountains have stored these regiments as repositories. The places will never forget. Our recovery by going to those sites will become useful at this particular moment for the community, through the active telling and retelling of Shembe and the places that he travelled. Revisiting those sites, the members assert the healing and wholeness that they carry in their communal lives. As I have seen on social media posts by followers who vlog their journey to the mountain, and specifically Mamic Mbonambi on the 14th January 2025, she records how her experience of seeing and walking with the followers gives her encouragement and reassures that Shembe is with them. In another video by Siya Mtshali, he expresses how this journey is about showing off what one has(cars, clothes, food) but this journey is about a people who seek to be lifted from their burdens. It is a journey for people who seek to remember their parents who have also walked this long journey. This journey for him was to ask Shembe to remember his parents who had passed away; wherever they are, they must be protected under his hands (recorded on TikTok video by Siya Mtshali, 12 January 2025).

Moreover, in *Beloved*, Sethe justifies why she killed her child out of responsibility, and shows the extent and weight of the trauma, and the vision of the future, highlighting how much temporality works even when dealing with trauma. At that time, she did not see the possibility of a future in which they would not be slaves. She believed that her children would remain slaves forever. She understood the place as a re-memory that remembers things that happened, even when burnt down. Her act of killing her child was to prevent the child from being a slave. The infanticide was motivated by the association of slavery with the plantation, which is a place that records cruelties dealt to slaves. The child could not be allowed to live whilst the plantation remained an existing place, because the plantation became the apparent permanent place for those born into slavery. However, Sethe forgets in order to remember.

The mountains and the land in Zululand will always remember Black people—not as vagrants and beggars, but as people who were born and made from that place. It is in the act of remembering the ancestor which becomes an act of recovery. The formation of collective memory can continue. Memory itself would become an instrument of survival. The ancestor lives if there are those who remember them. UbuNazaretha, through iNhlangakazi as a site of memory, demonstrates the variety and importance of continuity and/continuousness of a

narrative that is all encompassing (good and bad) for any person to understand their own story. Each story, then, comes together and becomes a communal narrative.

In essence, when Mathiane remembers the past, she says:

> People often shower me with praise for surviving my ordeal. Although I was lucky to get away, and can rationalize my actions, the guilt has left a hole in my heart, an emptiness which I carry to my grave. One true consolation I have about my life is that although I witnessed a great deal of unwarranted waste of lives, I am proud to say I come from a stock of people who fought gallantly to save their land. There are those who will argue that it was a futile exercise because the odds were stacked against the Zulus. For me, it is with a deep sense of pride to know that our regiments gave it their all (*Eyes in the Night,* page 246).

We continue to be critical of the system that perpetuates violence, and records in history the mountains of Zululand as war zones which one cannot recognize or relate to. However, the work of memory, like the January pilgrimage to Mount Nhlangakazi to assimilate with the spirit that carried Shembe, continues to reveal that places do not forget, even if facts about those places could be distorted.

Being Remembered

Umhlangano kaJuly Ekuphakameni

The July meetings are another sacred tradition of the church. Like the January pilgrimage, during the month of July, followers of the church partake in a month-long fast and, for those who can, go to the headquarters of Ebuhleni, where they camp Emadokodweni for the month. The fast entails members not eating bread and chicken, and not engaging in sexual intercourse (for those who are married—everyone else is assumed to not be engaging in any case). Various activities take place while people are in Ebuhleni at different points. For example, during the week, campers pray at 9:00 am at the temple at the bottom (smaller temple located at the entrance gate Ebuhleni), then people engage in different activities like cleaning, sewing, cooking, and attending services at certain times. Afternoon, there is umgidi in the afternoon. Over the weekend, the Sabbath service is held at the bigger temple at the top (more people attend, including people who are not camping). On Sundays, imigidi takes place for the full

day. They usually begin at 9:00 am and end at roughly 6:30 pm, with amakhosazane singing "uLala kahle babawethu" to uNyazi at the entrance of his house.

In this section I focus on imigidi kaJuly, in which visuals and sound are central to its production and coordination. Firstly, imigidi are announced on the closing of the Sabbath; and the invitation is that imigidi eyabantu bonke, meaning the sacred dance is for everyone. This includes amakhosazane—virgin girls, inhlalisuthi—young men, omama—married women, unmarried women, older men, and observers. People can go to izigcawu (the regiments)—which is the place where the sacred dances take place—after the morning prayer that is held eTemplini at the bottom at 9:00 am. According to Sithole (2016: 64), there are about ten regiments for men, ranging between 100 and 300 each. During weekdays these numbers are smaller because many people are at work. Married women make up about 25 regiments, while amakhosazane make up five regiments. At the time I attended imigidi in 2022, there were more numbers than recorded by Sithole in 2016.

The sacred dance can only take place after uNyazi has received word that "lithi izwi leNkosi, ayiphume imigidi," meaning the sacred dance can now begin. The significance of this announcement is that the coordination by those who are joining the abasemkhathini—spiritual realm—are also ready to begin. Sithole (2016: 66) highlights an important testimony given by Qamabelabantu Ngidi who had gone to Ekuphakameni for healing. He came in at the time of imigidi. He noted:

> When I arrived there, I looked at the dancing. There I saw [amid] the dancers my late brother coming up. I saw him in the daylight. I was not asleep. I remembered what people had said that there is Malay magic in this place. Now my brother was there before my eyes and laughing at me. I pinched myself to see if I was still alive. Then I ran away from the dancing ground and ran as far as Durban. (Hexham and Oosthuizen, 1996: 110 quoted, Sithole, 2016: 66)

This testimony is one example of the importance of the sacred dance for both the dancers and the observers. It shows how the dance is a form of worship that brings the living and the non-living together. For Sithole (2016: 67), the sacred dance is imagined as bridging the gap between the physical and the spiritual worlds. Thus, those who do not participate in the dance

have to wear umNazaretha in honorium, and are usually urged to sit down when they 'watch.' Even though Sithole uses the word watch, here I make a different case, that imigidi should be listened to for their role of connection to the spiritual. One needs to hear their family members communicate with them. This manner of analyzing imigidi corresponds to the experience of Qamabelabantu who, because he was attentive to the sacred dance, was able to see his brother who had passed.

I recall a moment when Zama and I got to isigchawu samakhosazane (young girls' regiment), after we had walked (barefoot) up the mountain for what felt like hours from the main entrance, Ebuhleni, which was the first one we attended. One of the abashumayela (pastors), who I later found out, is known for being one of the strict patrollers of izigchawu (the regiments), to ensure that people are sitting down, as noted by Sithole, during imigidi. This isigchawu was full, with some people sitting right in front, while others were standing around the sides with their phones out and talking among themselves. In my admiration of amakhosazane and their outfits, who had just started lining up for their dance, I heard a loud sound of a whip on the ground, followed by a man shouting, "Ey ey ey nimeleli nina, why are you standing? Move back. Why are you standing? Sit down, inkonzo yemigidi ayimelwa—you are not allowed to stand during the sacred dance worship." This he kept saying as he continued to hit the ground with the whip, while people quickly sat down, in fear of possibly being whipped. This instance emphasized the way in which imigidi should be attended, viewed and received.

In the next section I show photographs of virgin girls that I captured Ebuhleni and at NCG during the 2022 July festival. I am cognisant and acknowledge with much care and appreciation an argument that Kiguwa (2019) eloquently shares in her article *Negotiating the academy: black bodies "out of place*". In this article, Kiguwa (2019) takes the reader through five moments of her experiences of navigating and negotiating the academic space as a "Black, lesbian and gender-nonconforming academic" (Kiguwa, 2019: 12). In moment three, specifically, Kiguwa gives a detailed account of an angering and rather unsettling encounter with a colleague and friend during the busy period in the academic year of finalizing courses and submissions of teaching material for the semester. Kiguwa shares that this friend and colleague shared her course and teaching material. This material is accompanied by sample images that are supposed to highlight the overall framing of the course, which the topic/ title of the course was on teenage sexuality and teenage pregnancy.

The images shared, Kiguwa (2019: 18) describes, show "bare-breasted women, with some images of male bodies also in bare skin from the neck to the waist" [as I have also captured below images of virgin girls and some male members during umgidi]. Kiguwa expresses that this invoked anger more than anything. The anger that Kiguwa felt at this moment of seeing these images, was because the images resembled strong similarities to what Kiguwa (2019: 18) "equates to those old colonial imageries of black bodies". Kiguwa (2019: 18) expresses that these images depict Black bodies "lined up, silent yet loud in their misrepresentation, appropriation and denigration by the photographer and the colonial system that reinforced that photographer's representation." Kiguwa, completely stunned by all this, is put in a position to do the daunting and tiresome work of educating the friend and colleague on "racism and humanity of the black bodies." Kiguwa (2019:18) explains why these images are, in fact, "offensive, because of the sociopolitical and colonial history that informs the depiction of these images."

Kiguwa (2019: 18) explains that there is "gender, race and class politics in the depiction and equation of black women's bodies in general." This daunting exchange between Kiguwa and the friend and colleague further invoked the deep-seated collective hurt and anger experienced by many Black people in these academic spaces of "tolerating, excusing, re-educating the racial faux pas of our intimate relationships" (Kiguwa, 2019: 19). This has serious detrimental implications for Black bodies, as Kiguwa (2019) quotes Toni Morrison's 1976 interview speaking about racism:

> The very serious function of racism is…distraction. It keeps you away from doing your work. It keeps you explaining over and over again, your reason for being. Somebody says you have no language and so you spend 20 years proving that you do. Somebody says your head is not shaped properly, so you have scientists working on the fact that it is. Somebody says that you have no art, so you dredge that up. Somebody says that you have no kingdoms and so you dredge that up. None of that is necessary. There will always be one more thing. (Morrison, 1976, n.p. cited in Kiguwa, 2019:19)

Morrison, as Kiguwa (2019: 20) argues, shows us how "racism and racial practices become even more functional and effective when we abandon the real work of anti-racist activism in

favour of changing the mindsets as part of that activism." This further highlights how Black people also need intellectual rest, especially from such discourses. In my theorisation of rest, intellectual rest is articulated by Kiguwa, showing how the constant need to explain, and re-educate who we are as Black people and Black women, is labour-intensive and a distracting exercise, which we need to be liberated from as well.

With much sensitivity, consideration and care, my portrayal of the images that I have captured are not meant to be received in a sense of appropriation or as a misrepresentation of Black bodies, in a similar way that old colonial photographers did. My engagement with and inclusion of these images gives agency to the followers as they take pride in being part of ubuNazaretha. They always look forward to imigidi for its underlying purpose of communication between them and the living dead. Imigidi is an important place of belonging and sense of self that exceeds the definition by some scholars, who capture these images and portray them as representations of the colonial "Other". Rather, I hope that the reader gets to look through these images, as argued by Campt (2017: 59), "beyond what we see and attune our senses to the other affective frequencies through which the photographs register," and in so doing, the reader gets to embrace how the different movements are in effect a portrayal of the attentive listening that is done by the members, captured through these images. It also aims to show the attire/dress that the members wear during this ceremony. Since, as Sithole (2016: 155) confirms, "Isaiah Shembe spent a great deal of time designing the outfits for his followers to use in church services and especially to use when performing the sacred dance." These handmade outfits form part of the kinds of work that the members do, as instructed by Shembe, to illustrate that work is a creative process that needs not to be tiring and mundane but rather is an expression of one's creativity that is given to the individual by God as a form and is part and parcel of worship, as we saw in Chapter Five.

Figure 7: Ebuhleni during the month of July 2022



Photograph: Fikile Masikane[53]

Figure 8: Amakhosazana esina (July 2022)



Photograph: Fikile Masikane[54]

[53] I captured this photograph as we walked from emadokodweni, where we slept during my time Ebuhleni, closer to the entrance to isigcawu, where imigidi would take place, Ebuhleni (July 2022)

[54] I captured this photograph during the sacred dance by amakhosana, esigcaweni sawo

Figure 9: Attire yamakhosazane (July 2022)



Photograph: Fikile Masikane[55]

As soon as the announcement is made and the sacred dance has been officiated, the beating of the drum and the blowing of the imbomu (kudu horn trumpet) is heard across the mountains as people make their way to the different regiments. Sound, here, becomes the only mode of communication. According to Campt (2017:13), sound signifies a multitude of things. We receive it based on where we are mentally and emotionally. Emigidini, the sound of imbomu and the drum, can be mournful to those who are attending imigidi because of grief. It signifies a presence that fills an unexplainable void. It can be a soothing message for those who are restless. It can be a celebration for others (Campt, 2017: 13), while it can also irritate or distract others who do not understand it as it seems like one beat that gets louder and louder. From an observer's perspective, especially one who is not a member, the sound of imbomu is loud, and sometimes it is unpleasant, especially for the time that one spends in this setting. It is not a sound that one can easily dance to because of its coordination and choreography. Either way, sound in this context symbolizes an expression that exceeds words (Campt, 2017: 47).

The participants of umgidi follow isihlabelelo, for example. Isihlabelelo 188, will often be sung as an opening song for umgidi. Usually, as observers, we cannot hear the person singing,

[55] I captured this photograph to show the coordination and attire of amakhosazana at the back

because the trumpet and the drum overpower the singer. What the singer chants is what the body translates to movement. In certain moments, the body's movement is fast-paced, and slow in others. This further shows that sound and the coordination of umgidi is a routine that must be understood as a practice rather than an act. For example, in the embodiment of ubuNazaretha as discussed in Chapter Four, one can hear what is being directed in order to move according to the direction that is being instructed. The members' sonic expressions and/or practice of uVuka Nathi (the Morning Prayer), and umthandazo weSabatha (the Sabbath prayer), which are detailed instructions for work and rest, enable them to achieve a sense of coordination between them and their ancestry who are present during umgidi. As Campt (2017) argues, such practices are refined by the dispossessed and those in the struggle, to create possibilities that allow them to overcome the constraints of everyday life.

This has become an everyday practice of refusal (Campt, 2017: 56). Sound-like images play a critical role in articulating black people's complex relationship to cultural identity and national belonging. It bears witness to things that cannot be put into words, things that are buried deep in our souls. The movement of the sound can only be expressed with the place inside of us that this sound encounters and, according to what is being communicated, healing is possible.

Gilroy (in Campt, 2017: 57) defines sound and music as a "crucial modality of politics of transfiguration." It is through sound that we engage with forgotten histories, for purposes of transfiguration and transformation. Sound, as theorized by Campt (2017: 57), is "an innately embodied process that registers at multiple levels of human sensorium. Sound does not need to be heard but rather sound is perceived". This will allow sound to heal people, without words. The followers of umgidi move uniformly, but their facial expressions and way of hitting the ground differ from one dancer to the other. Where one expresses deep sorrow, another expresses joy, yet they all move to the same beat that the drummer is coordinating. This shows that dancers of umgidi display a movement that is conveyed according to the individuals' aural and sonic interpretation.

This is a form of art therapy, as defined by Malchiodi (2011:1) "is an approach that helps the individual to create meaning and achieve insight, find relief from overwhelming emotions or trauma, resolve conflicts and problems, enrich daily life, and achieve an increased sense of well-being." Art therapy, "supports the belief that all individuals have the capacity to express

themselves creatively and that the product is less important than the therapeutic process involved" (Malchiodi, 2011: 1). The therapist's focus is not "specifically on the aesthetic merits of art making but on the therapeutic needs of the person to express him/herself" (Malchiodi, 2011: 1). In figure 10, in the photograph that I have captured below, one can see the different expressions and movements of the male performers as each is individually led and guided by what they hear. This is a form of sonic expression translated here mostly into dance. I present the performances as a form of rest practice, where rest is a complex therapeutic and embodied set of practices. This is so, for its purpose of providing relief, recovery and recuperation from the labour/work that is done on other days and in their daily lives that can sometimes be overwhelming. This form of rest practice releases any tensions caused by work or labour, and life more generally, and forms part of a moment of attentive listening in order to receive guidance and direction for one's life and problem-solving.

Figure 10: Isigcawu so Baba be'skothi[56]



Photograph: Fikile Masikane

Umgidi must then be theorized and understood as a profoundly aural and sonic form of sensory contact. Through sound, the past is filtered through the present. The performer or dancer at this point uses memory to access his/her past family members in order to make sense of their everyday lives. In this instance, isigchawu is a space that enables rest, as defined in Chapter

[56] I captured this photograph at the Marianhll at the Mr van der Khoza farm, where NCG hosted imigidi on Sundays during the month of July in 2022. This is a Scottish garment that the followers wear during umgidi, for all Nazarite men.

Six. It is characterized as communal, as distinct periods of time, and as ritually removed from the hardships of everyday life. Umgidi is a crucial part of rest, enabling one to hear the voices of their ancestors. It shows how collective rest is a powerful practice for its liberatory affordances and its liberatory effect of reparation, and recovery in nonverbal communication of the performers' thoughts and feelings. In this space, the performers' actions are much like art therapy, which focuses on "silence, listening and processing", that is then translated into what is being heard through sound.

In the context of umgidi, the sound consists of much more than what we hear: it is an embodied modality constituted by vibration and contact (Campt, 2017: 58). The coordination and sound translation of imigidi thus becomes an everyday practice for the dancers. We engage with sound emigidini for the transfigurative potential that it holds, the spiritual state, that will allow for communication between you and the spiritual realm to be heard. The unspoken communication and connection is the meeting point. One comes in burdened by the everyday, but sound becomes communication without demanding spoken words from the dancers and congregants.

The unexplainable is evident, as every time I asked how the members managed to do the dance all day, with only one 30-minute break in between, they chuckled and said they could not explain why. One would simply have to be a participant to fully understand. It serves as an enactment of memory, in which the past is activated in the present. This is less about the aesthetic merit and outcome of the dance itself as we view it as observers during umgidi, but it is rather more about the freedom and relief that the participant feels at that moment. This unspoken and inexpressible condition illustrates that they themselves (the members and participants of umgidi) may be present and seen in the physical, but they have also entered the realm of the unspeakable. What is communicated heals whatever one has brought into the congregation.

In my personal experience and auto-ethnographic encounter of umgidi during my observations, I cannot explain how I sat and watched [listened] all day without getting tired or bored. This constitutes what Campt (2017: 59) looks at in images, as a practice of "looking beyond what we see and attuning our senses to the other affective frequencies through which photographs register." In our case at umgidi, dancers are images of bodies that perform in accordance with the sound, but the body movements are not held together by their proximity. The dancers move

in a nexus because of coordination of their aural and optical senses in response to the sounds coming from the trumpets and drums. The observers are not only admiring the participants' coordinated body movements; they are also interpreting the sounds of the trumpets and drums through their own aural and optical senses. Consequently, the essence of umgidi is the congregation of the participants and the observers through their aural and optical senses. By extension, the reason for the use of the aural and optical senses is not only to observe and listen to what is going on at Ebuhleni and NGC, but it is also to congregate with Isaiah Shembe and his dead successors, who are also using their optical and aural senses to observe and listen to those present at the umgidi ceremony.

Imigidi an annual celebration

When John Dube's Ilanga laseNatal began reporting amaNazaretha's calendrical movements, and by then started running their leaders izibongo (praise poems) at the height of the main festival in July (Papini, 1991), this brought in a different kind of audience and surveillance of the July activities of amaNazaretha. As noted by Nelly Wells (1991), he became the most visited figure by government officials and political figures who wanted to draw him to their own projects, because of his power of drawing crowds. As noted by Gunner (1988: 90) in *The Mercury*, the July festival of 1925 ended with an approbation of Shembe's "anti-ICU stance, in fact, Shembe turned down an ICU man, even though the Shembe village is close to a house which was occupied by the son of Mahatma Gandhi (now a place called Phoenix[57]). However, Shembe cannot be compared to Gandhi. In his activities, Shembe was purely concerned with the spiritual and moral welfare of his people. By this I mean that it was or seemed possible for collaboration between the two, Gandhi's son and Shembe, to draw numbers from both the Indian community and the Zulu community to fight against the oppression of labour. But this was not the case.

So, every year during the July festivals, spectators from all over the world attend umgidi, marvelling at Shembe's community with their strong position on Shembe's stance of being "anti-kholwa, anti-ICU, unreconstructed heathens, who were too raw for liberals' tastes or the abaqhafi who disconcerted the NAD, or the petit-bourgeois- ama-respectables" (Papini, 1991: 250). Sithole's argument is that umgidi is not meant for political intent but rather is a form of

[57] There is a long history of a difficult and constrained relationship between the Zulus and the Indians in KwaZulu-Natal. In 2021, there was unrest in Phoenix where people died.

worship, a practice of rest, by the members in which sound, place and memory intersect for their benefit of recovering, recuperating and restoration.

Figure 11: Ikhulu handmade beadwork



Photograph: Fikile Masikane[58]

[58] Hanging at the back of married women during umgidi, in Marianhill-Van der Khoza farm - NGC married women (July 2022)

Figure 12: Inhlayisuthi



Photograph: Fikile Masikane[59]

Figure 13: Older me wearing injobo (July 2022)



Photograph: Fikile Masikane[60]

[59] Young male members wearing isikotshi during umgidi, Marian Hill-Van Der Khoza farm-NCG (July 2022)

[60] I captured this photograph Ebuhleni esigcaweni soBaba wearing injobo (July 2022)

Sithole (2016:25) argues that both dress and dance "are improvisions on the old pre-colonial period, and in Ibandla lamaNazaretha, the dance is reconfigured and given new meanings and reemphasizes that it is not political" as stated by Muller (2010). Pre-colonial dance was a social phenomenon and in Ibandla lamaNazaretha, it is first and foremost a religious phenomenon. In light of my argument on rest in Chapter Six, this social association of umgidi, which is such an important activity for the followers, like the observance of the Sabbath rest, indicates that rest is a social phenomenon. To reiterate, rest is liberating, and work is a function of rest. While work in Shembe's teachings affirms the key difference between alienated wage labour that other writers emphasise, its definition shifts: work is individual creative activity with one's hands, as we saw in Chapter Five. While creative work (tiro) 'makes others' in many theories (and is in this way constitutive of 'African personhood'—one is a person through other people), in Shembe's teachings and its practice, it is *collective rest* that makes others together. This commemoration or remembrance of Isaiah Shembe shows the place of memory in society as well.

Conclusion

This chapter highlights the significant role of rememory within the context of Ibandla lamaNazaretha. It is illustrated in Nhlangakazi, a vital site of memory to which the January Pilgrimage journeys, never forgetting. The July Umgidi wamaNazaretha serves as a space where sound and hearing demonstrate the connection between the past and the present, guiding our actions. This reflects the processes of remembering and being remembered, acting as both a site of memory through the January pilgrimage and a means of being remembered through sound and hearing. Those who lived before us speak to us, and sometimes, in unexplainable ways, we hear and are directed along the paths we should follow. Recovering the past helps us define a unique way of being in the world. The way memories resist erasure illustrates that Blackness cannot be reduced to a condition of precarity. The act of remembering grounds us. Our ancestry lives on through us continuously.

The memories of the field trip to Mpumalanga have become like the ghost's presence in *Beloved*, something I wish to forget. My everyday encounters and frustrations with the poor service delivery and danger, including load-shedding of the ANC government, which has made

conditions unsafe especially at night with no streetlights, potholes and increased crime rates, forced me to unintentionally interact with my past that day, in ways that are crippling. As I read *Beloved,* I am more sympathetic towards Sethe's impulsive act of killing her children, as a protective measure, but also her exercise of power by discontinuing reproduction, which can benefit the running of the capitalist system. She pre-emptively saw the future, and from her vantage point, as a slave, she did not want that to be the experience of her children.

Being Black in the world, and particularly as a Black woman in the world, seems like a struggle where we are confronted by imposed challenges in various forms. These problems are intensified because of the everyday interaction with violence and being violated, whether systemically (by being marginalized and silenced) or violated because of our womanhood, which continues to be sacrificed and reduced to nothingness. Sethe displayed an act of power through enacting discontinuity rather than passively allowing the continuity of oppression to define the future. This place [Africa] is also a space for good memories and recuperation through the practice of rest of imigidi.

Remembering the past—its people, events, moments, time, and space—is a crucial exercise in (re)constructing the present. Even if we try to sever ourselves from the past due to trauma, forgetting it means erasure and robes us of the potential to fully inhabit the world with the richness of our ancestry that lives through us. To avoid this connection and interaction with the past would mean surrendering to the notion of Black people being moulded in the image of Whiteness. Instead, by returning to Mount Nhlangakazi (one's place of origin), we embrace the spiritual undertones that connect us with past places. In doing so, we can better appreciate our present. The idea is to remember that we belong to something larger than ourselves. We belong to something that transcends into the spiritual, as this interconnection reaches into the spiritual realm, where those who have passed can be manifested through the living bodies present at any time.

Through telling and retelling, our memories are made to escape erasure and silencing. Like the women in the arms struggle by Siphokazi Magadla, omama bamanyano by Lihle Ngcobozi, we embrace womanhood as power. Thus, Isaiah Shembe was the manifestation of self-sufficiency, as was Garvey, the "Black" Moses. Being Black anywhere meant being at the bottom of the scale. Blacks lived in the poorest areas, earned the lowest wages, had fewer social amenities,

and they received the lowest level of respect. Isaiah Shembe similarly noted that Blacks accepted this condition, particularly through factory labour: “Why do you work in confinement?” he asked. “Why do you allow yourself to be reduced?” This he was determined to end.

By hearing with our aural and optical senses the messages that our ancestors conveyed to us, as revealed in Qamabelabantu’s experience, we perform re-memory and revitalize our connection with the dead. We are guided and defined by this acknowledgment. If we fail to recognize it, then we risk being lost (Morrison, 1987). Staying connected to our ancestors, as Morrison notes, is essential for rehabilitative memory.

Chapter Eight

Bongani uJehovah ngoba eLungile

Bongani uJehovah
Ngoba elungile,
Ngoba umusa wakhe uhlezi phakade
Ngoba elungile

Praise Jehovah,
Because he is righteous,
His mercy is everlasting,
Because he is righteous

Summary of the thesis argument and findings

Chapter One introduces the study by locating the history of labour and land dispossession as the context in which the inception of Shembe unfolds. From the onset, I centre these colonial occurrences that became oppressive as problematic and precursive moments. The study foregrounds Shembe's interventions as forms of theoretical concepts that encapsulate liberatory paradigms in purpose, content, and practice. Central in this regard, as I have shown, is the hymn/isihlabelelo. Through the time spent with amaNazaretha on the Sabbath, I witnessed the different forms of expressions in how the hymns were 'sung'. This is in comparison to how I had been accustomed to singing from my own positionality as a Seventh-day Adventist. It was in my immersion and understanding of the intention of Isihlabelelo that I could recognise that there is a difference between singing and ukuhlabelela. Thus, at the end of Chapter Two, I analysed ukuhlabelela as a liberatory practice. Ukuhlabelela, which differs from singing, and izihlabelelo should not be analysed as hymns, as doing so diminishes the profound meaning of this sonic expression and its significance for the members and potentially for those who hear it.

In Chapter Three, I showed how the role of religion in Black communities has always been an overarching one, yet there seems to be limited clarity in scholarship as to the connection

between the promises of the church and the actual emancipation that members seek, expect or work for. I looked at precarity from a position of understanding temporality, to dismantle the idea of precarity according to Shembe's conceptualisation.

In Chapter Four, I discussed Shembe's concept of courage, which makes freedom a teleological matter. Freedom is a default state of human beings because God is not an oppressive God, and therefore, where there is oppression that oppression is created by other human beings. And where there is precarity, that precarity is also created by other human beings. To fight oppression, then, is to return to the original state, a state of freedom, a state where God has placed human beings. Embodying ubuNazaretha means embracing a particular consciousness as I have shown in Chapter Four. Where I contrast Fanon's (1967) notion of madness with Shembe's notion of courage. For Fanon, the notion of madness, at least in relation to the experiences of Black people, must be associated with colonialism, with its brutalities and the psychological debilitations caused because of those brutalities. However, for Shembe, such brutalities do not need to lead to madness as heartache or cognitive dissonance caused by the colonial experience, which can be embalmed by the exercise of his teachings which leads to the spirit of courage rather than the spirit of defeat or resignation. In my analysis, the followers of Shembe show what it means to be free under conditions of constraint.

In Chapter Five, I looked at Shembe's theory of work, which centres rest and not on profit; it centres on nature; it centres work on social cohesion; and Shembe builds his humanism on all these factors. I argued, in the chapter, that Shembe's theorisation of work is important for the corpus of South African labour studies. Shembe's theorisation of work, mainly, connects freedom to rest, and it regards humanising work as work that encourages human freedom as opposed to it being a source of oppression. This concept of lacking nothing broadly addresses issues related to precarity, suggesting that the efforts of one's hands do not leave them in a precarious state of "ukudinga, nokuswela." Third, once this is accomplished, the follower will not be so reliant on others as to burden them.

Essentially, my previous study (2017) focused on the Shembe church community in the context of Black studies. This initial engagement raised further questions that have informed this doctoral project. My conviction is that this is an interdisciplinary sociological study primarily premised on labour discourses that set out to explore the question of precarity in the lives of

black people. Interdisciplinarity, in this case, evolved from the depth and breadth of the rich and diverse empirical data that I encountered in my fieldwork. The diversity of data sources entails active participant observations through extensive immersion in community practices, in-depth interviews, photographs and music, artworks, digitally archived sermons online, radio and social media platforms, life histories, and narratives. The Shembe church community presented a unique opportunity to probe non-secular faith-based response to precarity.

In Chapter Six, Shembe's followers regard freedom as integral to the command that there should be a Sabbath rest. Hence during in this day, they do not work; they render themselves totally free from any duty. This shows how rest is the restoration of the (alienated) relationship between work and rest.

Shembe Optimism

In this above stanza, Isaiah Shembe is optimistic. Shembe encourages his followers to focus on the Lord/Jehovah who has gifted them with life and all the basic needs to continue living. The gift of life is integral to nature, and is a gift of Jehovah to black people and, therefore, black people have continued to sustain themselves through ploughing and harvesting this land. As such, they must show an interminable gratitude by worshipping Jehovah who has not forgotten them. The Isihlabelelo 60 is projected to this end: the worship of God, because He has given blacks nature (land, animals, water-sources) to sustain themselves. The Isihlabelelo 60 gives an excursus of black suffering, and it provides the culmination of this suffering as the organisation of wage labour. In the disruption of black people's connectivity to nature and the displacement of nature by factories or industrialism, black suffering was made integral to capitalism. However, Shembe does not regard industrialisation, the extractive nature of mining or commercial farming, which values the machine more than it values the farmworker, as a defeat of black people; hence, he encouraged blacks to return to what God says about work and what he says about rest in Exodus 20:9. It is when black people return to the statute of the Lord at work and rest that they will realise how righteous the Lord is. This view is diametrically opposed to the popular view that the missions in introducing Christianity to the black communities also made blacks incapable of seeing themselves in Christianity because the God with which they were presented was for Jews and could never be for Blacks. Shembe saw a God who was for Blacks, a God who had never been against blacks. The reason for Shembe's

view is that life and nature belong to God, and since Blacks are alive, and they exist on the land owned by the Lord, it means that God is for Blacks.

This optimism, as demonstrated through the thesis, is not void of the recognition of challenges, insecurities, inequalities, and vulnerability that black people are perpetually living under. However, informed by my time with amaNazaretha, over the past three years, their life histories, practice of the Sabbath rest and the understanding of the morning and evening prayers in their everyday lives, I have been made to move beyond the sometimes-despairing stance that some Black Studies, decolonial scholarship and Afro-pessimists assume when thinking about black lives (not without reason). I am not bringing up Shembe's phenomenological contribution in some crude and cruelly optimistic sense, but in a sense that recognises through the works of Mbiti (1979) the conception of time as past and present (past as present) to be helpful when we are making sense of the impact of the past in the present. The speed at which modernisation operates requires a stagnation of the African continent.

Instead, a high percentage of Black people have been turned into labouring bodies, as depicted in the works of Gerard Sekoto, a South African artist, specifically his "song of the pick". In this painting, Sekoto shows Black labourers toiling in the mines, while a white man stands with his hands in his pockets, wanting to receive or eat of the labour of the Black labourers. Although the painting "song of the pick" was produced in 1947, over seven decades the factory continued to create more labouring bodies. Labour continues to rebuild the Black community shaped by the waste economy, where the things that provide us meaning are commodities created from waste and driven by consumption economy. This waste economy depends on endless repetition, replaceability and non-durability in goods. Chapter Five explained a different notion of work. The work of one's hands is an important intervention that dismantles precarity.

This study recognises that work without rest is oppressive. As shown in Chapter Five, because wage labour depends on mass production and mass consumption, it relies on an endless cycle regulated by competition and a race of advancement in a mass-market complex, which is not made of individuals but out of consumers and customers. Hence, Shembe associated mechanisation of work with oppression, because he realised that taking over hectares of land to mine or build factories or making people work on commercial farms without rest would de-

humanise the people, and they would be as soulless as machines, or the market indicators represented by charts and graphs relating rises and falls of stocks.

The Sabbath rest is not only about freedom from work as we saw in Chapter Five, but it is also about freedom to be with the Lord, the provider of basic needs, who has created nature for alimentation. This makes God concerned with freedom, since by making rest a command, He does not want people to be oppressed by work. Hence, for Shembe's followers, the Jehovah who sent them Isaiah Shembe is the God of freedom, not the God of oppression. Rest, as illustrated in Chapter Six, is a collective practice, where it is reinforced in the ways in which the Sabbath programme is run. Rest is then a conscious liberating activity, and the Sabbath serves as this reminder to those who observe it. To rest, then, is to acknowledge that you are liberated. The temples are a space and that allows this kind of becoming. By the telling and retelling of Shembe's life history, re-memory allows the followers to connect with the past in ways that will enable them to live in the present.

Through izigchawu and umgidi wamaNazaretha, as illustrated in Chapter Seven, which moves across Kwa-Zulu-Natal, Johannesburg, Mpumalanga and many other areas that have amaNazaretha, the ground always speaks, in that our ancestry communicates to us in ways that enables us to live our day-to-day lives. The different sites, mountains, caves, spaces have recorded and memorized our ancestry. I am encouraged by a deep sense of place (not just as space) to record such scenes, as a symbolic means of "freezing" time. Here, I play with notions of time and space as twin concepts in Chapter Seven. This thesis contends that amaNazeretha offers a theory of Black life that is hopeful and yet grounded in everyday attention to time and temporality.

I return, once again, to Adv Mnyandu's warning about the danger of not writing autobiographically about Black histories and lives as illustrated in Chapter Two. Writing about Black histories and lives provides a language that captures Black society for what it is. If this challenge is neglected, negligence encourages the erasure of Black experiences, and more importantly, no one will value our culture/society on our behalf.

Ultimately, the main contribution of this study is its reclamation of a theory of Black becoming which relies on first, a re-elaboration of the centrality of socially constitutive and creative work

in human existence, second, the cyclical centrality of rest as a sacred activity and collective reinvigoration enabling the activation of work, and third, the overarching interconnection of re-membering past trauma within temporalities of present and future reconstitutions.

Limitations and Further Studies

While I made intentional attempts to ensure the accurate rendering of ubuNazaretha. This study is not void of limitations and shortfalls. Firstly, my engagement with Shembe's conception of work, especially where he emphasises that people should work in turmoil and sweat to eat, follows the logic of man being seen as inherently evil and thus required to pay through hard labour pain and sweat the debt of this inherent evil.

Second, given the scope of the thesis, I could not study in detail the significance of the different factions that have since emerged after the passing of Isaiah Shembe. Further studies can detail the significance of these factions, while also paying particular attention to what the followers say about the spirit of Isaiah Shembe living in and through them. This externalises Shembe and his life continues through others.

Third, the study presents an opportunity for other scholars to use Shembe (the concept of Shembe and the human being) to reflect on 'global theological and social discourses of work and rest' in ways that offer an opportunity for a study in Shembe as an institution, as he spiritually exists according to the members. He lives through his successors. Shembe as a spiritual living-dead who lives through his succession- institution through the Nazarite community.

Lastly, just as this study emanated from a lineage of other scholars and thinkers who had a keen interest in the Nazarite community, I see a possibility of studies to look at the gender aspects in the church. This must be done with care and attentiveness to see the dynamics as they are and not as perceived through other scholarship.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics clearance certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND,

JOHANNESBURG

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

(NON-MEDICAL)

RI 4/49 Masikane	DATE 25 May 2021 PROTOCOL NUMBER: H21/04/22
CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	A faith-based response to the precarious life of black people: six days of labour, one day of rest- a case of the Shembe Church
PROJECT TITLE	Ms F Masikane Social Sciences/ 16 April 2021
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Approved
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Risk Level: Minimal
DATE CONSIDERED	24 May 2024
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	CHAIRPERSON
EXPIRY DATE	

(Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisors: Prof B Kenny, Prof L Nunez and Prof Bhekizizwe

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DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and ONE COPY returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

l/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and l/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions, Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to submit an amendment of the protocol to the Committee. I agree to completion of a regular progress report. For Minimal and Low studies, this is due annually on 31 December. For Medium and High Risk studies, this is due twice annually on 30 June and 31 December.

_____ _____/_____/_____

Signature Date