

Université de Montréal

**African Nazarites:
A Comparative Religious Ethnography of
Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha***

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RÉSUMÉ

Deux mouvements théologiques et culturels actuellement en croissance rapide suscitent un intérêt mondial, *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* et les Rastafari. Fondé par le Zulu prédicateur Isaiah Shembe pendant les années 1910, *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* prend son origine d'une église hiérarchique célébrant dans des temples extérieurs dans la province de KwaZulu-Natal et inclut maintenant un certain nombre de factions regroupées autour de la péninsule de l'Afrique du Sud. Le groupe des Rastafari, quant à lui, né en Jamaïque, a commencé comme une idéologie à plusieurs têtes qui a fleuri dans des zones éparses de l'île des Caraïbes. Il découle des interprétations d'une prophétie généralement attribuée à Marcus Garvey, concernant un roi devant être couronné en Afrique (circa 1920), et qui fut appliquée aux années 1930, avec le couronnement de Ras Tafari Makonnen comme Haile Selassie I, 225^e empereur d'Éthiopie. Les adhérents et sympathisants de ces deux mouvements se comptent en dizaines de millions et ils exercent plusieurs types d'influences, tant aux niveaux politique, théologique, social que culturel, en particulier en Afrique et dans les Caraïbes aujourd'hui.

Cette thèse soutient que les deux, *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* et les Rastafari, perpétuent un amalgame entre le « Naziréat » de l'Ancien Testament (Nombres 6:1-8) et le « Nazaréen » de l'évangile de Matthieu (2:23), à travers la dévotion à un seigneur contemporain: Haile Selassie I dans le cas du mouvement Rastafari et Isaiah Shembe dans le cas du mouvement *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Dans ce cadre théologique, à la fois les Rastafari et *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* ont réanimé les anciens rites de purification judaïques du naziréat jusque-là disparus, et les ont également adaptés, dans le contexte du messianisme, aux préoccupations postcoloniales de l'autochtonie. Grâce à la persistance de l'autochtonie, l'influence des idéaux indiens de résistance non-violente, et l'appropriation des différents thèmes bibliques, les deux mouvements africains noirs ont habilité avec succès leurs membres « dépossédés ». Ils l'ont fait par la création de communautés liminales, alors que des modes de vie agraires et auto-suffisants s'épanouissent en dehors des auspices d'une élite dominante : une herméneutique du naziritisme unifie les diverses racines hybrides africaines, judaïques, chrétiennes, indiennes, et européennes.

Mots-clés: Naziritisme, Rastafari, *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, Shembe, Afrique, Jamaïque, Bible, Naziréat, Nazaréen

ABSTRACT

Two rapidly growing theological and cultural movements currently sparking global interest are Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Founded by the Zulu preacher Isaiah Shembe during the 1910s, *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* originated as a hierarchical church order that worships at outdoor temples in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and currently comprises a number of splinter groups centralized around the Southern African peninsula. Rastafari, however, born in Jamaica, commenced as a multi-headed ideology that blossomed in scattered pockets across the Caribbean island and stemmed from the interpretations of a prophecy generally attributed to Marcus Garvey about a king to be crowned in Africa (circa 1920) as applied to the 1930 coronation of Ras Tafari Makonnen as Haile Selassie I, 225th Emperor of Ethiopia. Today, *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari comprise adherents and sympathizers numbering in the tens of millions and their presences connote varying degrees of political, theological, social, and cultural influence, especially in Africa and the Caribbean today.

This dissertation argues that both *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari perpetuate a conflation between the “Nazirite” from the Old Testament (Numbers 6:1-8) and the “Nazorean” of Matthew 2:23 through the hailing of a contemporaneous saviour: i.e. Haile Selassie I for Rastafari and Isaiah Shembe for *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Within this theological framework, both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* have provided renewed life to the long defunct Ancient Judaic purification rites of the Nazirite, but have also adapted them in the context of messianism for the benefits of Africanness and the postcolonial concerns of indigeneity. Thus, through the persistence of indigeneity, the influence of Indian ideals of peaceful resistance, and the appropriation of various biblical themes, both Black African movements have successfully empowered the dispossessed by creating liminal communities wherein expressions of agrarian self-reliance flourish outside the auspices of a subjugating elite; a hermeneutic of naziritism unifies the discernable African, Judaic, Christian, Indian, and European hybridic roots.

Keywords: Naziritism, Nazarite, Rastafari, *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, Shembe, Africa, Jamaica, Bible, Nazirite, Nazorean

TABLE OF CONTENTS

RÉSUMÉI

ABSTRACT.....II

TABLE OF CONTENTSIII

KEY BIBLICAL PASSAGES RE AFRICAN NAZIRITISM (NUMBERS 6:1-8; MATTHEW 2:23) VIII

LIST OF TABLES X

GLOSSARY.....XI

LIST OF ACRONYMSXV

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS..... XVI

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS FOR CITED BOOKS OF THE BIBLE (ALPHABETICAL)..... XVI

LIST OF AUDIO RECORDINGS CITED (FIELD RESEARCH)..... XVII

LEGEND FOR TRANSCRIPTIONS OF AUDIO RECORDINGS (FIELD RESEARCH)..... XIX

FIELD MAPSXX

MAP 1: SOUTHERN AFRICAXX

MAP 2: SOUTH AFRICA (DETAIL): “THE FIELD”XX

MAP 3: SOME KEY SITES VISITED IN SOUTH AFRICAXXI

MAP 4: THE CARIBBEANXXI

MAP 5: THE CARIBBEAN (DETAIL): “THE FIELD”XXII

MAP 6: SOME KEY SITES VISITED IN JAMAICAXXII

LIST OF FIGURES..... XXIII

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS XXV

AFRICAN NAZARITES: A COMPARATIVE RELIGIOUS ETHNOGRAPHY OF RASTAFARI AND *IBANDLA LAMANAZARETHA* 1

OVERVIEW 2

PART ONE: DEFINING AFRICAN NAZIRITISM 6

STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION..... 7

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL CONCERNS, METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES 14

1. COMPARATIVE RELIGIOUS ETHNOGRAPHY: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS.....	15
1.1 Comparative Approaches to Religious Ethnography	16
1.2 Comparing a Common Biblical Practice within Two Religious Groups.....	18
1.3 Syncretism, Hybridity, and Liminality	23
1.4 Conclusion to Comparative Religious Ethnography	29
2. LIVING HERMENEUTICS AND EXEGESIS: OSCILLATIONS OF RESISTANCE AND PERSISTENCE	30
2.1 Conclusion to Living Hermeneutics and Exegesis / Resistance and Persistence	39
3. LITERATURE REVIEW	39
3.1 <i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i> : Primary Texts.....	40
3.2 <i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i> : Overview of Scholarly Texts.....	42
3.3 Rastafari: Primary Texts	46
3.4 Rastafari: Overview of Scholarly Texts.....	49
3.5 Conclusion to Literature Review	53
4. QUALITATIVE ANTHROPOLOGICAL FIELD RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	54
4.1 Open Participant Observation	59
4.1.1 <i>Field Research in South Africa</i>	62
4.1.2 <i>Field Research in Jamaica</i>	64
4.1.3 <i>Conclusion to Open Participant Observation</i>	66
4.2 Semistructured Interviews.....	67
4.3 Informal Focus Groups	71
4.4 Conclusion to Qualitative Anthropological Field Research Methodology	71
5. CONCLUSION TO THEORETICAL CONCERNS, METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES	71
CHAPTER 2: BIBLICAL NAZIRITES, AFRICAN NAZARITES	74
1. BIBLICAL NAZIRITISM (13 TH CENTURY BCE – 3 RD CENTURY CE)	74
2. AFRICAN NAZIRITISM (1910 –).....	78
2.1 Consecration.....	82
2.1.1 <i>Rastafari Consecration</i>	85

2.1.2	<i>amaNazaretha Consecration</i>	95
2.1.3	<i>Conclusion to Consecration</i>	107
2.2	Consecrated Hair and Consecrated Heads	110
2.2.1	<i>Rastafari: Dreadlocks, Combsomes, Cleanface, Baldheads, Fashion Dreads</i>	110
2.2.2	<i>amaNazaretha: umqhele, isicholo, White Veil</i>	115
2.2.3	<i>Conclusion to Consecrated Hair and Consecrated Heads</i>	117
2.3	Regarding Alcohol and Intoxicants	117
2.3.1	<i>Rastafari: Ganja Exegesis</i>	119
2.3.2	<i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha: Alcohol as Debasement</i>	125
2.3.3	<i>Conclusion to Alcohol and Intoxicants</i>	130
2.4	Regarding the Dead: Nonviolence and Natural Living	131
2.4.1	<i>Rastafari: Ital Food, Balm Yards, Duppy Conquerors</i>	132
2.4.2	<i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha: Attitudes towards Death and the Natural World</i>	136
2.4.3	<i>Conclusion to Death, Nonviolence, and Natural Living</i>	140
3.	CONCLUSION TO “BIBLICAL NAZIRITES, AFRICAN NAZARITES”	141
	CONCLUSION TO PART ONE	149
	 PART TWO: FURTHER EXPLORATIONS FROM THE FIELD	155
	 INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO	156
	 CHAPTER 3: LIVING WORSHIP	162
1.	LAND OCCUPATION.....	162
2.	<i>AMANAZARETHA: A TALE OF TWO HOLY CITIES</i>	165
2.1	<i>Ebhleni: Sabbath Services, Pilgrimage to Mount Nhlangakazi, and Sacred Dances</i>	166
2.1.1	<i>Ebhleni Sabbath Services</i>	166
2.1.2	<i>2011 Ebhleni Pilgrimage to Mount Nhlangakazi</i>	176

2.1.3 <i>Ebuhleni Sacred Dances</i>	180
2.2 Ekuphakameni: Sabbath Services and Founding Day Ceremony at Bhekumesiya.....	183
2.2.1 <i>Ekuphakameni Sabbath Services</i>	184
2.2.2 <i>Founding Day Ceremony at Bhekumesiya</i>	195
2.3 Conclusion to Section: amaNazaretha Living Worship.....	200
3. RASTAFARI: CAMPS, BINGHIS, SABBATHS	200
3.1 School of Vision: Mount Zion Hill Temple, Sabbath Services, Binghi at Mount Edge.....	201
3.2 Binghi at Pinnacle: Remembrance of Leonard Howell	207
3.3 Bobo Shanti: Bobo Hill, Sabbath Services, Binghi.....	208
3.4 Nyabinghi at Scotts Pass: Earthstrong of Haile Selassie I.....	216
3.5 Conclusion to Rastafari Living Worship	219
4. CONCLUSION TO LIVING WORSHIP.....	219
CHAPTER 4: LIVING COMMUNITAS.....	222
1. FEMALE NAZARITES.....	222
1.1 Rastafari as the Voice of Feminism in Jamaica	224
1.2 Ibandla lamaNazaretha as a Refuge for African Women	234
1.3 Conclusion to Section.....	249
2. SELF-RELIANCE AND MODERNITY: INTERNAL ECONOMIES.....	250
2.1 Internal Economies: Ibandla lamaNazaretha	250
2.2 Internal Economies: Rastafari	258
2.3 Conclusion to Section.....	263
3. CONCLUSION TO LIVING COMMUNITAS.....	263
CONCLUSION TO PART TWO	265
GENERAL CONCLUSION AND THEORETICAL DISCUSSION: RESISTANCE AND PERSISTENCE... AT HOME AND ABROAD.....	269
1. MAIN FINDINGS AND CHAPTER REVIEW.....	271
2. FINAL THEORETICAL REFLECTION.....	277

2.1 Resistance and Persistence: At Home and Abroad.....	279
BIBLIOGRAPHY	282
DISCOGRAPHY.....	307
FILMOGRAPHY	307
APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET	308
APPENDIX 2: PORTRAITS OF FOUR “LIVING GODS”	311
1. MUTABARUKA	313
2. DERMOTT FAGAN.....	327
3. MTHEMBENI MPANZA	349
4. VUKILE SHEMBE	365
APPENDIX 3: FIGURES.....	389

KEY BIBLICAL PASSAGES RE AFRICAN NAZIRITISM
(NUMBERS 6:1-8; MATTHEW 2:23)

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When either men or women make a special vow, the vow of a nazirite, to separate themselves to the Lord, they shall separate themselves from wine and strong drink; they shall drink no wine vinegar or other vinegar, and shall not drink any grape juice or eat grapes, fresh or dried. All their days as nazirites they shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, not even the seeds or the skins. All the days of their nazirite vow no razor shall come upon the head; until the time is completed for which they separate themselves to the Lord, they shall be holy; they shall let the locks of the head grow long. All the days that they separate themselves to the Lord they shall not go near a corpse. Even if their father or mother, brother or sister, should die, they may not defile themselves; because their consecration to God is upon the head. All their days as nazirites they are holy to the Lord. (Numbers 6:1-8)

There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazorean." (Matthew 2:23)

King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the LORD: He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the LORD, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. All the days that he separateth himself

unto the LORD he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head. All the days of his separation he is holy unto the LORD. (Numbers 6:1-8)

And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene. (Matthew 2:23)

1893 iBaible (Zulu Bible)

UJEHOVA wa tyo kuMosi ukuti, Kuluma kuba Israeli u ti kubo, uma owesilisa noma owesifazana e zahlukanisa, a funge isifungo somNazareti a zimisele uJehova, A ka zahlukanise newaini, notywala obubukali, a nga puzi ubumuncu bewaini nobumuncu botywala, a nga puzi amanzi ezinhlamvu zevini a nga dhli izinhlamvu zevini ezimanzi nezomileyo. Zonke izinsuku zoku zahlukanisa kwake, a ka yi kudhla luto olwenziwe ngevini noma izinhlamvu noma amakasi. Izinsuku zonke zesifungo sokuzahlukanisa, a nga puculi ikanda lake ku ze ku pelele lezo zinsuku zokuzahlukanisela kwake ku Jehova, u ya kuba ngcwele, a yeke isihluthu sezinwele zekanda lake si kule. Ngezinsuku zonke zokuzahlukanisela kwake kuJehova a ka nga hlangani nesidumbu sofileyo. A nga zingcolisi ngoyise, na ngonina, na ngomfo wabo, na ngodade wabo ekufeni kwabo, ngokuba ukuzahlukanisela uTixo ku pezu kwekanda lake. Ngezinsuku zonke zokuzahlukanisela kawke u ngcwele ku Jehova. (Imibalo 6:1-8)

Weza wa hlala emzini o tiwa iNazareta, ukuba ku gwaliseke okwa shunyayelwa abaprofeti ukuti, U ya kutiwa umNazareta. (UMateu 2:23)

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Biblical Naziritism 78
Table 2: African Naziritism 148

GLOSSARY

<i>amaNazaretha</i> (Zulu)	(plural of <i>umNazaretha</i>) members of <i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i>
<i>amasi</i> (Zulu)	fermented milk
<i>chalice</i> (Iyaric)	Rastafari water pipe usually made from a hollowed coconut, polyvinyl chloride hose, and a clay chamber (<i>kochi</i>) to hold the marijuana and/or tobacco
<i>chamba</i> (Iyaric)	marijuana
<i>cheeba</i> (Iyaric)	marijuana
dreadlocks	a “hairstyle” that occurs when one allows their hair to grow without combing it (more symmetrical versions can also be obtained at a hair salon)
duppy (Iyaric)	malignant spirit
duppy conqueror (Iyaric)	vanquisher of malignant spirits
Ebuhleni	first splinter group of <i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i>
Ekuphakameni	first holy city of <i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i>
Fagan, Dermott (b. 1954)	Head Priest, Mount Zion Hill Temple (School of Vision)
ganja	marijuana
<i>gcaba</i> (Zulu)	to cut the skin with a razor and annoint <i>muti</i> in the cut
<i>grabba</i> (Iyaric)	pure, dried, leaf tobacco
<i>I-n-I</i> (Iyaric)	we; together we
<i>iBaible</i> (Zulu)	The Bible
<i>idren</i>	a gender inclusive term for brethren (<i>bredren</i>) or sisters (<i>sistren</i>)
<i>Iley</i> (Iyaric)	marijuana
<i>imbongi</i> (Zulu)	praise poet

<i>imiqhele</i> (Zulu)	(plural of <i>umqhele</i>) circular headbands of fur worn by members of <i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i> , sometimes adorned
<i>imiNazaretha</i> (Zulu)	(plural of <i>umNazaretha</i>) white surplices worn by members of <i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i>
<i>inansuka</i> (Zulu)	a white shawl worn by <i>amaNazaretha</i> women
<i>inansuka eluhlaza</i> (Zulu)	a blue shawl worn by recently married <i>amaNazaretha</i> women who consummated in keeping with religious custom
<i>iNkosi</i> (Zulu)	Lord
<i>inyanga</i> (Zulu)	spirit or witch doctor
<i>Ishence</i> (Iyaric)	incense
<i>isicholo</i> (Zulu)	headdress of a married woman in <i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i>
<i>isicoco</i> (Zulu)	a headring made of one's own hair sometimes worn by elder male members of <i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i>
<i>isiKotshi</i> (Zulu)	Scotch Dance
<i>Ital</i> (Iyaric)	organic, vegan, salt free
<i>izibongo</i> (Zulu)	praise poetry
<i>izimbomu</i> (Zulu)	long metal horn used by <i>amaNazaretha</i>
JAH	the term used by Rastafari to refer to YHWH
<i>kali</i> (Iyaric)	marijuana
<i>kaya</i> (Iyaric)	marijuana
<i>kochi</i> (Iyaric)	a clay chamber from which marijuana and/or tobacco is burned; sits atop a <i>chalice</i> (water pipe)
<i>livity</i> (Iyaric)	combination of "lifestyle" and "vitality"
lobola	bride price
Love, Cen'C (b. 1984)	reggae musician
Mutabaruka (b. 1952)	Jamaican poet and international Rastafari spokesperson

Mpanza, Mthembeni (b. 1952)	first non-Shembe member of <i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i> to start his own faction
<i>muti</i> (Zulu)	casting evil spells through spirits
<i>obeah</i> (Iyaric)	casting evil spells through spirits
<i>polytricks</i> (Iyaric)	a combination of “politics” and “tricks” suggesting that all forms of politics involve treachery
Prendergast, Donisha (b. 1984)	artist, activist, and international Rastafari spokesperson
<i>sangoma</i> (Zulu)	spirit or witch doctor
shebeen	illicit bar or club
Shembe, Amos Khula (1907-1986)	son of Isaiah Shembe and founder of the Ebuhleni faction
Shembe, Isaiah (1867-1935)	founder of <i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i> and Ekuphakameni
Shembe, Johannes Galilee (1904-1975)	son of Isaiah Shembe and 2 nd Living God at Ekuphakameni
Shembe, Londa K. (1944-1989)	son of Johannes Galilee Shembe and 3 rd Living God at Ekuphakameni
Shembe, Mbusi Vimbeni (1933-2011)	son of Amos K. Shembe and 2 nd Living God at Ebuhleni
Shembe, Mduduzi Derrick (b. 1960)	son of Mbusi Vimbeni Shembe and 3 rd Living God at Ebuhleni
Shembe, Vukile (b. 1980)	son of Londa Shembe and 4 th Living God at Ekuphakameni
Sithole, Nkosinathi (b. 1975)	scholar and member of <i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i>
spliff (Iyaric)	large, conical marijuana joint
<i>suru</i> (Iyaric)	small wooden cutting board
<i>uJehova</i> (Zulu)	the term used by <i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i> to refer to YHWH
<i>umNazaretha</i> (Zulu)	a) a member of <i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i>

b) a white surplice worn by members of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*

umqhele (Zulu)

a circular headband of fur worn by members of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, sometimes adorned

LIST OF ACRONYMS

EABIC	Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress, aka Bobo Shanti
HIM	His Imperial Majesty (Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia)
KJV	The Bible, King James Version
NRSV	The Bible, New Revised Standard Version
UWI	The University of the West Indies

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A. K.	Amos Khula Shembe
J. G.	Johannes Galilee Shembe
M. D.	Mduduzi Derrick Shembe
M. V.	Mbusi Vimbeni Shembe

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS FOR CITED BOOKS OF THE BIBLE (ALPHABETICAL)

1 Sam	1 Samuel
2 Sam	2 Samuel
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Gen	Genesis
Dan	Daniel
Deut	Deuteronomy
Eph	Ephesians
Ex	Exodus
Heb	Hebrews
Is	Isaiah
Jgs	Judges
Jn	John
Lam	Lamentations
Lev	Leviticus
Lk	Luke
Mk	Mark
Mt	Matthew
Num	Numbers
Prv	Proverbs
Ps (pl. Pss)	Psalms
Rev	Revelation

LIST OF AUDIO RECORDINGS CITED (FIELD RESEARCH)Open Participant Observations

- Ekuphakameni (Afternoon Sabbath Service), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 12, 2011
(5:49:27)
- eMakhosini Temple (Between Morning and Afternoon Sabbath Services), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 13, 2010 (1:45:16)
- Enhlanhleni Temple (Afternoon Sabbath Service), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 19, 2010 (2:09:12)
- Estcourt Temple (Morning Sabbath Service), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 27, 2010 (2:08:40)
- Estcourt Temple (Afternoon Sabbath Service), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 27, 2010 (2:19:50)
- Mount Edge Guest House (School of Vison Nyabinghi Drumming), Blue Mountains, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, May 8, 2011 (1:56:07)
- Nkonzenjani Temple (Afternoon Sabbath Service), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 17, 2010 (1:51:32)
- Scotts Pass (Earthstrong Bingi of Haile Selassie I), Clarendon, Jamaica, July 22, 2011 (8:57:02)

Semistructured Interviews

- Dermott Fagan, Zion Hill Temple Mountain, Blue Mountains, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, May 8, 2011 (1:43:12)
- Donisha Prendergast, Kingston, Jamaica, June 29, 2011 (44:07)
- F/Inanda/19¹, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 27, 2011 (56:26)
- F/Port Shepstone/23, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 17, 2010 (1:37:13)
- F/Ulundi/22, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 20, 2011 (53:51)
- M/Kingston/40 (Bobo Priest), Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress, Bull Bay, Jamaica, July 16, 2011 (2:23:19)
- M/Maputo/45, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 10, 2011 (2:15:53)

¹ Sex/Region of Origin/Age

M/Noodsberg/24, Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 19, 2011 (48:21)

Nkosinathi Sithole, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 1, 2010 (1:05:26)

Nkosinathi Sithole, eMakhosini Temple, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 13, 2010
(1:37:43)

Nkosinathi Sithole, Estcourt, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 27, 2010 (1:53:03)

Nkosinathi Sithole, Hlathikulu, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 24, 2010 (1:25:43)

Nkosinathi Sithole, Mount Nhlankakazi, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 14, 2011 (45:31)

Nkosinathi Sithole, Hlathikulu, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 26, 2011 (47:12)

M/Pietermaritzberg/27, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 19, 2010 (5:23:54)

Mthembeni Mpanza, Pinetown, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 22, 2011 (1:21:24)

Mthembeni Mpanza, Pinetown, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, April 13, 2011 (1:18:04)

Mutabaruka, Murdoch Spring, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, June 1, 2011 (2:45:31)

Mutabaruka, Murdoch Spring, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, June 3, 2011 (3:00:34)

Mutabaruka, Murdoch Spring, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, June 8, 2011 (1:16:12)

Vukile Shembe, Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 14, 2011 (2:18:49)

Vukile Shembe, Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 20, 2011 (3:12:20)

Informal Focus Groups

Dermott Fagan and group of four tourists, Zion Hill Temple Mountain, The Blue Mountains,
Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, April 22, 2011 (2:46:06)

Five young *amaNazaretha* men (Homis), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 10, 2011
(1:25:14)

Four young *amaNazaretha* men (Ekuphakameni to Bhekumesiya), KwaZulu-Natal, South
Africa, March 9, 2011 (5:58:05)

Four young *amaNazaretha* men (Bhekumesiya), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 10, 2011
(1:15:23)

LEGEND FOR TRANSCRIPTIONS OF AUDIO RECORDINGS (FIELD RESEARCH)

- {xyz} words that appear in-between braces {} are explanatory notes of actions that have been included by the author to provide necessary context
- [xyz] words that appear between brackets [] replace or introduce contextual information in tandem with the grammar of the speaker
- [...]
- a) a bracketed ellipsis within a passage signifies inaudible sections of under 30 seconds
- b) a bracketed ellipsis between paragraphs signifies an interval of time over 30 seconds
- [....]
- an editing decision by the author that includes at least one full sentence
- ...
- denotes an instance where the speaker trails off or around the topic
- A—
- a capital letter with a long dash signifies a name omitted by the author in the interest of confidentiality
- KGC
- the author

FIELD MAPS

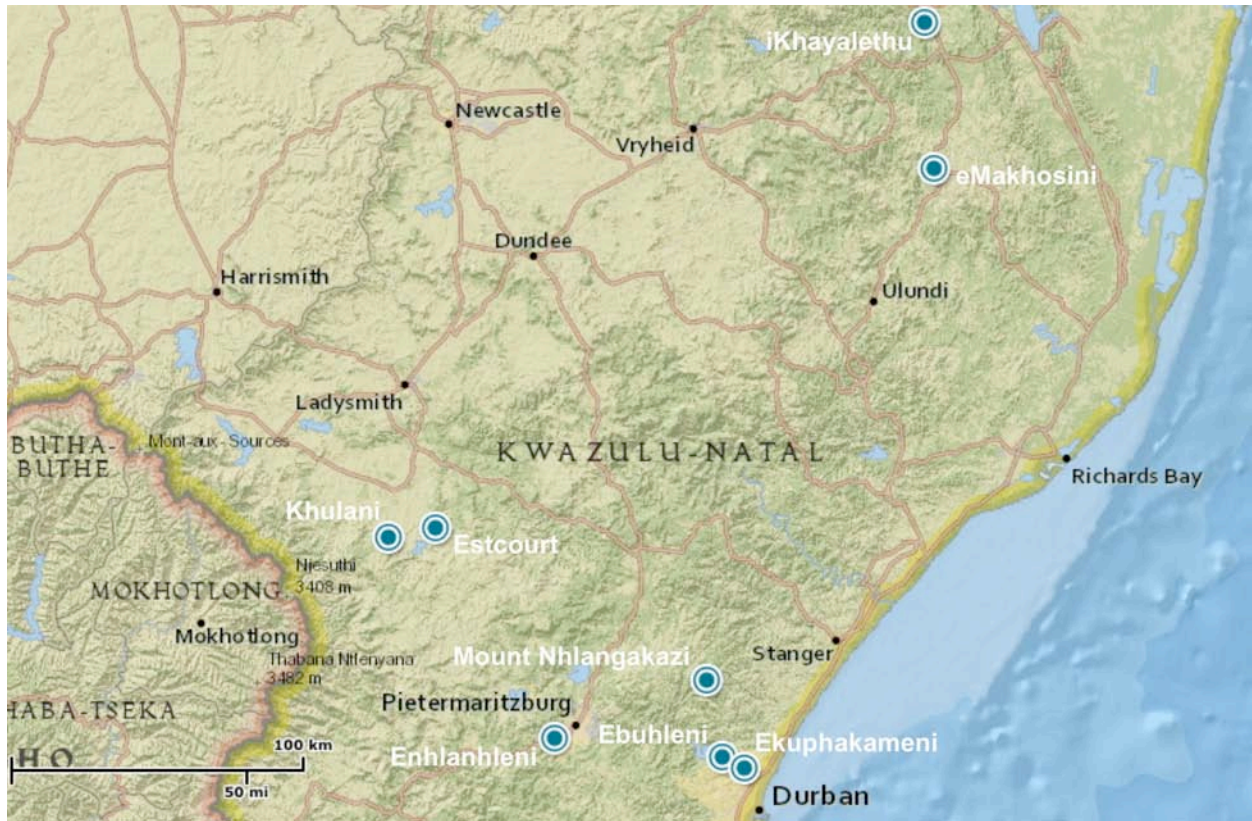
Map 1: Southern Africa



Map 2: South Africa (Detail): “The Field”



Map 3: Some Key Sites Visited in South Africa



Map 4: The Caribbean



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Nkosinathi Sithole at Khulani Temple	389
Figure 2: Chilean Bobo Shanti Rasta.....	390
Figure 3: K. Gandhar Chakravarty atop Mount Nhlankakazi	391
Figure 4: Reggae Musician Kiddus I and K. Gandhar Chakravarty	392
Figure 5: “The Beast,” Office (and Clothesline) on Wheels	393
Figure 6: Hitchhiking in the Blue Mountains.....	394
Figure 7: Gerald O. West, K. Gandhar Chakravarty, Roderick Hewitt.....	395
Figure 8: “JAH RAS TAFARI!” Ritual Ganja Smoking from a <i>Chalice</i>	396
Figure 9: Male <i>amaNazaretha</i> Carrying Ceremonial Staffs.....	397
Figure 10: “Baldhead” Howellites Celebrating a Binghi, Leonard Howell Symposium	398
Figure 11: School of Vision Rasta with “Living Crown” of Dreadlocks	399
Figure 12: <i>amaNazaretha</i> Bride and Groom with <i>Isicholo</i> and <i>Umqhele</i> Headpieces	400
Figure 13: <i>umNazaretha</i> with Knotted Locks	401
Figure 14: <i>umNazaretha</i> Wearing a Personalized <i>umqhele</i> (Fur Crown).....	402
Figure 15: <i>amaNazaretha</i> Women during Sabbath Service	403
Figure 16: <i>amaNazaretha</i> Virgin Maidens during Sabbath Service.....	404
Figure 17: <i>amaNazaretha</i> Virgin Maidens Performing Sacred Dance.....	405
Figure 18: Rastaman Preparing a Mixture of Ganja and <i>Grabba</i>	406
Figure 19: Rastafari Youths with Ganja Crop.....	407
Figure 20: <i>umNazaretha</i> Female Leader (<i>Umkhokheli</i>) Ministering Ritual Cleansing	408
Figure 21: Church Building at Ekuphakameni.....	409
Figure 22: Entrance to Ekuphakameni Temple.....	410
Figure 23: Government Representative Attending <i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i> Sabbath Service	411
Figure 24: House for the Spirit of Shembe and Seated Congregants.....	412
Figure 25: <i>amaNazaretha</i> Men Displaying <i>ibeshu</i> and Muddy Feet.....	413
Figure 26: Variations in Attire among <i>amaNazaretha</i> Women	414
Figure 27: Three <i>amaNazaretha</i> Women with Prayer Wreaths and Stones	415
Figure 28: <i>amaNazaretha</i> Women Placing Prayer Wreaths and Stones	416
Figure 29: <i>amaNazaretha</i> Pilgrims Arriving at Homis	417
Figure 30: Arrival at Mount Nhlankakazi	418
Figure 31: <i>amaNazaretha</i> Pilgrims Climbing atop Mount Nhlankakazi.....	419
Figure 32: The View atop Mount Nhlankakazi: “Heaven on Earth”.....	420
Figure 33: Loudspeakers and Pilgrims atop Mount Nhlankakazi.....	421
Figure 34: Campsite at the Foot of Mount Nhlankakazi	422
Figure 35: Zulu Men Dance Group.....	423
Figure 36: Zulu Men Dance Group Arm and Ankle Adornments	424
Figure 37: Zulu Men Dance Group Member Wearing Beaded Necklaces and Photos of Shembe	425
Figure 38: Zulu Men Dance Group Leg-lift and Heel Stomp	426
Figure 39: Zulu Women Dance Group	427
Figure 40: <i>amaNazaretha</i> Virgin Maidens of Marriagable Age Dancing.....	428
Figure 41: <i>isiKotshi</i> Dance Group.....	429
Figure 42: Mature <i>isiKotshi</i> Dancer.....	430
Figure 43: <i>isiKotshi</i> Initiates Dancing among Older Boys.....	431
Figure 44: Personal Prayers and Requests to Vukile Shembe inside Church Building at Ekuphakameni.....	432
Figure 45: Residences (back) and School (front) at Mount Zion Hill Temple	433
Figure 46: Staircase Leading the Way to Mount Zion Hill Temple	434
Figure 47: A Mural of Haile Selassie I.....	435
Figure 48: Main Gate to Mount Zion Hill Temple	436
Figure 49: Rastafari Lounging at the School.....	437
Figure 50: School of Vision Banner (detail)	438
Figure 51: School of Vision Rasta Tending the Sabbath Fire in the Town Square	439
Figure 52: Flag Bearers, School of Vision Sabbath Service	440
Figure 53: School of Vision Rasta Reciting Biblical Passages during Sabbath Service	441
Figure 54: Nyabinghi Drumming and Chanting during School of Vision Sabbath Service	442

Figure 55: Members of School of Vision Nyabinghi Drumming and Chanting at Mount Edge Guest House.....	443
Figure 56: Ruins of the Main House at Pinnacle	444
Figure 57: Modern-day Tabernacle at Pinnacle	445
Figure 58: Howellites Reciting Prayers at the “Leonard Howell Syposium”	446
Figure 59: Bobo Shanti Rastafari Clad in Ceremonial Robes, Praising JAH Rastafari	447
Figure 60: Bobo Shanti Rastafari Hand Washing Clothing	448
Figure 61: An Example of Architecture at Bobo Hill.....	449
Figure 62: Flag Poles at Bobo Hill.....	450
Figure 63: A Placard on a Building at Bobo Hill.....	451
Figure 64: A Residence at the Rastafari Community in Scotts Pass	452
Figure 65: Inside the Tabernacle at Scotts Pass	453
Figure 66: A Painting at Scotts Pass Depicting Marcus Garvey, Mortimo Planno, Nelson Mandela, Mohandas K. Gandhi, and Malcolm X.....	454
Figure 67: Rastafari Brethren Partaking in Ritual Ganja Smoking.....	455
Figure 68: Mutabaruka Farming his Backyard.....	456
Figure 69: Mutabaruka Speaking, Left: Michael Barnett.....	457
Figure 70: Dermott Fagan Giving Sermon.....	458
Figure 71: Notes by Dermott Fagan.....	459
Figure 72: Dermott Fagan and School of Vision Rasta, Sabbath Service.....	460
Figure 73: Vukile Shembe and <i>umNazaretha</i>	461
Figure 74: Vukile Shembe and K. Gandhar Chakravarty.....	462
Figure 75: <i>amaNazaretha</i> Vendors	463
Figure 76: Corn Growing at Ekuphakameni	464
Figure 77: A Goat Grazing at Ekuphakameni.....	465
Figure 78: <i>umNazaretha</i> Vaseline Vendor	466
Figure 79: <i>umNazaretha</i> Leader Blessing Vaseline on Sabbath Day	467
Figure 80: An Empty Coca-Cola Bottle and <i>izimbomu</i> Perched on a Traditional Zulu Drum	468
Figure 81: Rasta Selling Various Fermented Homemade Beverages (e.g. Roots Wine, Noni Punch) at a Binghi...469	469
Figure 82: Nell Robinson and Jaunel McKenzie Wearing Mutamba Fashions	470
Figure 83: More Designs by Mutamba	471
Figure 84: <i>Itribution</i> Box.....	472

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AFRICAN NAZARITES:
A COMPARATIVE RELIGIOUS ETHNOGRAPHY OF
RASTAFARI AND *IBANDLA LAMANAZARETHA*

OVERVIEW

This work is divided into two large parts and a general conclusion. The first, “Defining African Naziritism,” which includes the Statement of the Question and Chapters 1 and 2, addresses and responds to my main research questions pertaining to the ethnographic study of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* (aka the Shembe Church) in the context of naziritism. In other words, through the consideration of a number of theoretical and methodological concerns, this study demonstrates, particularly in Chapter 2, how various ideals of naziritism have been assimilated by both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. The second part, “Further Explorations from the Field,” composed of Chapters 3 and 4, expands on the previous exegetical and ethnographic findings through the presentation and analysis of qualitative data accumulated in the fields of South Africa and Jamaica (October 2010 – September 2011). The inclusion of these topics was, in essence, forced by the overwhelming presence of the associated themes in my database. In the process, the additional subjects also provided an opportunity to apply the theoretical findings to a number of religious practices and social themes. Finally, the General Conclusion ties together the major theoretical threads of the work and offers a few concluding thoughts.

Regarding the structure of this dissertation, in more detail then, Part One begins with a “Statement of the Question” that provides some background information on Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and states my main research queries and offers a concluding paragraph as a thesis statement. I argue that adherents of both religions perpetuate a conflation between the “Nazirite” from the Old Testament (Numbers 6:1-8) and the “Nazorean” of Matthew 2:23 through the hailing of a modern saviour: Haile Selassie I for Rastafari and Shembe for *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. The “African Nazarites” have not only renewed the long defunct Ancient Judaic Laws of the Nazirite, but they have also “re-membered” (West 1999) them in the contexts of hybridity and liminality for the benefit of Africanness and the postcolonial concerns of indigeneity.

Next, “Chapter One: Theoretical Concerns, Methodological Approaches” delves into the overarching theoretical and methodological issues concerning the pursuit of comparative religious ethnographies with African and African Diasporic peoples and offers a few suggestions regarding the most ethical and effective approaches for today. The first section of this chapter explores the large historical lines of religious studies, comparative religion, and ethnography, especially as they pertain to the notions of “religious hybridity” and “liminality.” Having

considered pertinent theoretical and methodological approaches from the last century or so, the second section of the first chapter argues for a “living hermeneutical and exegetical approach” to help account for the “oscillations of resistance to modernity and the persistence of indigeneity” manifested by adherents of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

The third section of Chapter One then provides literature reviews of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* primary and scholarly texts. As the academic work on Rastafari is quite vast in comparison to that focused on *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, I provide a somewhat synthetic presentation of the scholarly texts on Rastafari while pinpointing a few of the most pertinent for this project. In contrast, I utilize the section pertaining to scholarly texts on *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* to further a number of theoretical arguments related to the insider / outsider dilemma in religious ethnography, in particular relation to the study of African Naziritism.

Finally, the first chapter closes by applying the theoretical and methodological approaches to the literature reviews of both movements. I discuss, in details, the particular qualitative field research methodologies I developed and employed in Montreal, South Africa, and Jamaica:² “open participant observation,” “semistructured interviews,” and “informal focus groups.” A short conclusion revisits the main ideas of the chapter and the complexity of the ethnographic endeavour today.

Next, in Chapter 2, having revealed the layers of my comparative religious ethnographical methodology, I then present the findings related to my main research questions regarding Rastafari, *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, and naziritism in “Biblical Nazirites, African Nazirites.” The first section of this chapter briefly defines naziritism in its biblical contexts. The understanding of Biblical Naziritism largely rests on the historical-critical exegesis that distinguishes between “Tribal Nazirites” and “Cultic Nazirites” (Chakravarty 2009b; cf. Chepey 2005). The ensuing presentation of “African Naziritism,” while taking the historical-critical parameters into account, employs the strategies already presented in the previous chapter on living hermeneutics and exegesis to interpret Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* with regard to a) consecration, b) hair growth, c) abstinence from alcohol / intoxicants, and d) attitudes regarding life and death, nonviolence, and natural living / self-reliance in tandem with notions of liminality and hybridity that help account for oscillations of “resistance to modernity and the

² The field research occurred with Rastafari in Montreal (2008-2009) and Jamaica (April to September 2011); with *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa (October 2010 to March 2011).

persistence of indigeneity.” In the second section of this chapter, I also demonstrate how the various hybridic sources at play during the inceptions of both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*—African, Christian, Judaic, Indian, European—can be connected to the four points of naziritism found in Numbers 6:1-8.

Having defined African Naziritism, as particular to *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* or Rastafari, and moving into Part Two, the following two chapters present some additional findings that also dominated a significant percentage of my field research while reflecting further on the theoretical issues already developed in Part One. These chapters are entitled “Living Worship” and “Living Communitas.” Part Two begins with a short introduction that outlines the breadth of my field research activities and justifies the choices made to select the primary material and additional themes found in Chapters 3 and 4. While these chapters are intended to provide a larger and more profound understanding of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* themselves as religious groups, I have also provided analysis related to the main theoretical and methodological concerns of this study.

“Chapter 3: Living Worship” explores the sabbath services and various gatherings of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari through endogenous and exogenous comparative approaches. This chapter is intended to give a better understanding of some of the main ritual practices associated with either Rastafari or *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Next, “Chapter 4: Living Communitas” presents two community contexts in which the living theologies of African Naziritism have become central: a) “Female Nazarites,” b) “Self-reliance and Modernity: Internal Economies.” While I do not consider myself an expert on either of these two subjects, I still deemed it essential to include at least something about these topics since they recur so frequently in the transcriptions from my field work.

Last, the General Conclusion, apart from summarizing the main theoretical threads that run through the entire work, includes my final thoughts on the notions of resistance to modernity and the persistence of indigeneity: “at home” as in the case of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, and “abroad” as related to Rastafari—i.e. *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* was founded on indigenous soil, while the forefathers of Rastafari represent the displaced progeny of the African slave trade in Jamaica. Based on the evidence, I suggest a paradigm shift that includes a dialogue of “persistence” when discussing religions today that incorporate aspects of indigeneity, or the precolonial customs of their ancestors. I also offer a few final reflections on the ethnographic

process itself, while reiterating the ethical justifications for this study and the practical implications for its findings.

PART ONE: DEFINING AFRICAN NAZIRITISM

STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION

Two rapidly growing theological and cultural movements currently sparking global interest are Rastafari³ and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.⁴ Founded by the Zulu preacher Isaiah Shembe during the 1910s, *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* originated as a hierarchical church order in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal, while a number of splinter groups centralized around the southern African peninsula currently exist.⁵ Rastafari, however, born in Jamaica, commenced as a multi-headed ideology that blossomed in scattered pockets across the Caribbean island and stemmed from an interpretation of a prophecy (circa 1920)⁶ generally attributed to Marcus Garvey about a king to be crowned in Africa, as applied to the 1930 coronation of Ras Tafari Makonnen as Haile Selassie I (225th Emperor of Ethiopia). Together, both *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari comprise adherents and sympathizers numbering in the millions and their presences convey varying degrees of political, theological, social, and cultural influence, especially in Africa and the Caribbean today.

The whitewashed stones lain circularly in the fields of Southern Africa quietly broadcast the induction of hundreds of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* temples. Observe, for example, Nkosinathi Sithole, scholar and member of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, standing among the stones at Khulani Temple (Figure 1). Rastafari, on the other hand, often touted as the fastest growing theological

³ Though the adherents of Rastafari are often referred to as “Rastafarians” and some adherents fluctuate between the use of both appellations, I opt for the less derogatory term “Rastafari” to represent both the name of the movement and its adherents. Most adherents consistently refer to their belief system as Rastafari. Often, the terms “Rasta(s)” and “Dread(s)” are also used among adherents to refer to themselves. The term “Rastafarian” derives from a neologism of scholarship, “Rastafarianism,” which, according to Savishinsky, “is not a popular one, because ‘ism’ implies schisms and divisions” (2001: 263), notions contrary to Rastafari thought (cf. Cashmore 1979: 8-9). This sentiment has also been confirmed by my ethnographic research with Rastafari in Montreal (2008-2009) and Jamaica (2011).

⁴ Also known as the Shembe Church, the original Zulu, *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, loosely translates as “Congregation/Church of the Nazaretha.” See Chapter 2, Section 2.1.2 for details on translation. I generally use the Zulu terms in relation to signifying *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, and its members, as the very translation into English presents a number of problematics that could themselves be the subject of an article. In brief, the English translations of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* found in contemporary scholarship include the Nazarite Church, the Nazarite Baptist Church, the Nazareth Church, the Nazareth Baptist Church, the Church of the Nazarites, and the Church of Nazareth; often, several terms are used in the same book or article. Brown has also stated that *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* “is colloquially known as the Shembe Church and its members as Shembeites or Shembeites or Nazarites or even the Shembes” (1995a: 19). The English translation of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* also remains contested among members of the various Shembe factions. To date, I have not encountered any scholarship that directly addresses the problems encountered in the translation of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* into English.

⁵ The current factions are: Ekuphakameni, Ebulheleni, Gauteng, Ginyezinye, Mini, and Mpanza.

⁶ No documentation exists that actually connects Marcus Garvey to the prophecy, “Look to Africa when a black king shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near” (Cashmore 1979: 21-22), but Hill connects it to James Morris Webb, a reverend and associate of Garvey (1981: 32). See Chapter 2, Section 2.1.1 for details.

and cultural movement in the world, by members and academics alike,⁷ boasts tremendous ethnic diversity and international appeal. Refer to the Chilean Bobo Shanti Rasta in Figure 2; according to my field work, having a non-black Bobo Shanti in residence at the Ethiopia Black International Congress (EABIC) in Bull Bay, Jamaica would have been unthinkable but a few decades ago. Finally, it is also important to acknowledge that although the Laws of the Nazirite (Numbers 6:1-8) represent a central theme for each group in this study, both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* also possess unique landscapes beyond naziritism.⁸

Before moving too far ahead, however, I ought to mention, at this early juncture, that this dissertation is a direct consequence of my graduate work on Nazirites in the Bible and, in fact, represents a formal response to the question posed in the title of that work: “Where Have All the Nazirites Gone?” (Chakravarty 2009b). As I kept conducting database searches, “Nazirite” or “Nazarite,”⁹ articles and books about two particular Black African movements born in the twentieth century kept popping up on the computer screen. The more I kept reading about Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, the more intrigued I became with the complexity of the material. Adherents of both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* were speaking about themselves as “Nazarites,” yet some of the behaviours and practices that were associated with this marker of self-identification were sometimes polar opposites. I wanted to know what drew these people to the then obscure Nazirite Laws and how they interpreted them for their circumstances. And, thus, this project was born.

Like most of my contemporaries, while I had heard of Rastafari, at that time, I knew only as much as anybody else: ganja (marijuana), dreads, reggae music, Bob Marley, Haile Selassie, Ethiopia, and the colours “red, gold, and green.” Moreover, to be honest, before 2006, I had never even heard of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, or the Shembe Church. When I arrived in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa four years later, I discovered that urban and suburban Durbanites generally thought of the Shembes in similar chroma: white robes, white stone temples, leopard skins, bare feet, and (the erroneous) “Shembe plunged from the holy mountain to his death thinking he could fly.” While neither Rastafari nor *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* represented an immediate concern for the historical-critical exegesis on the Nazirites in the Bible I conducted

⁷ As noted during various participant observation sessions I conducted during my field research.

⁸ See Chapter 2 for detailed definitions of Biblical Naziritism and African Naziritism. In brief, naziritism refers to the consecrated practices of hair growth, abstinence from alcohol, and avoidance of the dead.

⁹ I address the translation issue of Nazirite / Nazarite in Chapter 2.

for my Master's work, the more I read about the people who I now refer to as African Nazarites,¹⁰ the more I became fascinated with their appropriations of the principles of naziritism in tandem with, to borrow a term from Musa W. Dube, a “nonapologetic hybridity” (2002: 53). Needless to say, I also learned that there exist profound universes well beyond the stereotypes.

The “routinization” (cf. Barrett 1997 [1977]; Callam 1980; Edmonds 2003; Firth 2004 [1996]: 182; Weber 2005 [1922]) of both movements amid the snipped patches of the colonial quilt fragmenting into a free market democracy has resulted in internal oscillations of resistance to modernity and the persistence of indigeneity.¹¹ In other words, indigenous ideals related to a pastoral sense of self-reliance often conflict with the realities of surviving in the modern economic and technological world. Within two nations so harshly tethered by history's colonial yoke, both Rastafari and the Shembe Church have peacefully withstood hegemony through hybridic religious practices that have fostered ethnically inclusive liminal environments conducive to human dignity. Let us recall that the Jamaican elite were among the last British colonies to accept emancipation, while apartheid was abolished in South Africa but two decades ago. From within their respective socioeconomic crucibles then, both Rastafari and the Shembe Church have emerged as living theologies that have interwoven elements of African, Indian, European, and biblical traditions in a spirit of peace and harmony.

Rastafari constitutes a dually diasporic movement. Beyond the scar of the slave trade that persists in Rasta selfhood, the movement—still generally scorned by the Jamaican middle-class—has been exported to numerous countries around the world, mainly because of the popularity of reggae music and dub poetry. Voices such as Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer, and Benjamin Zephaniah continue to disseminate Rasta ideologies across the globe. While I will cite a number of song lyrics throughout this work, the roots of Rastafari nevertheless dig deeper than the arts and culture industries. Affiliates of Nyabinghi,¹² which endures as the oldest living Rastafari tradition, typically chastize the interaction of their living theology with the commercial dissemination of Rasta-inspired music like popular reggae. Instead, by “Chanting Down

¹⁰ Note my distinction between Biblical Nazirites and African Nazarites. Nazirite refers to both the Ancient Israelite Tribal and Cultic models of naziritism while my intention with Nazarite is to communicate the conflation of Nazirite and Nazorean that drives Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* theology. See Chapter 2 for details.

¹¹ The concept of “resistance and persistence” will be defined in detail in Chapter 1, Section 2.

¹² translates to “death to black and white oppressors”

Babylon” with verses and drumming, Rastafari understand the Binghi¹³ as an occasion to send out positive vibrations with the capacity to destroy evil—not in the sense of violence in the terrestrial plain, but through spiritual transformation.

Other internal dichotomies abound. The ascetic Bobo Shanti clothed in pristine robes and turbans celebrate the Binghi in highly ritualized daily performances¹⁴ that barely resemble the dreadlocked reggae singers wearing tailor-made suits and dancing among scantily clad women in their music videos. New Rastafari houses and mansions¹⁵ have also emerged that combine UFO theory and “Rastaology” (McPherson 1991: 22), a term now employed to distinguish “Rastafari theology” by other scholars as “Rastology” (Alvaré 2010: 196; Hepner 1998b: 198, 217, 223; Van Dijk 1998: 179).¹⁶ The School of Vision camp, led by Dermott Fagan in the Blue Mountains, accomodates upwards of one hundred *idren*.¹⁷ Their weekly Sabbath services held in Papine, under a banner depicting flying saucers painted in the Rasta red, gold, and green, have drawn much public attention. Somewhere in the middle, rest the Twelve Tribes of Israel house located near Bob Marley’s mansion, now a museum, on Hope Road in Kingston. The ongoing commercialization of Rastafari has resulted in orthodox and secular streams (Chakravarty, forthcoming). These oscillations within the context of naziritism carry a number of intriguing implications for liminality and hybridity, especially as Rastafari communities emerge in foreign contexts as unique as—to name but a few—New York, Toronto, London, Paris, Ghana, Guyana, Hawaii, New Zealand, South Africa, Ethiopia.¹⁸ Rastafari adherence broadens every day to include more professionals and intellectuals among the less literate.

*amaNazaretha*¹⁹ accommodation for modernity has also resulted in an increasing number of members maintaining employment in the world of the “oppressor.” One can clearly see the irony of a paediatrician belonging to a church that is technically against the use of modern

¹³ worship service

¹⁴ For more on the “performance” character of religion, cf. Turner 1987; Beyer 1994.

¹⁵ akin to the religious notions of stream and denomination

¹⁶ I will also employ “Rastology” in this work.

¹⁷ a gender inclusive Rastafari Iyaric term for brethren (*bredren*) or sisters (*sistren*)

¹⁸ See Chapter 1, Section 3.4 for details.

¹⁹ The plural form *amaNazaretha* (singular *umNazaretha*), refers to adherents of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* who are readily called either Nazarenes, Nazarites, or Shembes in English. In this study, *amaNazaretha* is also employed as an adjective akin to the way “Christian” can be either a noun or an adjective in English.

medicine.²⁰ In this regard, Shembe's appeal to maintain African indigenous traditions partly accounts for the increasing popularity of the church. Regional temples accommodate local practices so long as they do not involve witchcraft or run contrary to the Laws of Moses. In practice, however, the lines between church law, *sangoma*,²¹ and modernity are not always clear. Although *amaNazaretha* temples exist in Mozambique, Swaziland, and Lesotho, the movement is primarily centred in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa), where they have historically represented an ideological threat to the imperial and apartheid governments.

In the New South Africa, *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* counts membership and sympathizers among Zulu chiefs, the incumbent African National Congress party (Gunner 2002: 1, 3), and other notable members of society including the internationally recognized actor Mike Mvelase from the television series *Generations*, and the now deceased reggae musician, Lucky Dube. As revealed during my field research, *amaNazaretha* are increasingly found in academic and professional positions as well. Alongside its growing popularity, though their communities are scattered throughout Southern Africa, *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* represents a much more geographically centralized movement than Rastafari. Yet there are fragmentations within the Shembe Church.²² The original holy city Ekuphakameni, numbering in the tens of thousands, possesses an almost negligible number of affiliates when compared to the first splinter group and current majority faction Ebuhleni, which counts millions. The laxity of the original laws pertaining to dietary restrictions and fasting alongside the retention of the major theological and ritual elements associated with the Ekuphakameni tradition help explain this attractiveness. Many of these changes can be traced to the imports and impetuses of capitalism that have infiltrated South Africa over the past century, in addition to the increasing accommodation for modernity among church members.

Anthropologically, we must recall that most *amaNazaretha* are Zulu, Swazi, and of other Nguni ethnic origins (Becken 1966: 109), while the founders of Rastafari were generally of West or Central African slave descent, the majority traced to the Ashanti peoples of modern-day Ghana and ultimately the highlands of Ethiopia and the Nile and Nubian valleys (Chevannes

²⁰ Once a member of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* returns to temple after undergoing a medical procedure or treatment, they undergo a cleansing ritual before re-admittance. See Chapter 2, Section 2.4.2 and Chapter 4, Section 1.2 for details.

²¹ spirit doctor, also known as witch doctor

²² Four of these groups are led by the members of the Shembe lineage and another branch has been initiated by Mthembeni Mpanza.

1994: 2; Warner-Lewis 1993: 110). Both movements are philosophically rooted within the horrors and injustices that European colonialism inflicted on Black Africans. This connection, however, does not constitute the entire birth narrative for either.

The historical introduction of Indian indentured labourers into the post-imperialist world economy indelibly changed the theological and cultural landscapes of both Jamaica and South Africa (Laurence 1971: 26; Mansingh and Mansingh 1985; Du Toit 1996: 644). Apart from a mutual sharing of Gandhian philosophies regarding nonviolence and self-reliance, the overall tone of the major Indian influences that helped shape Rastafari and the Shembe Church take somewhat different forms. In South Africa, the practices of nonviolent protest pioneered by Gandhi at the Phoenix Ashram, a short walk away from Isaiah Shembe's fledgling holy city Ekuphakameni, would be integral to the development of "an independent African *satyagraha*" (Heuser 2002; cf. Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2004: 187; Du Toit 1996: 658; Heuser 2003).²³ In Jamaica, however, the presence of Shiva worship in Kingston and the mountainsides point to the presence of another school of Indian spirituality at the inception of Rastafari (Bernard 2007: 94-95; Hamid 2002: xxxv, 43; Lee 2003: 97-107; Mansingh and Mansingh 1985). In more recent scholarship, however, Helène Lee has argued that Leonard Howell, often referred to as the "first Rasta," was also influenced by Gandhian philosophies related to self-reliance and nonviolence (2003: 102).

Finally, of the biblical influences, along with a general adherence to the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments (Ex 20:3-17//Deut 5:7-21), both movements independently resurrected²⁴ the

²³ Although no direct evidence of an association between Isaiah Shembe and Mohandas K. Gandhi exists, the evidence from Heuser (2002; 2003), Du Toit (1996), and Dhupelia-Mesthrie (2004) suggest that barring direct contact, while highly unlikely, the climate of cultural exchange that permeated the environs of KwaMashu and Inanda during the early-twentieth century meant that both figures were, at the very least, clearly aware of each other's missions and ideas. On the other hand, their individual associations with John Dube (a Zulu Christian leader who had also established a community near Gandhi's Phoenix Ashram and Isaiah Shembe's Ekuphakameni) are well attested (Dube 1936; Heuser 2003: 78-79; Hughes 2007). My field research in KwaZulu-Natal revealed additional information on the subject which, although technically hearsay, remains worth stating for the record. On April 21, 2011, during an interview with Lulu Dube, the last surviving daughter of John Dube, she discussed how Isaiah Shembe, Mohandas Gandhi, and her father used to meet at her house quite regularly to exchange and discuss spiritual, political, and intellectual ideas. In fact, she mentioned that she remembers once possessing a photo of the three of them together, but it was borrowed by someone claiming to be a researcher for a museum several years ago and never returned. Unfortunately, Dube could not provide further details regarding this passerby. See also the footage dated April 14, 2010 of Mwelela Cele (Senior Librarian, Killie Campbell Collections, Library of the University of KwaZulu-Natal) interviewing Lulu Dube on the Ulwazi website (12:48-15:30, 21:58-22:54), http://wiki.ulwazi.org/index.php5?title=Lulu_Dube_-_Memories_from_Inanda_Durban, accessed February 20, 2013.

²⁴ My research reveals no direct historical connections between the founders of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari. Before the twentieth century, naziritic practice had globally sunk into widespread obscurity for a period of at least 1500 years (Rothkoff 2007: 46-47).

Laws of the Nazirite (Numbers 6:1-8) as a hermeneutic for practices of resistance and persistence, understand themselves as a consecrated people akin to the Israelites, and hallow a contemporary Black Messiah as the living spirit of Christ for their era (Haile Selassie I for Rastafari, Shembe for *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*). Based on the literary evidence and the findings from my field research, this dissertation argues that both *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari perpetuate a conflation between the “Nazirite” from the Old Testament and the “Nazorean” of Matthew 2:23 through the hailing of a modern saviour.²⁵ Within this theological framework, both Rastafari and the Shembe Church have provided renewed life to the long defunct Ancient Judaic purification rites of the Nazirite, but have also adapted them in the context of messianism for the benefit of Africanness and the postcolonial concerns of indigeneity. Thus, through the persistence of indigeneity, the influence of Indian ideals of peaceful resistance, and the appropriation of various biblical themes in addition to various artefacts and technologies belonging to modernity, both Black African movements²⁶ have successfully empowered the dispossessed by creating liminal communities wherein expressions of self-reliance flourish outside the auspices of a subjugating elite; a hermeneutic of naziritism unifies the discernable hybridic roots.

²⁵ See Chapter 2 for details.

²⁶ Not all adherents of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* are necessarily Black with regard to ethnicity. For the purposes of this work, Black African should be understood in reference to a reverence of Black people and the theme of Africa as the Promised Land / Motherland.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL CONCERNS, METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

This work represents the first on African Naziritism.²⁷ As such, obtaining pertinent answers to my research questions required an innovative interaction of international scholarly approaches. Herein lie the cumulative findings of a comparative religious ethnography grounded in an interdisciplinary conceptual framework that employs a) living hermeneutics and exegesis, b) literature review, and c) thematic analysis of qualitative anthropological field research. From both a theoretical and ethical standpoint, the ideal of self-reliance enmeshed in both *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari, when weighed against the participation of adherents in the infrastructures of modernity, necessitates the exposition of crucial political and economic factors that have historically shaped religious ethnography during the colonial era and continue to flitter as so much neocolonial chad. The would-be confetti are as blatant as the plastic two litre Coca-Cola bottles beating the animal skins of the Zulu drums,²⁸ or the “Rent a Rasta” beach boys who gratify female tourists vacationing in Jamaica.²⁹ The very terrain implicated in this study is fraught with neocolonial tension.

To address the dilemma of where comparative religious ethnography can be useful today, especially in relation to Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, Section 1.1 first presents some of the overarching problems related to the endeavour and offers a few suggestions regarding ways to overcome the challenges. From there, Section 1.2 discusses the specific textual approach that this study employs as its primary comparative framework and the reasons for which structuralism and phenomenology are generally avoided. Next, Section 1.3 provides a short summary of the development of “syncretism” as a referent in religious studies. By referencing authors such as Kurt Rudolph (2004), Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart (1994), Horace Campbell (1985), Jean and John Comaroff (1992), Jim Kiernan (1994), Brigit Meyer (1994), André Droogers (1989), and Homi K. Bhabha (1994), this section reviews the argumentation that has largely demonstrated how syncretism functions as a tacit angle from which to analyse the question of religious ethnography in relation to postcolonial African theological and cultural traditions. Moreover, the usages of syncretism among scholars have been largely harmful to understanding how new religions and spiritual movements actually function, especially in the context of the

²⁷ African Naziritism will be defined extensively in Chapter 2.

²⁸ Reminiscent of the neocolonial themes presented around the motif of the glass Coca-Cola bottle that fell from the sky in *The Gods Must be Crazy*, Dir. Jamie Uys. Ster Kinekor, 1980. Film.

²⁹ *Rent a Rasta*, Dir. Michael Seyfert. Passion River, 2007. Film.

Two-Thirds world. After a short overview of the implications of syncretism, I then argue in favour of the more neutral term “hybridity” to facilitate the discussion of “liminal” phenomena associated with contemporary African religious movements. An examination of comparative religion proceeds. After re-exposing a number of central hegemonic dimensions of the field that occurred parallelly with religious studies and theology at large, I will argue in favour of “organic” methodological approaches in league with “self-reflexive” anthropology that demand practical implications for theoretical work. With this conceptual background in place, I present “living hermeneutics and exegesis” as a methodological approach that readily lends itself to the revelation of the oscillations between “resistance to modernity and the persistence of indigeneity” present in the theological and cultural universes in parts of Africa and the African Diaspora today.

The next section provides a short literature review of both the primary texts and pivotal academic texts pertaining to *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari, with particular concern for this study. Finally, in tandem with my methodology and literature review, I discuss the triangulated qualitative anthropological field research methodology (open participant observation, semistructured interviews, informal focus groups) that I specifically developed and employed during my field work as connected to the larger theoretical concerns of this study. A short conclusion ends this introduction. In it, I summarize the main argumentative thread of this chapter and reiterate the ethical justifications and potential benefits for the study.

1. Comparative Religious Ethnography: Theoretical and Methodological Concerns

Because this study involves research on both an African and a Caribbean “religious” group, without belabouring the etymological root and precise meaning of “religion,” (cf. Beneviste 1935; Grondin 2009: 68; Turner 2007: 153), suffice it to state that an *a priori* idea of “God,” especially in its Western Christian contexts, remains problematic when broaching the rituals of communities who knew of no such notion prior to contact with the West. In this regard, some authors are strongly critical of the impact of the concept of religion in the study of African and Caribbean spirituality and theology (Adogame 2007; Draper 2003; Gunner 1988; 2004; West 2000; Yorke 2000; cf. Alles 2008).

Regarding the reverence of ancestors in precolonial Africa, for instance, the assumption of an omnipresent, omnipotent Christian God in religious studies often trivialized the importance

of ancestral spirits, while the further missiological use of African words that denoted deities or the spirits of deceased ancestors to translate for demonic figures in the Bible are further evidence of the potential dangers with this concept “religion” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 73; Meyer 1994; Togarasei 2012). In particular, as will be detailed in Chapter 2, Section 2.4, in both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, relationships with the ancestors and varying attitudes regarding the dead remain central to the hermeneutics of each. Furthermore, as Gustavo Benavides writes, “despite its pre-Christian Latin source, *religio*, ‘religion’ is a Western, indeed a Christian, invention, and that therefore ‘religion’ cannot be found beyond the confines of Christendom” (2008: 244). As such, many indigenous practices that did not resemble post-Reformation Christianity were labelled “superstition” or “cults” by Western scholars (Beyer 2003). The signifier maintains a similar position in Africa where religious studies scholar Ezra Chitando has articulated that “religion permeates all aspects of African life, including morality, economics, and politics, among others” and that “religion is not a disembodied phenomenon” (2008: 110; cf. Adogame 2007: 528). Moreover, the intrinsic orality of spirituality in Africa makes it generally incompatible with the doctrinal assumptions of “religion” (Draper 2003: 2; Gunner 1988; 2004; West 2000: 45; Yorke 2000: 137-138). As the well reknowned sociologist of religion Peter Beyer has so critically assessed, the impositions of religious studies have indeed been global (2006; 2007: 174-175). But during the last decades, many efforts have been made to go beyond this way of framing the issues. If scholars still use the concepts of religion and religious studies, they have reconsidered the fundamental categories implied by the modern and classic uses of the concept.

In order to discuss the main intersection of theoretical concerns related to this study, the following section is divided into three parts: 1.1) Comparative Approaches to Religious Ethnography; 1.2 Comparing a Common Biblical Practice within Two Religious Groups; 1.3) Syncretism, Hybridity, and Liminality. While the theory provided in these sections will be far from exhaustive, I believe they represent the most significant points of consideration in relation to this project.

1.1 Comparative Approaches to Religious Ethnography

One problem many comparative studies have faced when it comes to the study of religion is the fundamental distinction between the sacred and the profane, as well as the notion of Church

(Durkheim 1912: 65). If the distinction has been criticized during the last decades by scholars (cf. Stausberg 2008: 19), the implicit hegemony embedded in the *a priori* cross-section of the sacred and the profane, God, and “the Church” has largely carried through religious studies scholarship of the twentieth century. This model, as will be discussed in Section 1.3 of this chapter, is especially influential in the field of “syncretism” during the early-twentieth century, the era during which Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* were born and first studied by ethnographers. In short, while the ethnographic endeavour may indeed discover the “sacred and profane,” a church, or even God in the theologies and cultures of non-Europeans—especially in relation to some parts of the naziritic consecration hermeneutics of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* detailed in the following chapter, the sacred and profane cannot be taken as given points of reference. Where they occur, the very meanings, forms, and manifestations of these words and concepts may have indeed changed in the imaginative universe of “the Other;” and this circumstance is indeed the case for Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

With regard to comparative studies, social scientists in the field of religious studies today have acknowledged the pervasiveness of Christian-influenced approaches that have historically dominated and shaped the field to the point where many of its results have come to be understood as a kind of “autopoeticism,” or internal to itself, leaving little room for practices outside a European Christian sensibility in nations still governed by those traditions (Beaman 2007; Beyer 2006; 2007; Simpson 2007: 134; Hervieu-Léger 1993: 16). The example of polygamy from sociologist of religion Lori Beaman (2007) is especially relevant as polygyny is practiced by many *amaNazaretha* and, more informally, as polyamory by some Rastafari. In fact, the weight of Beaman’s argument implores the reader to reconsider how much of what the West has collectively inherited from its Protestant and Catholic roots—good / bad; right / wrong; or even common sense—is a function of the interplay between theology and law: “Who is allowed a defining voice and how loud is that voice permitted to be?” (2007: 391).

As problematic as the word “religion” remains, echoing religious studies scholar Gregory Alles, there nevertheless remains much practical use for the word (2008: 313). Even if adherents of Rastafari, for example, aware of the hegemony of “religion,” balk at the idea of belonging to one, if we look at global considerations in the fields of diversity management and reasonable accommodation, the rather reductivist term still supports a number of practical applications in the pursuit of harmonious living (Chakravarty, forthcoming). Chitando has also argued that the

economic inequities of globalization and neocolonialism have created a circumstance in which Western scholars are freer to intellectualize, but religious studies scholars in the Two-Thirds world are generally confined to developing practical applications for their work (2008: 121). Chitando's stance is especially relevant with relation to the study of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. As I observed during my field research, the few adherents of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* who are also scholars of the religions to which they belong, whether in South Africa or Jamaica, typically cope with economic realities that are far inferior to scholars working at universities in the West; yet they are largely subject to maintaining the same academic "standards" (cf. Chitando 2008). This global dynamic has created a situation in the study of religion whereby Western scholars are able to study foreign "religions," but Two-Thirds world scholars are typically confined to studying "religions" that exist in their own lands since ethnography largely remains in the domain of Western researchers with generally more access to the funding required for travel and field work abroad (Alles 2008: 3). Since I, as a westerner, am somehow complicit in these phenomena, I deemed it essential to be self-critical in this manner before embarking upon the study. I undertook this same process of self-criticism with regard to religious studies scholar Patrice Brodeur's allusion regarding the implicit hegemony of writing about the Other using the English language (2008: 76-79) as well as historian Dipesh Chakrabarty's notion of "asymmetric ignorance" (2000: 28). As will be seen throughout the thesis, however, sometimes these "deficiencies" also carry potential for obtaining further knowledge in the context of ethnography. The whole of these realities represent a major ethical challenge to conducting religious ethnography today; but as we shall see, the Two-Thirds world emphasis on indigeneity, reading with non-academic voices, and practical applications for qualitative findings may indeed be approaches worth emulating in "first-world" academia.

1.2 Comparing a Common Biblical Practice within Two Religious Groups

As its starting point, this dissertation proceeds with a comparison of two religious groups based on a set of practices from the Bible, the Laws of the Nazirite (Num 6:1-8) from the Old Testament, and its associated hermeneutics in conjunction with the New Testament "Nazorean" of Matthew 2:23. For this reason, it is important to review the idea of comparison and a number of associated theories. With its myriad impositions in league with the colonial legacy of religious studies, much comparative religion has been dismissed as theological foundationalism,

universalism, intellectual imperialism, and anti-contextualism in postcolonial, postmodern, and poststructuralist scholarship of the late-twentieth century (Doniger 2000: 72; Locklin and Nicholson 1975: 97; cf. Patton and Ray 2000). But far from the comparative religion of the past that claimed to be “a branch of empirical science which aims at describing in formulae of the highest generality attainable the historical tendencies of the human mind considered in its religious aspect” (Marett 1908: 60), today’s “‘new comparative religion’ grows out of cultural specificity,” assumes no “shared ontology across the world’s religious traditions,” “grows organically out of a careful respect for particular contexts,” and seeks to “illuminate truths [...] that would have been impossible through the exclusive contemplation of either of them alone” (Patton and Ray 2000: 7, 9, 18). In this regard, note that two “postcolonial” religious movements form the basis of this ethnography, hence the centrality of the Bible, yet as we shall see, although the same reverence for the Laws of the Nazirite and the Nazorean of Matthew 2:23 exist in both groups, their hermeneutics differ due to cultural and historical specificity. It is thus through an organic approach to processing and analyzing the data that we can illuminate truths about both specifically and the manifestations of naziritism embodied by each.

Despite the problems of studying religions—and comparing them, my approach includes the added simplicity of being grounded in a textually-based concept, the Laws of the Nazirite (Num 6:1-8), that is openly shared by both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* as a central tenet in spiritual identity construction. In Section 4 of this chapter, I discuss the techniques I employed during my field research to help maintain an *a posteriori* stance on issues around naziritism despite the fact that I had read so much about the centrality of the Nazirite Laws for both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* (e.g. Barnett 2005; Brown 1995: 77; Charet 2008: 129; Chevannes 1989a: 11; 1990: 68; 1994: 158; Hexham and Oosthuizen 1996: 21; Johnson 2008: 397; Owens 1983: 156-157; Price 2003: 10; Smith, Augier, and Nettleford 1960: 26; Taylor 2001: 73; Van De Berg 1998: 173). While my field research overwhelmingly confirmed these findings, I remain somewhat surprised that the exegetical work lay heretofore largely untouched.

In fact, the lack of exegesis around naziritism actually astounded me. Allow me to reiterate that this work represents the first on “African Naziritism.” Beyond this innovation, this study marks the initial effort to systematically compare Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* on any basis, not to mention one so central to the hermeneutics of each religious movement, namely

the Laws of the Nazirite (Num 6:1-8). Indeed, beyond passing, sometimes inaccurate,³⁰ references to the Nazirite Laws, no scholar had actually engaged the pertinent passages with in-depth historical-critical exegesis as weighed against the realities of the religious groups in question. Yet, by narrowing in on the naziritic elements, it quickly became clear that much more was at play, i.e. the idea of “living hermeneutics and exegesis” that will be detailed in Section 2 of this chapter.

Furthermore, although this study employs the Laws of the Nazirite (Num 6:1-8) as its exegetical point of origin, with regard to Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, during the field research, it became increasingly clear that there lies, for the adherents, a conflation between the Nazirite of the Old Testament and the concept of the “Nazorean” in Matthew 2:23 of the New Testament (cf. Chakravarty 2009b; Chepey 2005) that signals a key point for their respective hermeneutics. The field work consisted of the careful observation of these practices in tandem with the pertinent passages that were then analyzed and systematized based on the principle characteristics of the hermeneutics developed by both religious groups. Since naziritism serves as a nexus for dialogue with both groups, it endures as a logical point of entry for this comparative study. In fact, the naziritism embodied by both groups, with its emphasis on the “organic” (Patton and Ray 2007: 7) and the “living”—as detailed in Section 2 of this chapter—in league with the “Nazorean” conflation, provides the methodological framework for Chapter 2, Section 2 of this work—the space specifically devoted to answering my research foci regarding the manifestations of naziritism found in both groups. Needless to say, if I had found evidence to the contrary, that is what I would have written about.

This work has thus pinpointed a biblical set of practices shared by two historically disconnected movements as a common identifier. While not a prerequisite for comparative religion, the biblical passages in question serve as a common point of entry into both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and an opportunity to study the religions from an insider’s point of reference; but from there, I discovered greater complexities related to interpretation and the concepts of “hybridity” and “liminality,” as will be discussed below. My organic approach to comparative religion has thus bloomed from an interaction of the historical-critical precepts of

³⁰ With regard to Rastafari, note a) Pretorius’ “Nazarene Vow” (2006: 1015; cf. Chapter 2, Section 2) and b) Chevannes’ oversight wherein Rastafari allegedly cultivate “head and facial hair according to the Nazirite vow as set out in the Book of Leviticus” (1990: 68). With regard to *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, cf. the analysis of Becken’s translation, edited by Heuser and Hexham (Shembe and Shembe 2005 [1936]) in Chapter 2, Section 2.1.2.

naziritism (cf. Chakravarty 2009b; Chepey 2005), alongside the contemporary concerns of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* in both academic and non-academic discourses, as well as the respective hermeneutics embodied therein.

Beyond the biblical passages, since the study involved two religious groups from the Two-Thirds world, it was also necessary to verify other comparative approaches in the social sciences and humanities. Notably, the field of anthropology envisions the production of comparative analysis pertaining to human societies by placing particular elements into perspective (cf. Armer and Grimshaw 1973). According to the precepts of cultural anthropology, we can, through comparison, interpret and explain certain social and religious phenomena. The term “comparison” itself leaves little mystery, and indicates the analysis of differences and similarities between certain elements present in given societies and cultures (Bucher 1991: 167-8). But the choice of which elements to compare, along with the criteria and goals of comparison, in addition to the very methods utilized, have sometimes been quite controversial. These different aspects vary depending on the theory or discipline within the social sciences and humanities.

From the outset, it ought to be iterated that this dissertation does not proceed from a structural-comparativist approach (cf. Levi-Strauss 1964-1971). For this study, the comparative research investigates the potential kinship, similarities, and common traits between two religious groups whose origins are located at a great geographical distance from each other. The dissertation also sought to discover any historical connections—direct or indirect—between the two groups. Religious studies scholar Jacques Waardenburg’s affirmation on the subject of the results from significant comparative projects is strong:

Au total, la recherche comparée a pu montrer qu’il n’existe quasiment aucun fait ou phénomène religieux propre à une seule religion. Lorsque la recherche entreprend d’étudier des phénomènes précis, comme le fit J. G. Frazer à propos de la souffrance, de la mort et de la résurrection d’une divinité, très vite il s’avéra que ceux-ci possédaient des précédents historiques et se retrouvaient dans de nombreuses religions sans lien historique apparent. (1993: 79-80)

Should the naziritism located at the heart of both movements be approached in this manner? In part, yes, since the dissertation sets out to ascertain the functions of naziritism in each group, which will be explained in great detail in Chapter 2.

At a more descriptive level, this dissertation presents a typology of naziritism that represents a first degree of comparison. Waardenburg (1993) has offered three methods of

comparison that are illuminating in this regard. External comparison delineates the similarities and differences between the data, classifies them based on common visible characteristics, and then regroups the information into larger categories. Next, analytical comparison examines the different meanings of this data. Third, and most relevant for this dissertation, we can proceed with a comparison of the subjective relationships between the adherents of a religious group and given phenomena, and between the subjective significations attributed to the phenomena itself.

Naziritism as juxtaposed against the universes of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* constitutes an ideal object for the latter comparative approach. First, the extensive field research that spanned several months enabled me to avoid undertaking an abstract comparative project, especially since the dissertation elaborates the social and cultural contexts of the practices associated with naziritism in great detail, while focusing on its interpretive meanings as well as its social and cultural functions. Second, Waardenburg has remarked: “*l’application d’une méthode comparative n’est pertinente que s’il existe une similitude entre les phénomènes comparés et leurs contextes socio-culturels*” (1993: 86). In the case of this study, the two groups involved exhibit analogous lifestyles and cultural points of reference.

A final pertinent question: is this dissertation a phenomenological undertaking? As with religious studies scholar Walter Capps, inasmuch as phenomena are involved, there is implied in the very nature of the study a “concentration on religion’s manifest features – the visible, empirical, and self-evident factors” (1995: 110), in this case, with particular attention to the aspects of naziritism. But unlike phenomenology, in this study, these features are not necessarily taken “as the most effective way of coming to terms with the the subject” (Capps 1995: 110). Even if the study borrows from the major categories of phenomenology to develop and distinguish the various aspects constituting the practices of naziritism (rituals, ethics, doctrines), it takes into account the contemporary criticisms of classical phenomenology offered by researchers over the last decades regarding the nature of its generalizations (Allen 1987: 272-285; Waardenburg 1993: 92). With regard to this study, the observation and analysis of religious phenomena could only be taken as a starting point. The research herein is thus highly descriptive and empirical; it attempts to rigorously place the practices of naziritism in their respective social and cultural contexts, and then analyze them in detail (cf. Platoet 1983). The manner in which to understand the similarities between the two societies will primarily stand on the concepts of “living hermeneutics” (Bakhtin 1981), the “hybridic” (Bhabha 1994; Kenzo 2004; Voss Roberts

2010) character of the two movements, and “structural liminality” (Turner 1969) and the “liminoid” process (Turner 1975) as they apply to accounting for new cultural phenomena. All of these concepts will be developed in the following sections of this chapter.

These comparative methodological parameters having been established, the fundamental objective of the dissertation is much more modest. The study is not a meta-analysis of two social and religious groups, but rather a comparison of the manner in which the concepts around naziritism have been interpreted by the members of these communities. Among the principle concerns of religious studies, Moojan Momen (1999) has mentioned “the central experience of religion,” “the conceptual aspect of religion,” and “the social effect of religion.” The study of naziritism as a structuring set of practices largely addresses the social effect: “Most important in assessing the role of religion in a society is the fact that once a religion has become established at the core of a society, it becomes the basis for the ethos of the society and its social and moral values” (Momen 1999: 6-7). In my opinion, the concepts around naziritism could largely help to define Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* as religious movements unto themselves. To this end, in Chapter 2, Section 2, the passages of Numbers 6:1-8 have been divided into four sections: a) consecration (Num 6:1-2, 8 in conjunction with Mt 2:23); b) consecrated hair and consecrated heads (Num 6:5, 7b); c) regarding alcohol and intoxicants (Num 6:3-4); d) regarding the dead (Num 6:6-7). Broaching this basic framework, however, proved to require an interdisciplinary approach that continued to weigh the voices of diverse scholars belonging to differing fields within the Arts and Humanities.

1.3 Syncretism, Hybridity, and Liminality

One of the major approaches to comparative religion during the era that Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* came into existence was “syncretism,” and not surprisingly, the notion runs parallel to the larger dynamics of power and play embedded in the historicity of religious studies. The oldest known use of “syncretism,” the Greek *synkretismos* found in Plutarch’s *De fratero amore*,³¹ signifies the alliances of various Cretan tribes who despite quarrels between themselves would occasionally band together to war against a powerful common enemy. In its earliest use, the notion of syncretism thus projected an “amphictyonic” phobia within larger poles of opposition (Pye 2004: 59; Rudolph 2004: 68-69). The next cited use of syncretism occurs in a

³¹ “On Brotherly Love,” *Moralia* § 19 = 490b. Teubner-Edition Leipzig 1972, 2, 249.

1519 letter to Melanchton written by Erasmus. The Catholic priest and Dutch Renaissance humanist wrote to this father of Lutheranism in a spirit of putting aside their theological differences and coming together in defence of the sciences (Rudolph 2004: 69). Though in a similar framework as Plutarch, with Erasmus' use of syncretism, the platform shifted from the war fields of the Cretans to the hallways of the academy.

Where religious studies has run into particular trouble with the use of syncretism, however, is the wide use of the term from the seventeenth century onward that regarded such processes of synthesis as somehow illegitimate when compared against the particular denomination of Christianity in question (Rudolph 2004: 69-70; Shaw and Stewart 1994: 4). The polemic use of syncretism by Western scholars who studied Africans over the next centuries, particularly during the colonial era, largely contributed to demonizing indigenous spiritual practices against a "normative" Christian worldview, thus leaving traces of the "sacred" and "profane" with particular denominational sensibilities (Campbell 1985: 48-49; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 235-264; Kiernan 1994; Meyer 1994).

Since the mid-twentieth century work of Hendrik Kraemer who recognized the relative universality of syncretism (1956), Christianity also began to be more commonly regarded as "syncretic" in academic discourse (Kamstra 1970: 23; Pannenberg 1970: 85-88).³² We cannot, however, forget the historical bias of viewing these Western-oriented Christian "syncretisms" as somehow "objective," versus the pervading colonial and neocolonial "subjective" uses of syncretism to describe perceived perversions of a "normative" religious framework. In this regard, cultural anthropologist André Droogers has argued that the recognition of universal plurality in religious identity construction and institutionalization has rendered the distinction between "objective" and "subjective" syncretism otiose (1989: 8). Or, put another way, as postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha has written: "hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable" (1994: 37). As syncretism assumes conflict in the process of encounter, it cannot adequately account for the openness to multiple religious belonging embedded in African and other indigenous approaches to spirituality.

³² We need only think of two examples: the initial fusion of evolved Judaic notions of holiness and Greco-Roman philosophy that inspired Early Christianity and the writings of the New Testament (Gunkel 1903: 420; Radhakrishnan 1933: 62) and the development of Christianity in Northern Europe during the Middle Ages as the tribal kingdoms met the Roman Army and its missionaries, thus blending Northern European "paganism" and papal ideology (Carver 2003). The epic poem *Beowulf* stands as the quintessential testament of the latter (Bjork and Niles 1997; Chakravarty 2006).

In reaction to the host of problems associated with the term “syncretism,” postcolonial approaches have advocated the concept of “hybridity” to describe movements that exhibit amalgamations of practices, behaviours, and thought borrowed from multiple discernable points of origin, especially as they relate to the colonial and postcolonial encounter (Bhabha 1994; Kenzo 2004; Voss Roberts 2010). Although the Latin root of the word, *hybrida* (a variant of *ibrida*), is laden with biological meaning (mongrel, or offspring of a tame sow and wild boar), make no mistake that its use in conjunction with “religious” today has absolved it of these genetic *sang-mélé* implications. To pursue religious studies today, we must be prepared to admit that we are often referring to ways of existence that escape the logic of previous scientific frameworks.

Permit the elaboration of a metaphor to further the point that “religious hybridity” is a different type of hybridity whose interweavings of texts and traditions occurs in the realm of the imagination rather than at a genetic level. Let us ponder the notion of a chimera, a mythological creature with a lion’s head, goat’s body, and serpent’s tail. Though the hybridic concept may or may not kindle fear, there certainly emerges a “newness” akin to Bhabha’s definition of *in media res*: “a newness that is not part of the ‘progressivist’ division between past and present, or the archaic and the modern; nor is it a ‘newness’ that can be contained in the mimesis of ‘original and copy’” (1994: 227). Drawing along, if we were to usefully describe the significance of another hybridic mythological notion, a gryphon, I would argue that as scholars we would be ill-advised to pursue a discourse of “lionized-eagle” or “eagled-lion” akin to the historical debates among syncretic scholars that have fluctuated from “Africanized Christianity” to “Christianized Africanism.”³³ Resolving this debate in either direction (if even possible), while not only intellectually jejune, actually fails to provide an accurate model of how the new entity functions and grossly undermines its significance. For the somewhat more complex notion of the tripartite chimera, assessing the degree to which it is lion, goat, or serpent, while arguably a worthy pursuit for genetic sciences if such a creature were to exist, smacks absurd compared to the opportunity to describe what the hybrid form is actually doing in the imagination of its believer and the community in which the adherent lives.

Beyond this logical leap that takes us away from the strictest of etymological origins, with religious hybridity’s removal of certain assumptions of normativity including the Church,

³³ See Hexham 1997 and Hock 2003, for example.

God, the sacred / profane, it foremost avoids the risk of falling into Sundkler's understanding of the blending of traditions as an *a priori* slipping "back to heathenism" (1961: 297). Moreover, as Bhabha asserts, "the effect of colonial power is seen as the *production* of hybridization [...]. Hybridity reverses the formal process of disavowal so that the violent dislocation of the act of colonization becomes the conditionality of colonial discourse" (1994: 112-114). In this manner, hybridity also encourages self-reflexivity on the part of the ethnographer within the postcolonial landscape as another "product" of postcolonialism. Being a product, however, does not necessarily mean being a victim. Indeed, different people, again and again, from Muslims to Raëlians, understand themselves as being somehow tied to biblical traditions without being "Christian" in the Western or European senses of the word.

Finally, through the sheer fact that of all manifestations of religion on Earth, we are still discussing one species, this "emblematic hybridity"³⁴ we are concerned with is far removed from the outdated colonial notions of "biological hybridity" and "syncretism" that have equated ethnic and religious "impurities." I argue that a certain symbolic magic in the imaginative universe of a "communitas" (Turner 1969: 96) surpasses the bounds of quantitative observation. Magic here should be understood in the sense of ethnographer and folklorist Arnold Van Gennep, who associated the word with ceremonies, rites, and worship, or the "*technique*" of religion (1909: 17-18). As opposed to traditional Western epistemology that has regarded magic as the occult manipulation of spirit or nature, or the signposts of "primitive" cultures, recent scholarship has reclaimed the word "as a concept describing religious practices and sciences that involve internally consistent, tightly logical relationships between a wide variety of physical and metaphysical principles of power" (Patton and Ray 2000: 18). Needless to say, literally believing in the miracles of Jesus of Nazareth (e.g. walking on water, raising the dead, and rising from the dead) would also amount to "superstition" in the minds of many rational people today; hence, a "kenotic" approach to hybridity—or one that renounces, at least in part, the divine nature of Jesus Christ alone among humanity—emerges as essential (Ruparell 2003: 246). The notion is especially relevant for the study of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* who both represent biblically oriented religious groups for whom the figure of Jesus Christ is generally tertiary, or perhaps secondary, at best. As the cultural anthropologist Victor Witter Turner has acknowledged, "there are no 'simpler' peoples, only some peoples with simpler technologies

³⁴ My term. Emblematic, from the Latin, *emblema*, "raised ornament."

than our own” (1969: 3); in this regard we can position the European missionary theologies associated with the Bible as a part of that technological predjudice.

Thus, rather than evaluate each spiritual tradition on a sliding scale of pure to impure, a contemporary qualitative method of analyzing cross-cultural theologies would acknowledge various discernable origins as normative—points of reference in a never-ending process of hybridization—and then discuss how they work in tandem. Religious hybridity moreover, unlike syncretism, readily bends to the idea of more than two poles in the processes of symbolic negotiation. In the cases of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, we are indeed discussing hybridic movements that embody at least four recognizable religious influences at their inception (African, Indian, Judaic, Christian), rendering the Africanization / Christianization dialectic superfluous anyhow.

Instead of risking the perpetuation of any antiquated binaries or axioms of normativity that could be associated with the word “syncretism,” this study borrows from notions on “religious hybridity” to account for the networks of theological and cultural “bindings” of peoples, ideas, and symbols defined by self-proclaimed adherence. With precedent, this study then reserves “syncretism” to refer precisely to the power dynamic involved in the colonial and neocolonial study of groups exhibiting genetic, linguistic, or cultural “métissage” or “creolization” from the perspective of any one, usually nationalistic, religious tradition (Benoist 1996; Meyer 1994: 45). Complementary to Bhabha’s definition of hybridity as “a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that the other ‘denied’ knowledge enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of authority” (1994: 114), theologian Mabiala Justin-Robert Kenzo has illuminated the concept of “constructed hybridity” in the context of African theologies and cultures that “skillfully and creatively construct their identity borrowing insights from resources that are both endogenous and exogenous to Africa and their own tribal resources” (2004: 244).

I argue that the status of “structural liminality” as it applies to the development of *communitas* (Turner 1969: 166-167), in addition to African approaches to exegesis, have facilitated occurrences of religious hybridity in both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. While historian Caroline Walker Bynum has notably criticized Turner’s theories as “based implicitly on the Christianity of a particular class, gender, and historical period” (1984: 105), I argue that Turner’s notion of the “liminoid” process (1975: 14-17) remains a useful entryway towards

understanding the inception and routinization of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* if the movements are understood as metaphorical neophytes unto themselves, reaching their thresholds on the margins of hegemonic empire. The word liminal itself derives from the Latin *limen*, “threshold” or “cross-piece.”

No mention of liminality can occur, however, without reference to the early-twentieth century work of Van Gennep, *Les Rites de Passage* (1909). Van Gennep based his “*schéma*” of the liminal process on the latest scholarly literature pertaining to the customs and rituals of preliterate societies living within the colonies of his era (1909: i, 14). Though somewhat hampered by a deference to the then prevailing model of the sacred and the profane, Van Gennep ascertained that every ritual or ceremony, whether related to birth, death, scarification, hospitality, etc., followed three stages: “*préliminaires (séparation), liminaires (marge) et postliminaires (agrégation)*” (1909: 14). Beyond this well embossed formula regarding ritual liminality, Van Gennep’s identification of the Sabians as “*un amalgame de mazdéisme, de judaïsme, de christianisme, d’islam, etc.*” and the statement “*le christianisme a tant fait d’emprunts aux mystères égyptiens, syriens, asiatiques et grecs qu’il est malaisé de comprendre l’un sans tenir compte des autres*” nod at the normativity of hybridity in cross-cultural encounter (1909: 114, 126). The scholar pursues little else on the topic of hybridity except to note the “*caractère hybride*” of Sabian magicians who are not subjected to “*des rites d’union à un regroupement humain déterminé*” during their initiations (1909: 152), but the exact meaning here is unclear. From here, Turner expanded the liminal *schéma* as a model to account for the appearance of new cultural phenomena (1969: 166-167; 1975: 14). I have in turn borrowed this approach to help account for the inception and routinization of both movements as new religious groups.

As only a few scholars explicitly consulted Van Gennep’s work prior to Turner (cf. Kimball 1960: xi-xiii), postcolonial scholarship has only in more recent years directly addressed the relationship between religious hybridity and liminality in social identity construction. On this point, two sources merit lengthy citation. The first is Bhabha who describes liminality as a matrix of interstices that create the “in-between.” Here, Bhabha describes how hybridity emerges in that “in-between:”

Hybrid hyphenations emphasize the incommensurable elements – the stubborn chunks – as the basis of cultural identifications. What is at issue is the performative nature of differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually,

contingently, ‘opening out’, remaking boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference – be it class, gender or race. Such assignations of social differences – where difference is neither One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between* – find their agency in a form of the ‘future’ where the past is not originary, where the present is not simply transitory. It is, if I may stretch a point, an interstitial future, that emerges *in-between* the claims of the past and the needs of the present. (1994: 219)

Along these lines, religious studies scholar Tinu Ruparell is also quite explicit, especially regarding the potential for creativity and invention within the position of liminality:

What I propose is that in the face of silence or hostility, when the only options seem to be reversion to monologue or self-imposed silence, one other possibility is for the willing participants of dialogue to consciously hybridize their religious positions or even themselves. Through the use of interstitial theology one can consciously and carefully seek to hybridize one’s own religious commitments, practices, and beliefs with those of the reluctant other. In so doing one creates a novel religious location liminal to oneself and the other as well as redescribing the other’s and one’s own positions in order to contribute new options in the service of religious conversation. (2003: 244)

With these excerpts from Bhabha and Ruparell, “the stubborn chunks” that remain and the internal logic of those pieces, we can also begin to see how the interaction of religious hybridity and liminality will help account for the oscillations of resistance to modernity and the persistence of indigeneity present in Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

1.4 Conclusion to Comparative Religious Ethnography

This research addresses the albeit large problems associated with comparative religious ethnography by incorporating pertinent approaches developed by noted scholars from the Two-Thirds world, particularly in the field of African and African Diaspora theology, in tandem with germane Western approaches and—not to mention—the actual subject matter itself, i.e. Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* as religious movements. In fact, inasmuch as the position of privilege I have been granted to conduct this study, I could only go forward from a non-denominational perspective in the spirit of bringing religious and academic voices from the Two-Thirds world into further dialogue with the West.³⁵ As we shall see, they have much wisdom to offer, especially if we refrain from exoticism and elitism. We can accomplish this imperative by entering as sincerely and sympathetically as possible into the universes of our subjects. As

³⁵ In addition, being affiliated with a Western university facilitated the location of a great number of obscure documents thanks especially to the Interlibrary Loans service (<http://www.bib.umontreal.ca/PB/>, accessed January 22, 2013), even if obtaining of a few rare sources sometimes required some tenacity on my part.

mentioned, the very endeavour of religious studies, especially as rooted in its colonial and neocolonial contexts, possesses the capacity to compromise the nature of what is actually being studied: a case of the Heisenberg uncertainty principle at the macro-level. Ethnography today must acknowledge that the act of science changes all gazers; we are both studying and being studied. But not all gazing necessarily results in negative consequences; indeed, the best case scenarios promote mutual enrichment and enlightenment.

2. Living Hermeneutics and Exegesis: Oscillations of Resistance and Persistence

With these larger theoretical concerns in place, and in tandem with my literature review (cf. Chapter 1, Section 3), I have chosen “living hermeneutics and exegesis” as a suitable theoretical methodology for representing the oscillations of resistance to modernity and the persistence of indigeneity found in African and African Diasporic theological and cultural movements today—“oscillations” here can also be understood with regard to a dynamic of “selective resistance and persistence,” i.e. aspects associated with either modernity and indigeneity are respectively embraced and/or rejected. Of course, these terms—“living hermeneutics,” “living exegesis,” “resistance and persistence,” “modernity and indigeneity” will need to be decoded. To this end, this section will first address the idea of “living hermeneutics and exegesis” in relation to theology and the need to go beyond a “liberation theology” wherein the study of postcolonial religious movements is concerned. The latter point is also connected to the idea that the adherents of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* largely demonstrate a relationship of “selective resistance and persistence” to both the perceived markers of modernity and indigeneity. These ideas and terms are all core conceptual innovations that were largely inspired by my field work as analyzed against my academic readings specifically on Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

Note that I have chosen here not to pursue a theoretical methodology along the lines of liberation theology or “liberation hermeneutics” (West 1999). This statement in no way wishes to discount the severe socioeconomic realities that many Rastafari and *amaNazaretha* cope with everyday, from extreme poverty to the rampant spread of HIV/AIDS in South Africa and Jamaica, but many of the Rastas and *amaNazaretha* I spoke with in some way described how their way of life has in fact already “liberated” them in both the so-called sacred and secular spheres. To continue to speak of liberation may unintentionally suggest that people from Africa

or the Caribbean, or elsewhere in the Two-Thirds world, are irreparably enslaved by neocolonialism, when, in fact, many thrive within the network of its impositions and opportunities. The growing number of doctors, lawyers, commercially viable artists, academics, and other professionals who count themselves adherents of Rastafari and *amaNazaretha* today suggest ongoing negotiations between one's sense of indigeneity and the demands of living in the modern world. Without going into minutiae on the history of African biblical scholarship,³⁶ suffice it to say that the approaches from which I borrow overwhelmingly share a focus on the living, both conceptually and practically speaking.

With regard to “living hermeneutics,” many individuals report a similar feeling when reading a poem, for instance, or watching television, or listening to a sermon. In a quotidian setting, people often interpret what they are in the process of reading, hearing, or seeing as emblematic of their current emotional states and psychological concerns. These types of associations between theology and hermeneutics are especially important with relation to religious movements such as Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* whose cultures, on the whole, exist somewhere between the relevant texts of the Bible and oral traditions that have endured as part of African identity. The philosopher, literary critic, and semiotician Mikhail M. Bahktin uses the Russian term “*zhytejskaya germeneytika*” (1975), usually translated as living hermeneutics, to describe this process of interpretation in relation to reading a novel, but within the context of Africa and the Bible, because of the intrinsic orality of African traditions, this approach can also be understood in particular theological contexts.

A number of theologians and religious studies scholars have written specifically about “African exegesis” (cf. Jonker 2005; West and Dube 2008), and much of the theory in this regard is applicable to the idea of “living hermeneutics.” For example, Justin S. Ukpogon has argued that in the African context, exegesis can consist of linking “the biblical text to the African context such that the main focus of interpretation is on the communities that receive the text rather than on those that produced it or on the text itself, as is the case with the Western methods” (2000: 11). Needless to say, this approach moves far away from the typical concerns of historical-critical exegesis that are rooted in the context of the past, on the original hands and motives behind the books of the Bible. Gerald O. West has also argued that this type of “dialogical reading” of the Bible fosters more “socially engaged” biblical scholars (1999), an approach I

³⁶ See *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends* (West and Dube, ed. 2008) for details.

would endorse in keeping with the ethical considerations involved in conducting ethnographical studies today in the context of globalism. In other words, with regard to “living hermeneutics and exegesis” as related specifically to biblical theology, the process refers to the act of taking biblical passages and applying them to one’s own context and history, in keeping with the real concerns of the community in question. In the process, the biblical passages under consideration can often take on meanings for the adherents that are well-removed from the historical-critical scholarly context and the hermeneutics of other religious groups with which the reader may be familiar.

Living hermeneutics and exegesis do not however eschew the Western methods entirely. In fact, as with Gerald West’s presentation of African exegetical techniques, while recognizing “the full array of historical-critical methodology” (2008: 39) that posits the original hands, motives, and contexts associated with the origins and meanings of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek scriptural passages, living hermeneutics and exegesis would also recognize the propensity for creativity and interpretation in the liminoid process of transmission and reception. A “living” approach to hermeneutics and exegesis focuses on the real time assimilations and appropriations of oral and textual theologies. The Bible does not necessarily represent the starting point in this approach, but can be where certain texts have been cited as central by adherents. Living hermeneutics and exegesis demonstrate how religious ethnography can facilitate the cognition of hybridic theological and cultural movements that have emerged through multidimensional processes of encounter with the political frameworks of Western modernity and the Christian colonial ethos; moreover, and in a more general sense, the combined analysis can sometimes shed new insight on the implications of the scriptural passages themselves.

I would argue that living hermeneutics and exegesis, with regard to the Old and New Testaments, has fostered innumerable theological and cultural movements over the millennia; that is, wherein the contexts of the recipients is far-removed from the contexts of the Ancient Near East during Antiquity, a “living” aspect of theology in hermeneutics and exegesis will likely occur based on a particular community’s cultural and historical circumstances. Beyond this line of reasoning, Hendrik M. Vroom has also submitted the notion of a “living hermeneutical process” to account for “how very divergent currents can emerge within a religious tradition” (1989: 328).

With particular regard to African Diasporic spiritualities, for example, the term living hermeneutics maintains great pertinence for interstices of liminality and hybridity. Here, theologian Carlyle Fielding Stewart addresses African American spirituality in particular:

All too often the negative aspects of Anglo culture are accentuated in the black experience because of white racism. The genius of African American spirituality resides in its own elective affinities, the manner in which it has subtly and thoroughly appropriated, integrated, transformed, and synthesized various aspects of African and Anglo culture into a living hermeneutic of positive transformation and human survival. This is the genius of black freedom. (1997: 18)

As will be explored, like hybridic and liminal dimensions to living hermeneutics are evident in the testimonies of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* adherents. Additionally, and as will be discussed presently, a living hermeneutical and exegetical approach ought to be able to account for oscillations of resistance to modernity and persistence to indigeneity.

Although many postcolonial studies, such as the proliferation of texts concerned with “resistance movements,” refer *de facto* to the concept of resistance in indigenous freedom movements, scholarship that engages resistance and persistence in tandem is scant at best.³⁷ With relation to my research, one example of this conceptual deference occurs in Clinton Hutton and Nathaniel Samuel Murrell’s chapter in which they define Rastafari thought as both a “resistance and liberation psychology” (1998: 36). Hutton is a scholar of political philosophy and culture and while Murrell works within the field of religious studies. Another example: through his emphasis on orality, William F. Lewis concludes that “Rastafari have revitalized a folk culture from which they have derived a theology of liberation” (1993: viii), but one can also relate this finding to his self-reflexive position as a white Catholic priest and liberation theologian. The sociologist Jack A. Johnson-Hill (1995) has also discussed Rastafari in relation to liminality and liberation theology. The theologian Andreas Heuser (2005) also discusses the Shembe Church with regard to liberation.

Similar attempts to position *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* as a “resistance movement” are echoed in the works of art historian Karen Hull Brown (1995) and ethnomusicologist Carol Ann Muller (1999; 2002). Of all these examples, perhaps the most telling about how inaccurate the dialogue on resistance has become is the following line from Muller, who identifies “the

³⁷ On the search engine WorldCat.org, “resistance movement” yielded 2,721 results and “resistance movements” 5,394. Neither “persistence movement,” “persistence movements,” nor “persistence and resistance” yielded anything relevant. Findings are from January 21, 2013.

retention of cultural identity as a form of resistance to colonization,” a key element in the construction of “Africanness” (2002: 426). This type of monofocal approach thus uncritically positions any attempt to preserve elements of one’s precolonial indigenous culture as “resistance” (cf. Sithole 2010: 122-123).

With regard to the terminologies I have employed, my research indicates that in anthropological studies, William H. Babcock first uses the dialogic between “resistance and persistence” to describe the Nanticoke people’s struggle for human rights and dignity (1899: 280). Yet Babcock uses persistence to refer to the tenacity of spirit in the resistance struggle, rather than the persistence of indigenous culture itself. Generally defined, indigeneity can be understood as aspects of the precolonial culture that are alien or contrary to the vehicles of colonialism and modernity. Thus, technologies such as automobiles and texts such as the Bible, with all its missionary contexts, can be understood as objects introduced to an indigenous culture that had originally fostered practices of self-reliance and self-sustenance on the land prior to the colonial era. Yet, as mentioned, both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* represent postcolonial religious traditions, hence the tensions between resistance and persistence, modernity and indigeneity. The notion of indigeneity is particularly important with relation to adherence to the Laws of Nazirite, which from a biblical perspective—and as will be detailed in Chapter 2, Section 1—are associated with pre-monarchical wilderness traditions that are of particular importance through the Babylonian exile and the era of Cyrus the Great in maintaining a concept of “indigeneity” that could no longer be fully achieved under imperial rule (cf. Chakravarty 2009b).

In relation to Rastafari, the political scientist Rex Nettleford discusses “the persistence of race and its related issues of identity and protest in the Jamaican reality” (1998b: vii). In so doing, Nettleford implies a sort of “*indigenisation*” based primarily on race (1998b: viii), a notion I am trying to move away from with this work and my use of the term “indigeneity.” Next, the social anthropologist Barry Chevannes has passingly referred to the turbans of the Bobo Shanti as the “persistence” of an African tradition, but nothing further is provided on the use of the term (1989b: 229). From a sociological perspective, Alemseghed Kebede, Thomas E. Shriver, and J. David Knottnerus have discussed the persistence of Rastafari itself as a global movement, but do not engage the term with notions of indigeneity (2000: 314). African-Caribbean language scholar Maureen Warner-Lewis (1993), Rastafari scholar Maureen Rowe

(1998), and anthropologist Neil J. Savishinsky (1998) have each described discernable markers of African indigeneity in relation to Rastafari as “continuities,” but, in my opinion, the somewhat more tepid term inadequately captures the immediacy of persistence. These efforts towards a dialogue of persistence in Rastafari scholarship are not mirrored in the scholarly literature on *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Only ethnographer Robert Papini has come closest, by identifying the “neotraditional uniforms” of *amaNazaretha* as a “symbolic resistance” (2004: 49). Outside of African Naziritism, I could only locate the work of one author that explicitly discusses the terms “resistance and persistence” as they pertain to oscillations of modernity and indigeneity, but aboriginal studies scholar Kevin Keffe’s concepts (1988)³⁸ appear to have been largely overlooked by scholars.

Before getting into Keffe’s work, however, I think it pertinent to mention that I hit upon this idea of “resistance and persistence” before I had actually become aware of Keffe’s more or less solitary efforts to employ the terms. I first started to think about these concepts during a conversation with Nkosinathi Sithole, the first member of the Shembe Church and PhD graduate on the same, in which he was referring to an argument in his recently completed dissertation in the field of Human Sciences under the auspices of the School of Literary Studies, Media and Creative Arts, University of KwaZulu-Natal. Here I present the excerpt from my field notes in which I first captured the idea after the discussion with Sithole:

Can spiritual groups such as *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari be properly labelled “resistance movements?” Hypothesis: *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari cannot properly be labelled resistance movements since this would somehow place colonialism as the centre and counterpoint of their very existences (see Sithole). If we refer to such contemporary spiritual groups as resistance movements, this would somehow assume or imply that each decision, practice, rite, ritual, or manifestation is somehow intentionally calculated to go against colonialism and neocolonialism and the interventions thereof, but this dynamic is clearly not the case. Some aspects introduced by neocolonialism are readily integrated into the religious culture, for example, technologies such as cars, helicopters, DVDs, CDs, etc.; products such as Coca Cola, or designer sunglasses.

Though we can still evaluate the groups in relation to aspects of both traditional African and colonial / neocolonial culture that have been rejected and accepted, for the

³⁸ I was unfortunately not able to access Kevin Keffe’s BA thesis with the same title, “Aboriginality: Resistance and Persistence.” (Canberra: Australian National University, 1986). Further investigation revealed that the one hard copy held at the library of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Canberra is for reference only and indeed not available for interlibrary loans. See National Library of Australia website: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/33794861?q&sort=holdings+desc&=1360047853054&versionId=41570281>, accessed February 5, 2013.

sake of precision, we would be more accurate if we thought of such spiritual groups – instead of nonviolent resistance movements – as nonviolent *persistence* movements. Otherwise, we risk implying that all aspects of the movements' existences have been consciously and intentionally defined against the dominant culture and it keeps colonialism or neocolonialism at the centre, which in and of itself retains an implicit neocolonial imposition and speaks more of the scholar's interests rather than the people themselves.

The people in these spiritual movements just want to be free, to live life in a context that makes sense to them. They are not deconstructive postcolonial scholars! Labelling the spiritual groups as resistance movements amounts to the scholar imposing their own views and intrigues on their subjects. In this vein, we can discuss aspects that are in direct opposition as resistance aspects and the preservation of precolonial traditions as persistence. (November 15, 2010)

I later located the passage from Sithole's PhD dissertation to which he was referring since the idea inspired a pivotal implication for this study.

In response to previous scholarship that rather uncritically identified the sacred dances of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* as a reaction to colonialism (Brown 1995b; Muller 1999; 2002), Sithole criticizes the sole lens of resistance towards building a sound hermeneutic:

[In] trying to find resistance to colonialism by simply equating events like the sacred dance with resistance or response to colonialism, without examining if these performances are indeed connected to colonialism in the way they are said to be, such postulations end up offering undue power to colonialism itself. At the same time, their tendency deprives people of their agency as actors in their own history since they can only be reactive. (2010: 122-123)

Although the term "resistance" is often employed by scholars to signify something positive and active, a clear bias is revealed in scholarship that categorizes indigenous persistence as a form of resistance, especially where no such antagonism can be located. Recall Muller's identification of "the retention of cultural identity as a form of resistance to colonization" as crucial to the idea of "Africanness" (2002: 426). First of all, the sacred dances of the Zulus existed long before colonialism, even though several aspects (attire, steps, hymnal) have evolved within *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* over the last century. Thus, labelling the sacred dances as "resistance" is not only misleading, but potentially hegemonic as it foremost frames the significance of the sacred dances in primary relation to the postcolonial encounter and outside of their original indigenous contexts. Secondly, a number of sacred dances today in fact embrace various artefacts of colonialism in addition to Zulu dance traditions side-by-side (Sithole 2010), hence the need for an alternative term to signify those elements of precolonial indigenous traditions as distinct from the influences of colonialism and neocolonialism. Ultimately, by distinguishing between

resistance and persistence we are left with a much richer vocabulary to discuss the postcolonial experience and these accompanying oscillations of resistance and persistence, i.e. “selective resistance and persistence.”³⁹

Oddly enough, though I only became aware of Keffe’s work in December 2012, some of the insights reflect my own, though I would not extend the “genetic element of persistence” (1988: 69) that Keffe connects to Aboriginals in Australia to all forms of indigeneity. As detailed in Section 1.3 of this chapter, the hybridic element of religious routinization so evident in Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* innovation far supercedes the outdated notions of biological hybridity and the Other. But, especially since Keffe’s work is little known, the somewhat lengthy definitions merit citation:

Aboriginality-as-persistence can be shown, through analysis of social action, to be a set of ideological elements that are a significant part of what Aboriginal people mean when they refer to and use Aboriginality. When this aspect is dominant, the elements that are stressed are such things as a belief in the persistence of an inherently unique identity, the continuity of cultural practices that originate in traditional Aboriginal culture and the common sharing of these by all Aboriginal people in Australia. The emphasis on persistence and continuity that characterises this aspect of Aboriginality, and in some contexts delimits it, is founded on a particular notion of culture as a fixed body of knowledge and concepts that are described as being genetically transmitted and reproduced.

In contrast, Aboriginality-as-resistance is a more active and dynamic concept in its usage by Aboriginal people, especially for the young. It is not only a specific set of ideological elements, but also a living set of cultural practices which are in dynamic interaction with white society, and the cultural practices that characterize it. This is particularly evident in school. The elements that are stressed when this aspect is dominant are such things as resistance to white authority, political struggle and collective solidarity. The means to express these elements are drawn from the resources of the dominant society.

The two notions underlie all Aboriginal discourse on Aboriginality but in any particular context one may be submerged or muted by the other. They are not total opposites, as the persistence of Aboriginal people is partially due to successful and ongoing resistance and contemporary political actions make use of both notions. They are in tension, and at times compete for attention or contradict each other. The contrasts between the two themes can best be seen by listening to Aboriginal people talk about them[selves] and observing their active construction and transmission. (1988: 68)

Without denying the European legacy of colonialism in Africa, Australia, the Caribbean, and elsewhere, if we respectively replace the concepts of “Aboriginality” and “white authority” with “indigeneity” and “colonialism and neocolonialism,” as related to modernity, we come closer to

³⁹ See Chapter 3, Section 1.1.3 for details on the sacred dances of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

my intentions with the notion of “resistance and persistence.” Of course, issues of ethnicity will be prevalent in these oscillations, but they are not a given in all contexts related to indigeneity.

A number of additional African approaches can also be of use to this hermeneutical framework. First, in the interest of studying indigeneity and local reception and appropriation of biblical themes, the call has gone out to the scholar to read with scholarly *and* non-scholarly voices (West 1999; 2008). In this regard, theologian, gender, and postcoloniality scholar Musa W. Dube has advocated rereading the Bible using African exegetical devices, particularly open-ended storytelling and divination, especially as they can be applied under the auspices of feminist discourse, in addition to reading with “grassroots or subaltern readers” in the pursuit of reflexivity and relevant theological study in Africa (2001: 2), a case I would extend to the African Diaspora.

The notion of “inculturation from below” that Dube applies to African Initiated Churches such as *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* can just as easily apply to many Rastafari who also express a “nonapologetic hybridity” (2002: 53). Dube’s conclusion stems from the act of reading with non-academic Others. Here, “reading with” should be understood “both literally, to include literate African readers, and metaphorically, to include illiterate or partially literate African ‘readers’” (West 1999: 95). West argues that the illiterate or partially literate people he works with, though they cannot read well, “hear, remember and retell,” in the process initiating “a remaking or a ‘re-membering’ of the Bible” (1999: 95). This “re-membering” can be understood as follows:

They ‘read’ differently; their ‘reading’, I would suggest, is more akin to ‘rewriting’ than to reading in any scholarly sense [...] Ordinary African interpreters of the Bible are not as transfixed and fixated by the text as their textually trained pastors and theologians [...] their hermeneutics characterized by a ‘looseness, even playfulness’ towards the biblical text. If they do speak of the Bible as ‘Word of God’, they do so in senses that are more metaphorical than literal; ‘the Book’ is more of a symbol than a text. The Bible they work with is always an already ‘re-membered’ ‘text’—a text, both written and oral, that has been dismembered, taken apart, and then remade and re-membered. (West 1999: 95)

Sithole has applied this notion of “re-membering” to Isaiah Shembe’s reading of the Bible:

“Re-membering” allowed Shembe to claim the Bible for himself and his followers, and to interpret it in a manner relevant to him and his context [...] The implication of this appropriation of the Bible for the question of response and resistance to colonialism is that while Shembe rejected orthodox Christianity advocated by the missionaries, he accepted the Bible, even though he had his own way of understanding and interpreting it. (2010: 88)

In the process, Sithole argues that Shembe successfully decolonized the Bible for his context. These same ideas regarding reading and “re-membering” are equally relevant in the living hermeneutics and exegesis, or “living faith” of Rastafari who “shy away from any strictly literal interpretation of the scriptures” (Owens 1976: 34, 36). Finally, in this regard, theologian Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole’s association of “living exegesis” with the prophetic persona (2008: 255) also pertains to the theoretical discussion as both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* are largely organized around living charismatic figures re-membering elements of various theological and cultural traditions.

2.1 Conclusion to Living Hermeneutics and Exegesis / Resistance and Persistence

In the previous section, I have outlined the key factors towards building a living hermeneutical and exegetical approach to explore how the concepts of religious hybridity, in addition to structural liminality and the liminoid process, are related to the oscillations of resistance to modernity and the persistence of indigeneity embedded in Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* today. As a result, I have proposed a coalescence between historical-critical exegesis and relevant approaches from the Two-Thirds world including reading with non-academic voices and focusing on real time connections. Furthermore, the voluminous works that exist regarding “resistance movements” are themselves a reflection of the inherent neocolonial dynamics of ethnography at large. I have argued for the need for a dialogue about indigeneity that includes the concept of “persistence,” a term that refers to those pieces of the precolonial culture that a religious community seeks to maintain, even though they have been labelled as a form of “resistance” to the mandates of the dominant society.

3. Literature Review

As mentioned, no prior work exists that specifically explores the naziritism of either *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* or Rastafari. Where the Laws of the Nazirite are mentioned in relation to either group, they are done so in passing, with no further analysis.⁴⁰ It remains imperative, of course, to nonetheless highlight the most significant primary texts and academic works associated with both movements and the theoretical concerns of this study. Note that the body of existing scholarly work on Rastafari is vast compared to *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. For this reason, I reflect

⁴⁰ cf. Chapter 1, Section 1.2.

the imbalance by using the overview of scholarly texts on *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* to further a number of complex arguments around the insider / outsider problem in ethnography. Moreover, the overview of scholarly texts in the section on Rastafari is primarily synthetic. I have done so in order to demonstrate the overwhelming diversity of literature on Rastafari as compared to the Shembe Church. I have nonetheless pointed to some influential texts in the field, especially as they are relevant to this study. Still, on either count, I apologize in advance for any noteworthy omissions present in the short space reserved for this purpose. I hope that these sections provide some necessary background on both movements, while outlining some of the main academic discourses associated with each in relation to my study.

3.1 Ibandla lamaNazaretha: Primary Texts

Translated by the American Bible Society, the Zulu Bible of 1893, or *iBaible*, endures as a ubiquitous source of reference in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. While we look at some key passages for the Shembe Church throughout this work, these inclusions cannot be exhaustive. I have placed particular emphasis on passages relating to the various themes of naziritism.

Be that as it may, there is no denying the greater authority and centrality of the hymns and prayers composed by founder Isaiah Shembe (1867-1935), in addition to the hymns of Johannes Galilee (J. G.) Shembe (1904-1975), son and first successor. This collection is entitled *Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha* (Hymns of the Nazaretha) and includes three liturgical texts and 242 hymns. The first three texts are read at the beginning of the accompanying services for which they have been designated: *Isiqalo Somthandazo Wokuvuka* (The Beginning of the Morning Prayer), *Isiqalo Somthandazo Wokulala* (The Beginning of the Evening Prayer), and *Umthandazo weSabatha* (Prayer of the Sabbath). Of the 242 original Zulu hymns; the first 223 are credited to Isaiah Shembe and the final nineteen to J. G., his son. The Shembe Church continues to publish the original Zulu texts in South Africa, but two significant English translations exist: one edited by Andreas Heuser and Irving Hexham and translated by Hans-Jürgen Becken (i.e. Shembe and Shembe 2005 [1936]); the other, which includes the original Zulu, is edited by Carol Ann Muller and translated by Bongani Mthethwa (i.e. Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]).

Though only an appreciation for the original Zulu provides the best foray into the study of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, in the interest of broader accessibility for the reader, this largely

thematic work will generally refer to the relevant biblical passages and excerpts from the Shembe hymnal in English, while referring specifically to the Zulu where required to make an exegetical point. With regard to the hymnal, I will refer to Mthethwa's 2010 translation (Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]) as I believe it better transmits the poeticism of the Zulu, in addition to the biblical parallels, and is generally more accurate than Becken's 2005 version. I will demonstrate the reasons for this conclusion in Chapter 2, Section 2.1.2 in relation to the exegetical work I conducted on naziritic consecration.

Next, in terms of primary texts, after the initial split in 1977, Londa and Vukile Shembe of the original Ekuphakameni faction have carried on the tradition of composing hymns and expanding the repertoire, but the same has not occurred at Ebuhleni where, under Amos K. (A. K.) and Mbusi Vimbeni (M. V.) Shembe, only the hymns and prayers of Isaiah and J. G. are performed at public worship services.⁴¹ In this regard, the collection, *The Scriptures of the amaNazaretha of Ekuphakameni* (1994) represents another key primary reference. The collection includes some writings and prayers of Isaiah Shembe as well as the hymns of Londa Shembe and is edited by Hexham. Of the material included, Isaiah's writings are translated by Londa Shembe and Londa's hymns are translated by Becken.

Next, inasmuch as we can regard a text as representative of the interface of orality and literacy, a series of books translated into English by Becken (*Sacred History and Traditions of the amaNazaretha*) has recounted the oral history of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* based on Zulu manuscripts and oral traditions at the request of J. G. and A. K. Shembe (Hexham and Oosthuizen 1999: ix). The first two volumes, *History and Traditions Centred on Ekuphakameni and Mount Nhlankakazi* (ed. by Hexham and Oosthuizen 1996) and *Early Regional Traditions of the Acts of the Nazarites* (ed. by Hexham and Oosthuizen 1999) include collected traditions from primarily Isaiah Shembe's era, as well as some from J. G.'s. The third volume, *The Continuing Story of the Sun and the Moon* (ed. by Hexham and Oosthuizen 2001), comprises traditions from J. G. and A. K.'s era (1935-1976). *The Catechism of the Nazarites and Related Writings* (ed. by Papini and Hexham 2002) contains tracts of spiritual teachings attributable to Isaiah and J. G. Shembe as well as a number of additional oral traditions. Overall, the Ebuhleni bias is evident in these works, but indicative of the significantly larger membership (and resources) of the faction.

⁴¹ See "Statement of the Question" for more on the factions of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

The volumes of primary texts that have painstakingly been edited and translated into English by scholars remain a testament to the academic commitment to representing traditions associated with *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. In fact, although they are largely based on the collection of testimonies drafted by Petros Musawenkosi Dhlomo and later traditions (Hexham and Oosthuizen 1996: xi-xxi), the circumstance in which the collected origination traditions of a religious group exist in a language other than their own represents a further utility of the ethnographic endeavour and certain Western approaches to document the annals of indigeneity, both scientifically and ethically, for an audience outside the core adherents of the tradition.

3.2 Ibandla lamaNazaretha: Overview of Scholarly Texts

Institutional interest in Isaiah Shembe's church dates almost as far back as its founding days. Within one year after the death of its founder, two published volumes appeared on Shembe. Based largely on Carl Faye's government transcript of Isaiah Shembe's testimony (1929) and the film notes of Nellie Wells (no date), John Dube's *UShembe* (1936) denotes the first biography of the founder of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Scholars have argued that the information in this book is not historically credible as the book was co-authored in a roundabout manner by Shembe himself (Cabrita 2012; Papini 1999). Papini (1999), moreover, argues that the contents of *UShembe* comprise the source material for the first volume in the *Sacred History and Traditions of the amaNazaretha* series, *History and Traditions Centred on Ekuphakameni and Mount Nhlankakazi* (ed. by Hexham and Oosthuizen 1996). Also from 1936, Esther Roberts' MA thesis, "Shembe: The Man and His Work," denotes the first academic endeavour on the subject. Her unique opportunity as an outsider to talk and interact with Isaiah Shembe during his final days endures as an invaluable look into the history of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

From here, the next wave of scholarship on *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* is defined by Absalom Vilakazi (1986), Becken (1966; 1968), and Gerhardus C. Oosthuizen (1967), but it is also important to include into this category Bengt Sundkler's larger comparative work of African Initiated Churches in South Africa (1961). Vilakazi's 1986 publication is based on field work from 1950-1951 (1986: 4). Becken's contributions (1966; 1968) are largely narrative accounts of the scholar's participation in various ceremonies and the Mount Nhlankakazi pilgrimage of January 1967 under the leadership of J. G. Shembe. Next, Oosthuizen (1967), rather pivotally in the field, has provided an exegesis of the hymnal that focuses on central Zulu and Christian

hybridic elements, their interplay, and their hermeneutic. As discussed in the section on hybridity, a new religion distinct from Christianity may still carry some of its markers. Finally, Sundkler's 1961 edition represents a revision of his 1948 categorization of African Initiated Churches. Sundkler's modifications have peculiar implications for the study of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* who move into a special section of the Ethiopian / Zionist binary typology of hundreds of Bantu churches, i.e. the newly included Messianic type, which in Sundkler's estimation represent about one percent of the Zionist Churches of the era (1961: 323).

Hexham's 1997 synopsis of Sundkler, Vilakazi, and Oosthuizen's respective research and conclusions on *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* evokes a number of problematics central to the postcolonial ethnographic study of independently instituted hybridic theological movements and the insider / outsider problem. In the context of this literature review, these issues are worth taking a moment to consider. Hexham writes: "Oosthuizen claims that the amaNazaretha of Isaiah Shembe represent a New Religion distinct from Christianity. Sundkler and Vilakazi have argued that Oosthuizen is wrong and that the amaNazaretha are an authentic form of Zulu Christianity" (1997: 361-362). A tendency of scholastic thought exists that implies that African academics are more apt to understand African religions (Chitando 2008: 110), but in the reference to the aforementioned scholarship on *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, the opposite sentiment is expressed by the leaders of two different factions.

I quote here at length to demonstrate the dramatic impact that such debates can arouse:

It comes as a surprise to learn that Isaiah Shembe's son and grandson, Bishop Amos Shembe and the Rt. Reverend Londa Shembe, preferred Oosthuizen's presentation of their beliefs to that of his critics. Amos Shembe was furious when he read Vilakazi's manuscript in 1986. In fact, Amos Shembe immediately applied for a Court injunction to prevent its publication. In his opinion it was blasphemous because it completely distorted the life and teachings of Isaiah Shembe.

After seeing the book in a local bookshop in 1986, Londa Shembe wrote 'About Prof. A. Vilakazi's book... I leafed through the pages and there was nothing that I could find in it that gave joy to my heart. I was sorry in fact that I had ever looked at it... my hope is that with the passage of time brave authors will come forward and really get into the meat of the matter: the spiritual identity of the man. Who was he in the realm of the Spirit?' Later, after he read the book, Londa Shembe commented 'I have in my mind to write a short work on the work life of Baba inKhulyu Isaiah Shembe to counter the poison-pen of Vilakazi's.'

Thus, although they disagreed strongly about other issues both agreed that Vilakazi's work was unacceptable. Amos Shembe believed Isaiah Shembe created an entirely new form of Christianity. Londa Shembe believed his grandfather founded a new religion. Both said that Oosthuizen, not Vilakazi or Sundkler, was the person who really

understood their Faith. They also agreed that Vilakazi attempted to cast the amaNazaretha in a Christian mould of his own making. In Londa Shembe's words 'In the past Christians used a stick to beat us. They said we were pagans and that our followers ought to join real churches. Now they are using a carrot. They say we are just another Christian denomination. In this way they are trying to bring us under their control by using promises of recognition and financial assistance as bribes to lead our people back into their churches'. Londa Shembe summed up the issue saying 'only Oosthuizen understands us. The others want to re-make us in their own image.' (Hexham 1997: 363-364)

Recalling Wilfred Cantwell Smith's validation of the insider's position in the construction of religious knowledge (1959: 42), these testimonies are no small matter in determining the overall value of the ethnographies in question.

In this case, it was Oosthuizen's focus on the interaction of central hybridic elements from both Zulu and biblical traditions that met the approval of the adherents themselves. Sundkler, a Swedish Protestant missionary scholar, emphasized the Zulu character of the church by making such offensive statements as: "The syncretistic sect becomes the bridge over which Africans are brought back to heathenism" (1961: 297). Vilakazi, on the other hand, though of Zulu origin, is a Christian who is not a member of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Hampered by his employment of structural-functionalism, as well as his self-proclaimed authority over the Zulu language, Vilakazi writes an analysis that functions as an unsolicited apology for *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* that erroneously marks them as another Christian denomination. Finally, and most surprisingly perhaps, is the fact that Oosthuizen was an Afrikaner who learned Zulu in order to conduct his studies (Hexham 1997: 363). In this sense, Oosthuizen represents someone on the extreme periphery of the religious movement in question—ethnically, linguistically, and politically; yet we are presented with two opinions of his work from leaders of different groups within the Shembe Church that confirm the compatibility of the researcher's perceptions with their own. This tripartite example demonstrates that in the assessment of ethnographical material, the backgrounds of the scholars do not *a priori* mark the validity or invalidity of a study; it is not a simple African / Western scholarly binary. Complex subcurrents within the multiple identities of the researcher condition the relativity of the insider / outsider conundrum.

Note also that Becken's largely narrative approach has escaped the crux of this debate, though one article clearly moulds the Shembe Church into a Christian entity (1966), reflecting the same tendency of both Vilakazi and Sundkler. The very next chapter in the same monograph, Oosthuizen's "Isaiah Shembe and the Zulu Worldview," I argue, has provided that postcolonial

critique towards hybridity that was so essential in understanding the interplay of Zulu tradition and biblical references in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*:

It is wrong to think that the religion of the Scriptureless people belong to museological sphere when they become Christians or when they fall under the orbit of Christian influence. The roots are so deep in the original soil that it often seems as if Christianity, at least in its empirical form, has not the power neither the answer to eradicate these in the substratum. But in the case of the Shembe movement the problem is even greater because here we are faced with a movement whose leadership has been in intimate contact with Christianity but which has many adherents who had no contact with established Christianity at all and who came directly from their pre-Christian religion into what may be described as a post-Christian religion, i.e. one in which contact has been made with Christianity so that in form the appearance seems to be Christian but in content it is a syncretism of which the old rock is still basic. The pre-Christian Zulu religion forms the basis but it has been quickened, revitalised by Christian concepts. (1966: 115)

Although Oosthuizen's emphasis on Christianity is somewhat misleading, if we understand the above passage as connected to the Bible at large, in both Judaic and Christian forms, we come even closer to a precise cognition of *ubuNazaretha*.⁴²

Next, of the later scholarly works on *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, some of the most pertinent are as follows. Heuser's articles "Experiments in an Independent African Satyagraha" (2002) and "Recovered Narratives of an Inter-Cultural Exchange" (2003) explore some of the theological underpinnings of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* from the perspective of hybridity, in particular relation to the interaction of Gandhian, Christian, and Zulu thought. Also, from the perspective of hybridity, Heuser's article, "Memory Tales: Representations of Shembe in the Cultural Discourse of African Renaissance" (2005), explores how fragments from a historical intercultural milieu that coexist in the memories of the church members contribute to shaping spiritual identity.

Two important scholars who largely approach their studies of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* through the framework of liminality are Elizabeth Gunner and Carol Ann Muller. Much of language scholar Gunner's work explores the question of liminality through the evaluation of a number of dialectics, namely: physical, metaphysical, and linguistic. Gunner also explores issues of memory and the changing landscape in the process of identity-making in "Remapping Land and Remaking Culture" (2005) in addition to notions of hybridity in "New Wine in Old Bottles" (1982). The anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Muller analyses the symbolic power of the

⁴² *ubuNazaretha* refers to the theologies, ideologies, and philosophies that define *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

performed hymns in the context of hybridity as they exist in liminal spaces. Muller's works in this regard include "Making the Book, Performing the Words of *Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha*" (2003), "Archiving Africanness in Sacred Song" (2002), and *Rituals of Fertility and the Sacrifice of Desire: Nazarite Women's Performance in South Africa* (1999). The latter work, as well as "'Written' into the Book of Life" (1997), also focus on the role of women in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* cultus.

Of the most recent academic works on *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, a number of recent PhD theses should also be named. Joel E. Tishken's comparative analysis of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and L'Église Kimbanuiste (2002) moves well beyond the syncretic discourse by addressing the centrality of prophecy in both hybridic theological and cultural movements. The result is a more profound understanding of each and a new set of concerns for comparative theory and methodology. Joel Cabrita's "Theological Biography of Isaiah Shembe" (2008) delves into the early history of the church and the complex dialogue of being somehow Christian and Zulu in the frame of nationalism. Finally, the recent work of Nkosinathi Sithole (2010) marks a landmark for the study of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. As mentioned, Sithole is the first member of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* to have earned a doctorate in the subject of his church. Sithole's focus on the aspects of Zulu and African culture that have persisted and adapted within the Shembe Church is of particular relevance for my study. These efforts, along with my own, mark a new surge of interest among a young generation of scholars interested in the postcolonial concerns unmasked by the study of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

3.3 Rastafari: Primary Texts

Due to the fragmented nature of its inception, pinning down specific primary texts for Rastafari proved somewhat more enterprising than with *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Moreover, Rastafari, on the whole, champion the power of auditory vibration in linguistic exchange. Like with the Shembe Church, the emphasis on religious performance is preeminent.

Though not all Rastafari regard the Bible as a sacred text, for those that do, the King James Version (KJV) that first accompanied the Protestant missionaries is somewhat ironically the *de facto* translation from which much inspiration is still drawn. While I include several key biblical references for Rastafari in this work, I have focused on the passages relating to naziritism and its surrounding themes.

The writings and utterances of Marcus Garvey (unwitting prophet of Rastafari) and Haile Selassie I (Ras Tafari himself) can also be included as primary sources for inspiration, though neither of these figures were themselves Rastafari adherents. The core of Garvey's ideas are contained in the two part publication of *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or Africa for the Africans* in the 1920s. Many of Garvey's ideas were also disseminated through his newspaper, *The Blackman*. Next, as the coronation of an African emperor represented major international news, various speeches or writings of Haile Selassie, or reports on current events published in *The Gleaner*, *The Blackman*, and internationally distributed news journals such as *Time Magazine* would have been of great interest to the various individuals in Jamaica who regarded this man as a Messiah. Many of Selassie's utterances have been compiled into readily available volumes in later decades.

In addition, the *Kebra Nagast*, one of the scriptures of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, should be regarded as a primary text. The *Kebra Nagast* adds a significant hermeneutical aspect to Rastafari in relation to the meeting of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba attested to in 1 Kings 10:1-13 and 2 Chronicles 9:1-12, especially in terms of explaining the Davidic lineage of Haile Selassie I and the heritage of the Ethiopian throne under first son of Solomon, Bayna-Lehkhem, later annointed Menyelek. As only few Rastas may have been familiar with the Amharic, E. A. Wallis Budge's 1922 English translation can be considered a key exegetical piece that granted accessibility for Rastafari who could read or understand English (Munro-Hay 2005: 3). While most scholars posit that the Ge'ez version of the book was compiled as early as the 13th century, the Coptic source material on which it is based dates back to at least the 4th century (Brooks 1995: xxv-xxvii). In short, during a time when black people were searching for a source of pride and inspiration in Jamaica, the newly accessible *Kebra Nagast* and the traditions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Africa helped validate the notion of a Black Kingdom.

Another scripture of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, The Book of Enoch, also remains central to Rastafari exegesis. According to R. H. Charles, while Enoch is today "consigned to the Pseudepigraphia [...] It was not always so:"

In the earliest Christian centuries *The Book of Enoch* was held in great reverence by many of the Church Fathers, including Irenaeus, Origen and Tertullian [...] By the end of the fourth century, however, *The Book of Enoch* was looked upon as heretical and was condemned by the orthodox.

Its survival as a complete text was due to a different attitude on the part of Ethiopian Christians. For the most part they were, and still are, Monophysite in belief, i.e.

holding the doctrine that the Person of the Incarnate Christ is of a wholly divine nature. The messianic figure in *The Book of Enoch* was thus quite amenable to them and by the fifth century the book had been translated into Ethiopic and had entered the Canon of their Church. The original text was in a Semitic language, most probably a combination of Hebrew and Aramaic, which was later translated into Greek. Early manuscript versions in all three languages, varying from fragments to substantial parts of the texts, have been found, but manuscripts of the Ethiopic translation are by far the most complete. [...] *The Book of Enoch* dates from the second and first centuries before Christ and its Messianic content was utilized extensively in both the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, notably in the titles of the Messiah [...] But Enoch had vanished from mainstream Christianity by 500 A.D. and it would be almost 1,300 years later before the book returned and scholars once again appreciate its importance. (2003 [1912]: viii-ix)

In relation to Rastafari hermeneutics specifically, the implications of the narrative about the Nephelims, or giants, being the offspring of fallen angels and earthly women, in the Watchers section of *Enoch*, will be discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.1, with particular attention to the ensuing rationale for vegetarianism.

As for the inception of Rastafari, though a number of foundational ideologies were propounded by Leonard Howell, Archibald Dunkley, Joseph Hibbert, Robert Hinds, and others across Jamaica, from its roots, Rastafari was and continues to be polycephalous. Howell, however, has been touted as the first person to both proclaim the divinity of Haile Selassie and live his exegesis in the form of a self-reliant communal society, Pinnacle (cf. Lee 2003). Howell's *The Promised Key*, penned under the pseudonym Gangunguru Maragh (G. G. Maragh), stands as the first "official" Rastafari text.

Two proto-Rastafari texts must also be included as primary texts, however. Evidence suggests that Howell reworked much of the content of both *The Holy Piby* and *The Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy* into *The Promised Key* (Hill 1981: 34; Lee 2003: 97). First, Robert Athlyi Rogers' *The Holy Piby* (1924) categorizes Ethiopians as the chosen people of God, Africa as synonymous with Ethiopia, and sets the tone for the messianic role of Selassie. The second is Fitz Balintine Pettersburg's *The Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy* (1926) that argues against European colonialism in favour of an Afrocentric worldview.

Robert A. Hill has also argued that the prophecy regarding a king to be crowned in Africa has been erroneously credited to Marcus Garvey (1981: 32). Indeed, no scholar has been able to reveal evidence that connects Garvey to this idea of a universal black king, but Hill points to the works of James Morris Webb, an Evangelist from the Church of God in the United States and known associate of Garvey, as the most likely original source regarding the idea of a universal

African king under whose dominion there will be no segregation and discrimination. The titles are: *The Black Man: The Father of Civilization Proven by Biblical History* (1921) and *A Black Man Will Be The Coming Universal King Proven by Biblical History* (1919). I encountered no critical work on these texts outside of Hill (1981), whose treatment is rather glossorial. Indeed, further investigation revealed that many of the biblical passages and their connections cited by Rastafari exegetes regarding the royal lineage of black people are present in Webb's text, almost verbatim. I illuminate Webb's influence in the section on Rastafari consecration (Chapter 2, Section 2.1.1).

Within primary texts, I could have also included an extensive list of reggae and dub lyrics. The words of artists such as Bob Marley and Mutabaruka are often cited as pivotal in the conversion of adherents. Suffice it to say that the works I have included as primary texts in this sub-section are directly related to the inception of Rastafari, unlike the audio sources oriented towards proselytizing that arose during the routinization period of Rastafari, or as of the mid-1960s (Barrett 1997 [1977]: 146; Edmonds 2003: 7-28). In the ensuing analysis, however, song lyrics are cited from time to time as emblematic of particular themes. Also worth noting is the fact that none of the primary texts listed in this sub-section are written in the Rastafari language of "Iyoric" (Birhan 1981) or "Dread Talk" (Pollard 1985; 2000), a later development in the history of the movement.

3.4 Rastafari: Overview of Scholarly Texts

Academic interest in Rastafari began in the 1950s, twenty years after the crowning of Haile Selassie as Emperor of Ethiopia. Fernando Henriques (1953) is generally regarded as the first academic work that refers to Rastafari. In this anthropological analysis of family structures in Jamaican culture, Henriques recognizes a "white bias" in social identity construction, whereby "black is associated with the backward, primitive and undesirable qualities in man; and white is associated with everything that is desirable" (1953: 62). Henriques has presented these "Rastafarites" as a direct contradiction of the dominant hegemonic discourse by claiming "spiritual communion with all coloured peoples but particularly with the people of Africa, which country [sic] they regard as their home" (1953: 62). The articles of sociologist and anthropologist George Eaton Simpson (1955a; 1955b), however, emerged as the preeminent works regarding Rastafari of the 1950s. Based on his field research of four groups in Jamaica, Simpson emphasized

contemporaneous Rastafari beliefs, teachings, and cultus and categorized the movement as a millenarian revivalist tradition, but, in contrast to Henriques' earlier work, Simpson also presents Rastafari as racists (cf. Simpson 1955a: 134-135; 1955b: 169).

The next decade of work on Rastafari was landmarked by the University of the West Indies (UWI) sponsored study: *The Rastafari Movement in Kingston, Jamaica* (1960) authored by M. G. Smith, Roy Augier, and Rex Nettleford. This sociological study was pivotal in helping to dispel a number of negative stereotypes of Rastafari by revealing that not all were marijuana addicts, that only a few were criminals, and that Rastafari was quite popular among youths. The study also made a number of recommendations regarding Rastafari to the Jamaican government, including repatriation to Africa. During the early era of scholarship, the writings of Rastafari brethren, Samuel Elisha Brown, also came to attention, namely "The Truth About the Rastafarians" (1963) and "Treatise on the Rastafarian Movement" (1966). These articles were influential in the routinization process of Rastafari.

From here, the most noteworthy Rastafari scholars of the 1970s are undoubtedly Leonard E. Barrett, Rex Nettleford, and Joseph Owens. In Barrett's often-cited work, *The Rastafarians: Sounds of Cultural Dissonance* (1977), the scholar of African-Jamaican religions has provided a detailed historical background for the emergence of Rastafari, explored the African and biblical hybridic elements of Rastafari in detail, and set a precedent for future scholarship that would account for the diversity of Rastafari belief, behaviours, and practices by raising questions related to the death of Haile Selassie, the non-realization of repatriation, and the formation of splinter groups. Barrett also classified Rastafari as a millenarian-messianic movement. The two works of historian Nettleford from this era, *Mirror Mirror: Identity, Race and Protest in Jamaica* (1970) and *Caribbean Cultural Identity: The Case of Jamaica* (1978), provide a number of clarifications to and rebuttals of the depiction of Rastafari presented in the UWI report to which the author had previously contributed and also discusses the larger impacts of Rastafari ideologies on Jamaican society in general. Owens' *Dread* (1976) marks the first academic work on Rastafari written by a non-black scholar who had conducted ethnographic research with adherents of the movement. Owens helped clarify that the chant of "Black Supremacy" often heard on the lips of Rastafari ought to be understood in terms of repatriation to and the glorification of Africa, not as a racist reversal of the militancy and violence associated with White Supremacy, a portrait that was being painted of Rastafari in much media during the early

decades after its inception (King 1998: 50; Murrell 1998: 432) and supported by previous scholarship (Simpson 1955a: 1955b). Note here, that in a later article from the 1980s, Simpson revises his stance on the anti-white attitude of Rastafari, citing Owen's previous work (1976) as a key influence for this modification (1985: 287). According to Murrell, the works of Barrett, Nettleford, and Owens basically constituted the common academic authorities on Rastafari prior to the 1990s (1998: 430-432).

The late-70s and 1980s, however, unfolded a plethora of scholarship on Rastafari. These works can be distributed into two broad categories: ones that broach the issues of the Rastafari Diaspora in the context of globalization, with particular emphases on reggae music and other art forms as tools of dissemination, and a second group that approaches Rastafari in the context of postmodern and feminist studies, with specific attention on the role of Rasta women in the community. Many of these studies arrive in tandem with large outmigrations of Caribbean people to the United States, Canada, and the UK. Naming the gamut of these works would prove protracted for the purposes of this literature review,⁴³ but naming a few contributions from this era should enhance the overall picture.

Ernest Cashmore's *Rastaman: The Rastafarian Movement in England* (1979) represents a new age of committed scholarship on issues surrounding the emergence of Rastafari in an increasing number of countries around the world. Cashmore connects Rastafari to the Black Power movement and Ethiopianism while distinguishing between the political emancipation spoken of by British Rastas versus the ongoing call for repatriation and reparations voiced by their Jamaican counterparts. Derek Bishton's *Black Heart Man* (1986) is also worthy of mention since it represents the first work on Rastafari to explore in detail its ideological connections with historical figures of (though the terms are not employed) resistance and persistence in Jamaica: the Maroons, Sam Sharpe, Paul Bogle, Alexander Bedward, and Marcus Garvey. Only with peace and justice scholar Horace Campbell's work, *Rasta and Resistance* (1987), however, were some of the immediate struggles, as well as social and political upheavals, from which Rastafari was born made known to an international audience. With regard to Rastafari and the feminist discourse, the works of Maureen Rowe ("The Woman in Rastafari," 1980), Barbara Makeda Lee ("What Is a Rastaman?" 1982), Carole Yawney ("Moving with the Dawtas of Rastafari," 1987), and Imani Tafari-Ama ("An Historical Analysis of Grassroots Resistance in Jamaica," 1989)

⁴³ See Murrell 1998b: 432-436 for more details.

among others have contributed invaluablely to denoting Rastafari as the voice of feminism in Jamaica. A number of Yawney's other works, "Lions in Babylon: The Rastafarians of Jamaica as a Visionary Movement" (1978) and "Don't Vex then Pray: The Methodology of Initiation Fifteen Years Later" (1985), are also frequently referenced in the literature.

Only in more recent works has there been an effort to overtly present the diversity of the movement, moving away from the older tendency to represent Rastafari as a monolith. In this regard, William F. Lewis' historical work *Soul Rebels* (1993) borrows some of the theoretical foundations of liminality and postmodern social theory and avoids reducing Rastafari to an economic or political movement or a millennial cult. Next, Barry Chevannes' *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology* (1994) is another seminal work. Although his graduate and doctoral research on Rastafari had been available several years earlier ("Jamaican Lower Class Religion," 1971: 100-129; "Social and Ideological Origins of the Rastafari Movement in Jamaica," 1989), Chevannes' book explores the relationship of the movement to the historical figures presented in the aforementioned Bishton (1986), while paying particular attention to African sources of inspiration. The result is a history of Rastafari that elaborates significantly on previous efforts. Chevannes ultimately designates the Rastafari worldview as a sort of "revivalism" (1994: ix).

With relation to this study, the collection of essays, *Chanting Down Babylon* (ed. by Murrell, Spencer, and McFarlane 1998) represents a wealth of research. Uniting the work of some of the leading scholars of Rastafari, the chapters of this book address issues such as the traditional African influences present in Rastafari spirituality, Rastafari hermeneutics, and the development of Rastafari theology. Other valuable works in this vein are theologian Johnson-Hill's *I-Sight: The World of Rastafari* (1995) that explores issues of diversity, liminality, and hybridity as well as sociologist of religion Ennis Barrington Edmonds' *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers* (2003) that uses a similar conceptual framework to explore the impact that Rastafari has had on Jamaican culture in general. H el ene Lee's vital contribution to the Rastafari corpus, *Le Premier Rasta* (1999), a history centred around the figure of Leonard Howell, not only explores many of the historical aspects of Rastafari from a postcolonial perspective, but also further examines the issues of hybridity and liminality in relation to the movement. The work of John P. Homiak, such as "Movements of Jah People: From Soundscapes to Mediascape" (1999), that focuses on Rastology as a liminal phenomena within various media is also worth mentioning in regard to this literature review.

Finally, two works have recently been published that focus on Rastafari and globalization. *Rastafari: A Universal Philosophy in the Third Millennium* (2006) includes contributions from Warner Zips, Barbara Makeda Blake Hannah, Rupert Lewis, Stephen D. Glazier, and Barry Chevannes. The recent special issue of *IDEAZ*, “The Globalization of Rastafari” (2008), unites the work of several contemporary scholars including Richard Salter, Ian Boxill, Michael Barnett, and Nathaniel Samuel Murrell. In addition to the scholarship of Rastafari adherents included in these works, as an explicit instance of what I call “writing with the Other,” both of the latter volumes include contributions from poet Mutabaruka, an honorary voice in the growing “Rasta Academy” (Murrell 1998b).

Based on my analysis, the main concerns of Rastafari scholarship today continue to revolve around issues of liminality and hybridity, resistance and persistence, even if the terms are not always explicitly employed. The trend towards studying recent international forms of Rastafari that embody further hybridic elements as the movement is exported and settles into diverse foreign contexts has also persisted; to name but a few: the US (Hepner 1998a; 1998b), Japan (Sterling 2010), England (Van Dijk 1998: 179-184), Ghana (Middleton 2006; Savishinsky 1994; White 2007), Ethiopia (Gomes 2010; 2011), Dominica (Salter 2005), Cuba (Davis: 2008; Hansing 2001; Pollard and Davis 2006), New Zealand (Douglas and Boxill 2008; Van Dijk 1998: 193-195), South Africa (Oosthuizen 1993). Overall, the Rastafari call for social action has generally been echoed in the work of its scholars.

3.5 Conclusion to Literature Review

As mentioned, no work exists that specifically focuses on the naziritism of either *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* or Rastafari. Beyond the formulation of a relevant theoretical framework and methodological approach, one of the most challenging parts towards completion of this work was getting through the enormous body of work that exists on both Rastafari and the Shembe Church. As such, the treatment of the secondary literature is quite terse, though I have tried to show the relative weight of some of the primary texts in relation to the study. In the interest of balance, I have provided a largely synthetic review of the literature related to Rastafari, while I have furthered a few concerns related to the insider / outsider dilemma in the section on scholarly texts for *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. I have included a complete list of all works cited and consulted in the Bibliography, Discography, and Filmography sections of this work.

4. Qualitative Anthropological Field Research Methodology

As mentioned, both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* represent two “postcolonial” religious movements. Their adherents and members are often in dialogue with (though the exact terminology may not be employed) the conceptual oscillations between modernity and indigeneity, resistance and persistence, and, in some cases, hybridity and liminality. They also represent movements largely interested in sharing their messages with a worldwide audience. After having read the literature on postcolonial anthropology, I was careful to reflect on the ethical matters of my field work. Since both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* are engaged with the Bible, an artefact introduced by colonialism, and since their followings are actively in dialogue with postcolonial issues, it seemed that, as a western scholar, my foray into their universes would not necessarily be destructive, and hence ethically acceptable. In fact, Bhabha (1994) argues that today’s understanding of ethnography would render studies on heretofore isolated self-reliant tribal groups incompatible with ethical considerations regarding transference and dominance. Where such communities may remain, I echo that we ought not interfere, lest we continue to engage in a form of narcissism that accepts “class as the glass of history” (Bhabha 1994: 222).

For example, aside from Victor Turner’s influential contributions in “liminality” theory, which will be touched upon in the following section, his statement that his research group’s “entree to performances, and access to exegesis, was no doubt helped by the fact that, like most anthropological field workers, we distributed medicines, bandaged wounds, and [...] injected with serum persons bitten by snakes” (1969: 9) resounds so paternalistic against the reality of religious communities such as Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* who have consciously eschewed Western medicine as a force contrary to their sense of indigeneity. With this action, Turner has at some level contradicted his own call for “indigenous exegesis,” on the part of the ethnographer, to attempt to experience the religious realities of Others from the “inside” (1969: 14).

The example of medicine represents a rather pertinent reflection with regard to the two groups involved in this study. Stocked with medical vials, my entrance into the universes of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* would have marked an egregious methodological error, no doubt alienating me from the members of the community as they generally avoid the use of modern medicine. Note that healing, for Rastafari, is generally associated with the world of

natural herbs,⁴⁴ while for *amaNazaretha*, the Holy Spirit of Shembe represents the ultimate healing power.⁴⁵ As Choy so critically asserts: “Unlike other economic, political, and educational agendas in the colony, the popular conceptualization of Western medicine as a universal humanitarian effort to save lives continues to make it difficult for scholars and others to critique its racialist and exploitive effects” (2003: 19). For many people concerned with living their lives in a spirit of self-reliant indigeneity, modern medicine endures as but one of many westernizing forces that ought to be resisted. The Amazonian protests against industrial development remain another contemporary testament to the indigenous commitment to living in harmony with nature and away from the markers of modernity (Earle 2009; Hughes 2010). Closer to home, in Canada, the Oka Crisis (1990) and Idle No More (2012-2013) represent continued voices of indigeneity echoing a scarred imperial history. Still, we must accept that colonialism happened, leaving consumer products as diverse as Bibles, guns, and Big Macs in its wake; as a consequence, the rest of the world has been forced to adapt, while our connections to indigeneity continue to dissipate.⁴⁶

For reasons such as those mentioned above, postcolonial approaches have questioned the merits and demerits of the contemporary ethnographic endeavour abroad. As a product of feminist and postmodern discourses, the reflexive school of anthropology has emphasized the role of the ethnographer in relation to power and play:

All ethnography is, at one level, exploitation. The ethnographer is asking something of the people being studied that is going to help his or her career, and can offer very little to the people in return. Being a university-educated academic, usually articulate, invariably confident and essentially [sic] in control, gives the ethnographer considerable power in most societies. (Stringer 2008: 28)

This type of poignant self-reflexivity has helped moved contemporary ethnography well beyond the “choice between social uplift and intellectual zoology” (Spickard 2002: 239), but serious challenges remain. Put simply, as in the Claude Lévi-Strauss tradition (1955), ethnography

⁴⁴ See Chapter 2, Sections 2.3.1 and 2.4.1 for details.

⁴⁵ See Chapter 2, Section 2.4.2 and Chapter 4, Section 1.3 for details.

⁴⁶ On this point, Owens, for instance, references the work of Eric Williams (1944) to reiterate “the connections between British capitalism and the enslavement of Africans. The wealth accrued to Europe was the other side of the barbarism and destruction unleashed on Africa. The African countryside, especially along the West Coast, was depopulated as the European nation states set about organising one of the biggest transportation of slaves in the annals of world history. The forts dotted along the coastline of West Africa today are bloodstained records of a process which initiated the present underdevelopment and poverty in Africa” (1987: 12; cf. Diamond 1997).

continues to acknowledge that each study will intrinsically change both the researcher and the communities being researched.

The contemporary ethnographer must therefore assess whether the project merits both the use of resources and the potential changes that will occur to both themselves and the communities under study. The assumption of objectivity has all but dissolved in ethnography today, but neutrality within the context of subjectivity, slippery as that is to define and execute, has emerged as tantamount (cf. Byrne 1997; Donovan 1990). In reaction to the hierarchical design of colonial and sociological approaches, we have now come to understand ethnography as something closer to a “social art form than a social science” (Brown 2002: 130), with both a strong self-involving narrative element (Stoller and Olkes 1989; Turner 1992) and “autobiographical aspect” (McCutcheon 1999: 9; cf. Foucault 1988). Researchers today become more integrated in the lives of those they study and include themselves more readily in their findings. Nonetheless, because of the enduring scars of colonialism and the hegemonic implications of neocolonialism, the choice of whether to actually engage in religious ethnography remains perhaps the greatest consideration; the researcher of today must ask: is religious ethnography helpful or harmful to the people I am studying?

With this question in place, I can now discuss a few specific qualitative field work strategies that were employed to access my primary research questions. My concerns were accessed via three ethnographic research methods: open participant observation, semistructured interviews, informal focus groups. My main qualitative research was conducted over the course of a year (October 2010 to September 2011). I spent the first six months in South Africa directly followed by another six in Jamaica. I visited the province of KwaZulu-Natal during the South African summer, as *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*'s most important festival occurs every year in January, a pilgrimage to Mount Nhlankakazi to pay reverence to Shembe. I then travelled to Jamaica to be present during Haile Selassie's birthday celebrations on July 23rd. This schedule was chosen so that these dates would coincide and, if all went well, provide enough lead time for me to familiarize myself with the communities prior to these major events.

I conducted a triangulation of open participant observation, semistructured interviews, and informal focus groups. My original goals were to record at least 15 interviews, 15 focus groups, and 30 observation sessions in each country. The minable primary data that I obtained far surpassed my expectations. The 237 hours of audio recordings from South Africa include 40

interviews with 26 adherents, 20 focus groups, and 60 observation sessions of services and ceremonies; I also captured 1,100 photos and video clips in South Africa. From the 175 hours of audio recordings in Jamaica, I obtained 25 interviews with 17 participants, 20 focus groups, and 40 participant observation sessions of services, ceremonies, and gatherings; there are also a total of 400 photos and video clips related to Rastafari in Jamaica. In addition to my field research in Jamaica, I also had the opportunity to conduct scattered field work with Rastafari in Montreal prior to my departure (2008-2009). The material from Montreal consists of eight interviews with six adherents and five observation sessions. The research participants from South Africa, Jamaica, and Montreal are of both sexes, from 18 to 70 years of age, include a variety of adherents from central figures to recent converts, and represent a wide socioeconomic spectrum. I used a Sony IC Recorder ICD-UX70 (3.5" x 1") for audio files and a Fujifilm FinePix XP (3.5" x 2") for photography and videography; both these devices are durable, user-friendly, small, and inconspicuous. When I took field notes, I made sure I was more or less alone, in order to lessen the impact of non-participatory writing as an alienating act (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1955; Muller 1999: 9; Tyler 1986: 128).

Though I was able to surpass my minimum research objectives in both countries, two factors help account for the numerical discrepancies. First, in my experience, Rastafari, though among the most hospitable people in Jamaica, are generally more suspicious of academics than *amaNazaretha*. Though I could not claim to have instigated outright hostility, previous research on Rastafari has alluded to the myriad challenges that scholars have faced in the field (Barrett 1968: 21-23; Chevannes 1989b: 17-36; 1990: iv-xi; Gomes 2011; Lee 1999; Lewis 1993: vii-viii; Simpson 1998). On the whole, however, let me stress that I feel as though I was shown great kindness and generosity by the Rastafari communities I visited. The second factor relates to Rastafari as a more decentralized group than *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Gathering information about multiple streams required markedly more repetitions of the ethnographic entry process—over the same duration of time (six months)—in order to establish trust in each new setting.

As for the research on *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, fewer scholars have explicitly addressed their field research methodologies, opting instead for studies framed as historical, literary, or theological analyses. Yet, this trend perhaps betrays the pretences of “classical” scholarship. Take Oosthuizen’s work, for example. As Hexham elucidates:

The mistake Oosthuizen made when he published *The Theology of a South African Messiah* was that he allowed his work to be governed by conformity to the norms of literary scholarship. Thus, in the book he appears to deduce the theology of the amaNazarites from published texts without reference to his knowledge of their oral culture. Therefore, he exposed himself to the charge that he imposed a Western theological framework on the texts.

In fact, Oosthuizen based his conclusions on the results of several years of fieldwork involving participant observation and extensive interviews with many amaNazarites. But, because of his classical training Oosthuizen lacked confidence to publish a book based on such methods. Instead he chose to offer an interpretation of amaNazarite religion which *appeared* to be based on written documents. In reality he was interpreting the *Hymns of the amaNazaretha* in light of information gleaned from informants. As a result his interpretation reflected the views of the people he interviewed in the 1960's. (1997: 364)

Thankfully, many innovations within the field of self-reflexive ethnography have enabled the more “human” aspects of the research and the study to be factored in alongside observation.

Of the scholars of the Shembe Church, it is seemingly only Muller who devotes any significant space to field research methodology (1999: 4-19). Needless to say, Muller's experience as a white South African woman studying a neighbouring Zulu church of which she had only recently become aware would have a number of implicit differences with my encounters as a male Indo-Canadian born and raised in Montreal, Canada. Although Muller cited her “Shembe is the Way” bumper sticker as a facilitating factor in her study (1999: 8), I did not want to make the same assumption since I knew that I wanted to conduct field work with members of various factions. Perhaps the other factions did not use this bumper sticker? Indeed, during my field research with the Ekuphakameni members, I learned that they do not subscribe to that same motto popularized by the Ebuhleni faction. Thus, driving into Ekuphakameni with “Shembe is the Way” on my bumper would have marked me as an Ebuhleni sympathizer, likely alienating me during that leg of the research.

What follows is a synopsis of the approaches I utilized in my field work with an indication of how I intend to present the findings in the chapters to come with regard to analysis and presentation of primary qualitative data. A number of general and specific qualitative methodological approaches provided starting points (Barrett 1968: 21-23; Brown 2002; Chevannes 1989b: 17-36; 1990: iv-xi; Gobo 2008; Gomes 2011; LeCompte and Schensul 1999; Lee 1999; Lessard-Hébert, Goyette, and Boutin 1996; Lewis 1993: vii-viii; McCutcheon 1999; Muller 1999: 4-19; Russell 1996; Schensul et al. 1999; Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte 1999a; 1999b; Turner 1969; Turner 1992; Simpson 1998; Spickard 2002; Stoller and Olkes

1989; Stringer 2008). Without delving into which particular points I agreed with and disagreed with, which advice was relevant or not, I deem it more direct to simply present my qualitative field research methodology and allow it speak for itself, especially since I maintain that the success of this phase of the project can be mainly credited to a number of methods I uniquely developed in tandem with my larger theoretical and methodological concerns and literature review.

The particularity of my research schedule and goals necessitated the innovation of original approaches that went well beyond the readings. The technology available to me (as compared to ethnographers even a few decades ago), also facilitated much of the work. I consciously employed the methods and techniques I had developed and adapted them as required during the course of the field research. Still, as much hinged on timing and circumstance, while other aspects related to preparation, I present them here in an organic, self-reflexive manner in keeping with current ethnographic standards.

4.1 Open Participant Observation

My experience demonstrates that effective participant observation occurs when a researcher submits as fully as possible to the expectations of those encountered during the field work. Learning what these expectations are represents one side of the endeavour; carrying them out, the other. Whether respecting a diet, donning certain attire, walking barefoot, kneeling in prayer, singing, dancing, or participating in rituals, I worked my hardest to conform, wherever and whenever I could.

In fact, my preparations began in Montreal before my year abroad. During my initial field research efforts in Montreal (2008-2009), I got the distinct sense that my not having dreadlocks became a barrier to talking to central figures at Rastafari gatherings. Barrett has expressed the same sentiment with regard to beard growth (1968: 21). My research from Montreal thus consists of mostly peripheral figures, but the insight gained has been valuable nonetheless. Most recently, much of this information was essential towards building a polythetic four-point orthodox-secular Rastafari typology (Chakravarty, forthcoming).

Thus, aware that I would be encountering individuals who likely understand themselves as Nazirites and therefore primarily distinguish themselves by their refusal to cut their hair and/or beard, I had begun growing out my hair and beard several months before travelling to

South Africa. Although some readers might be quick to judge me an impostor, or others (gods forbid) that I was preemptively “going native,” my decision stemmed from a sincere desire to conduct an analytical form of “living exegesis.” This approach can, moreover, be described as a critical self-reflexive method that helps to establish “proper rapport” (Barrett 1968: 21). It is worth recalling that in participant observation, “*l’observateur devient lui-même le principal instrument d’observation*” (Lessard-Hébert, Goyette, and Boutin 1996: 102). Participant observation is an attempt to understand the social world of Others from the inside while understanding that the researcher is also being studied in turn. Having looked at photos of *amaNazaretha* and Rastafari online and in books, I noticed that the long-bearded *amaNazaretha* groomed their hair, while the majority of Rastas in Jamaica wore dreadlocks. The timing of my sojourns meant that my hair would be long enough to start knotting by the time I arrived in Jamaica. In this regard, though it would ultimately be clear to the communities concerned that there was a Canadian researcher among them, grooming (or not grooming) myself to blend in was a premeditated decision to help ease the process of gathering of data. In short, these simple attentions to my own appearance helped communicate that something about my presence among the adherents was sincere in intention.

With regard to hair growth, I believe that my hypothesis was proven correct. After my two six-month periods of field research, I stayed on in Jamaica from November 2011 to April 2012. I rented a house on the South Coast to begin the transcription of the audio material I had obtained. Although I was not technically engaged in field research during this period, I kept growing my dreadlocks. Towards the end of my stay, the dreadlocks had become dirty as I had never really learned how to properly care for them and I decided to cut them off. In so doing, I also noticed that the customary acknowledgement one with dreadlocks in Jamaica receives from hitherto unknown Rastas also vanished.

Also, while I am not sure of how much interest it may be, I nonetheless feel obliged to mention that I specifically chose my prescription eyeglass frames so I would appear more inviting.⁴⁷ The fact that they are photochromic lenses would not only be practical for me, but since tinted glasses are far from novelty in the contexts of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*

⁴⁷ Based on my aesthetic sensibilities and those of a few people close to me.

today, I had no reason to believe they would impede the study.⁴⁸ I have included Figures 3 and 4 to help illustrate how I moulded the “principal instrument of observation” to the task at hand.

In the field, I was consistently open about who I was (PhD Candidate from Canada) and what I was doing abroad (learning about *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* / Rastafari). I also participated as wholeheartedly as possible within the context of my asymmetric ignorance. I believe the latter was minimized by the extensive textual research I conducted before going overseas in addition to the lessons I learned during my qualitative field research in Montreal. Based on the advice of my dissertation supervisor, Solange Lefebvre, I read a lot, but I left some things unread until after the field research, in order to leave room for a few surprises.⁴⁹ It was also essential to be open to constant methodological adaptations to new situations. Depending on the circumstances, my excursions generally ranged from half-a-day to four days.

Before moving into some of the specifics of the field research endeavour in each country, I should also mention that the manner in which I chose to transport myself also became a conscious part of my research methodology for a number of reasons, both logistical and related to the reliability of the data. In South Africa, getting around the various remote sites without a motor vehicle would have proved virtually impossible. After an initial meeting with Nkosinathi Sithole in Durban, it seemed that having a car in the context of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* would not have rendered me too conspicuous. In this regard, while partially based on my budgetary concerns, I rented an old, but solid Volkswagen from the 1980s (lovingly dubbed “The Beast”) to cover the sometimes eight to ten hour drives to very remote areas (Figure 5). As many *amaNazaretha* arrive to worship services by motor vehicle, often in better condition than mine, I do not believe that my access to a car hindered the reliability of the research. If it somehow distinguished me, I believe that the impact was negligible. In fact, as I openly shared the car with members of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, the vehicle itself became a sort of “office-on-wheels” in which I was generously granted hours of interview and focus group recordings. Quite frankly, among *amaNazaretha*, my straight hair probably indicated more about my background than my car. The case with transportation was different in Jamaica, however, where I surmised that having access to a vehicle would have positioned me less favourably towards the study. The statement of power that a motorcar would make at many of the Rasta gatherings would have

⁴⁸ Those eyeglasses are currently in a state of disrepair.

⁴⁹ Sometime in the autumn of 2008; exact date unknown.

rendered me too conspicuous. Like most of the adherents, I generally arrived to the settlements and gatherings by route taxi or foot, or by hitchhiking, a common practice in Jamaica (Figure 6). In fact, all of the sites I visited were generally accessible by route taxi, and perhaps a short hike up a hill. In short, the manner by which I arrived at the various sites had embedded within it as much meaning as my appearance as I visited the *amaNazaretha* and Rastafari sites.

Overall, as I conducted the research, I consciously tailored my approaches to suit each context, as best as I could, to help minimize the gaze upon me as a Western scholar. The full impact that my presence as a myopic, male, Indo-Canadian-anglophone-Montrealer-of-Bengali-origins affiliated with a French university in Quebec had on the study,⁵⁰ I leave for someone else to discern.⁵¹ For my part, in relation to this study, the relative ambiguity and multiplicity of my identity has proven quite beneficial as it most likely facilitated the dispelling of stereotypes about me as a researcher that a more “defined” identity may have caused in the minds of the adherents I encountered.

4.1.1 Field Research in South Africa

In South Africa, noted expert on African Initiated Churches, Gerald West, agreed to act as my Host Supervisor. After a few orientation meetings, West placed me in touch with Nkosinathi Sithole, who I have already cited as a pivotal figure in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* scholarship. I had the good fortune of finding Sithole with some relative downtime and he agreed to act as my research facilitator for my excursions into the field for the next few months.

Once in the field, I could sense my presence as someone visibly of Indian descent having an observer-effect on my surroundings. During the very first sermon I attended in Estcourt (November 6, 2010), my presence in the temple served as a catalyst for the presiding minister to discuss the early history of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* when it was quite common to see Indians among the followers of Shembe, a statement corroborated by Heuser (2002; 2003). Take the following spontaneous exchange at eMakhosini Temple, for instance, when an unidentified member approached me:

⁵⁰ My background as a poet, musician, and photographer also provided further points of reference during the field research for my observations, discussions, and interactions. A few of these cross-overs are evident throughout the work. I have included this footnote at the suggestion of my dissertation supervisor, Solange Lefebvre.

⁵¹ For the record, I do not consider myself Rasta, *umNazaretha*, a Nazirite, or a Nazorean. In fact, I subscribe to no particular religion in my personal life.

Unidentified: Eh, you've got a nice dress {referring to my white surplice}.⁵² Ya. It was 1969, at Ekuphakameni there was so many Indians.

KGC: A long time ago?

Unidentified: Ya, a long time ago.

KGC: I read about that.⁵³

Unidentified: Now, you are a new generation.⁵⁴

These types of conversations provided glimpses into how members of the congregation were viewing me.

As I came to don the white surplice (*umNazaretha*) and fur crown (*umqhele*) while walking barefoot (Figure 3), I also made a sincere effort to learn the hymns while scarring my knees in hours of prayer. I also fasted when required. I argue that these techniques, along with my general demeanour, facilitated my movements within the events that I attended. I believe that these methodological techniques were successful since I was sometimes greeted as a convert as I walked among *amaNazaretha*.

Out of the tens of thousands of *amaNazaretha* I encountered during my six months, I was made to feel unwelcome only once by a certain member, and fleetingly at that. The antagonism in fact came upon news of my status as a university researcher. Generally however, I found *amaNazaretha* very hospitable to my ethnographic process. Recording, photographing, and filming was generally allowed, even encouraged, within the Ebuhleni faction. At the public gatherings of Ebuhleni *amaNazaretha*, I rarely stood out as the only one recording. Both *amaNazaretha* and journalists could be seen photographing and filming at many of the larger events associated with the Ebuhleni faction. At Ekuphakameni, I must admit however, that I was conspicuous in this regard. The more intimate settings captured within the Ekuphakameni faction necessitated my explicitly asking permission from senior members in conjunction with Vukile Shembe to film, photograph, or record.⁵⁵

The insight gained with Sithole through the various Sabbath services, sacred dances, and other events I attended, culminating in the Ebuhleni pilgrimage to Mount Nhlankakazi, proved invaluable when I started to attend services on my own at the even more austere holy village of Ekuphakameni in February 2011. Although *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* services are conducted in

⁵² In the transcriptions from my field research, words that appear in braces {} are action or explanatory notes that I have included to provide necessary context.

⁵³ cf. Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2004; Du Toit 1996; Heuser 2002; 2003

⁵⁴ Participant observation, eMakhosini Temple (Between Morning and Afternoon Sabbath Services), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 13, 2010

⁵⁵ See Chapter 3, Section 2.2.

Zulu, I was able to follow with the aid of Mthethwa's recent translation of the Shembe hymnal and prayer book that presents the original Zulu and English translation side-by-side (Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]). The book itself became a topic of conversation with *amaNazaretha* on a number of occasions.

By the end of the field research period, I could sing most of the Sabbath hymnal in Zulu. Today, though I cannot claim to be able to hold a conversation in Zulu, I can report that I am able to pronounce quite a few words. I also learned to read what would be relevant for the exegesis conducted in Chapter 2. Much of the accomplishment in South Africa can be credited to Sithole's facilitation. Sithole has also translated several of my audio recordings of sermons from Zulu into English, a service he has rendered me with great kindness on his part.

4.1.2 Field Research in Jamaica

The Jamaican leg of my research endeavour was complicated by the unfortunate passing of Barry Chevannes on November 5, 2010 while I was still in South Africa. I was honoured to have received his commitment to be my Host Supervisor for my future dates in Jamaica (April – September 2011). I first received news of his illness from Roderick Hewitt, African Diasporic theologies scholar at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in October 2010, shortly after a meeting with Gerald West (Figure 7). By the time I arrived in Kingston a few months later, I had no point of contact. As the travel funding to Jamaica required a new Host Supervisor, I was presented with the additional challenge of conducting research in remote areas of Jamaica while finding another busy professor to lend me their time, yet again.

For the first month, I decided to rent a room at a guest house in the Blue Mountains near the School of Vision Rasta camp. The Iyaric I had learned during my previous research with Rastafari in Montreal (2008-2009) proved to be an asset. In fact, as the School of Vision encourages foreigners to visit their settlement, I sometimes found myself in situations where I was asked to interpret for either English or French speaking visitors. Fortunately, about a month into my Jamaica trip, the introduction of Rastafari scholar Michael Barnett through a mutual acquaintance ultimately resolved my Host Supervisor predicament. By this point, I was fortunate enough to have been given the opportunity to move into the home of Mutabaruka, a central figure of Rastafari today. Once I mentioned to Barnett that "Muta" had taken an interest in my

project, Barnett's response made it clear that a visiting scholar of Rastafari theology could ask for no better base of operations in Jamaica.

In my opinion, Mutabaruka has largely taken over the mantle of Rastafari prophecy since the death of Bob Marley in 1981. Muta is further distinguished by being a nonaffiliated Rasta whose network extends from the grassroots, to the many houses or mansions, to the news and entertainment industry, and the academy. Over a period of four months, Muta graciously kept me informed about upcoming Rasta events—and often drove me there. In fact, apart from concerts and shows, a good number of these outings included various lectures and talks about Rastafari held at UWI where a network of scholars from the modern Rasta Academy, such as Michael Barnett, Jalani Niihah, and Clinton Hutton, were usually present.⁵⁶

While residing at Mutabaruka's near Kingston, I also ventured out during opportune intervals to conduct research with the Bobo Shanti in Bull Bay, the Nyabinghi in Scotts Pass, the Twelve Tribes of Israel in Kingston, and the Howellites at the ruins of Pinnacle. I spent my last month on the South Coast of Jamaica where I lived among an eclectic array of Rastafari and other locals in a small fishing village. Overall, I would have to submit that my appearance as a dreadlocked Indian granted me greater access to Rastafari than some other scholars in the past. In fact, in a few situations where a Rasta mockingly adopted a "white people" voice, I think the freedom to express themselves in that manner was facilitated by having no white observers around. As the observational situations in which I found myself in Jamaica were usually more intimate than much of what I had experienced in South Africa, I always made sure that the congregation or individual was explicitly aware whether or not I was recording, photographing, or filming. In some situations, recording and photography were simply not allowed. With Rastafari, merely asking permission in this regard, like in many real world situations, amounted to basic courtesy.

Finally (as I suppose it is worth mentioning), while not all Rastafari consume marijuana or ganja, many do. Some scholars have discussed whether partaking in the ritual smoking of ganja by the researcher enhances or hinders ethnographic reliability (Johnson-Hill 1995: 48;

⁵⁶ One worthy note of comparison already between Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*: whereas in Jamaica my open participant observations brought me into university auditoriums where I interacted with a growing number of academics who are also adherents of Rastafari, the instance of *amaNazaretha* studying their own church in university settings are still quite few; only Nkosinathi Sithole (2005; 2010), as well as Bongani Mthethwa and Mthembeni Mpanza as part of Vilakazi's team on *Shembe: The Revitalization of African Society* (1986), can be considered in this regard.

2003: 4; Tanis 2010; Yawney 1978: 139-141; 1985: 12-14). While Yawney innovated the field research methodology of “ganja mnemonics” to reconstruct her reasoning sessions with Rastafari while under the influence (1985), other scholars have been more cautious to partake or have simply not addressed the matter explicitly; but no clear answer to the question exists. Tanis offers the following reflection on the issue, for example:

This is a delicate situation because whether I participated [in ganja use] or not the research would be compromised in some form. However, I feel like I made the right decision in not partaking, because the little lost by not being able to appreciate the full Rastafari experience was made up for in keeping a sharp mind. (2010: 13)

While I certainly believe that Tanis was not actively engaging in marijuana use, from a critical perspective, I nonetheless ponder the full validity of the statement regarding not being “effected.” For my part, I would argue that any serious anthropological study of Rastafari will invariably bring the scholar into a climate where the potency of the fumes alone could easily initiate a psychotropic effect. I would even suggest that if someone cannot tolerate profuse ganja smoke in the air, they are probably not well suited to conducting qualitative field work with Rastafari. In my experiences, no Rasta ever seemed offended or otherwise put off by my polite refusals. Then again, I also believe that my demeanour, appearance, and interactions leading to these situations foremost contributed to my general acceptance at Rastafari gatherings. As ganja is not necessarily an “absolute” of Rastafari (Chakravarty, forthcoming), if approached properly, an ethnographer can get through their field research without smoking. But, at the same time—if they are accepted deep into the culture, they should expect to come into incidental contact with the herbal smoke, sometimes for hours on end.

4.1.3 Conclusion to Open Participant Observation

In conclusion, in order to conduct my open participant observations, I had to master a wide variety of skills and constantly adjust to often arduous and unfamiliar situations. The research in South Africa contains material from both the Ebuhleni and Ekuphakameni factions of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Few modern scholars of the Shembe Church have put much focus on Ekuphakameni. In Jamaica, I was able to gather significant findings with the School of Vision, Bobo Shanti, and Nyabinghi in addition to so much insight gathered while a guest at Mutabaruka’s house. While I first cursed the delay that pushed my field research back one month as I waited for my South African visa to go through, in the end, though I set conservative

research goals, I am quite grateful that the timing of my encounters worked out in a manner even better than I could have planned outright.

4.2 Semistructured Interviews

Semistructured interviewing is based on the use of an “interview guide” and is useful when the researcher gets only “one chance to interview someone” (Russell 2006: 212). Though I was able to conduct follow-up interviews with a number of participants, the transitory nature of both the research and the adherents of the movements meant that I often met a particular interviewee just once. Broached themes included the general background of the adherent; the meaning of adherence; rites of passage; the significance of hair, diet, and consumption; nonviolence; attitudes and practices regarding death, the transmission of values, guidance—both oral and textual, and the Laws of the Nazirite.

It was imperative in the interviews that the issue of naziritism, along with any other specific theme, was first raised by the participant in order to help counter my research biases. I began my interviews with broad lines of inquiry. “Please tell me about yourself.” “What does *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* / Rastafari mean to you?” Once one of my themes of interest came up naturally in the conversation, I would allow myself to ask more pointed questions on the subject. My approach also left room for unexpected themes to emerge in the interviews.

Since the information I desired was of a more thematic disposition, I made sure to avoid the “snowball sampling” technique in the “recruitment” of interviewees. A snowball model in which “respondents are selected not from a sampling frame but from the friendship network of existing members of the sample” (Salganik and Heckathorn 2004: 196) is better suited to obtaining information of a generational or contextual nature, as exposed by Chevannes’ infamous “Barnes bias” (1994: x). Bearing these factors in mind, tautological as it may be, worth mentioning once: no ethnographic research can ever adequately account for the portion of a population who would rather just be left alone.

Whether approaching or interacting with potential interview candidates, I presented the following basic information: my name and my position as a researcher and PhD Candidate at the University of Montreal in Religious Sciences. I then followed a number of basic guidelines. First, I notified the candidate that I would like, with their permission, to make an audio recording (mp3) of the interview for easy reference. I let the participant know that an interview could last

anywhere from 45 minutes to 1 ½ hours. Where the interviews carried on beyond this time in a climate of mutual enjoyment, I allowed them to do so with the participant's consent. Some of the longest interviews I obtained are over three hours in length. Next, I let the participant know that the interviews would be transcribed by myself on a word processor. To help ensure anonymity, both the audio files and the transcripts are coded as follows: sex / region of origin / age at time of interview, e.g. F/Port Shepstone/23, M/Papine/43. Also, any information that could possibly identify the general candidates will not be included in the transcripts (e.g. place of employment, the names of other people mentioned in the interview). If the interviewee was a public figure, however, I asked for their permission to use their name. In either case, the audio files of the interviews will ultimately be destroyed after the findings have been thoroughly mined, or after seven years. For ethical reasons, I am the only person granted the privilege of listening to the recordings.

In accordance with the most contemporary anthropological practices, I also offered each interview candidate the opportunity to read any article or piece of writing prior to publication in which I have either cited or referenced their interview for further input. If upon reading the work the interviewee decides that they no longer want their words to be part of my findings, they maintain the right to disassociate themselves from the publication. Many of the participants waived this option. Other times, however, candidates would approach me. As I entered the various sites, from time to time, an adherent would, upon becoming inquisitive of my presence, request participation in my study. Such moments were each blessings towards the completion of this project and I would use the same protocols listed above.

Finally, I did not use consent forms requiring the signatures of participants, many of whom maintain a problematic attitude towards the markers of Western institutions and might be suspicious of the act of signing a piece of paper. Instead, after receiving verbal consent and upon completion of the interview, I would give each participant an information sheet about myself (including contact information) and the general lines of my study.⁵⁷ The information sheet conformed to seven categories: research objective, research participation, confidentiality, benefits and disadvantages, opt-out right, no indemnity, dissemination of results.

⁵⁷ Argument for verbal consent approved by *Comité plurifacultaire d'éthique de la recherche (CPÉR)*, Université de Montréal (July 8, 2010). See Appendix 1 for a copy of the information sheet I distributed to participants.

Though some scholars contest the hegemonic quality of writing in English, and others have advocated a strictly philological approach to comparative studies,⁵⁸ I decided to conduct the interviews in English for several reasons. First, English, as a second language, represents a linguistic point in common between Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Most Rastafari speak Iyoric as a first language, while the membership of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* is composed almost exclusively of first language Zulu speakers. Since English is an official language in both Jamaica and South Africa, however, most citizens living in these countries today, who possess at least a basic education, are sure to not only be able to understand English, but also be relatively proficient speaking their second language.

My hypothesis that the adherents would be able to adequately represent themselves in English proved valid. In fact, many of the participants spoke quite eloquently in English. This unilingual dynamic to interviewing mostly applied to my field work in South Africa, however. In Jamaica, the interviews often occurred with the participant speaking somewhere between Iyoric and English, a courtesy sometimes extended by Rastafari who are accustomed to talking with foreigners. Finally, as English is by far my strongest language, employing it gave me the opportunity to best process and represent my thoughts while allowing the participants ample room to speak for themselves in a second language. In this manner, as I have drawn on the voices of my participants, as a complement to the idea of reading with non-academic voices (Dube 2001), I have also engaged in a form of, what I have termed, “writing with the Other.”

With *amaNazaretha*, rather than presenting myself as an expert in Zulu, I deferred to the living members of the Shembe Church to enlighten me with their exegesis. In this regard, a number of dialogues with Nkosinathi Sithole are particularly invaluable towards understanding the hermeneutics of African Naziritism. Fortunately, much exegesis has already been done on *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* theology, but by focusing specifically on naziritism, I was able to bring new information to light.⁵⁹ Though many *amaNazaretha* today can effectively articulate their ideas in English, on two occasions Sithole interpreted the spoken Zulu into English during live interviews that I conducted with senior members who represent valuable eyewitnesses to the earlier days of the Shembe Church. Otherwise, I was able to conduct interviews with members of three of six factions currently in existence: Ebuhleni, Ekuphakameni, and Mpanza.

⁵⁸ See Sections 1.1 and 1.2 of this chapter.

⁵⁹ See Chapter 2 for details.

In Jamaica and Montreal, rather than stumble along in a language that does not come naturally for me to speak, I actually gained credibility with many Rastafari since my sincerity was usually evident when I spoke English. Moreover, my research experiences confirm that my speaking Iyoric would probably have come across as inauthentic, marking me as a Rastafari poseur rather than a serious scholar. With Rastafari in Jamaica, as it became clear that I understand Iyoric, several of the interviews occurred with me speaking in English and the participant primarily in Iyoric, or an adapted Iyoric including more English words or pronunciations that Rastafari speak for the inquisitive. In the interest of readability, in the presentation of the excerpts that appear from such transcripts, I have not translated so much as I have maintained the original grammatical forms (e.g. “him say” instead of “he said”) and generally transliterated the Iyoric Patois accent for English spelling in most cases (e.g. “this” for “dis”). My approach differs slightly from Richard C. Salter who, with presentation of Iyoric speech, writes that while it “would have been possible to transcribe the interview in Jamaican English, spelling Jamaican pronunciation phonetically and including non-Standard verb forms and usages,” instead edits for Standard English style and conventions in the interest of accessibility (2008a: 51). With my approach, I have also attempted to bring some sense of Iyoric rhythm to the transcription and translation processes while providing most of the words in Standard English spelling. As it would be beyond me to “correct” the grammar for the English interviews I conducted with first-language Zulu speakers in South Africa, so too, to the best of my ability, have I left the grammar intact for the Rastafari transcripts. Where a particular word or passage requires exegesis, I will present it in its Iyoric form. Not all, but many words in Iyoric stem directly from English and are generally comprehensible with a little decoding.

In short, my interview participants from Montreal, South Africa, and Jamaica comprise men and women from a wide variety of national, cultural, ethnic, economic, linguistic, and demographic backgrounds. Sometimes I ended up having conversations that could simply not have occurred in other contexts of my personal and professional life. In many other cases, I found my research hypotheses being reaffirmed. In almost every interview, the issue of Nazirites and the themes naziritism were invariably raised by the adherents of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* as central to spiritual identity construction. I remain grateful to all the interviewees who so graciously granted me their time.

4.3 Informal Focus Groups

While conducting participant observations and interviews, I gradually became a familiar face around certain sites. Over time, news of the entrance of a Western scholar into the gathering would eventually get around. I measured the moments where I found myself spontaneously surrounded by a small group of people (2-4) who wanted to discuss their theology and culture with me as an indication of the success of my approaches.

These informal focus groups invariably occurred after spending a considerable amount of time with each group, and I took it as a sign of trust and confidence. In some cases, the participants actually made it clear to me that they were only spending time with me because they had (over the course of time during which they were watching me) deemed my interest to be sincere and my purpose worthwhile. In these research situations, I would try not to steer the conversation unless a theme of interest arose.

Overall, the focus groups range from thirty minutes to over two hours. In the case of audio recording, photography, or filming, I was open and rendered all participants aware. I also respected the same basic procedural and ethical guidelines outlined in the previous section on interviewing.

4.4 Conclusion to Qualitative Anthropological Field Research Methodology

By employing these methodological approaches during my field research, I was able to procure a rich body of primary source material. It took me over a year to review, mine, and transcribe the 412 hours of audio recordings I had amassed. Apart from the material included in this work, enough remains for the subject of at least one or two additional articles outside the scope of this study. Much of what was expressed by the participants in my findings marks original information about Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* today, while other affirmations sometimes confirm and contradict previous scholarly findings about African Nazarites. The general girth of the findings serves as the framework for this study.

5. Conclusion to Theoretical Concerns, Methodological Approaches

Earlier in this chapter, I asked the question: “is religious ethnography helpful or harmful to the people I am studying?” We have looked at the implicit hegemony in previous approaches to comparative religious ethnography. I have acknowledged this legacy, in addition to previous scholarship on Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, and presented a few current approaches

from African and African Diasporic biblical scholarship in tandem with relevant Western scholarship and argued for “living hermeneutics and exegesis” as a suitable methodological approach to incorporate theoretical dialogues on “structural liminality” and “religious hybridity” to describe “oscillations of resistance to modernity and the persistence of indigeneity” within this study of African Naziritism. I have also demonstrated how my theoretical and methodological concerns contributed to my triangulated qualitative anthropological field research methodology (open participant observation, semistructured interviews, informal focus groups) in tandem with my literature review. I have concluded that, at best, in relation to Africa and the African Diaspora in particular, the religious ethnographer of today can serve as a subjective, respectful medium between the assumptions of traditional Western scholarship and the realities of theological and cultural traditions in the Two-Thirds world, neither exoticizing nor demonizing, but by presenting the new hermeneutical frameworks as bases for further discourses and practical applications.

While I have not had the opportunity to reflect on my Jamaican experience in the same manner, permit me to close this chapter with some words I wrote for a presentation entitled, “Naziritism, Hybridity, and Liminality in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* (Field Report)”⁶⁰ which I believe best encapsulates the complex interaction between what (as ethnographers) we are reading, what we are doing in the field, and how we go about it:

First, suffice it to say my situation is complicated by the fact that I am a scholar who has emanated from the West to study an African religion. I am sure we are all aware of the implicit power dynamics at work in this relationship. One way that I was able to address these issues was through the input of my Research Facilitator, Nkosinathi Sithole, who was able to guide me through the “dos” and “do nots” of being within *amaNazaretha* holy space. As a fellow academic, he served as the ideal guide into the heart of the Nazaretha Church both from a faith and intellectual perspective. By submitting to the expectations of the community, I was able to, at some level, alleviate some of the presumptions of expertise that scholars can often bring with them into the field and was able to approach the study with – I believe – ethical integrity.

Now, other challenges proved unforeseen. For example, I experienced many physical rigours in the course of this research that I otherwise would not have chosen to undergo from a personal perspective. For example, walking barefoot at all the sites including the holy mountain Nhlankakazi, proved rather arduous for this Canadian with soft soles. At times, I found myself walking ankle deep, slipping and sliding in soft mud. Even veteran members of the church often found themselves injured after the pilgrimage,

⁶⁰ Presented as part of the *Theological Café* Series, School of Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, March 28, 2011.

so the threat of injury is quite real, especially for someone with no such experience. In addition, being upright on my knees, sometimes for hours on end, has also left a permanent mark – in fact my knees now have scars from all the time spent on them. Finally, and without getting into too much detail, I might also mention that the hygienic considerations for bathroom facilities and food preparation at some of the remote sites are, by Western norms, challenging, but it's important to remember that the community did not have my needs and sensibilities in mind when establishing their infrastructures.

Indeed, I constantly reminded myself that as an ethnographer my presence sometimes amounted to nothing more than an uninvited guest. I had to learn how to block out anything I could construe as hardship and be grateful for the generosity shown to me by any member, be it in the form of curiosity about myself or insights they provided. In many instances, the people I came to learn about were the ones who gave me shelter to rest my head and food to feed my belly. The sheer physical realities of living with the Shembe community for days at a time have led me to muse that ethnography can only begin once we eat where our participants eat, sleep where they sleep, and defecate where they defecate. I believe that living through these basic bodily needs with a group goes a long way towards understanding. There are cultural insights in odour too. I must add, however, that these types of physical issues fortunately amounted to no more than an inconvenience for me, but bear in mind that I also recognized the need to be careful, especially while driving or hiking in remote, treacherous terrain.

The more demanding set of challenges proved to be emotional. I remember two occasions during which I was reduced to tears as much from the physical pain as the overwhelming stress of being an outsider – moreover, one who was actually in the process of playing a role, and one with his own set of problems too, just like anyone else. Now, it wasn't exactly a question of acting as someone I am not, but more a constant consideration for the things that I was saying and the way that I was behaving which might have an adverse impact on my relationship with the community and thus on my study. In both cases when I cried, I felt it necessary to hide what was happening, though I ultimately felt close enough as a friend to Nkosinathi that I was able to confide in him later. And that certainly helped.

The most important skill that I learned during this process was to refrain from pushing myself beyond my own threshold. Because the schedule of *amaNazaretha* is often unpredictable and irregular – late nights followed by early mornings, sudden announcements that mobilize over 100,000 people one way or another – I had to not only train myself to be able to bear more than I thought possible, but also to be aware of when it was a good time to take a break. Still, in the field, there was a moment where I felt my body moving as part of the crowd while my feet had left the ground. That was a new feeling for me. In the pursuit of ethnographic information, whether I felt half-asleep or undernourished, I just had to go with the flow, as they say.

Again, while these reflections have been reproduced from a talk I gave on my particular field research experiences in South Africa, much of the same general considerations regarding the arduousness and flexibility of the endeavour can be applied to the various contexts in which I found myself in Jamaica. And herewith lies the culmination.

CHAPTER 2: BIBLICAL NAZIRITES, AFRICAN NAZARITES

To date, naziritic studies have focused almost exclusively on the evolution of the Nazirite throughout the biblical era.⁶¹ But one of the central questions of this study is: why did charismatic innovators of the twentieth century, in two separate Black African populations, appropriate the Laws of the Nazirite as a central motif in spiritual identity construction? Towards this end, the first section of this chapter provides an overview of the changes associated with the office of the Nazirite in the context of Antiquity and how the figure of the Nazirite as holy warrior becomes usurped by a Judaic Messiah of Peace, i.e. Jesus of Nazareth, aka the Nazorean⁶² (Mt 2:23). The next section, through adherence to the theoretical concepts of “religious hybridity” and “structural liminality” and the “liminoid” process alongside the methodological approach of “living hermeneutics and exegesis” to describe “oscillations of resistance to modernity and persistence of indigeneity” defines African Naziritism in general, then as specific to both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* with regard to consecration (Num 6:1-2, 8; Mt 2:23), hair growth (Num 6:5), abstinence from alcohol (Num 6:3-4), and attitudes towards life, death, and natural living (Num 6:6-7). I then conclude by reiterating the complex points of interest sustained by this analysis of how the precepts of naziritism in tandem with religious hybridity and liminality help define Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* as religious groups.

1. Biblical Naziritism (13th century BCE – 3rd century CE)

This section provides a brief presentation of the changes undergone by the figure of the “Nazirite” in the Bible. While this work cannot provide the most thorough account of the representations of naziritism throughout biblical history,⁶³ rendering the basic historical-critical exegesis remains necessary to help contextualize the living hermeneutics and exegesis of naziritism evident in Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. This very short presentation of Biblical Naziritism brings us back to the Ancient Near East and covers a period of about a millennia and a half (13th century BCE – 3rd century CE).

The stories about “the Nazirite,” or the Hebrew נזיר (*nazir*), originate sometime around the age of Samson and Delilah. The “Tribal Nazirites” (Chakravarty 2009b) of Israel’s pre-

⁶¹ cf. the bibliographies in Chakravarty 2009b and Chepey 2005.

⁶² as portrayed in the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NRSV)

⁶³ See Chakravarty 2009b and Chepey 2005 and their accompanying bibliographies for full details.

monarchic era (13th to 12th century BCE) were warriors, judges, and kings who were considered “consecrated” or “separated” unto the Lord and were expected to somehow deliver YHWH’s people from enemy tyranny and oppression. The Tribal Nazirites were models of a superior style of holiness within the imaginary universes of many Hebrew speakers living in the Ancient Near East during the Late Bronze Age (Chakravarty 2009b: 3-8). Tribal Nazirites, men or women, were expected to grow their scalpel and/or facial hair long and abstain from wine and strong drink. Hair was understood as containing an individual’s life force; “uncut hair symbolized abiding and undiminished strength deriving from the spirit of the Lord” (Pilch 1997: 234), cutting it thus akin to severing one’s spiritual self. Long hair was also seen as a visual statement against vanity (Pilch 1997: 233). As Tribal Nazirites were crucial players in Ancient Israelite military battles, abstaining from wine would help these warriors maintain mental acuity and peak physical condition. The Tribal Nazirite was additionally characterized as committed to the status from womb to grave. The story of Samson’s “triple anti-naziritic behaviour” ironically serves as a highly recounted “Aesop’s fable for Yahwists” of what was expected of a Tribal Nazirite (Chakravarty 2009b: 36, 41).

In later centuries, as the Israelite people were exiled by the Babylonians and then returned to their holy lands during the more religiously tolerant Persian Era (7th to 6th century BCE), the Laws of the Nazirite became codified in Numbers 6:1-21. The scripting of Nazirite Law amounts to a political decision taken by the Judahite Priestly class as a strategic manoeuvre aimed at disassociating the traditional Israelite connection between holiness and militancy—a mediated step to survive under the auspices of a larger regime. In this vein, a third law was added, to avoid contact with dead bodies (Num 6:6-7). Within its Second Temple incarnation, the added proscription against coming into contact with the dead ultimately led to a dissociation of holiness and militancy in the context of naziritism (Chakravarty 2009b). Furthermore, the law that stipulated abstention from wine was extended to include all products of the vine (Num 6:3-4), particularly the grapevine, regarded as hallmarks of the corrupt Babylonian Empire—a dominant culture “civilizing” against indigeneity, so to speak.

The ritualization of naziritism also lifted the lifelong commitment to the status of Nazirite. In fact, the “Cultic Nazirites” of Late Second Temple Judaism (200 BCE to 70 CE) commonly practiced the set of rites as a temporary vow of thirty days (cf. Chepey 2005: 10, 70; Gray 1900: 203); indeed, its lengthy list of lavish offerings (Num 6:10, 14-15, 20-21) appear

specifically drafted “for the purpose of drawing in for the priests a substantial income” (Chepey 2005: 5-6). The Cultic Nazirites thus served as symbolic proxy of the Israelites’ tribal wars in the pre-monarchic era (Chakravarty 2009b: 3-8), a faint reminder of the Hebraic heritage associated with notions connected to their conceptions of “indigeneity.” This sacerdotal role of the Cultic Nazirites resulted in a further shift towards a pacifistic model of holiness that facilitated the advent of a Judaic Messiah of Peace, Jesus Christ (Chakravarty 2009b: 21).

Note here that although Jesus Christ’s status as a Nazirite is uncertain, Stuart Chepey has argued that the authors of the Gospels purposely depict him through a number of naziritic motifs (Mk 14:25//Mt 26:29//Lk 22:18; Mk 15:23; Mt 2:23) in order to connect him to a more ancient holiness tradition while at the same time conveying that something new is afoot (2005: 154-155). In this regard, the Ancient Greek word in Matthew 2:23, Ναζωραῖος (*Nazōraios*)—translated as either “Nazorean,” according to the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), or “Nazarene” in other English Bibles—is derived from a poetic integration of the Ancient Hebrew נזיר (*nazir*), or “Nazirite;” the Ancient Greek Ναζαρηνέ (*Nazarēne*) for “Nazarene” meaning “of Nazareth” (Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34); and the Ancient Greek ἅγιος (*hagios*) for “holy one” used more generally in the Septuagint manuscripts in relation to revered figures, but sometimes in place of the transliteration ναζιρ (*nazir*) and related forms in conjunction with Tribal Nazirites like Samson, depending on the manuscript (Chepey 2005: 32-33; 148-155).

The other appearances of Ναζωραῖος in the Greek Bible (Lk 18:37; Jn 19:19; Acts 6:14; Acts 22:8) occur with the single article ὁ (*ho*) preceding. Here, modern biblical translations fluctuate on whether this means “of Nazareth” or “the Nazarene,” but the use of the single article ὁ to represent “of” is unusual since it typically appears as “the” – e.g. “the Christ” (Mt 2:4), “the star” (Mt 2:9), “the tempter” (Mt 4:3), “the angel” (Lk 1:13), or John “the Baptist” (Mt 3:1; Lk 7:33). Only some modern English translations render the passage as “the Nazarene,” but the translation leaves it unclear whether this means “of Nazareth,” as in “of Montreal” / “Montrealer,” or something more. The KJV, for example, has translated all instances of ὁ Ναζωραῖος as “of Nazareth” and this tendency has largely carried over into modern English translations. All other forms in the Greek Bible beginning with either Ναζωραι- or Ναζαρ- are alternately translated as “of Nazareth” or “the Nazarene” with no overwhelming consistency. These disagreeing versions demonstrate that much confusion continues to exist between the concepts Nazirite, Nazareth / Nazarene, and Nazorean.

For my part, I would suggest that in each instance of ὁ Ναζωραῖος there seems no good reason not to understand the passage as “the Nazorean.” Chepey (2005) has argued that the deliberate juxtaposition of Ναζαρέτ (Nazareth) and Ναζωραῖος (Nazorean) in Matthew 2:23 remains our best entryway into this historical-critical quandary. In this passage, the author seems to be purposely including the two forms to show that with Ναζωραῖος there is embedded a meaning beyond the geography of Nazareth. If all that was intended was “of Nazareth,” the use of a new form seems perplexing. The majority of forms in the Bible beginning with Ναζαρ- are generally rendered with regard to Nazareth the place name, while most modern translations today tend to present the less frequent Ναζωραι- occurrences as “Nazarene” or, singularly, “Nazorean” in the NRSV. That all versions agree that the sole occurrence of Ναζωραίων (Acts 24:5) represents a plural form of Ναζωραῖος seems to confirm the point—as in “the sect of the Ναζωραίων,” or the followers of Jesus, but no English Bible translates τῶν Ναζωραίων as “the Nazoreans.” With this in mind, I would also argue that Ναζωραίων could be more accurately translated to “Nazoreans.” If the Ναζωραίων of Acts 24:5 are to be specifically understood as the followers of Jesus and not merely citizens of Nazareth (i.e. Nazarenes), the word Nazoreans allows us to make this distinction in English. I believe this exegesis makes more sense in the context of the passage regarding the case against Paul since, surely, not all the people who lived in Nazareth (Nazarenes) were necessarily followers of Jesus. In short, with regard to Jesus Christ, the exegesis suggests that Ναζωραῖος communicated something along the lines of: the Holy Nazirite of Nazareth. This degree of poetic license has, in essence, facilitated a conflation between the concepts of “Nazirite” and “Nazorean” in the consecration hermeneutics of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

In conclusion, with regard to biblical naziritism, the lifestyles and behaviours of both Tribal and Cultic Nazirites, whether militaristic or ceremonial, remained powerful statements against the values of several dominant religiopolitical cultures of the biblical era; corporeally or symbolically, a consecrated resistance and persistence—a legislated arena for practices associated with indigeneity. The Tribal Nazirites of lore were naturalistic long-haired warriors fighting against the civilizing forces of imperialism. For Cultic Nazirites, the purification ritual served as an opportunity for an Israelite to literally “let their hair down” and recall their lore. Bear in mind that even during Antiquity, the figure of the Nazirite was in a constant state of adaptation from one historical community to another and one individual to the next. Each

Nazirite embodied a context-specific type of persistence effort exhibiting permutations of militancy or pacifism, nationalism, and theology.

From here, clear breaks from both Tribal and Cultic Naziritism can be discerned in the early-Christian asceticisms that Jesus’ preaching and stories inspired with their variations of contemplation to flagellation. Although a confusion between asceticism and naziritism exists, the notions are exegetically unequivocal. At best, biblical naziritism sets a number of precursors for a few practices associated with the early-Christian asceticisms, such as hair growth and various abstinences (Chakravarty 2009b: 9-16). By the 3rd century CE, rabbinic tradition effectively outlawed the Nazirite Vow as a response to the increasing fusions of the norms of Cultic Naziritism and the masochistic tendencies of several influential early-Christian ascetic traditions (Rothkoff 2007: 46-47). Thus, the Nazirites of the Ancient Near East ostensibly lay to rest.

Table 1: Biblical Naziritism⁶⁴

Tribal Nazirites	Cultic Nazirites
<i>Lifelong Commitment</i>	<i>Temporary Vow</i>
Consecration by <i>God/Angel</i> : A Divine Calling	Consecration by <i>Priest</i> : A Personal Decision
Perpetual <i>Hair Growth</i>	<i>Cutting Hair</i> Signifies the Termination of a Temporary Vow
<i>No Consumption</i> of Wine, Strong Drink, (or Intoxicants)	<i>Consumption</i> of Wine Allowed after the Termination of a Temporary Vow [No Consumption of Wine, Strong Drink, Vinegar, and Grape By-products until Termination of Temporary Vow]
<i>Warrior Figure</i>	<i>Avoids the Dead</i>

2. African Naziritism (1910 –)

After more than a millennia and a half of obscurity, the figure of the Nazirite has been reclaimed in the spiritual identity construction of both *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari in tandem with the notion of Jesus the “Nazorean,” representative at once of a biblical lineage and a new faith stemming from those roots. Many Rastas speak of the “Nazarene Vow,”⁶⁵ but there is indeed no such thing in the Bible. The conflation has been perpetuated in scholarship as well. The

⁶⁴ cf. Chakravarty 2009b for details.
⁶⁵ cf. Cashmore 1979: 63; also confirmed by my field research.

following stands as exemplar: “For many Rastas, dreadlocks are an outward sign of their religious calling, that is, that they are set apart by God—just like the Nazarenes [sic] in biblical times” (Pretorius 2006: 1015). The notion of being “set apart” is particularly important with regard to the idea of “consecration.” My analysis demonstrates that with regard to naziritism, the KJV in particular has exacerbated the Nazirite / Nazarene / Nazorean conflation with the use of Nazarite (with an a) in Numbers 6 and the uncritical use of Nazarene (Mt 2:23), Nazarenes (Acts 24:5), and “of Nazareth” (Lk 18:37; Jn 19:19; Acts 6:14; Acts 22:8) for the instances of Ναζωπαῖος and Ναζωραῖων. In Section 1 of this chapter, I have argued that from a historical-critical exegetical perspective, these passages could be more accurately rendered as “the Nazorean” (Mt 2:23; Lk 18:37; Jn 19:19; Acts 6:14; Acts 22:8) and “the Nazoreans” (Acts 24:5).

The conflation is similar for *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* since *amaNazaretha* generally understand the Zulu *umNazareti* (Nazirite, Num 6) and *umNazareta*⁶⁶ (Nazorean, Mt 2:23) as related forms, without a clear cognition of the historical-critical implications heretofore presented. In all fairness, and as will be exposed, neither do many Bible translators and scholars. In this case, the 1893 *iBaible* emerges as somewhat more accurate than the KJV, however, since the Zulu prefix *um-* can only carry the grammatical connotation of a singular, either people (*umNazaretha* / *amaNazaretha*) or objects like the white surplice (*umNazaretha* / *imiNazaretha*). The prefixes *ama-* and *imi-* represent the plural forms of the *umNazaretha* homonymy in both instances. All the instances of ὁ Ναζωπαῖος (Lk 18:37; Jn 19:19; Acts 6:14; Acts 22:8) are rendered as *wa seNazareta*, with no distinction between instances of Ναζαρ-, where the meaning “of Nazareth” is more explicit. *IwamaNazaretha* represents a single occurrence (Acts 24:4).

Whether with Rastafari self-identification with “Nazarenes” / “Nazirites” / “Nazarites” or *amaNazaretha* with *umNazareta* or “Nazirites” / “Nazarites” / “Nazarenes” / “Nazareths” / “Nazaretha,” there is no doubt that the adherents do not understand themselves as being “of Nazareth,” the village in Israel where Jesus was born. With regards to African Naziritism, both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* understand “Nazareth” as a location that was not geographically connected to their religion. Like with the original followers of Jesus, Rastafari and *amaNazaretha* understand themselves as something new, or *in media res* (Bhabha 1994), but within the succession of a divine lineage related to the personages of the Bible. In the living

⁶⁶ Note that *Nazareta* in the 1893 Zulu Bible does not include the “h” as with modern Zulu, *Nazaretha*.

exegesis of Rastafari and *ubuNazaretha* however, “Nazirite / Nazarite,” “Nazarene,” and “Nazorean” represent one fluid continuum: hence, African Nazarites (with an a) versus African Naziritism.

Within this hermeneutic, both Rastafari and *amaNazaretha* employ the biblical history of the Israelites under Babylon as a paradigm to explain the circumstances of their oppression and subsistence. In both cases, the irony lies in the fact that for African Nazarites, the oppressors themselves introduced the foreign set of scriptures within which lay the Nazirite and the Nazorean, consecrated figures of resistance and persistence. Products of the English and American Protestant missions in both Jamaica and South Africa, and heavily influenced by a KJV hermeneutic, the Bibles that at first helped the hegemonic class justify the subservience expected of black populations—through the myth of the Sons of Ham (Gen 9:20-7), for example (Chevannes 1994: 36)—also bore several sources of inspiration for African persistence.

In the Old Testament stories of tribal wars and kingdoms, folk intellectuals discovered tales that echoed African ancestral memory. Practices such as polygamy, walking barefoot, and agrarian self-reliance spoke to markers of indigeneity so scorned by Evangelical Christianity and the advent of *laissez-faire* capitalism. Both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* conceptualize members of dominant society as clean-cut, consumers of alcohol, driven by greed and war-mongering. African Nazarites stand in stark opposition to this model and function as living theological expressions against many of the perceived follies and injustices perpetrated by the imperializing forces of modernity. Yet, not all aspects of the hegemonic culture have been rejected. As with Keeffe’s definition of “Aboriginality-as-resistance” (1988: 68), both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* discovered within the markers of oppression, antidotes to those same hegemonic systems. Despite a wide array of African and Indian sources for inception which shall also be presented, a number of key passages in the Bible represent common sources of reference for African Naziritism.

From a strictly biblical perspective, African Naziritism can be summarized as an overall emulation of the Ten Commandments or Decalogue (Ex 20:3-17//Deut 5:7-21),⁶⁷ rounded out

⁶⁷ “Thou shalt have none other gods before me. Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in

with the additional consecrated practices (Num 6:1-2, 8) of hair and beard growth (Num 6:5, 7b), abstinence from alcohol (Num 6:3-4), and avoidance of the dead (Num 6:6-7)—generally interpreted as a call to live in harmony with the natural world. Along with the concept of the “Nazirite,” African Nazarites also perpetuate a conflation with the “Nazorean” of Matthew 2:23 in the person of a living Black Messiah: Haile Selassie I for Rastafari, Shembe for *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* generally neglect the remaining aspects of Cultic Naziritism (Num 6:9-21) since the tribal naziritic notion of a lifelong commitment endures in both movements. Evil, in the context of African Naziritism, has emerged on the physical plane in the form of oppressive religiopolitical regimes, but they are to be “battled” through nonviolent methods such as singing, dancing, prayer, meditation, or farming. Unlike the Tribal Nazirites, the holy warriors of the past, the calling of African Nazarites can be likened to the oxymoronic notion of a “peace warrior.” Even where the interstices between modernity and indigeneity are ill-defined, the prevailing attitudes surrounding African Naziritism usually carry over into the activities of the adherent in the modern world.

Within this larger rubric, a number of convergences and divergences between the specific naziritism of Rastafari and *amaNazaretha* remain to be explored. In the following sub-sections, based on the framework provided by the Laws of the Nazirite (consecration, hair growth, abstinence from alcohol, attitudes vis-à-vis life and death), I will detail the parameters of these naziritic ideas and practices through a “living hermeneutical and exgetical” approach that borrows the notions of “religious hybridity” as well as “structural liminality” and the “liminoid” process as they apply to new cultural phenomena to account for the coexistence of African, Christian, Judaic, European, and Indian influences represented in Rastafari and *Ibandla*

vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day. Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Thou shalt not kill. Neither shalt thou commit adultery. Neither shalt thou steal. Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour. Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's.” (KJV)

lamaNazaretha, especially in tandem with the notion of “oscillations of resistance to modernity and the persistence of indigeneity.” The references to naziritism are but starting points in a multilayered intercultural dialogue that accounts for the variations in these practices through the theoretical framework of religious hybridity and structural liminality and the liminoid process.

2.1 Consecration

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite,⁶⁸ to separate themselves unto the LORD [...] All the days of his separation he is holy unto the LORD.

(Numbers 6:1-2, 8)⁶⁹

And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.⁷⁰ (Matthew 2:23)

As discussed in Chapter 1, when presenting the findings from an ethnographic study involving African and African Diasporic theological and cultural movements today, we may well discover markers of a colonial history: items such as the Bible, the concept of a “church,” or theoretical tools such as “the sacred and the profane.” Although we should not necessarily embark on a religious ethnography with these types of preconceptions, where a postcolonial reverence for the Bible exists, we will obviously discover some biblical elements, but likely alongside precolonial indigenous traditions within the new religion. In the case of naziritism, at the centre of which lies the idea of consecration, or separation unto the Lord, remnants of the sacred and profane dichotomy are sure to be evident, but how they occur in the universes of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* are generally quite different from the European ecclesiastic interpretations associated with the notion. In many cases, with African Nazarites, the boundaries between sacred and profane seem ill-defined; in other instances, the lines are quite clear.

To begin with, both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* understand themselves as consecrated to the Lord, יה (yah) or יהוה (yahweh), aka YHWH, of the Old Testament—this adherence marks a key trait that they share with Biblical Nazirites. As such, they also regard themselves as a chosen people under the dominion of a divine lineage. From here, how each

⁶⁸ Nazirite in the NRSV.

⁶⁹ Please note that the biblical passages cited in italics at the start of Sections 2.1-2.4 of this chapter are from the KJV.

⁷⁰ Nazorean in the NRSV.

living theology unfolds is quite unique. Rastafari give thanks and praises to JAH, while *amaNazaretha* refer to this ancient Lord in Zulu as *uJehova*.

For Rastafari, the geneological numen is encapsulated by His Imperial Majesty (HIM), Haile Selassie I, who was annointed the “225th Emperor of Ethiopia,” in the tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church that traces a bloodline back to a union between King Solomon and Queen Makeda (of Sheba) that produced Menyelek, the first-born son of Solomon, an Ethiopian offspring in the Davidic line (*The Kebra Nagast*). Owens furthers the point in the context of rural Jamaica: “the crowning of an African King who could claim legitimacy from the bible [sic] and from the line of Solomon led to a new deification, replacing the white King of England with a black God and black King” (1985: 69) who came to stand for all “oppressed” peoples of the world.

Similarly, for *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, Isaiah Shembe, and now his heirs, represent a usurpation of not only the Christian heirarchal systems of subservience based on a white European Jesus and monarch, but also the traditional structures of the Zulu kingdoms and deities (Oosthuizen 1967; 1968). According to my field research inquiries, the vast majority of Zulu kings today are aligned with *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, their distribution generally a reflection of the faction’s overall membership. The Shembe Church has indeed emerged at the head of the Zulu world today. For *amaNazaretha*, the authority of Shembe stems not from the notion of a seminal root as with Selassie, but something closer to a spiritual lineage. The notion is captured in the immaculate conception narrative of Sitheya, Isaiah Shembe’s mother, who ate the flower that carried the divine seed (Hexham and Oosthuizen 1996: 5-7). Having established a new divine geneology, the progeny of Shembe have subsequently been recognized as the “Living God”⁷¹ of each faction, each regarded by its adherents as the true Shembe Church. As with Rastafari, the purpose of the Messiah extends to the salvation of not only African people, but everyone suffering iniquity and strife.

While more accurate English and Zulu translations of the Bible have been published since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the adherents of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* are largely disinterested in leaving their pre-Qumranic hermeneutics aside (i.e.

⁷¹ “Living God” is the actual title of the head of each faction of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, i.e. Vukile Shembe is the “Living God at Ekuphakameni,” M. V. Shembe was the second “Living God at Ebuhleni.” Court cases continue to be waged over which faction has exclusive use of the Ekuphakameni title, the original holy city of Isaiah Shembe.

KJV, 1893 *iBaible*). Ironically, from a historical-critical exegetical standpoint, the new versions would actually lend more credence to their self identification as Nazirites beyond the two key passages cited above (Num 6:1-2, 8; Mt 2:23). For example, since “Nazarites” and “*abaNazari*”⁷² are explicitly mentioned in Amos 2:11-12⁷³ of the KJV and *iBaible* respectively as renditions of the Hebrew נזיר (*nazir*), the passage represents a recurrent point of reference in the theologies of both *ubuNazaretha* and Rastafari as an example of the corrupting influence of alcohol on Nazirites. But that is where the similarities with the modern translations based on the post-Qumranic hermeneutic of the biblical naziritic passages ends.⁷⁴

For one, neither the KJV nor the 1893 *iBaible* allows for the reading of consecrated hair growth in the Song of Deborah (Jgs 5:2) offered in post-Qumranic editions (cf. Chakravarty 2009b: 29-31). Also, especially with reference to the notion of charismatic leadership and naziritism, neither the KJV nor the 1893 *iBaible* includes Samuel explicitly as a “Nazirite” as later editions have (1 Sam 1:11, 22; cf. Chepey 2005: 20). Out of the various other naziritic passages in the Bible, the KJV includes “Nazarites” in Lamentations 4:7-8,⁷⁵ but the 1893 *iBaible* does not include anything that could resemble the notion. Likewise, my findings indicate that Lam 4:7-8 marks a key citation for Rastafari and one of little significance for *amaNazaretha*. Incidentally, later Zulu translations from 1959 render the Hebrew נזיר (*nazir*) as *Naziri* (as opposed to the 1893 *Nazareti* or *Nazari*) while all the Greek Ναζωραι- or Ναζαρ- instances are translated as *Nazaretha*, with alternate prefixes that indicate either place or person. For both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, however, the modern translations remain unadopted at large.

Though I mentioned that I could not find any other direct historical connections between the founding fathers of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, in the case of Leonard Howell and

⁷² “*abaNazari*” occurs only in Amos 2:11-12 of the 1893 *iBaible*.

⁷³ “And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the LORD. But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not.” (KJV) // “Futi nga pakmisa abanya bamadodana enu ba be abazisi, nabamadoda amatya enu ba be *abaNazari*. A ngi ti loku ku njalo, bantwana ba selsraeli na? u tyo uJehova. Kanti nina na puzisa *abaNazari* iwaini, na yaleza abazisi ni ti, ni ngazisi.” (1893 *iBaible*)

⁷⁴ For a complete analysis of all the biblical passages that are related to naziritism, please see Chakravarty 2009b.

⁷⁵ “Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire: Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick.” (KJV) // “*Izikulu zalo za zi cwebile ku neqwa, za zi mhlope ku nobisi, za zi bomvu ku namakorali ngomzimba; isimo sazo si isafire. Ukuma kwazo kwa ba mnyama ku nobumnyama; za zi ngaziwa ezitalatini: isikumba sazo sa namatela ematanjeni azo, soma njengoti.*” (1893 *iBaible*)

Isaiah Shembe, the research indicates a shared awareness of the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi (Heuser 2002; 2003; Lee 2003) as the only indirect link in the inception of each movement. The Bible, however, especially passages regarding naziritism, remains a central and direct point of reference in the inception of both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. In the following subsections, the exegesis centres on the notion of consecration as it applies to the conflation between the “Nazirite” of the Old Testament and the “Nazorean” of the New Testament as further personified in a living messianic figure.

2.1.1 Rastafari Consecration

Rastafari generally point to the sole occurrence of the word JAH in Psalm 68:4 (KJV) to reveal the name of their Lord. In the KJV, the only other occurrence of the Hebrew term ביה (*beyah*) is translated as “Jehovah” in conjunction with YHWH, ביה יהוה (*beyah yahweh*), in Isaiah 26:4. The result is “Lord Jehovah.” The single form of Jehovah occurs twice more in the KJV (Ex 6:3; Ps 83:18) and represents a curious choice of translation for יהוה (*yahweh*). In modern English translations of the Bible, ביה (*beyah*) is alternately translated as “Lord,” “Jah,” or “Yah” in the solitary (Ps 68:4), while the Hebrew term in Isaiah 26:4 is rendered as either “God” or “Lord.” The KJV again uses “Lord Jehovah” to represent the sole occurrence of יה יהוה (*yah yahweh*) in Isaiah 12:2.

Even the NRSV reveals the complexity of translating these anomalies. The only two occurrences of ביה (*beyah*) are translated as either Lord (Ps 68:4) or God (Is 26:4). Although the NRSV can translate the solitary use of ביה (*beyah*) as Lord in keeping with the יה (*yah*) / Lord tendency, this device must break with ביה והיה (*beyah yahweh*) and יה יהוה (*yah yahweh*) lest one is left with “Lord Lord.” The latter fluctuation breaks the tendency to reserve the term God for אלהים (*elohim*). From a historical-critical perspective, what these interpretations demonstrate is that if one reserves “Lord” to translate occurrences of יה (*yah*) and יהוה (*yahweh*), while employing “God” for אלהים (*elohim*), eventually they will run out of options because of the occurrences of ביה יהוה (*beyah yahweh*) and יה יהוה (*yah yahweh*). For that reason, even the NRSV must translate either יה (*yah*) or יהוה (*yahweh*) as God in Isaiah 12:2.

Rastafari solve this riddle by understanding the occurrences of ביה יהוה (*beyah yahweh*) and יה יהוה (*yah yahweh*) to mean something closer to “Lord of Lords” or “King of Kings.” Psalm 68 is especially pertinent in conjunction with verse 31 and the notion of Ethiopia stretching out

her arms to God. For Rastafari, a sense of Ethiopian and Davidic royalty unerscores larger notions of Africanness, a nobility confirmed by passages in the Bible and the unfolding of the newly crowned Emperor in Ethiopia in the only African country never successfully colonized by the countries of the North (Munro-Hay 2005: 15).

The logic of this living exegesis is quite compelling when viewed in tandem with certain passages in the Book of Revelation (5:5; 19:16). Ras Tafari Makonnen’s coronation title in the Ethiopic language of Ge’ez, ግርማዊ፣ ቀዳማዊ፣ አፄ፣ ኃይለ፣ ሥላሴ፣ ሞዳ፣ አንበሳ፣ ዘእምነገደ፣ ይሁዳ፣ ንጉሠ፣ ነገሥት፣ ዘኢትዮጵያ፣ ሰዩመ፣ አግዚአብሔር, translates to: His Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie I, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, [King of Kings / Lord of Lords] of Ethiopia, Elect of God. Furthermore, Haile Selassie itself means Power of the Trinity. Much of this pomp can be connected to the larger traditions of Ethiopian royalty and the Davidic line attested to in the *Kebra Nagast* (Chisholm 1998: 171-173). For Rastafari, the several names and titles of the Emperor appear as fulfilment of prophecies related to the coming of the saviour in Revelation:

And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. (Rev 5:5)

And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. (Rev 19:16)

By equating Selassie’s title, ንጉሠ ነገሥት (*Negus Nagast*), with the “Lord of lords, and King of kings” in Revelation 17:14—the one “alluded to” in the Isaiah 12:2 / 26:4 problematic—and the solitary “JAH” of Psalm 68:4 that points to Ethiopia, Rastafari understand Jesus as the Lamb who came to slaughter and Selassie as the “Root of David” who defeated his enemies as the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah. In this hermeneutic, Selassie marks the fulfilment of the prophecy in Hebrews 9:28: “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” The idea that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has maintained elements of African, Judaic, and Christian traditions for centuries⁷⁶ is echoed in Howell’s *The Promised Key*. Furthermore, in keeping with the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition, for Rastafari, the Song of Songs 1:5-6a confirms that the historical Solomon was indeed a black man,⁷⁷ and hence his progeny. That the Ethiopian Orthodox Church

⁷⁶ Scholars generally trace the founding of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to the mid-fourth century CE (Brooks 1995: xxv-xxvii; Mansingh and Mansingh 1985: 99; Munro-Hay 2005: 12).

⁷⁷ “I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me.” (KJV)

designated Haile Selassie I as the 225th in an unbroken line of Ethiopian emperors dating back to Menyelek, son of Solomon and Makeda (*The Kebra Nagast*), serves as a pivotal exegetical premise.

Within a hermeneutic dating almost three millennia to Solomon, the media images of Selassie that displayed African regalia, pet lions, and a dark-skinned Emperor—in a world ruled by Europeans—all contributed to this messianic aura. Even *Time Magazine* presented Selassie on the cover with the caption “THE KING OF KINGS” (November 3rd, 1930), a common translation of *Negus Nagast*. In the decade that ensued, the historical reality of the Ethiopian “King of Kings” from the “House of David” first being exiled and then returning to his homeland to emerge victorious against foreign oppression—Italians under Victor Emanuel III during the Mussolini era—would not be lost on the Jamaican audience across the sea (cf. Hill 1981: 35, 51; Lewis 1998: 150). As one Jamaican Ethiopianist of the era asserted, Italians, or “Romans [...] are the said people who crucified Jesus 2,000 years ago” (Mantle 1935: 35). The symbolic implications of a Black King crowned Emperor on a continent otherwise carved out by colonialism are undeniable, but as the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition places the Ark of the Covenant within its borders as the new House of the Lord (*Kebra Nagast*), the extra-biblical material was no doubt of overwhelming hermeneutical significance.

The idea also seems to be supported by Isaiah 43:3: “For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.” Rastafari interpret the passage as the seat of Davidic power moving to Africa, a notion further supported by the presentation of a solid gold twenty-seven inch sceptre to Selassie by the Duke of Gloucester, the son of King George V. The sceptre also bore the inscriptions “Ethiopia shall make her hands reach unto God” and “King of Kings of Ethiopia,” thus echoing Psalm 68:31 and Selassie’s coronation title (Hill 1981: 43-44; Pretorius 2006: 1016-1017). The biblical passage is particularly relevant to the issue of repatriation to Africa; the 500 acre land grant that Selassie designated for Africans in the West who wanted to return to Africa resounded as the fulfillment of the prophetic interpretation of Psalm 68 (Owens 1987: 221).

In *The Promised Key*, Howell frames the passing of the sceptre from Gloucester to Selassie in conjunction with the attendance of so many international dignitaries at the coronation and two particular biblical passages (2011 [1935]: 1-2):

They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. (Ps 72:9-11)

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. (Gen 49:10)

Howell's version includes some embellishment, however:

In 1930 the Duke of Gloucester undertook one of the most interesting duties he had been called upon to execute up to this date. The occasion was the Coronation of His Majesty Ras Tafari The King of Kings and Lord of Lords The Conquering Lion of Judah, The Elect of God and The Light of the world [...]

The Duke handed to His Majesty Rastafari [...] a Sceptre [...] which had been taken from the hands of Ethiopia some thousand years ago.

The Duke fell down on bending knees before His Majesty Ras Tafari The King of Kings and Lord of Lords and spoke in a loud tone of voice and said "Master, Master, my father has sent me to represent him sir. He is unable to come and he said he will serve you to the end Master." (2011 [1935]: 1-2)

The presentation and obeisance of the English royal envoy represent, for Howell and many Rastafari, the fulfillment of the aforementioned biblical prophecies regarding an Ethiopian kingdom (Hill 1981: 43).

But the history of Ethiopia and England would oscillate further during these critical years of foundational Rastafari hermeneutics. During the 1960s, when the face of the latest symbol of European oppression started to be printed on Jamaican banknotes⁷⁸ and Rastafari routinized, for many, Queen Elizabeth II became synonymous with the Whore of Babylon, "Babylon The Great, The Mother Of Harlots And Abominations Of The Earth" (Rev 17:5), especially as Great Britain under George VI officially accepted Emanuel III's claim to the title, Emperor of Ethiopia, in 1938, while Selassie himself lived in exile in London (cf. Adejumobi 2007). The whole colonial structure and its accompanying *polytricks*,⁷⁹ with the British Monarchy as the symbolic head (Rev 17:18), is understood as evil incarnate in this hermeneutic, or the living fulfillment of "white supremacy, the Grand Whore of this World" (Pettersburg 1996 [1926]: 79).

In tandem with Rastafari biblical exegesis of Psalm 68:4, scholars have also connected JAH with the common Sanskrit / Hindi chant of Shiva and Kali worshippers, जय, pronounced *Jaya* or *Jai* (Hamid 2002; Lee 2003; Mansingh and Mansingh 1985). The praise is also associated with the many sects of Hinduism at large. The phonetic similarity of the Indian जय (*Jaya / Jai*)

⁷⁸ <http://www.banknotes.com/jm.htm>, accessed January 31, 2013.

⁷⁹ an Iyaric combination of "politics" and "tricks" suggesting that all forms of politics involve treachery

and the biblical JAH, however, served as a mutually reinforcing element in praising, as Rastafari developed their vision of a universal theology. *Jai*, a Hindi version of the Sanskrit *Jaya*, that echoes dual meanings of victory and joy, is a common mantra chanted by sadhus upon ritual consumption of cannabis, for example, जय काली माँ (*Jai Kālī Mām*), Hail Mother Kali. The practice is echoed in the ubiquitous exclamation of *idren*, “JAH Ras Tafari,”⁸⁰ that accompanies the ritual consumption of ganja (Figure 8) and, sometimes, the exposure of one’s dreadlocks from beneath a head covering (e.g. cap, scarf, turban).

The exportation of Shiva and Kali worship to Jamaica was one of many unintentional outcomes of colonialism. Furthermore, as will be subsequently discussed in this chapter, the rituals of Shiva worship, especially, that arrived among waves of Indian indentured labourers in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries from 1845, resemble the practices of Rastafari hair consecration, ganja cultus, and dietary regulations (Lee 2003: 163-164; Mansingh and Mansingh 1985: 103). Outside of biblical and Indian sources for consecration to JAH, Campbell has also connected the term with “King Ja Ja of Opobo, the African king from West Africa who was deported to the Caribbean in 1887” (1985: 102-103); the argument may indeed help account for the frequent use of “Jah Jah” in Rastafari praise. With “JAH Rastafari,” however, an adherent proclaims that Haile Selassie is the incarnation of the Lord of the Israelites, Africans, and all the peoples of the world. In this regard, for Rastafari, Selassie has become a symbol of African, Davidic, and universal resistance and persistence during the aftermath of colonialism.

Next with regard to consecration, the notion of Shiva and other Indian deities as God-Kings that are representatives at once of a worldly and divine kingdom, also translates to Selassie in tandem with a wide variety of African precedents including Akan kings in Ghana and the Ivory Coast, as well as the Bushongo of Central Africa and the Mbum of the Cameroon (Benard 2007: 95; Barrett 1997 [1977]: 132; Mansingh and Mansingh 1985: 108; Lee 2003: 101; Warner-Lewis 1993: 110-112). The intense feelings of alienation felt by black people in Jamaica, in the absence of an African king in their quotidian reality, as their children sang “God Save the Queen” in classrooms, prompted “Hibbert and a few others [...] to visualize an African Rama/Krishna/Buddha for years before Haile Selassie was crowned” (Mansingh and Mansingh

⁸⁰ Here, I have separated the words Ras and Tafari to emphasize the pre-coronation title and name of Haile Selassie I, i.e. Ras Tafari Makonnen.

1985: 111). Beyond being one of the founding voices of Rastafari, Joseph Hibbert was also one of Howell's lieutenants (Lee 2003: 70).

As Chevannes has argued (1994), for these Garveyites who had heard their leader's call for an African God through African spectacles, "Africa for the Africans" (1967 [1923]: 50-53), Selassie's status as a literal God-King in Ethiopia coincided with the messianic hopes of black people exiled in Jamaica:

The white man has the idea of a white God, let him worship his God as he desires. If the yellow man's God is of his race let him worship his God as he sees fit. We, as Negroes, have found a new ideal. Whilst our God has no color, yet it is human to see everything through one's own spectacles, and since the white people have seen their God through white spectacles, we have only now started out (late though it be) to see our God through our own spectacles. The God of Isaac and the God of Jacob let Him exist for the race that believes in the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. We Negroes believe in the God of Ethiopia, the everlasting God—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, the One God of all ages. That is the God in whom we believe, but we shall worship Him through the spectacles of Ethiopia. (Garvey 1967 [1923]: 33-34)

This idea, when taken in tandem with James Morris Webb's notion that "a black man will be the coming universal king" (2008 [1919]), became a powerful notion during the reign of Haile Selassie. The idea that the black king would speak out against discrimination and segregation are immortalized in the Bob Marley song "War" (*Rastaman Vibration* 1976), in which an excerpt of a speech of Selassie presented to the UN in 1963 is set to music:

that until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently dcredited and abandoned;
 that until there are no longer first class and second class citizens of any nation;
 that until the colour of a man's skin is of no more significance than the colour of his eyes;
 that until the basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all, without regard to race;
 that until that day, the dream of lasting peace and world citizenship and the rule of international morality will remain but fleeting illusions, to be pursued but never attained.
 And until the ignoble and unhappy regimes that hold our brothers in Angola, in Mozambique and in South Africa in sub-human bondage have been toppled and destroyed;
 until bigotry and prejudice and malicious and inhuman self-interest have been replaced by understanding and tolerance and good-will;
 until all Africans stand and speak as free beings, equal in the eyes of all men, as they are in the eyes of Heaven;
 until that day, the African continent will not know peace. We Africans will fight, if necessary, and we know that we shall win, as we are confident in the victory of good over evil. (Selassie 1972: 467)

Finally, the idea that this African king would be a black man with “wooly hair” can be credited to Webb’s exegesis of Daniel 7:9 (Webb 2008 [1919]: 12).

Webb also provides a detailed argument based on the geneologies stemming from the sons of Noah (Shem, Japeth, Ham) to argue about an African presence in the Bible generally ignored by the missions (2008 [1921])—a great example of “draw[ing] from the resources of the dominant society” to initiate “aboriginality-as-resistance” (Keeffe 1988: 68). Furthermore, as with the Protestant traditions of the era, Webb also approaches his exegesis from the perspective of biblical inerrancy (2008 [1921]: 7), as with Howell (2011 [1935]: 26). Additionally, Webb’s notion that “The devil’s spirit moves upon whiskey, beer, wines and all strong drinks” (2008 [1919]: 6) not only echoes naziritic practice (Num 6:3-4), but since alcohol is connected with white colonialism and the Christian eucharist, these attitudes provided a further push, beyond *The Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy* (Pettersburgh (1996 [1926]: 18), for Rastafari to pinpoint the Catholic Pope as “a bad spirit” in the same category as “the Monarch of hell bottom” (Howell 2011 [1935]: 13). Within this hermeneutic, Webb also draws attention to what would become key passages in Rastafari exegesis: Numbers 12:1, Revelation 5:5; 7:17; 1 Kings 10:1; Song of Songs 1:5-6a (2008 [1919]: 6, 18-20; 2008 [1921]: 3).

Further to the idea of an African king, both *The Holy Piby* (Rogers 1924) and *The Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy* (Pettersburgh 1926), source material for Howell’s *The Promised Key* (1935), represent palimpsests of Ethiopianist thought that precede Haile Selassie’s coronation. Their pages, from the perspective of white Jamaican society, contain controversial prophetic passages, especially as Rastafari related certain passages to the historical circumstances in 1930s Ethiopia. A few excerpts from each provide a necessary glimpse into the social climate of black people in twentieth-century Jamaica.

First, the passages from *The Holy Piby* (Rogers 2000 [1924]) demonstrate the longing for an Ethiopian God-King in an African image that reflected the faces of the exiled in Jamaica:

When the Lord God of Ethiopia is with us in the battle for that to which we are entitled, show me the foe so powerful to set us down? Verily I say unto you there is none. (24)
 And when the two messengers of the Lord were midways they cried out unto the earth saying, blessed be thou Ethiopia for this day thou art anointed, thou are blest with a blessing, be ye forever united and stand up, let the world know your God. (27)
 Love ye one another, O children of Ethiopia, for by no other way can ye love the Lord your God. (36)

Saying Ethiopia's generations shall respect the heaven while for a foundation they sacrifice on earth; moreover a king sits on the throne of his organized government, but a Shepard must seek his sheep and prepare a pasture for them that they be fed. (43)

"For thus saith the Lord our God, I shall not send Jap[h]eth to Ham, neither will I send to Shem, Jap[h]eth. But in time of peril I shall appoint from among them a savior whose word shall reign forever." (70)

I am black. Made in the image and likeness of the God or our Fathers and is of the Lord, our God unto thee. (93)

This excerpt demonstrates that within Jamaica there was a certain messianic expectation attached to Ethiopia even before the coronation of Haile Selassie and the ensuing Rastology.

Next, from *The Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy* (Pettersburgh 1996 [1926]), one can see how Howell and other Rastafari could easily equate the concept of the Alpha and Omega to Haile Selassie and his betrothed, Empress Menen Asfaw, the last King and Queen of the Davidic dynasty in Ethiopian history:

Without any apology, to any mortal that was ever created by King Alpha and Omega. I hand you my Rule Book from the poles of Supreme Authority. (5)

This pole is Black Supremacy, King Alpha and Queen Omega. (19)

Every Black Man and Woman is Black Supremacy. (20)

Black Supremacy is the Queen of Ethiopia's Triumphant Resurrection. Africa's DESIRE is to Rebuild Solomon's Temple, but Solomon, is not BIG ENOUGH, nor his FATHER DAVID to dictate to the Monarch of Dread Creation. I am Building a World's Super Capital for The Church Triumphant, The Black Supremacy at the World's Dam-Head. I am the Master Builder of Continents, and Countries, DYNASTIES and Kingdoms on the Earth PLAIN. I am The Perfect Royal Head of This World, The Root of Creation. King Alpha and Queen Omega, The First and The Last. (38)

My dear Ethiopia, Creation Vast, is now Ethiopian Triumphant Dynasty. The Ethiopian is the CROWN HEAD of this Earth Field since Heaven and Earth has been BUILT by the Living God. Thank and Praise the Ever Living God, as long as Eternal Ages Roll. We are your Parents, His and Her Triumphant Dynasty, King Alpha and Queen Omega, the Keepers of The TREE OF LIFE. We are not any family at all to Adam and Eve and Abraham and Isaac, and the Anglo-Saxon Slave Owners. For that is exactly how His Majesty King Noah the Black Monarch was DROWN at Antediluvia by Adam-Abraham, THE ANARCHY. Judge Samson lost his TRIBUNAL and his life by marrying the Philistine white woman. See Judges 14, 15 & 16 Chapters. (64)

In the latter passages we can also glimpse the budding connection of Ethiopianism and naziritism as with the reference to Samson, biblical passages in tow. As will be explored in Section 2.4.1 of this chapter, the consecrated "Balm Yard" found in both *The Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy* (1926) and *The Promised Key* (1935) endures as further grounds for this association with African Naziritism.

Finally, some passages from *The Promised Key* (2011 [1935]) help demonstrate how Howell successfully channelled the Ethiopianist messianic longing into Haile Selassie's coronation with reference to historical events and passages from the Bible:

His and Her Majesty King Alpha and Queen Omega The King of Kings drove to the Cathedral in a coach drawn by six white Arab horses. Queen Omega in a Robe of Silver and the escort on mules wearing lion's skin over their shoulders, forming into procession outside the Cathedral. King Ras Tafari and Queen Omega the Royal pair, the escort and a line of Bishops and Priests fulfilling the 21st Psalm. (3)

Dear inhabitants of this world King Ras Tafari and Queen Omega are the foundation stones of the resurrection of the Kingdom of Ethiopia. (7)

Black Supremacy has taken charge of white supremacy by King Alpha and Queen Omega the King of Kings. Instead of saying Civilization hereafter we all shall say Black Supremacy. Just take this drench of indomitable fury and move for the Church triumphant right from the bridge of Supreme Authority. Black Supremacy will promote the mortals of every shade according to our power to go. The Black Museum will be opened day and night for life. Education will be free and compulsory to all mortal beings, if you are not an enemy of Black Supremacy. (18)

My dear Ethiopians, Ethiopia is the crown head of this earth field since heaven has been built by His Majesty Ras Tafari the living God. (22)

Judge Samson lost his tribunal and life by marrying the Philistine white woman. (23)

Indeed, Howell is the first person to have connected, in writing, Selassie and Empress Menen to the Alpha and Omega of the Book of Revelation while pointing to aspects of naziritism. The call for Black Supremacy is not a call for violence, however, but an effort to take something back from the white balance in favour of African dignity.

Beyond the Ethiopian foci, the Indian influence in the idea of consecration is also referenced in *The Promised Key*. Howell originally published this text under the pseudonym G. G. Maragh, which stood for Gangunguru Maragh. According to Hill (1981) and Lee (2003), Howell's alias is derived from the Hindi words for knowledge (ज्ञान - *jñān*), virtue (गुण - *gun*), spiritual mentor (गुरु - *guru*), and great king (महाराजा - *mahārājā*). Howell's community also referred to him as "Gonga" or "The Gong." The resemblance of Gonga to the Hindi word for marijuana or grass, गांजा (*gānjā*), spelled in English as either *ganja* or *ganga* at the time, also connects Howell to Shaivism (Lee 2003: 97). The use of this nickname is evidence, on the part of Howell, of a conscious borrowing from Indian notions of spirituality, or an intentional insertion of a hybridic element in the liminoid process of creating new cultural phenomena.

Another Indian link that scholars seem to have overlooked is that the nickname, "Gonga," also connects Howell to the sacred river of India, the Ganges, which many Shiva devotees

worship in Sanskrit as माँ गङ्गा or in Hindi as माँ गंगा (*Mām Gaṅgā*).⁸¹ Indeed, many sadhus dwell on the banks of this holy waterway while worshipping it as a goddess. In practice, there can also be a sonic and thematic interplay between the Sanskrit / Hindi words for great (महान - *mahān*) and mother (माँ - *Mām*), such as महाकाली (*mahāKālī*). In this regard, Howell's self-anointed pseudonym marks him as the Great Mother-King of Rastafari, Ganja Guru, teacher of knowledge, virtue, and the way to salvation.

Having already emphasized the Ethiopian, Judaic, and Christian heritage of Rastafari, in the quest for a universal theology, Howell has brought the point further by taking an Indian holy name with multiple embedded meanings. Lee further argues that, in the case of Howell, Gandhi's positions on nonviolence, self-reliance, and that "caste and color were equivalent" were influential in the vision of the Pinnacle (Lee 2003: 102). The "Ashram" approach pointed out by Mansingh and Mansingh is also evidence of Gandhian influence at Pinnacle (1985: 109). The Indian devices and philosophies add further authority to Howell's prophetic calling and the example marks a lucid instance of "nonapologetic hybridity" (Dube 2002), religious "remembering" (West 1999), and living hermeneutics and exegesis at work.

In conclusion, how Rastafari came to understand that the Lord of the Old Testament manifested in the flesh as Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia represents a broad, circuitous theological hermeneutic whose trajectory includes mutually reinforcing elements from diverse religious backgrounds: African, Judaic, Christian, Indian. For Rastafari, YHWH is referred to as JAH, a reflection of Psalm 68:4 and the Sanskrit / Hindi जय (*Jaya / Jai*) combined with Selassie's pre-coronation title and given name, i.e. Ras Tafari. Hence, the ever-chanted mantra of Rastafari, "JAH Rastafari," refers to both the man, Tafari Makonnen, and the coronation persona: His Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie I, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, [King of Kings / Lord of Lords] of Ethiopia, Elect of God. In the theological tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church that annointed Selassie as head of state, Selassie represents the 225th God-King in an unbroken Davidic lineage stemming from the consummation of a romantic liaison between Solomon and the Queen Makeda of Sheba that is alluded to in 1 Kings 10:1-13 and 2 Chronicles 9:1-12 and the Ethiopic set of scriptures, *The Kebra Nagast*. These historical and theological events occurred at a time when many dispossessed black people in Jamaica were

⁸¹ Here I draw on the knowledge of my mother tongue, Bengali, in addition to my background partaking in Brahminic worship services in both Canadian and Indian Hindu contexts.

already anticipating an African God-King based on a prophecy by James Morris Webb about the coming of a “black king,” that is generally attributed to Marcus Garvey.

2.1.2 amaNazaretha Consecration

With regard to the divine paradigm of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, the 1893 *iBaible* translation of the Hebrew יה (yah) and יהוה (yahweh) as *uJehova* reflects the Latin-influenced Jehovah popularized by various German and Dutch Protestant churches during the Reformation. The JAH / Jehovah translation anomaly of ביה (beyah) in Psalm 68:4 and Isaiah 26:4 (KJV) is carried over in the 1893 *iBaible* as *uJa* and *uJehova* respectively and represents one indication of the influence of the KJV in the production of that version. A second, inexplicable occurrence of *uJa* also occurs for יה (yah) in Psalm 68:18. *uJa* has not, however, become incorporated into *ubuNazaretha* hermeneutics as with JAH and Rastafari.

Though it will have already been obvious to some readers, worth indicating at this junction is the fact that the literary tradition of Zulu is a relatively new, postcolonial development; indeed, the very alphabet used to represent the once exclusively oral language has been taken from English (Latin). Moreover, neologisms, such as *uJehova* or *uTixo*, were created by translators to represent biblical material with no real equivalents in traditional Zulu cosmology and culture (cf. Oosthuizen 1967: 15-16). *uTixo* represents a further complexity as the term used to represent אלהים (*elohim*) likely derives from the Xhosa, *uTikxo*. The Xhosa people may have, in turn, borrowed it from the neighbouring Khoikhoi people (Oosthuizen 1967: 16). The term is then employed as *uThixo* in a number of Shembe’s hymns and prayers and is also translated as God. From such instances, Isaiah Shembe extrapolated and further transformed the technology of literature for his context, *uThixo* at once representing the foreign God of the missionaries and another African people, a reflection of a desire for a universal theology.

Apart from the Lord God of *iBaible*, or *uJehova uTixo*, we are even better suited to referencing Shembe’s own words to understand how he became yet another Messiah of the Lord of the Old Testament. According to *amaNazaretha* oral history, Shembe met with *uJehova* of the Bible on Mount Nhlankazi (Hexham and Oosthuizen 1996: 79-84). This tradition continues that the divine calling to follow the ways of the Nazirite came to Shembe beforehand, after being struck by lightning (Hexham and Oosthuizen 1996: 21). The theological traditions of *ubuNazaretha* make it clear that Shembe represents a new prophet of YHWH, like Moses

(Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]: 27), and Nhlangakazi becomes like a “Mount Sinai” for Zulus.

A major result of this theological interaction is perhaps the earliest original work of Zulu literature, the Shembe hymnal and prayer book, *Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha*, that served the dual purpose of teaching the flock how to read in Zulu, especially through the act of vocalizing the words into song, while conveying the principles of *ubuNazaretha*. The opening lines of the *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* Morning Prayer, for example, read as follows:

1. As the dignified congregation who belongs to the Creator of heaven and earth, we are now worshipping him, he who is to be worshipped daily.
2. CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE
God Almighty,
Father of all those who worship him,
Bless our awakening on this day
And keep us in your mercy. *Amen.*
3. Jehovah is my shepherd, I shall not want, I who am his creation. He watches over me at night and during the day. He allows my lips to mention his name.
4. He did not recall my momentary transgressions when I was still in my mother’s womb. He still does not recall them, even now, because of his kindness and his namesake. He restores my soul to good pastures. He guides me to paths of righteousness, because of his kindness and his namesake.
5. Even though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I shall not fear evil; because you, Jehovah, are within me. Your rod and your staff are a shield for protecting me; I rejoice in them.
6. You provide a table for me in the presence of my enemies. You have anointed my head with oil, my cups are overflowing.
7. Indeed, because of your mercy, goodness and kindness which you come from, God, will follow me all the days of my life. With your permission and in your mercy, I will dwell in your house, Lord Jehovah, until the end of my days.
8. CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE
[....]
9. Remember then, that today you have made an agreement with Jehovah, your God, to dwell in the house of Jehovah, until the end of your days. (Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]: 5)

Here, the connection of *amaNazaretha* as the favoured people of Jehovah is rendered clear through the parallels to Psalm 23:1-5.⁸² But we can also see that there are insertions in verses 3

⁸² “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.” (KJV)

and 4 that break up the usual order of this Psalm of David, thus exposing an additional Zulu sensibility within the framework of this originally Hebrew hymn.

Moreover, as Oosthuizen argues, by including the Zulu divinities *Menzi* (Creator, verse 1) and *Nkulunkulu* (God, verse 2), it is clear that for *amaNazaretha*, *uJehova* represents the Lord of the Africans as well as the Israelites (1967: 28). The interchangeable use of *Menzi* and *Nkulunkulu* demonstrates a Christian influence, as no traditional Zulu speaker would use the terms this way (1967: 28; cf. Muller 1999: 161-164). For anyone converting to the Shembe Church, whether from Zulu traditional religion or from a Christian church, *ubuNazaretha* would indeed be something new from both perspectives. These exegetical devices are also reflected in “The Beginning of the Evening Prayer” from *Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha*, but with an emphasis on retiring for the night (Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]: 15-17).

Another example of a central neologism in *ubuNazaretha* is the word *Nazareta*, from which the members of the Shembe Church identify with as a people, and from where the name has originated. Modern Zulu, as with Shembe’s hymnal, adds the “h.” The 1893 *iBaible* employs the term *Nazareta* to identify Nazareth (the place), Nazarenes (citizens of Nazareth), and Nazoreans (followers of Jesus). Typographically, the word is nearly the same as *Nazareti*, the translation for Nazirite in Numbers 6. Jesus Christ is understood as both *umNazareta* (Mt 2:23) and *umNazareti* (Num 6) in this hermeneutic. The KJV habit of translating the instances of ὁ Ναζωραῖος (Lk 18:37; Jn 19:19; Acts 6:14; Acts 22:8) as “of Nazareth” has also transferred; the Zulu translation used, *wa seNazareta*, carries no difference to other instances where the meaning “of Nazareth” is clear (Naζαρ- forms). In Acts 24:5, for *IwamaNazareta*, the meaning of *Iwama*, “it stood” (Sibanda 2011: 132), makes interpreting the passage as “the leader of the ones who stood with the *Nazaretha*” the least awkward possibility. Indeed, Acts 24:5 emerged as one of the key passages referenced during my field research with *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

One passage in which the 1893 *iBaible* demonstrates greater accuracy than the KJV is Matthew 2:23, in which the British and Foreign Bible Society translated the sole occurrence of Ὅτι Ναζωραῖος (*hoti Nazōraios*) as *umNazareta*, another isolated occurrence. As the Zulu prefix *um-* denotes the English article “a / an,” and whereas the other uses of *Nazareta* can easily denote “of Nazareth,” the *um-* makes the possibility of “a Nazareth,” quite awkward, being that Nazareth is a place name. For this reason, *ubuNazaretha* exegesis understands *umNazareta* as something new, “a Nazaretha,” and, according to Sithole, Matthew 2:23 is indeed the passage

with which the Zulu name of the Shembe Church and its members originated.⁸³ In other words, *amaNazaretha* would not refer to themselves in the Zulu *umNazareti* (Num 6), but, in English, they will talk about themselves as “Nazarenes,” “Nazarites,” or “Nazareths,” and sometimes somewhere in-between: [Nazarite / Nazareth].

With these brackets, I wish to indicate that the conflation of the concepts Nazirite and Nazareth in the figure of Jesus Christ sometimes results in a member of the Shembe Church phonetically translating *Nazareta* to somewhere between “Nazarite” and “Nazareth” when they speak about their religion in English. Take the following excerpt from an interview I conducted, in which the speaker relates a tale about his father, once a barber, who was called to join *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*:

KGC: Do you know what first brought your parents to the church?

M/Maputo/45: Very good question. My father actually did tell us that story. He was a barber. So, as he was working in this barbershop, he was an assistant barber. There was this man who used to come around. Then he would stop in the corner and start talking about Shembe, talking about this relation that people should keep [the] Sabbath Day holy. People should go back to [...] ⁸⁴ commandments of the Lord. There was no longer a reason for people to convert to [...] ⁸⁵ or a church or a belief that says you need to be something else for you to follow the Lord. You can follow the Lord as you are, as you were originally [...]

And then one day, he actually went to this man and he asked him questions. He started telling him about the whole [Nazarite / Nazareth] way of life [...] telling him that a [Nazarite / Nazareth] is a person who distances himself from a few things. In other words, as the Bible says that if you choose to become a [Nazarite / Nazareth], it means you are supposed to move yourself over to this level and that there are things that you don't do.

You don't cut your hair. You don't eat pork. There are things that you are supposed to be doing for you to be called a [Nazarite / Nazareth]. And once you become a [Nazarite / Nazareth], as the prophet says, “Everything and anything is possible in that space. You are supposed to cleanse yourself over and become a [Nazarite / Nazareth]. And then one day he started to go and just listen. He went with everybody else.

KGC: At the temple?

M/Maputo/45: Yes, at the temple. He went there. He listened and then a few months later he decided to start following. And then he told them that, “I have a problem. I am a barber.” And he said, “As a barber, how do I do it?” And they said to him, “I cannot tell you not to be or to be a part of. That is your profession. But if you choose—us we feel

⁸³ Interviews with researcher, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 13, 2010 and January 26, 2011.

⁸⁴ In the transcriptions from my field research, a [...] denotes an editing decision I have made that includes at least one sentence.

⁸⁵ In the transcriptions from my field research, a [...] within a passage denotes an inaudible section of under 30 seconds.

that inside is holier than outside.” But as a [Nazarite / Nazareth], you distance yourself from such behaviour.

Number two, you must start praying and telling the Lord, “I am a barber. I want to be a [Nazarite / Nazareth]. What can I do to survive? I need some kind of profession for me.” It was before he was married.

Then he started praying, asking God to give him a job. He’s going to not cut people’s hair as a profession. And then later on, he was given a job as a labourer at a communications department, like a post office. I don’t know what they call it. Yes.

And then he got that job and he started working there, then realized that, “You know what, when you pray, Lord does answer it.” And then time came when he had to start making arrangements to get married. Like you know, in Africa we do lobola, all of us. So, his mother when he started working, he started putting money away for him to have money for lobola. And his cousin who was a member of a Church called Nazarene [....]⁸⁶

Since I had by this point in the interview heard this participant refer to himself and the fellow members of his church as Nazarite, Nazareth, Nazarene, and *Nazaretha*, I eventually asked him to clarify what he was indeed saying, and if there was a difference. He admitted that he was not sure:

KGC: Are you saying Nazarite or Nazareth?

M/Maputo/45: Maybe you must tell me the difference.

But this confusion does not represent an isolated case.

Many *amaNazaretha* I interviewed were aware of the differences in the English words, but not the distinctions in their meanings. Again, this phenomena is evidence that the neologisms *umNazareti* and *umNazareta* that were created for Zulu translation of the Bible are indeed connected for *ubuNazaretha*. For all the historical-critical inaccuracies, we can understand the living hermeneutic as: “*amaNazareta* (Mt 2:23) are ‘Nazarites’ (Num 6) like *uJesu* in *iBaible*.”⁸⁷ The similarity of the 1893 *iBaible* against the KJV equivalents “Nazarite” (Num 6) and “Nazarene” (Mt 2:23) also helps account for this conflation. Worth noting here: not that I could have, but had I been in a position to conduct the interviews in Zulu, many of these exegetical issues would not have surfaced.

Beyond the exegesis, the matter of English translation is further complicated by the fact that *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* was not legally registered for the first few decades of its existence (Vilakazi 1986: 133). Donald M’Timkulu has attested that during these years, *amaNazaretha* were commonly known as Shembes, Shembites, and “[at] one time they even called themselves

⁸⁶ Interview with the researcher, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 10, 2011.

⁸⁷ “*amaNazaretha* are Nazirites like Jesus in the Bible.”

‘Israelites,’ until there was another group with this name which got into serious conflict with government” (1977: 27). From here, the organization became known as the Zulu National Baptist Church, Nazarite Baptist Church, and Nazareth Baptist Church (M’Timkulu 1977: 29; Vilakazi 1986: 133). The situation regarding translation has been exacerbated by the succession conflicts between the various factions.

I was recently sent the following press release, for example, by Edward Ximba, Secretary General at Ekuphakameni:

With due respect can you please receive the photo copies of the original trade mark certificates, and please note that The Ebuhleni Congregation or any other Congregation are no longer entitled to use The name or to be known as The Nazareth Baptist Church, AmaNazaretha, Ibandla Lakwa-Shembe, or use symbols that belong to the Nazareth Baptist Church, AmaNazaretha or Ibandla LakwaShembe including literature, Hymns or prayers or anything that was founded by His Holiness Prophet Isaiah Mudliwamafa Shembe, His Holiness Inkosi⁸⁸ Johannes Galilee Shembe, His Holiness Inkosi Londa Nsikayomlilo Shembe, also they are not allowed to preach directly or indirectly or also not allowed to broadcast any religious material or sing, record any of the hymns that were composed for Ibandla LamaNazaretha, Ibandla LakwaShembe that are recorded in the Hymn book called IZIHLABELELO ZAMAMANAZARETHA that were composed by His Holiness Prophet Isaiah Shembe and His Holiness Inkosi J. G. Shembe and officially published in 1940 for Ibandla LamaNazaretha or The Nazareth Baptist Church at the Church headquarters Ekuphakameni for the purpose of selling, broadcasting make any comment about them or religion founded by His Holiness Prophet Isaiah Shembe to the public or via any media communication eg. radio, magazines, television or newspapers about His Holiness Prophet Isaiah Mudliwamafa Shembe without the AUTHORITY by His Holiness Inkosi Vukile Vukukhule Jehov’ushilo Shembe with immediate effect anyone disregarding this notice will be breaking the law and is liable to be sued for any damages that may occur as result, for your convenience the Ebuhleni Congregation is registered as (Ebuhleni Shembe International Church/Trust).⁸⁹

In actuality, however, neither the other factions of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, nor the media, have applied this warning with regard to either use of the church name or the Shembe hymnal.

My interview with Vukile Shembe, leader of said Ekuphakameni *amaNazaretha*, presents yet another view with relation to the translation of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* that at once demonstrates the conflation of Nazirite and Nazorean, the lack of relevance of Nazareth (the place in Israel), and the mystery surrounding the entry of “Baptist” into the English rendering of the church name:

⁸⁸ Lord

⁸⁹ Email communication, May 13, 2011.

KGC: I've read that in the seventies the Shembe Church was registered as the "Nazarite Baptist Church" and then, currently, it's registered as the "Nazareth Baptist Church" [...] There seems to be a confusion.

Vukile Shembe: Yes, it's supposed to be the Church of Nazarites.

KGC: Simply?

Vukile Shembe: Yes. Over the years, I think there was a slight change. I don't know how it happened, but it ended up being from the Nazarite Baptist Church...⁹⁰ Nazareth Baptist Church. But what it was supposed to have been, even if it had changed to that "Baptist Church," it was supposed to have been "Nazarite Baptist Church."

KGC: Wasn't it, originally, in the seventies, the first time it got registered?

Vukile Shembe: The "Church of Nazarites." When it changed, they were not supposed to have said "Nazareth." They were supposed to have instead said "Nazarite Baptist Church."

KGC: Right, because "Nazareth" in relation to this church is relatively meaningless, as far as I understand...

Vukile Shembe: Yes. That has always been my thing. Because my assumption is that Nazareth is a town...

KGC: Yes, it's the birthplace of Jesus. But then, you refer to the members as *amaNazaretha*.

Vukile Shembe: Well, that's a Zulu translation of it, but it's supposed to mean the "Nazarites," not "Nazareth."

KGC: So, when you hear "*Nazaretha*," you understand it as "Nazarite" and not someone from "Nazareth?"

Vukile Shembe: Yes.⁹¹

Even though Ekuphakameni has most recently registered in English as the "Nazareth Baptist Church," how "Baptist" entered the translation, as alluded to by Vukile Shembe, remains puzzling, since, although the Shembe Church conducts baptisms on adults as part of their initiation into the church,⁹² I found no instance in my readings or my field work that *amaNazaretha* refer to themselves in Zulu with *Bapatizi*. Out of the several terms allegedly reserved for use by the Ekuphakameni faction in the email from the Secretary General (Nazareth Baptist Church, *AmaNazaretha*, *Ibandla LakwaShembe*), "Nazarite Baptist Church," the chosen translation of its leader, Vukile Shembe, has not in fact been included.

⁹⁰ In the transcriptions from my field research, a ... denotes an instance where the speaker trails off or around the topic.

⁹¹ Interview with researcher, Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 14, 2011.

⁹² Note that I have chosen not to broach the subject of baptism in any great detail in this work. While baptism represents the basic step to obtain membership in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, the naziritic aspects are more directly related to the notion of "consecration" to *uJehova* and Shembe, as they represent sustained efforts towards a particular way of life, rather than a one-time initiatory event into the church. Moreover, there exists no evidence of baptism being practiced among the various Rastafari mansions. If anything, the importance of baptism, as a key event in the life of Jesus, and as an initiatory rite in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, also points to the Nazorean conflation in building this living hermeneutic.

When so many individuals from Ebuhleni, and other factions, identify themselves as *amaNazaretha*, it is not for me to say otherwise, especially when my research demonstrates an incongruity between Vukile Shembe's words and the message from the Ekuphakameni Secretary. During one Sabbath service I attended at Ekuphakameni, I also noted a visiting Ebuhleni contingent in attendance, suggesting still more crossovers. In relation to my thematic and academic concerns, I can only do my best to portray which faction I am referencing, when pertinent, to show that there are indeed similarities and differences.

The lacunae around translation called for more exegesis on the matter. In Heuser's introduction, for example, space is taken to explicitly define *Ibandla* as "Church" or "congregation" (2005: xiv), but the translation of *Nazaretha*, as with all known scholarship on the Shembe Church, is never specifically addressed. If pressed to provide one, I would suggest that the most accurate literal English translation of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* would be "Congregation of the Nazaretha"⁹³ since neither "Nazirite" nor "Nazareth" provides the whole story, while the word "Church" generally carries a connotation that may *a priori* connect *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* with Christianity. "Nazarite" (with an a), may have been sufficient in the translation of *Nazaretha*, but prior to this study, there has been no real effort to apply distinctions to the English "Nazirite" versus "Nazarite," as with "Biblical Nazirites" and "African Nazarites," particularly since Nazarite (with an a) has been applied to both *umNazareti* (Num 6) and *umNazareta* (Mt 2:23). My position regarding "Congregation of the Nazaretha" is reflected in Londa Shembe's translation of a number of Isaiah Shembe's prayers and writings, in addition to Becken's translation of Londa Shembe's hymns (Shembe and Shembe 1994).

Other translations that render *Nazaretha* untranslated are "Church of the Nazaretha" or "Nazaretha Church" (e.g. Becken 1968; 1978; Cabrita 2010; 2012; Oosthuizen 1994) since "Nazaretha" preserves not only the Zulu character that is so central, but "Church" repositions it in the framework of a religious organization with a head, a concept that maintains validity with reference to the various factions of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. We are not to confuse "Church" here with "Christian," however. *Ibandla Nazaretha* is indeed a church whose members worship at outdoor temples demarcated by whitewashed stoned lain upon the grass in circular patterns

⁹³ Note that while I have utilized "the Shembe Church" as a colloquial English equivalent for *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* in this work, it cannot be considered a literal translation.

and celebrate the Sabbath from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, as with Judaic tradition. *amaNazaretha* also regard Shembe as their Messiah. As I have written elsewhere:

As reductionist as signifiers can be, we must acknowledge that there is something distinguishable when we are confronted with: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Rastafari. Clearly, there is some *thing* about the worship of Jesus Christ as the only Son of God that is far removed from following the teachings of Buddha or Shembe. Living one's life as a Southern Baptist Minister in Texas or a Catholic Priest in Montreal has little to do with hallowing Haile Selassie I as a Black Christ returned in the flesh for the salvation of the African diaspora. (Chakravarty, forthcoming)

In a similar manner, and as alluded to, the case extends to *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Shembe worship. With *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, then, the best English translation, as I have already stated, is not to translate, or to simply use the "Shembe Church," as colloquial shorthand.

We can further the point by comparing Becken's 2005 and Mthethwa's 2010 English translations of Shembe's hymnal. Generally, Mthethwa's version agrees with my analysis, simply using the roman "Nazaretha" to translate the vast majority of instances of the Zulu *Nazaretha* (Prayer of the Sabbath; Hymns 3, 7, 10, 20, 37, 45, 59, 68, 73, 83, 84, 92, 93, 102, 143, 149, 154, 203, 208), while Becken uses "Nazarene" to refer to instances of *Nazaretha* used to represent people (Prayer of the Sabbath; Hymns 3, 20, 59, 68, 73, 83, 84, 93, 143, 149, 203, 208, 215, 218) and "Nazareth" when the meaning of *Nazaretha* is connected to a place (Hymns 7, 10, 37, 45, 92, 102, 154). The reasons for the discrepancies between Becken's earlier academic work that translated *Nazaretha* as the roman "Nazaretha" (1968; 1978) and the later publication of the Shembe hymnal that uses Nazarene or Nazareth for the instances of *Nazaretha* (Shembe and Shembe 2005 [1936]) remain unaddressed.

Hymn 45, in particular, clearly demonstrates the inaccuracy of Becken's 2005 translation that renders the Zulu neologism *Nazaretha* as Nazarene for instances of people and Nazareth for usages referring to a place:

Hymn 45:

1. I called out loudly at night and at daytime
Why did you not hear me?
Nations sleep when Zulu has been heard
Before the Saviour.
2. I was besieged by all nations
Which are under the sky
Nations sleep when Zulu has been heard
Before the Saviour.

3. Hey! Virgin of Nazareth⁹⁴
Cry out and shout,
About the shame that has befallen you
In your own country.
Nations sleep when Zulu has been heard
Before the Saviour.
4. Hey! Youngman of Nazareth⁹⁵
Even you cry out and shout
About the shame that has befallen you
You youngman of Shaka
Nations sleep when Zulu has been heard
Before the Saviour. (Shembe and Shembe 2005 [1936]: 43-44)

Especially with reference to King Shaka, the highly influential Zulu leader at the turn of the nineteenth century, this hymn clearly places its reader and participant in an African landscape. As mentioned, since *amaNazaretha* understand “Nazareth” as the village in Israel that Jesus came from, Becken’s rendition into English as listed above reflects a disconnection from the way that *amaNazaretha* themselves read the passage in Zulu. Recall that according to biblical historical-critical exegesis, “Nazarene” refers to someone “of Nazareth.”

By contrast, consider Mthethwa’s 2010 translation of the same hymn:

Hymn 45:

1. I cried out night and day,
Why did you not hear me?
Nations sleep so that the Zulu people
Can be heard before the Saviour
2. I was prevented by all the nations
Below the heavens.
Nations sleep so that the Zulu people
Can be heard before the Saviour.
3. Oh, maiden of Nazaretha
You will wail like a waterfall,
For the disgrace that has come upon you
In your own country.
Nations sleep so that the Zulu people
Can be heard before the Saviour.
4. Oh, young man of Nazaretha,
You, too, must wail like a waterfall,
For the disgrace that has come upon you,
You, warrior of Shaka.
Nations sleep so that the Zulu people

⁹⁴ *We ntombi yaseNazaretha*

⁹⁵ *We nsizwa yaseNazaretha*

Can be heard before the Saviour. (Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]: 79)

Beyond the more poetic rendering of *Mawukhale umpompoze* to “You wail like a waterfall,” versus Becken’s, “Cry out and shout,” Mthewa consistently translates instances of *Nazaretha* as Nazaretha, whether for place or person. As “Nazareth” can only be understood as a location in the Middle East—and a “Nazarene,” a person from that place, the English version of the Zulu neologism, i.e. “Nazaretha,” best accounts for instances of the Zulu *Nazaretha* used both as place or people in Shembe’s hymnal. Today, in the context of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, Nazaretha is at once the name of an agrarian community within the Ekuphakameni faction and the term the members of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* use to refer to themselves (i.e. *umNazaretha*, *amaNazaretha*).

The 2005 version, edited by Heuser and Hexham, adds further ambiguity by combining the Zulu article *ama-* and the KJV influenced Nazarite to create “amaNazarite” to translate *Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha* to “amaNazarite Liturgy” (1). While the opening Morning, Evening, and Sabbath Prayers are included in this book, *Izihlabelelo*, in the context of the Shembe hymnal, is usually translated as “hymn,” although the 1893 *iBaible* has employed *Izihlabelelo* to designate “Psalms.” Heuser further exacerbates the problems of translation in the introduction to the 2005 edition by first translating *amaNazaretha* as amaNazarite (viii), and then going on to use both the roman form “amaNazaretha” and the italicized *amaNazarites* (xxv). Hexham and Oosthuizen swing between the roman *amaNazaretha* and *amaNazarite* in some of their introductory writings as well (Hexham 1994; 2005; Oosthuizen 1994). Even Mthethwa’s more consistent version (Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]) carries some ambiguities for translating *Nazaretha* as “Nazarite” just once in Hymn 215 and as “Nazaratha” one time in Hymn 218. While “Nazaratha” most likely represents a typo of Nazaretha in the latter case, the sum of inconsistencies in both the 2005 and 2010 translations also beckon the question of what editorial decisions and/or oversights may have also contributed to these ambiguities. In short, when discussing the members of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and the “universe” in which they live and worship, rendering *Nazaretha* as Nazaretha avoids potential confusion in relation to naziritic exegesis that implicates Tribal and Cultic Nazirites of the Bible, as well Rastafari, a comparative subset within African Naziritism.

Beyond the exegetical factors that are necessary to even carry out this complex analysis, a key rite of passage for *amaNazaretha* men must also be mentioned in this section on naziritic

consecration: circumcision. Beyond the obvious connection to Judaic tradition, for *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, the rite also has precedent in pre-Shakan ancestral traditions. As Sithole has argued, for *amaNazaretha*, circumcision is at once representative of the Judaic (Gen 17:10-11, 14; Lev 12:3) and Zulu universes:

Circumcision is one form of ritual practice that Shembe appropriated and gave new meaning. As [Gen 17:10-14]⁹⁶ shows, circumcision in Israel was meant to be a symbol of a covenant between a person and God, and boys had to be circumcised at the age of eight days. In the Nazaretha Church the youngest boy circumcised is at least ten years old (which itself is very rare), but it is mostly matured young men (and adult men) who go for circumcision. This is because this ritual is not just an appropriation of the biblical text but it is also part of an African traditional rite. In pre-Shakan Zulu society young men used to be circumcised in the ‘African’ way. Here, circumcision was a rite of passage in which young men of a certain age would go to the bush to be circumcised and taught the ways of the tribe, and then come back as men. Shaka thought this practice was weakening young men whom he wanted to conscript for his regiments and therefore he put an end to this tradition [...] So in introducing circumcision Shembe was both importing a ritual practice from Israel and at the same time reinstating a tradition that had been lost in the time of Shaka. (2010: 92-93)

During an interview with Sithole, he also mentioned that *amaNazaretha* men earn the right to walk with a ceremonial staff (Figure 9) only after circumcision has occurred.⁹⁷

The ceremonial staff then represents not only having undergone, as a mature male, the circumcision rite that represents a hybridic interaction between Judaic and Zulu traditions, but also the demilitarization of the Zulu nation in the building of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Sithole explains:

KGC: So, you were going to tell me about the staffs?

Nkosinathi Sithole: Yeah, they are significant. As you will see, when we go to Nhlankazi, every man will be carrying a staff.

KGC: Really?

Nkosinathi Sithole: So, it’s the staff... Isaiah Shembe used to carry a staff wherever he was going. I don’t know what it symbolizes.

KGC: It’s [...] of Shembe, right?

Nkosinathi Sithole: Yeah, and some people say it also has to do with your ancestors. If you have a staff, people believe that it’s not just yours; it’s for your ancestors as well. I

⁹⁶ “This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.” (KJV)

⁹⁷ Interview with research, Estcourt, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 27, 2010.

know one minister that used to say that Shembe found the Zulu people carrying spears and shields... long, pointed, very pointed, very sharp staffs that were carried with the shield. So, if you're fighting with the sticks, you could stab a person with that. So, he says Shembe told the people to cut it.

KGC: So it was no longer a weapon?

Nkosinathi Sithole: Ya, to use it instead to pray for people... sometimes it is used in the healing process.⁹⁸

In tandem with “an independent African satyagraha” (Heuser 2002; 2003), in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, the Zulus have dulled their spears from the days of King Shaka into staffs like that of Moses. Like the Nazirites of the Bible, militant traditions that were once associated with the ancestors have been subdued in the interest of the persistence of other cherished aspects of indigenous tradition.

Finally, with the aforementioned hermenutics in mind, let us turn to two final hymns (7, 32) that clearly demonstrate that while the Bible served as a major inspiration in the inception of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, Shembe is once again that same messiah prophecied in the Bible (Dan 7:13; Mt 24:30, 26:64; Mk 13:26, 14:62; Rev 1:7), but in a postcolonial, “real time” African context:

Hymn 7:

4. Prophets came forth
From Nazaretha;
They came with their Lord,
Covered in clouds.
5. The Holy People set off
From the place of the Nazaretha;
They left to meet their Lord,
Who came on the clouds (Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]: 55).

Here, *Nazaretha* is both a new place and a new theology. And thus Shembe was designated as the one to clothe *amaNazaretha* “with the robes of David” (Hymn 32). In clear instances of Shembe “re-membering” and rewriting the Bible, he has realigned his flock with aspects of the divine universes of the Zulu people and the Bible text in the context of something new in South Africa.

2.1.3 Conclusion to Consecration

In the previous sections, I have demonstrated the hybridric interaction between various sources that help account for Rastafari consecration to Haile Selassie I as a representative of JAH and,

⁹⁸ Interview with researcher, Estcourt, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 27, 2010.

likewise, for *amaNazaretha* consecration to Shembe as a representative of *uJehova*. Rastafari have drawn on diverse concepts from the King James Version of the Bible, *The Kebra Nagast* and the scriptures of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Shiva and Kali worship, and the messages of Ethiopianists, such as Marcus Garvey, in building this living hermeneutic. In the process, through the works of Rogers (1924), Pettersburgh (1926), and Howell (1935), the idea of an African Kingdom became increasingly tied to naziritism. Oddly enough, two of the key figures in the architecture of this hermeneutic—Haile Selassie and Garvey—were not Rastafari adherents themselves. In this regard, the consecration hermeneutic of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, like the movement itself, represents a more centralized set of influences. In *ubuNazaretha* tradition, the call to follow the laws of the “Nazirite” (Num 6:1-8) arrived to Isaiah Shembe directly from *uJehova*. The founder and messiah are the same in the Shembe Church, unlike Rastafari. With Leonard Howell, the “First Rasta” (Lee 2003) and Isaiah Shembe, the philosophies of Gandhi regarding nonviolence and “ashram” life also played an ideological role. Indeed, the idea of agrarian self-reliance emerged as synonymous with all of the other ideas regarding naziritic consecration.

One key difference emerged under the theme of naziritic consecration however: the issue of circumcision. For *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, drawing on both pre-Shakan Zulu and Judaic traditions, Isaiah Shembe also re-introduced circumcision for adult men as a key covenant for consecration (Sithole 2010). I could find no evidence of Rastafari practicing circumcision systematically in any fashion during my readings or my field research. Yet, in the context of naziritic consecration, both Rastafari and the Shembe Church also discourage tattoos and scarification rites associated with many African traditions. Some Rastafari reference Leviticus 21:5 as an argument against these types of invasive rituals that cut into human flesh, circumcision included: “They shall not make bald spots upon their heads, or shave off the edges of their beards, or make any gashes in their flesh” (KJV). Thus, while we can include circumcision with the idea of naziritic consecration as a central point for *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* inasmuch as it ties to Mosaic traditions and consecrated hair growth, Rastafari men seem to extend their respect for the “natural world” to their foreskins.

Aside from the ambiguity of circumcision as a “scarification” rite, the example of generally leaving aside scarification rites by African Nazarites, demonstrates a willingness on the part of Rastafari and *amaNazaretha* to move beyond those markers of indigeneity that fail to

accord with the Laws of Moses. Yet, in choosing what exactly those laws are, as the example of circumcision shows, a dynamic of selective resistance and persistence remains at play. As the ensuing points of naziritism emerge (hair, abstinence from alcohol, attitudes towards life and death), they will also demonstrate that what exactly these “laws” are and what they actually “mean” fluctuates tremendously.

In both cases, however, recall that the Ten Commandments remain a constant point of reference. Here they are, slightly attenuated, for reference:

Thou shalt have none other gods before me. Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth [...] Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee [...] Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee [...] Thou shalt not kill. Neither shalt thou commit adultery. Neither shalt thou steal. Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour. Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour’s wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour’s house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour’s. (Ex 20:3-17//Deut 5:7-21, KJV)

Indeed, the ideas of a “true God,” “disregarding false idols,” “maintaining the Sabbath,” “family values,” “nonviolence,” “honesty,” “fidelity,” and “humility” that stem from readings of the Decalogue are indeed theological themes that are integrally connected to African Naziritism.

The key point of the consecration hermeneutic, however, indicates that the hallowing of Selassie or Shembe in league with Numbers 6:1-8 and Matthew 2:23 perpetuates a living conflation of the Old Testament “Nazirite” and the New Testament “Nazorean” in both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* living exegesis where adherents of both movements typically use various tenuously connected terms interchangeably (e.g. Nazirite / Nazarite, Nazarene, Nazorean) to define a continuum of holiness from Adam, to Abraham, to Moses, David, and Jesus, of which the latest representative of YHWH has manifested in the flesh—their messiah. The most curious aspect of this entire work was trying to understand how two geographically disconnected African peoples, during the same epoch, in countries separated by thousands of miles, came to understand themselves as “Nazarites” living in the world of today, consecrated to a notion of divinity that represents a continuation of the Davidic line as it pertains to a contemporaneous Black Messiah incorporate.

2.2 Consecrated Hair and Consecrated Heads

All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the LORD, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow [....] the consecration of his God is upon his head.

(Numbers 6:5, 7b)

Although it appears typographically posterior in the list of naziritic practices listed in Numbers 6, I include the subject of consecrated hair growth here since it represents the foremost visual marker of a “Nazirite” or “Nazarite” and arguably the oldest biblical practice associated with naziritism (cf. Chakravarty 2009b: 30). While both men and women in the biblical and African contexts of naziritism were also entitled to become Nazirites, the physiological capacity of some men to sprout sparser beards, however, should not be mistaken as a sign of shaving.

With regard to consecrated hair, most Rastafari understand the further act of allowing their hair and/or beard to knot into dreadlocks as inextricable from their living exegesis. Other Rastas, dreadlocked or not, say otherwise. In the following, we will not only look at the consecrated status of hair in Rastafari, but also some deviations from the “dreadlock” standard. I will then go on to describe a number of the hybridic roots that have also been attached to this naziritic practice.

Next, while *amaNazaretha* generally do not cut or shear their hair, the advocated practice of combing prevents knots from forming, while allowing the hair to grow. In addition, various adornments worn on the heads of *amaNazaretha* distinguish a number of gender and social roles and requirements, from Zulu manhood to the virginity status of women in relation to marriage. While I discuss the attire worn during the Ebuhleni sacred dances in Chapter 3, Section 2.1.3, in the accompanying sub-section below, I will specifically focus on *amaNazaretha* Sabbath attire and codes of meaning in relation to naziritic consecration.

2.2.1 Rastafari: Dreadlocks, Combsomes, Cleanface, Baldheads, Fashion Dreads

Some Rastafari continue to debate whether dreadlocks mark an essential component of Rastology. As I have argued elsewhere, for the purposes of diversity management and reasonable accommodations, dreadlocks need not be regarded as a necessary aspect in the determination of Rastafari sincerity (Chakravarty, forthcoming). Regardless of how essential they are to the adherent, however, dreadlocks nevertheless remain a defining feature of Rastafari. Here I

compare the lyrics of Rastafari musicians Morgan Heritage and Bob Marley & The Wailers as emblematic of the opposing perspectives, and as entryways into the complexities surrounding the issues of hair consecration in Rastafari.

Although the band Morgan Heritage sing, “You don’t haffi⁹⁹ dread to be Rasta / This is not a dreadlocks thing / Divine conception of the heart” (*Don’t Haffi Dread* 1999), Bob Marley’s lyrics show an alternate and, in my view, the prevalent attitude among Rastafari that links clean shaven faces and hair cutting with the legacy of imperialistic oppression in Jamaica:

We gonna chase those crazy baldheads¹⁰⁰ out of town.

Chase those crazy bladheads out of our town.

I-n-I¹⁰¹ build a cabin.

I-n-I plant the corn.

Didn’t my people before me

Slave for this country?

Now you look me with that scorn,

Then you eat up all my corn.

We gonna chase those crazy...

Chase them crazy...

Chase those crazy baldheads out of town [...]

[We] build your penitentiary, we build your schools,

Brainwash education, to make us the fools.

Hate is your reward for our love,

Telling us of your God above [...]

We gonna chase those crazy baldheads out of town. (*Rastaman Vibration* 1976)

In the Marley song, “baldheads” represent people who groom themselves according to British or colonial customs to be part of the neocolonial capitalist system. The song clearly resonates with a scorn against perceived structures of systematic subjugation.

On the other hand, beyond its theme of Rastafari existing in one’s heart, the contrasting sentiment encapsulated by Morgan Heritage, “You don’t haffi dread,” nonetheless points to some of the oldest traditions of Rastafari, such as the Howellites, for whom dreadlocks were generally of less importance. In fact, the man touted as the “First Rasta,” never explicitly advocated the practice nor had dreadlocks. Scholars generally agree that the practice of wearing dreadlocks became synonymous with Rastafari as of its routinization period (e.g. Chevannes 1995a; 1995b; Barrett 1968: 75-6; 1997 [1977]: 146; Lee 2003: 229). Yet, few today would question the sincerity of the so-called “baldhead” Howellites (Figure 10), the remaining followers of the order

⁹⁹ have to be

¹⁰⁰ clean shaven oppressors

¹⁰¹ together we

established at Pinnacle in the 1940s. Barnett has further commented on the informally mandatory nature of dreadlocks in the Nyabinghi and Bobo Shanti houses, while the Twelve Tribes of Israel are generally more flexible on the practice (2005: 75). Indeed, my field research with the Twelve Tribes in Montreal and Jamaica revealed a number of “combsome” or “cleanface” individuals at gatherings. In my research with Nyabinghi and Bobo Shanti, dreadlocks were always unequivocal, though the Bobo Shanti always keep their hair wrapped in turbans when in public, including group worship ceremonies, while the Nyabinghi generally support taking any head coverings off when entering the tabernacle. My time spent with the School of Vision, however, revealed more lenience on dreadlocks among the congregants, particularly the non-residents of the mountain camp who would gather primarily for the public Sabbath services in Papine Square. Regardless of the length of one’s hair, few, if any, Rastafari will disagree on the centrality of Selassie in Rastafari consecration.

Aside from “baldheads” who cut or shave their hair, there are a number of other terms Rastafari use to refer to the various degrees of hair maintenance one can exhibit in a society. Someone who only combs their hair, as opposed to cuts it, is “combsome.” Those who shave their beards can be referred to as “cleanface.” Some also refer to those who get their hair styled into dreadlocks at the salon as “fashion dreads” or “designer dreads.” In parallel with Numbers 6:7b, many dreadlocks Rastafari describe their growing hair as a “living crown” upon their head (Figure 11), but—as with Biblical Nazirites—the notion of a “living crown” is also connected to the idea that one’s “life force” dwells in one’s hair. In connection with Selassie as the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah and the lion imagery associated with the Nazirite Samson (Jgs 14), dreadlocks are also symbolic of the “lion’s mane” and vitality.

My field work supports Chevannes’ finding that with Rastafari, for the most part, “the longer the locks the greater proof of years of witness to the faith” (1989b: 228). For Rastafari at large, dreadlocks represent the persistence of a form of indigeneity in stark contrast to what dominant society has deemed incompatible with its frameworks of normativity. With regard to the Bible, apart from the liturgical biblical references (Num 6:5, 7b; Lev 19:27;¹⁰² Lev 21:5), Rastafari also refer to Samson’s “seven locks” as evidence of consecrated dreadlocks (Jgs 16:13-14).

¹⁰² “You shall not round off the hair on your temples or mar the edges of your beard.” (KJV)

A number of likely African sources have also been posited as influences for consecrated hair growth in Rastafari (cf. Singh 2004: 27-28). Scholars have pointed to the Masai and the Mau Mau guerrillas of Kenya and their influence on the adoption of dreadlocks by the Youth Black Faith and other Rastafari in Jamaica, including some of the Howellites (Barnett 2005; Chevannes 1994: 152-155; Campbell 1985: 95; Lee 2003: 102; Smith, Augier, and Nettleford 1960: 26). Savinshinsky argues further that, during the 1950s, many Mau Mau warriors vowed not to cut their hair “until Kenya was entirely free from European control” (1998: 143), mirroring Rasta commitment.

Some Rastas “prefer to relate dreadlocks to published photos of Selassie’s tribal guards, the ‘Mountain Lions’” since three guards at Leonard Howell’s Pinnacle took on this same appearance and appellation (Lee 2003: 102, 229). Warner-Lewis has also discussed a number of precedents for consecrated hair growth in Akan burial customs; Yoruba culture, where “children born with matted hair are considered wise and spiritually protected;” and Central Africa, where some medicine-men grow long matted locks and “live apart, like hermits” (1993: 117). In this regard, one should also note the Ashanti narrative of Okomfo Anoyke, “their founder and protector, they hold him as one of their highest fetish priests, mysteriously born as a locksmith with fully-grown, matted hair” (Middleton 2006: 155). The African evidence, in conjunction with the biblical, has prompted Warner-Lewis to conclude:

The cultivation of matted hair among certain Rastafari sects marks a resurgence of these inter-connected ideas. Matted hair functions as a symbol of apartness, while at the same time it emphasizes the mystic strength of the wearer and his/her dedication to a spiritual life-mission. (1993: 117-118)

The notion is also mirrored in the long, matted hair associated with Shiva devotees. Long unkempt hair is also a common practice associated with the devotional practices of sadhus in India. Indian images of the deity commonly depict Shiva wearing tiger-skins, poised in meditation with his ganja close at hand; he appears with knotted locks of hair, “from which the River Ganges had poured to nourish agriculture and life in the vast Indo-Gangetic plain” (Hamid 2002: 91). In this regard, the hybridic elements that influenced the Rastafari practice of keeping dreadlocks and growing beards were mutually reinforcing.

Finally, in addition to the various theological influences for dreadlocks, at the core of Rastafari inception, dreads ought also to be understood as an expression of “black is beautiful,” a seditious statement in the context of the era’s white capital (Cashmore 1979; Owens 1976).

Dreadlocks came to represent a strong statement against the white bias in Jamaica (Barrett 1997 [1977]: 138). Moreover, as Chevannes has expressed, “The concepts of ‘white’ being pretty and ‘black’ being ugly went effectively unchallenged until the emergence of Marcus Garvey in the 1920s [...] Character stereotyping of Blacks was very much a part of that Euro-Jamaican tradition” (1998). Edmonds elaborates further on the “black is beautiful” ethos of Rastafari:

As with other Rastafarian symbols, dreadlocks have multiple levels of significance. Aesthetically, they indicate a rejection of Babylon’s definition of beauty, especially as it relates to European features and hair quality. According to Rastas, hair straightening and skin bleaching by black people reflect a yearning for whiteness and are therefore symptomatic of alienation from one’s African beauty. Against this background, dreadlocks signify the reconstitution of a sense of pride in one’s African physical characteristics. (2003: 59)

Although dreadlocks can be found in the indigenous histories of Africa, India, North America, and Western Europe (Chevannes 1995b: 97), like with the Babylonians, the Europeans that governed Jamaica had long ago abandoned the practice of keeping knotted hair as one of many indications of their ability to manipulate the technologies associated with civilization, even basic ones such as combs and shears, versus the notion celebrated by Rastafari of allowing living creatures to grow naturally and unabated. Chevannes’ observation about the relatively widespread practice of keeping dreadlocks in various indigenous traditions also reminds us that the concerns of indigeneity extend to Europe as well, the native people of that continent also once colonized as part of the Roman Empire.

In the Rastafari practice of keeping dreadlocks as a reflection of their understanding of hair as a containing one’s life force and hence consecrated, adherents have drawn on African spiritual traditions, naziritic passages from the Bible, as well as rituals and worship connected to Shaivism. While the initial crisis for Rastafari in Jamaica related to the white / black power structure railed upon by Ethiopianists during the early-twentieth century, the growing ethnic diversity of the movement over the decades, in addition to scholarship on the connection of hair growth and indigeneity around the world, has allowed dreadlocks to have emerged as a deracialized form of persistence. Rastafari around the world today still face persecution in public schools, institutions, and at work because of the practice, particularly because of the often synonymous association with marijuana in the minds of many non-Rastafari (Chakravarty 2008).

2.2.2 amaNazaretha: *umqhele*, *isicholo*, White Veil

Much of the Rastafari rationale for hair growth as both a statement in support of natural living and against the white bias also applies to *amaNazaretha* (Brown 1995: 3). One lifetime church member I spoke with described the rationale for not cutting the branches of trees as the same for not cutting one's hair: "You must let it grow."¹⁰³ During an era of industrialization in which self-reliant agrarian livelihoods were falling way to the encroaching colonial and neocolonial economic systems, the very hair on one's head became a living representation of the natural world that lies in the balance between the ongoing oscillations between modernity and indigeneity.

Several precolonial Zulu traditions persist in the Shembe Church that also demonstrate the symbolic character of hair. For example, female members are instructed to allow their hair to grow, but only women who were virgins prior to matrimony don *isicholo* (Figure 12), which Brown defines as a "Basket-like headdress of a married woman. Originally built up from their own hair" (1995b: xx). Elder men sometimes wear *isicoco*, a headdress made of one's own hair (Brown 1995b: xx), revealing yet another aspect of hair consecration particular to Zulu culture that would help enable a connection to the Nazirite.

Among men, beards are the most visible manifestation of naziritism as *amaNazaretha* typically comb their hair, thus preventing locks from forming. According to Sithole, knotted locks are not encouraged by *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. When I asked about the few scattered members I had noticed with dreadlocks (Figure 13), Sithole surmised that these individuals must have already had knotted locks before joining the Shembe Church since allowing one's hair to grow into locks is strictly forbidden.¹⁰⁴ Incidentally, I observed no such "dreadlocked" members among Ekuphakameni *amaNazaretha*.

Beyond the connection with hair growth, for *amaNazaretha*, the naziritic idea that "the consecration of his God is upon his head" (Num 6:7b), also readily connects to *umqhele* (Figures 9, 12, 13), a circular band of fur worn by precolonial Zulu men, particularly warriors and the elite (Knight 1989: 62).¹⁰⁵ As with the spears that have been dulled into staffs, the *imiqhele* once

¹⁰³ Interview with researcher, M/Pietermaritzberg/27, November 19, 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with researcher, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 13, 2010.

¹⁰⁵ Recently, the widespread slaughtering of animals, such as leopards, by members of the Shembe Church has come under fire. On the webpage for the documentary film *To Skin a Cat* (2011), the problem and proposed solution are described as follows: "Traditionally, only the Zulu royals have been allowed to wear leopard skins. However, in the

worn by Zulu warriors now find themselves worn on Sabbath and in other settings far removed from the battlefields of the days of King Shaka. Today, personalized embellishments on an older design motif exist among *amaNazaretha*, sometimes expressions of individuality, at others times emphasizing the role of *imiqhele* as “fur crowns” (Figure 14). These innovations, in addition to hanging pompoms, leather pieces, or fur strands (Figure 13) show room for creative expansion on precolonial motifs that pointed to notions of Zulu royalty, a historical artefact of privilege now adapted and extended to all male members of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

For female *amaNazaretha*, who are also expected to grow their hair as an extension of their “life force,” the idea of one’s consecration being on one’s head also carries further meaning through their headwear. For example, women who were not virgins prior to marriage cannot wear *isicholo*; these women don head scarves instead (Figure 15). Also, virgin girls wear a simple white sheet over their heads during the Sabbath and other temple prayer services (Figure 16), but are clothed in variations of traditional Zulu attire during the sacred dances (Figure 17). While I explore the sacred dances in more detail in the next chapter, I iterate this point about differing attire in the context of Sabbaths or sacred dances to once again show the hybridity at play, the lack of absolutes. While the entire heads and bodies of the virgin maidens are covered during the Sabbath ceremonies, they perform the sacred dances without head coverings and bare chested, in keeping with Zulu traditions. While females are clearly marked in relation to their sexual and marriage history in both the Sabbath and dance contexts, I will discuss the social roles and rationales for these demarcations in the context of South Africa and the Shembe Church in more depth in Chapter 4, Section 1.2.

In short, since so many connections to the holiness of hair already existed in precolonial Zulu culture, traditions such as the *isicholo* and *isicoco* and the Laws of the Nazirite became mutually reinforcing elements in building a new theology. Moreover, headwear for men and women carry a host of meanings. For men, the *imiqhele*, or “fur crowns” of their warrior

last three decades the Shembe Church, a four million strong religious group, has adopted the skins into their ceremonial costume. The demand for leopard skins is now astronomical. Because the use of skins is so widespread and culturally entrenched, law enforcement seems helpless to police this trade in a protected species. It has become, [...] ‘a major conservation blindspot.’ That’s the problem. But this film is about the solution. Leopard researcher Tristan Dickerson believes that you can’t save the leopard without the support of the Shembe people. The film follows Dickerson as he travels from the heart of leopard country to the heart of Shembe and Zulu culture in an effort to discover a solution that benefits all parties. His best solution turns out to be fake fur. Bad fakes are commonly used by church members while they save for the expensive real thing. Dickerson believes that if he can produce a high quality, affordable fake fur, and gain the endorsement of the powerful leader of the Church he can turn the tables in favor of the leopard.” <http://www.toskinacat.org/the-film/>, accessed May 13, 2013.

ancestors are no longer worn in battles. For women, their virginity and marriage “legitimacy” are evident from their attire. Both *amaNazaretha* men and women are expected to grow their hair, but many of the Shembe followers I interviewed told me about ongoing persecution faced by themselves, their children, and fellow members in the public sphere due to prejudice against lengthy hair.

2.2.3 Conclusion to Consecrated Hair and Consecrated Heads

We have looked at hair as a living symbol of one’s “life force.” Rastafari generally wear dreadlocks, a kind of “living crown” at once a statement of Africanness and indigeneity. *amaNazaretha* generally groom their hair, keeping locks from forming. Moreover, head wear plays various roles in the consecration hermeneutics of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. For Rastafari, turbans that reflect an African-style designate the Bobo Shanti (cf. Figures 2, 58, and 59), while the Nyabinghi insistence on the consecrated nature of hair recommends removal of any headwear when worshiping in the tabernacle. While the headwear in Rastafari sometimes distinguishes adherents of different mansions, the dreadlocks—though not necessarily an absolute—remain the foremost visual symbol of Rastafari. The various head pieces and other accoutrements in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, however, serve to clearly demarcate various social aspects about the adherents within a congregation. *umqhele*, *isicholo*, and the white veil distinguish members on various issues regarding manhood, virginity, and marriage. As will be discussed in Section 2.4, the idea that one’s “life force” dwells in one’s hair also relates to attitudes regarding the living and the dead. Despite the many traditions of sacred hair that they represent, many African Nazarites today still face prejudice in the public sphere against the religious practice of growing hair.

2.3 Regarding Alcohol and Intoxicants

He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. (Numbers 6:3-4)

While both Rastafari and the Shembe Church regard the preceding biblical passage as central to their living theologies, their interpretations of the passage possess a number of differences and similarities. For *amaNazaretha*, the proscription against alcohol includes all forms of intoxicants;

according to Sithole the meaning of Numbers 6:3 in Zulu can be read to include abstinence from all types.¹⁰⁶ The Shembe Church, hence, officially stands against the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and chemically manufactured drugs, whether illicit or pharmaceutical. Rastafari, on the other hand, generally eschew the use of alcohol and hard drugs, such as cocaine or heroine, in addition to pharmaceuticals, but substances like marijuana and tobacco are usually exempt from the list of pollutants since they are both products consumed in their natural form. Though some Rastas do not or no longer consume marijuana, you are more likely to see a Rasta mix their ganja with *grabba*¹⁰⁷ than smoke a pack of cigarettes (Figure 18), but many Rastafari also discourage tobacco use, however. With regard to ganja, Rastafari tend to point to many biblical passages that seem to support the consecrated use of marijuana, along with other plant life, in healing, meditation, and reasoning.¹⁰⁸

The excerpt regarding products of the vine tree is only of secondary relevance to the overall portrait of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari as African Nazarites. With no mention in any context of the Shembe Church of which I am aware, only a minority of Rastafari avoid fruits and vegetables such as grapes or pumpkins. The ones I encountered during my field research who had taken on this additional naziritic practice provided the following rationale: since these foods grow on vines, they can make one's meditation "wavy," or helter-skelter. Barnett has suggested that the practice of avoiding products of the vine is more prevalent in the Nyabinghi house (2005: 72). From my observations with Rastafari in Jamaica and Montreal, however, pumpkin constitutes a staple on most *Ital*¹⁰⁹ menus. Recall that for *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, Shembe represents the ultimate authority, while the Bible a secondary, yet central point of reference. The status of the Bible among Rastafari, however, fluctuates from useless to inerrant.

Since there exist only so many ways to iterate the fact that members of both groups generally avoid alcohol, I approach the respective subsections as follows. For Rastafari, I provide a living exegetical and hermeneutical analysis for the sacramentalization of marijuana, or ganja, as a testament against alcoholic beverages, a class of product understood as a colonial hegemonic

¹⁰⁶ Interview with researcher, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 24, 2010.

¹⁰⁷ *Grabba* refers to pure, dried, leaf tobacco as opposed to the chemically altered, shredded tobacco found in most brands of commercial cigarettes.

¹⁰⁸ "Reasoning" refers to a lengthy intellectual discussion between Rastafari *idren*.

¹⁰⁹ Organic, vegan, salt free diet associated with Rastafari

device introduced to the detriment of Africans and other indigenous people. The section on the Shembe Church provides a few examples of transgression from my interviews to demonstrate why alcohol is considered dangerous and debasing, especially as a relic of colonialism. In both cases, according to my research findings, abstinence from alcohol also stands in stark contrast with the Christian eucharist, particularly the sacramentalization of wine to represent the blood of Jesus Christ, a core religious ritual associated with European hegemonic empire from the perspective of African Naziritism.

2.3.1 Rastafari: *Ganja Exegesis*

The words of reggae singer, Jacob Miller, effectively summarize the postcolonial attitude of Rastafari on the subject of marijuana:

Please, Mr. Minister, a word with you
 Only take a minute, sir, so don't you screw [around]:
 You no fight against the rum head
 You no fight against the wine head
 You no fight against the cigarette smoking
 Yet you know, yet you know
 These things give cancer [...]
 Rastaman know the truth
 So you can't fool the youth [...]
 What was hidden from the wise and prudent
 Shall [be revealed] to the babe and suckling [...]
 Tell me why do you fight against the *kali*,¹¹⁰ man?
 Tell me why do you fight against the *kali*, man?
 Yet you know, yet you know
 It's the healing of the nation [...]
 Liar man, doctor man, Indian chief
 Babylon kingdom know the truth [...]
 Yet you know, yet you know
 It's the healing of the nation
 Yet you know, yet you know
 It's the curing of cancer, asthma... (*Healing of the Nation* 1976)

This passage reflects the sentiment among Rastafari and various researchers that cannabis has been a global marker of indigeneity, religious ritual, and healing for millennia in diverse cultures throughout the Near East, Asia, Africa, and both Eastern and Western Europe (cf. Abel 1980; Andrews and Vinkenoog 1967; Du Toit 1980; Hamid 2002; Mathre 1997; Rubin 1975). As with ancestors and knotted hair, my findings expose cannabis as yet another demonized

¹¹⁰ another Iyoric word for marijuana, of Sanskrit origin

marker of indigeneity seeking to persist in face of neocolonial globalization. Note how the hegemony of “resistance” influences Chevannes’ finding that focuses on the adoption of marijuana as an “illegal substance” (1995: xix); i.e. contrary to how Chevannes positions the argument, Rastafari do not want the right to smoke marijuana *because* it is illegal. The dialogue of persistence acknowledges that ritual practices around cannabis use predate its prohibition.

For those who may be unfamiliar with the ethnobotanical properties of hemp versus marijuana, note first that cannabis represents a “dioecious” plant species, one in which the flowers are either male (staminate) or female (pistillate):

Normally an individual plant bears either male or female flowers but not both. Male and female individuals differ in appearance and longevity, the males having conspicuous loose few-leaved inflorescences and dying earlier than the females, which have compact more leafy inflorescences with much less conspicuous flowers [...]

The [pistillate] fruit is a small nut, i.e. it has a single seed tightly covered by the hardened wall of the ovary, and is enclosed within a sheathing hairy bract with abundant resin glands which presumably developed in the wild as a protection for the fruit against insects, like the glandular trichomes of other plants. (Stearn 1975: 14-15)

The fibres of fertilized cannabis, or “hemp,” can be used to make a variety of rope, cloth, and paper, while the hemp seeds represent a non-psychoactive source for nutrition (Abel 1980; Bennett 2010; Wirtshafter 1997). Marijuana, the psychoactive form of cannabis, is produced by allowing the pistillate, or female plants, to grow unfertilized, allowing the “hairy bract” to swell into large buds which can be consumed or smoked.

Marijuana has been mentioned in Sanskrit as गञ्जा (*gañjā*) in the Atharva and Rig Vedas (2000-1400 BCE) as a “sacred grass” and likely ingredient of the sacred drink “soma” often used in Shaivite worship (Aldrich 1997; Andrews and Vinkenoog 1967; Benet 1975: 45; Du Toit 1980: 6; Van Der Merwe 1975: 78). The pistillate marijuana blossoms are either smoked, cooked and eaten, or prepared in lassis and teas, and cannabis buds have also been used in various preparations of incense (cf. Abel 1980; Aldrich 1997; Benet 1975). Recall my methodological point about an ethnographer walking into a room full of Rastas smoking ganja;¹¹¹ indeed, the burning herbs left a cloud in the air similar in density to other kinds of incense, such as sandalwood, that I have encountered during Indian pujas. Rastas also refer to ganja as *ishence*, a play on incense. Moreover, based on a historical-critical exegesis, Benet has argued that the ingredient קנמן־בשם (*kaneh bosm*) in Moses’ anointing oil (Ex 30:23) is in fact

¹¹¹ Chapter 1, Section 4.1

cannabis (1975: 40-42), whereas the KJV translates *kaneh bosm* to “sweet calamus,” the NRSV to “aromatic cane.”

In the context of Jamaica during the 1950s, the government, as a way to deal with the so-called Rasta threat, criminalized possession of what had previously been a commonly used plant in many indigenous and industrial contexts, the messages of “*peace and love*” and self-reliance associated with ganja and hemp so antithetical to capitalism (cf. Benard 2007). Former Prime Minister of Jamaica, Norman Manley, however, would notably speak in favour of the plant during the 1960s and 70s alongside the Rastafari messages of community and self-reliance (Campbell 1985: 96; Rubin and Comitas 1975: 20-35; Murrell 2008: 118-121). My field work also indicated that even Rastas who do not consume cannabis typically support its decriminalization. With this rather condensed background on marijuana in place, let us now turn to the hybridic exegesis that helps position ganja as a sacrament of Rastafari.

With regard to the Bible, apart from there being no specific proscription against marijuana in the Laws of the Nazirite, Rastafari exegetes have interpreted other passages of the Old Testament to corroborate their embodiment of this aspect of *livity*.¹¹² Here are just a few biblical verses that Rastafari regard as incontrovertible theological evidence in favour of cannabis consumption:

And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. (Gen 1:12)

And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left. (Ex 10:12)

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith. (Prv 15:17)

He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth. (Ps 104:14)

Furthermore, the reference to cannabis as the “healing of the nations” can be traced to Revelation 22:2: “In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” Rastafari even understand the Lord of the Bible as a herb smoker: “There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it” (2 Sam 22:9; Ps 18:8). The actions described in the latter passage, though

¹¹² An Iyaric combination of “lifestyle” and “vitality.”

they can just as easily be applied to natural phenomena, for Rastafari, who understand the “Almighty God [as] a living man” (The Wailers, *Burnin’*, 1973), the actions also parallel smoking ganja from a *chalice*.¹¹³ Note here that Rastafari have applied the word that usually refers to the cup that holds the sacramental wine of Christian eucharists to the pipe from which they smoke ganja, as a reminder of the sacred nature of this herb, especially against alcohol consumption.

Beyond the biblical passages, scholars of Rastafari have debated the African and Indian roots of ritual ganja use. Like with dreadlocks, I argue that the combined effect of the various sources were mutually reinforcing. Both the African and Indian sources maintain plausibility since cannabis plants had been present in Jamaica before 1800, after being introduced by the British (Abel 1980: 101-102; Rubin and Comitas 1975: 14-15), before the first Indian indentured laborers arrived. Hence, like African, Indian, and European people, marijuana is also not properly indigenous to Jamaica as of 400 years ago, which confuses the matter somewhat. The historical evidence suggests that many practices surrounding cannabis consumption in Africa were imported from India by Arab traders prior to the colonial era:

The terms *Bangalah* and *Bhang* were names for Bengal and the word for *bhang*, used for the herb, could thus have spread into east Africa centuries ago to refer to its Indian origin. The spread of its use was compounded with more recent Arab trading from Saudi Arabia, and it was almost certainly used in the southern part of the continent in pre-Portuguese times, i.e. before A.D. 1500. (Du Toit 1975: 82; cf. Du Toit 1980: 9-10, 14).

As the slave trade in Jamaica became illegal after 1807—whether or not more Africans continued to drift in until emancipation in 1838 (Owens 1987: 28)—and the first African indentured labourers started to arrive in Jamaica from 1841 (Bilby 1985: 91; Schuler 1980), it is possible to imagine that if cannabis consumption had faded from memory for the slave generations living in Jamaica prior to 1800, some Africans, especially from Eastern or Central Africa, may indeed have been smoking or eating the plant prior to the first documented report of ganja smoking in Jamaica and the arrival of the first indentured Indians in 1845 (Bilby 1985; Mansingh and Mansingh 1985; Rubin and Comitas 1975: 14-15).

¹¹³ For Rastafari, a *chalice* refers to water pipe usually made from a hollowed coconut, polyvinyl chloride hose, and a clay chamber (*kochi*) for the ganja and/or tobacco.

One can also imagine Jamaicans of European origin partaking in the plant as well, since its various uses were well known to the colonies. George Washington's diary entries from 1765, for example, reads as follows:

May 12-13—Sowed Hemp at Muddy hole by Swamp
 August 7—began to separate [sic] the Male from the Female hemp at Do—rather too late.
 (in Andrews and Vinkenoog 1967: 34)

The lachrymosity expressed in the passage demonstrates that Washington most likely grew cannabis both for fibre, like so many of European descent in the colonies (Abel 1980), and its medicinal uses. Such information most likely floated around other ports in the New World, but as no scholar has investigated this possibility, the statement remains only speculative at this juncture. Let us not forget, however, that shipping routes between Jamaica and the Southern United States were prevalent during the 18th century.¹¹⁴ According to my observations during my field research period, many Jamaicans of European descent also indulge in ganja smoking today. Still, as there is no evidence of cannabis being smoked in Jamaica until 1845, we can only ever speculate about the exact date that this practice began and who was indeed the first to “light one up” on the island (cf. Abel 1980: 101).

Perhaps the year of the arrival of the first Indian indentured labourers and the first documented ganja smoking are but coincidence; perhaps not. While the ubiquity of the Sanskrit-derived “ganja” in the Rastafari lexicon generally represents a testament to the Indian connection, Bilby has posited another reason:

the word “ganja” was already well known to British colonial administrators around the world by the time the cultivation of cannabis was first outlawed in Jamaica in 1913; those involved in drawing up the initial legislation on the island were familiar with the famous report of the British-sponsored Hemp Commission of 1893-94, and thus it is not surprising that cannabis should have come to be legally referred to in Jamaica as “ganja” – a term which had earlier entered the English language through Anglo-Indian vernacular that had grown up during the British colonial experience in India. There is a strong possibility, then, that this term came into Jamaican Creole from “above” (via the British-oriented legal system which was responsible for meting out penalties to users of cannabis) rather than from “below” (via the impoverished indentured immigrants from India who were among those who suffered the penalties). (1985: 90)

Aside from “ganja,” words for cannabis such as the Central African *chamba*, now sometimes *cheeba*, and the Kikongo term *kaya* remain popular among Rastafari today. Still, when

¹¹⁴ *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2012/apr/13/shipping-routes-history-map>, accessed March 2, 2013.

considering the entire spectrum of words Rastafari may use for cannabis (of which I name but a few), the hybridic interaction between theological cultures and therapeutic practices resonates: ganja, wisdom weed, holy herb, *cheeba*, *kaya*, *chamba*, *kali*, *Ishence*, *Iley*, sensemilla, high grade. It seems likely, however, whatever year cannabis started to be smoked in Jamaica, that general knowledge of the psychotropic properties of cannabis, among natives and traders of whatever origin, would have persisted somewhere prior to the arrival of the Indians. However, what we know for sure is that the meeting of so many cannabis cultures in one geographical area over the next century, and into the inception of Rastafari, initiated significant interreligious conversations about resistance and persistence, each new idea reinforcing and reinventing the previous.

Although the African precedents for cannabis use are extensive, from Eastern to Central, and Southern Africa (Du Toit 1980: 6-11; Van Der Merwe 1975; Warner-Lewis 1993: 113-114), my research agrees with scholars who have argued that the rituals associated with sacramental ganja smoking are primarily inspired by the parallel practices of Shaivism introduced to Jamaica by Indians, but as connected to Selassie's coronation and the Bible (Benard 2007: 95; Chevannes 1988: 7; Comitas 1975: 120; Lee 2003; Murrell 2008: 116; Warner-Lewis 1993: 114). With regard to the word *kali* for marijuana, Rastafari often refer to the choicest samples of psychoactive cannabis with this word. In Sanskrit, काली (*kālī*), can refer to either the female character Kali of the *Mahabharata*, destroyer of evil man-demons and goddess of the spirit world, or simply to the buds and blossoms of plants. But Rastafari scholars have neglected to mention that the goddess Kali is also represented as the consort of the Ganja God-King himself, Shiva, god of lightning and male fertility. In my opinion, the prevalence of *kali* to refer to pistillate cannabis buds in the Rastafari lexicon demonstrates knowledge of cannabis as a dioecious plant species that links Rastafari ritual marijuana use closely with Shaivite ganja tradition.

Still, one cannot, however, discount the influence of the Swahili *kali*, meaning strong or sharp, towards the connotation of premium quality blossoms it now maintains in Iyaric (Bilby 1985: 87; Rubin and Comitas 1975: 18). Moreover, the designs of Rastafari water pipes, or *chalices*, bongs made of coconut and other organic and inorganic substances, are closer to African than Indian origin since sadhus are generally associated with the clay chillum through

which the herbs are smoked straight, like a spliff¹¹⁵ one never rolls (Bilby 1985: 87; Du Toit 1980: 16). The words *suru*, for cutting board (Figure 18), and *kochi*, for the clay piece that sits atop the Rastafari *chalice* and holds the herbs (Figure 8), are also of African origin (Bilby 1985: 87). Again, without delving into which source bore “the greatest” influence in the consecration of ganja, it is important to recall that all—African, biblical, Indian—were working together to build a new hermeneutic in keeping with a number of indigenous views regarding plant life in general, and marijuana in particular.

Allow me to conclude with a few words about marijuana in the world today. “Compassion clubs,” or licensed distributors of medical marijuana for the relief of certain symptoms for specific ailments, are popping up all over North America and Europe, while more and more governments move towards decriminalization, but not without challenges (Capler 2010; Lucas 2008a; 2008b; Room et al. 2010). Excessive smoking could cause pulmonary complications, but the documented cases of such are on the whole less severe than tobacco (Tetrault et al. 2007). According to Mokdad et al. (2004), during the year 2000 in the United States alone, tobacco accounted for 18 percent of all deaths (435 000), bearing in mind the more severe impact of commercial cigarette blends versus organic tobacco. All illicit drug use combined accounted for less than 1 percent, but none of these were related to marijuana. By contrast, alcohol came in at 3.5 percent. With regard to ganja’s herbal properties, cooking and ingesting cannabis blossoms or diluting the herb into a topical oil negate respiratory concerns related to smoke inhalation. I mention these statistics in order to provide a scholarly echo to what Rastafari adherents were telling me in the field. Meanwhile, beyond herbal uses, arguments for the decriminalization of marijuana for both religious and/or recreational purposes continue to abound (cf. Gibson 2010; Murrell 2008; Room et al. 2010). Like with so many other practices associated with Rastafari naziritism, the sacrament of ganja represents a hybridic interaction of African, Indian, and biblical influences related to healing and indigeneity in all their global complexity.

2.3.2 Ibandla lamaNazaretha: *Alcohol as Debasement*

The Shembe Church discourages all forms of intoxication. In this regard, alcohol consumption including indigenous beer, or “Zulu beer,” a precolonial fermentation, is formally prohibited.

¹¹⁵ large, conical marijuana joint

The proscription represents a further indication of the dynamic of selective persistence in accord with Old Testament laws that promote a spirit of peace, maintaining a balance between the Laws of Moses and Zulu traditions.

Still, on a solitary occasion during my six months of field research in South Africa, I stumbled upon a group of five young men drinking beer and smoking both tobacco and marijuana during the Ebuhleni pilgrimage to Nhlankakazi, practices condemned by the Shembe Church. The men in question were all recent converts and sitting in a spot somewhat hidden from the rest of the congregants:

KGC: I've always been intrigued about how you roll those things without glue {referring to torn pieces of newspaper which are used to roll either cigarettes or joints}.

{one of the men offers KGC a seat on the mat} [...]

KGC: You guys aren't supposed to be smoking and drinking, right, if you are Shembe?

Speaker 2: {chuckling} Ya. He loves you even if you sin. Eventually, I will stop anyway.

Speaker 1: No one is perfect.¹¹⁶

Here we have adherents consciously breaking some of the central rules of their church while in the midst of the holiest annual ceremony, but they clearly understand their actions as "sins." Nevertheless, further inquiry revealed that one of the peers in the group was exerting a positive influence by inviting his cohorts to be part of the church that had helped him make positive changes in his life since he quit drinking alcohol.

According to Vukile Shembe, Living God of Ekuphakameni, and other *amaNazaretha* I spoke with, alcohol played a sinister role during the era of the initial split between Ekuphakameni and Ebuhleni and represents common knowledge within the Shembe family. Here I present an excerpt from our interviews. In it, Vukile Shembe tells the story of how A. K. Shembe allegedly corrupted the sons of J. G. and Londa Shembe with alcohol, securing his own hold over the emerging, and now majority, Ebuhleni faction:

Vukile Shembe: The most important thing that, I think, my father was trying to avoid... you know, growing around him could have easily spoiled me and many of my brothers. Because I was not the only one who did not grow up around him. Most of us, just when we were born, up to a certain age... then he would ask some of his friends to raise us. I don't know what the agreement was, but I think he was trying to run away from raising us under this thing of knowing we are children of *iNkosi* [the Lord], so that it doesn't end up getting into our head and thinking that we are superior than everyone else.

KGC: Which can be easy to fall into as a child...

¹¹⁶ Informal Focus Group, January 10, 2011.

Vukile Shembe: It is. Most of my uncles, I would call them... they fell into the same trap. Their lives, even up to today, couldn't go anywhere, except abusing alcohol. Most of them, in fact, are alcoholics.

KGC: Your uncles?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: Which uncles?

Vukile Shembe: My father's brothers [Londa's brothers]. My grandfather's children [J. G.'s children]. He complained a lot about that, but we couldn't do anything for him. [He] tried to send them to school, but they were just so, so into alcohol.

KGC: Which is ironic.

Vukile Shembe: It is, but it's something that would happen if you grow up under such an environment. You don't get to be treated like any other child. You get special treatment, special attention. You end up thinking that you are superior.

KGC: So, no one can say anything?

Vukile Shembe: No one can say anything to you. And my grandfather didn't have time. He was always busy such that he allowed most of the raising of his children to *amaNazaretha*. And, I think, something went out of hand there. I don't know what, but something really went out of hand, because at the same time when you are a man, you have children, and you leave them to the trust of other people to raise them and teach them, just like they do their own children. You know, when they grow up, they get to a point where they start saying, "Look, you're not my father. You are just another man. You can't tell me anything. Go say the same thing to your kids, not me." So, I think a lot went wrong in that process.

And it used to hurt him a lot, because before he passed on, he called them actually. He called his entire family and spoke very harshly to them [based on] the words I hear. He said something like, "I am supposed to be a father to you. And you, my children, you are supposed to listen to the words that I say to you. But what is happening, is happening the other way around. You are not listening to me. I am supposed to listen to you and heed to whatever you are saying, because I've sent you to school. You don't want to go to school. Instead, you are drinking. So, at this point, I am supposed to be leaving you with a blessing, because I am old now. But, I won't do that. I'm not going to do that, because I can't find any peace and joy, you know, from the fact that I am a father." So, there was to be a lot of [...] that would happen, but blame, mainly, was placed on his own brother, on A. K. Shembe.

KGC: The blame was on him?

Vukile Shembe: It was on him.

KGC: How so?

Vukile Shembe: He started this drinking thing.

KGC: He is the one?

Vukile Shembe: He is the one. So, I think, he had a plan...

KGC: Behind closed doors?

Vukile Shembe: Yes. That, here's this man, he has so many children...

KGC: And J. G. had how many children? Is it counted?

Vukile Shembe: It was a lot. And one of these children will have to succeed him. "What are my chances?" So, he could see that the only way to disrupt this whole thing is to throw in alcohol. He was a heavy drinker himself.

KGC: Amos?

Vukile Shembe: Yes. He was a very heavy drinker. Such that, at some point, he was a teacher. He got expelled from school, because of his many tendencies... you know... out of line behaviour. So, my uncles would go with him when he went to shebeens¹¹⁷ and all these places. Because they trusted him. He would just say, “Aie, come on my children. Let’s go.” And then they had the authority to start doing it.

My grandfather even said that at some point some people confessed this... said that, “I have children.” He actually asked *amaNazaretha* to help him. [J. G.] said, “Please help me. I know that you are expecting that because I am this kind of a person that I am, I am supposed to help myself. But, at times, there are certain things that the law of being the person that I am doesn’t apply. There are certain things that it doesn’t apply to. I have children here, but there is a man who takes them and drags them to shebeens. Now, they have become drunkards and I don’t know what to do, because I’m focused in telling you, in telling to your own kids.” Because he was very dedicated in also helping *amaNazaretha* with their own children. Some of them he took to school and some of them he raised himself ahead of his own children. So, with that gap, I think, evil saw an opportunity to chip in a lot of dark things.

KGC: And I imagine your father wasn’t a part of that?

Vukile Shembe: No, he wasn’t. There were a few of them who went. One of them was my uncle, P—. ¹¹⁸ He died in the hands of his own brothers.

KGC: From alcohol?

Vukile Shembe: No, they killed him.

KGC: Oh.

Vukile Shembe: They just killed him, because he was sort of tipped, you know when kids are growing up, people start making claims that so and so did this... he was one of the highly favoured according to these rumours. So, one day, he came back. He was supposed to go to Swaziland and then I don’t know which country overseas that he was supposed to go to, because he was studying [...]

So, he went to his father. He was in northern Zululand, Emkayideni. [My uncle told his father] that, “I’m leaving. I’ve come to say goodbye.” His father told him that, “Look, if it were up to me, you wouldn’t go back to Ekuphakameni. From here, you’d go straight to Swaziland and then to wherever you are supposed to go.” But his mother was here. He said, “No, I can’t leave without seeing my mother. [I’m] supposed to come back [and] say goodbye to my mother and leave.” And then, well, he came to Ekuphakameni.

When he got here, his own brother, the one after him [of the] same mother, he said, “No, look, before you go, let’s go celebrate. Let’s go say goodbye.” So, they took him and he said, “No, but I don’t drink. What am I going to be doing?” They said, “No, come, we’ll just sit around. We just want to be with you in your last moments before you go.” He followed them. That was the last he was seen alive. Next thing, they brought him back. I don’t know who found him somewhere. They had hit him with a nail, straight to his head. He was crying. He died on his way to the hospital. But the influence came from one person.

¹¹⁷ illicit bars or clubs

¹¹⁸ In the transcriptions from my field research, a capital letter with a long dash signifies a name omitted by the author in the interest of confidentiality.

Because [A. K.] always had this thing of saying, “Look, I know. I talked to my brother.” He would invite them individually, saying, “Look, I know you are the one who is supposed to be the successor.” And he would turn around and say the same thing to the other person. So, they started looking at each other with those eyes that, “Maybe so and so is an obstacle.” Started killing each other. Started hating each other. Up to this day, [if] you sit down with them, they still don’t like each other, even after so many years [....]

And he was doing this in assistance with some of the church pastors who did not like my grandfather. He was a man of high authority. He was very strict, so people didn’t like that, because they saw it as their dignity and honour being challenged, because some of them were great pastors. So, they ended up having that kind of fallout. So, they ended up turning to his brother and thinking, “Maybe if he was in place, things wouldn’t be like this.”

KGC: Because he was easier to let things go?

Vukile Shembe: He was easier. The only thing he spoke about, “As long as you’re going to pay.” As easy as that [....] And the main thing [was] that the prophet had prophesied these things. There’s a point where he wanted to kill Amos.

KGC: Who?

Vukile Shembe: The prophet.

KGC: Isaiah?

Vukile Shembe: Yes. He was very angry with him.¹¹⁹

I leave a special word of thanks to Vukile Shembe for sharing this painful story with me and providing permission to use his words in my study.¹²⁰ Although it would be extremely difficult to verify the facts of such a private history involving people who have now passed away, we must recall that Vukile Shembe represents an eyewitness to occurrences that include close family members.

Please do not misinterpret the purpose of providing these two examples of alcohol use as a factional representation of the Shembe Church—far from it. As mentioned, alcohol being present in the context of any *amaNazaretha* cultus, even during a recreational moment, is rare to the point of being a shock and most likely an indicator of the participants’ recent conversion and desire to change their lives away from alcohol. As Nkosinathi Sithole proudly attested to me, he has never taken a sip of alcohol in life and the same was true of every church member born *umNazaretha* who I had a chance to interview. As alcohol is quite expensive in the context of South Africa, the habit is something that could at best be associated with certain upper echelons of the Shembe Church—a minority in a congregation of millions.

¹¹⁹ Interview with researcher, Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 14, 2011.

¹²⁰ Interview with researcher, Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 20, 2011.

2.3.3 Conclusion to Alcohol and Intoxicants

In the previous sub-sections, we have explored how both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* generally abstain from alcohol which, in particular, is viewed as quite a corrupting influence on people walking the path of a “Nazarite.” For African Nazarites, Amos 2:11-12 occurs as a common point of reference when describing the corruption of Nazarites by alcohol: “And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the LORD. But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not” (KJV). Here, the effects from the introduction of alcohol into the digestive system are understood as a spiritual barrier to one’s connection with the Almighty.

Rastafari, with a living hermeneutic that places such figures as the Catholic Pope and the Queen of England among the heads of a pantheon of demons, also attach alcohol to the Christian eucharist and the exploitative nature of colonialism and neocolonialism. One will often hear Rastafari reason something along the lines of: “God created ganja, but man made alcohol: who do you trust?” A number of scholars have argued that prejudice against marijuana continues to be conditioned by the ongoing global campaigns against the plant that started in the 1930s with Harry J. Anslinger, William Randolph Hearst, and Andrew Mellon, in conjunction with Dupont petrochemicals company (Abel 1980: 237-247; Hamid 2002: x-xi; Malmo-Levine 2010; Post 2001: 10-14; Williamson 2010: 16-21). For my part, on the basis of my field research, I cannot describe any behaviour that I would describe as “dangerous” from the marijuana use. Portraits of the worship services of Rastafari I observed will be presented in Chapter 3, Section 3.

On the other hand, we have also seen the complete formal intolerance for all forms of intoxication within the Shembe Church. I presented two examples of transgression. The first involved of group of younger men partaking in smoking marijuana and tobacco, and drinking alcohol, during the Ebuhleni pilgrimage to Mount Nhlankazi. Although the sight was a solitary one for me as a researcher, the transgressors explained that they were new converts and seeking to improve their lives, like their friend who has recently converted and made positive changes to his life since quitting the habit. Next, I presented an excerpt from my interviews with Vukile Shembe, Living God of Ekuphakameni, who explained how alcohol had been used as a corrupting influence by members of the church on potential heirs to *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

As more and more Rastafari and *amaNazaretha* are obtaining university educations and becoming employed in various professional fields (not to mention members of other religious

groups for whom alcohol is taboo), I must also echo Alles (2008: 9) and wonder to what degree the presence of wine and other alcoholic beverages at scholarly events, and other public occasions, could be alienating to individuals from certain religious traditions. Though one always maintains the right to abstain, where alcohol is viewed as part of a “culture,” so the Other whose culture scorns alcohol may suffer an unintentional alienation from that culture. In this regard, whether “right” or “wrong,” alcohol remains a thematic link to colonial oppression in the views of Rastafari and *amaNazaretha*. Though the opinions of Rastafari and *amaNazaretha* differ on marijuana use, their shared views on alcohol point to its potential for harm and destruction in society.

2.4 Regarding the Dead: Nonviolence and Natural Living

All the days that he separateth himself unto the LORD he shall come at no dead body.¹²¹ He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head. (Numbers 6:6-7)

As discussed, both Rastafari and *amaNazaretha* grow their hair in part because of the notion that one’s life force resides in the strands of one’s hair. Likewise in this hermeneutic, and as reflected in the biblical passages above (Num 6:6-7), under the auspices of naziritism, coming into contact with the dead can contaminate this source of vitality. For African Nazarites, not coming into contact with the dead implicitly involves the idea of nonviolence, especially in keeping with the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill” (KJV, Ex 20:13//5:17). Apart from Numbers and the call to distance oneself from the dead, Rastafari and *amaNazaretha* both hold the following biblical passage dear: “Let the dead bury their dead” (KJV, Mt 8:22//Lk 9:60), a rather enigmatic passage. For African Nazarites, the latter helps frame death metaphorically into categories of activities that either create human flourishing or demise. In this regard, according to my field research, many African Nazarites understand themselves as something akin to a “peace warrior;” that is, one who affects change or maintains a lifestyle through pacifistic means. In both cases, the influence of Gandhian philosophies regarding nonviolence can also be considered a mitigating factor in the hermeneutic around the dead.

African Nazarites thus encourage ethical frameworks, attitudes, and practices that promote the production of life over and against structures that cause death, like military war, or

¹²¹ “corpse” in NRSV

products such as chemically processed foods that slowly impair the health of consumers. In addition, pertaining to this hermeneutic on the value of life, African Nazarites generally condemn abortion and contraception, methods that promote premature death in a holistic sense. Rastafari extend the proscription against the dead into advocacy for an *Ital* diet (organic, vegan, salt free), while, for *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, the general respect for nature carried by each fosters a spiritual respect for the slaughtered “clean” animals (according to Mosaic Law), such as cattle and sheep, that are sacrificed and consumed. Finally, for both sets of African Nazarites, malignant forms of witchcraft and sorcery involving the spirit world are discouraged alongside modern medicine, although allowances for the latter have increased with the passing of generations. For healing, Rastafari subscribe to a natural *livity* based on herbs and an *Ital* diet, but in the Shembe Church, the primary vehicle of healing is the Holy Spirit of Shembe. Finally, notably absent from each is the notion of “spirit possession” found in both Pentecostal and African traditions. The following sections reveal the living exegesis and hermeneutics behind these varying markers of resistance and persistence.

2.4.1 Rastafari: *Ital* Food, *Balm Yards*, *Duppy Conquerors*

Beyond the call for pacifism towards fellow humans, Rastafari extend their reverence for life to the animal world. Historically speaking, however, vegetarianism as a spiritual practice is closer connected with the religious world of Indians than Africans (Benard 2007: 95). In this move away from the traditional African practice of slaughtering and consuming meat, Rastafari demonstrate a willingness to go beyond an ancestral tradition in search of alternative models of enlightened living. The exegesis for *Ital* food could begin in Genesis:

And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. (KJV, Gen 1:29-30)

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones,

and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. (KJV, Gen 2:18-23)

Many Rastafari I interviewed pointed to these passages to argue that the original dietary decree for humans and animals was vegetarianism. The “herb bearing seed” implicitly includes cannabis as well. Beyond its use as an aid in meditation, cannabis also constituted a holy food for many cultures since the nutritional value and protein content of hemp seeds would be sufficient for humans and even some animals accustomed to having meat in their diets (Wirtshafter 1997). Now, while I cannot tell you what a lion would do if presented with cannabis (blossoms or seed), I can attest that during one field research situation, I witnessed a common dog lapping up a bowl of hemp seeds. According to Lamaistic Buddhist tradition, Buddha ate only one hemp seed per day during his six year meditation, while in Tantric Buddhism psychoactive cannabis drinks are ingested to help induce meditations (Rätsch 1998: 45). In the NRSV, אכלה (*oklah*) is translated as “food” instead of the KJV’s “meat” (Gen 1:29-30). The KJV thus belies the relatively carnivorous dietary ideals of late-medieval English aristocracy, i.e. “meat” becoming synonymous with “food.”

Moreover, in Genesis 2, the animals are designated as helpers or “partners” (NRSV), not “food.” According to this hermeneutic, animals are only sanctified as “food” after the flood:

And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. (KJV, Gen 8:20-21)

In the above tale, it is only after the flood, when the Lord finds the smell of the meat cooking over the fire “sweet,” that the Lord finally starts to change his mind about a diet including flesh. In Gen 8:20-21, flesh eating is designated as “evil” in accordance with the original reasons for the flood. The Bible contains a little further information regarding the nature of this pre-diluvial “evil:”

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (KJV, Gen 6:1-5)

With regard to the Lord's rationale to flood the Earth, the Bible alerts the reader to a) breeding between the Sons of God and the daughters of men, b) the presence of giants roaming the world, and c) the widespread wickedness into which humankind had slipped.

The Book of Watchers (300 BCE), from the Book of Enoch, one of the central texts of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church from which Rastafari also draw inspiration, represents an extra-biblical source with additional information towards the hermeneutic regarding God's motivations for flooding the earth. Take these excerpts from 1 Enoch 6-7:

And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the children of the heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: "Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men and beget us children." And Semjaza, who was their leader, said unto them: "I fear ye will not indeed agree to do this deed, and I alone shall have to pay the penalty of a great sin." And they all answered him and said: "Let us all swear an oath, and all bind ourselves by mutual imprecations not to abandon this plan but to do this thing." Then sware they all together and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it [....]

And all the others together with them took unto themselves wives, and each chose for himself one, and they began to go in unto them and to defile themselves with them, and they taught them charms and enchantments, and the cutting of roots, and made them acquainted with plants. And they became pregnant, and they bare great giants, whose height was three thousand ells: Who consumed all the acquisitions of men. And when men could no longer sustain them, the giants turned against them and devoured mankind. And they began to sin against birds, and beasts, and reptiles, and fish, and to devour one another's flesh, and drink the blood. Then the earth laid accusation against the lawless ones. (Charles 2012 [1912])

Thus, in Enoch, eating flesh of any kind, human or animal, emerges as one of the many evils for which God obliterates humankind from the face of Earth by flood.

In this regard, the following passage regarding the boarding of the ark can be understood as a further reiteration of the divine call to be vegetarian:

Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive. And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them. (KJV, Gen 6:20-21)

Once again, the idea that humans and animals can eat the same food emerges, alluding to the idea that animals are not designated as food. Recall that according to this hermeneutic, the Lord only lifts the ban on animal flesh after the flood.

The KJV makes the reading more plausible with its "he shall come at no dead body" (Num 6:6). The ambiguity of the translation of *נפש מת* (*nepeš mêt*) as "dead body," allows for the

inclusion of both human and animal life in this proscription. In fact, this marks one of the rare instances in which the KJV translation emerges as more accurate than the NRSV. NRSV's "corpse," only allows a reading that includes dead human bodies. But, since נֶפֶשׁ (*nepeš*) also widely pertains to animal life in the Old Testament (Betterweek, Ringgren, and Fabry 1998: 497-519), "dead body" may indeed be more indicative of the intentions of the original hands behind the manuscripts, regardless of the above hermeneutics.

Finally, with regard to naziritic consecration and Rastafari attitudes regarding life and death, the section entitled "Royal Notice" in Howell's *The Promised Key* (1935), largely copied from various sections of *The Royal Parchment Scroll of Black Supremacy* (Pettersburgh 1926), provides more insight, particularly with its description of the Ethiopian Balm Yard in tandem with Haile Selassie and Empress Menen as Alpha and Omega:

King Alpha said Bands are not runned by Ministers, they are runned by the Priesthood not after the order of Aaron but strictly after the Royal Order of King Ras Tafari The King of Kings of Ethiopia [...]

The reason why revivalists world have not been lightened up with radiance before now, King Alpha was awaiting for the Delegates of the Resurrection of the Kingdom of Ethiopia and King Alpha's work is strictly perfect and He and Queen Omega do not business with Anglo Militant white people nakedness.

King Alpha said that a Balm Yard is not a Hospital, neither is it a obeah¹²² shop. People that are guilty of obeah must not visit Balm Yard, nor in the Assembly of Black Supremacy. No admittance for fortune tellers, witch and old hige. No admittance for obeah dogs, none whatever, no admittane for ghost, witch, lizards, no admittance for alligators, snakes, puss, crabs, flies, ants, rats and mice, and lodestones, pin and needles, john-crows, the ravens and candles, fast cups and rum bottles and grave yards are not required.

People's clothes, a beast hair, and fowls and grave dirt not wanted. The woman's baby will strive in her belly, and your snakes and lizards will not be able to hurt her for your ghosts will come right back to you. For this is Ethiopia's Balm Yard and we do not have leprosy. For ghost only visit the lepers home. (2011 [1935]: 12-13)

Many themes work concurrently in this notion of "Ethiopia's Balm Yard." After announcing the new consecration hermeneutic that points to Selassie as king and colonialism as the enemy, Howell describes a healing yard that borrows neither modern medicine nor African forms of sorcery, such as *obeah*. Furthermore, a number of "unclean" animals, but particularly scavengers that represent death and decay are mentioned: "lizards [...] alligators, snakes, puss,¹²³ crabs, flies, ants, rats [...] mice [...] john-crows." The animals also represent taboo items with regard to

¹²² casting evil spells through spirits

¹²³ cat

the lengthy dietary laws of the Old Testament, particularly in Leviticus 11. In the consecrated healing yard, no reptiles, rodents, or carrion-eaters are allowed. Since alcohol is also viewed as a pollutant that leads to death, all these items are components of a larger hermeneutic in which ghosts and alcohol are both pollutants against the spirit. Some Nyabinghi affiliates in particular, along with their adherence to this proscription, also refrain from attending funerals for risk of contamination from the dead (Barnett 2005: 72-73).

Yet, within Rastafari, more mystical approaches towards death also have their place. For example, The Wailers—Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, and Bunny Wailer—sing about a “Duppy Conqueror” (*Burnin’* 1973), or vanquisher of malignant spirits, who can enter into that dimension through the use of marijuana. The notion links with both the Indian deity, Shiva, who made his home in the funeral pyres of the dead to gain oneness with the otherworld and African shamanistic mastery of the world of spirits. Note that while Rastafari condemn *obeah*, the malignant manipulation of the spiritual world, they recognize its existence; a strong Rasta will be able to enter into this world of witchcraft to impede the spirits from harming their community.

2.4.2 Ibandla lamaNazaretha: *Attitudes towards Death and the Natural World*

Similarly to Rastafari and *obeah*, *amaNazaretha* have officially forbidden *muti*, traditional Nguni practices akin to witchcraft or sorcery that manipulate the spirit world with bad intentions. Again, the existence of *muti* is not denied, but by living a righteous lifestyle, the adherent feels more capable of dealing with such perceived forces. Unlike Rastafari, however, who seek healing from the natural world of plants and herbs, *amaNazaretha* disregard herbal medicines since they are associated with the *inyanga* or *sangoma*, or Zulu witch doctor figure who is consulted for spells. Moreover, in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, the ultimate source of healing is the spirit of Shembe.

Outside of the spirit realm, and in accordance with Num 6:6-7, coming into contact with dead humans endures as a polluting act. When a member of the Shembe Church returns for a service after having attended a funeral, for example, a minister performs a ritual in which the spirit of Shembe cleanses the individual before readmission into the temple (Figure 20). In *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, however, the proscription against coming into contact with the dead does not extend to animals. First, Nguni peoples had been eating meat in Southern Africa for

millennia. The 1893 *iBaible* version of Numbers 6:6 also pertains to human bodies only,¹²⁴ as opposed to the KJV's "dead bodies" which could also include animal life. Still, even though *amaNazaretha* commonly eat meat from "clean" animals such as cattle, sheep, and goats, the members are entrusted to treat the animals well and raise them according to free range, as opposed to industrial, farming practices. The blood of the animal is also drained before consumption. The ancestral Zulu practice of eating pork, however, has been swept aside by naziritic consecration and its connection to Leviticus 11 and Mosaic Law.

A number of parables from *ubuNazaretha* oral tradition capture the call for responsibility towards animals and nature quite well:

A donkey accuses its owner to Shembe

On another day, when we were in the village of Ekuphakameni, the lord told us to accompany him on his visit to the evangelist Nsele at Msimbazi. We arrived there at sundown. On the next morning, Shembe went out and sat at the door. There he saw a small seedling of a tree. He took it, and I heard with my own ears when he said: "Its name is Inkambabeyibuza."

When he had planted it, he sat down together with us. After 9 a.m., a donkey came back from the pasture and stood before the lord. Shembe rose from his chair, went to the donkey, put his ear close to its mouth and closed his eyes. Then he said to Nsele: "This donkey accuses you. It says, that all the other donkeys did already perish, and that it has remained alone, because you had put them together with the cattle which were stabbing them. Therefore, you must pay a fine." Nsele paid 50 cents, because his donkey had accused him to the owner of all things. I have seen this money with my own eyes. (Thomas Makhathini in Hexham and Oosthuizen 1996: 113)

The donkey of Shembe

When we were on our way to Lenge together with Shembe, he said: "We have hit this donkey too much; when it should die, we shall be guilty before God." Then he dismounted and walked. It was surprising, how this man knew the creation of God. He said: "When God created the donkey, he forgot to put blood into its heart; therefore, when you hit the donkey, it will soon forget that you hit it, and it will do again the same thing, for which you hit it."

(Muntuwezizwe Buthelezi in Hexham and Oosthuizen 1996: 113)

In both stories, Shembe condemns these acts of violence against animals. The two tales also ensure that those who have committed the acts of abuse pay a price in return.

Another popular narrative among *amaNazaretha* involves an encounter between Isaiah Shembe and a young girl carrying a monkey in a bag:

¹²⁴ "Ngezinsuku zonke zokuzahlukanisela kwake kuJehova a ka nga hlangani nesidumbu sofileyo."

He saw her on her way from afar and called her. He said: “My child, what do you carry in your bag? Open your bag, that I may see what you hide in it.”

The girl replied: “I have been sent to sell this monkey cub at Mthunzini.” Then the monkey cub cried: “Shembe, you son of Mayekisa, did you come to choose only some in this world? You liberator, will you not liberate all from their chains? Have mercy on me. I have been separated from my father and from my mother, and I do not know where I am going.”

Shembe said to the girl: “My child, return it; its father and its mother are mourning for their child.” Then he gave her five shillings, and the girl went back with the money and the cub.

When the girl came back home, the owner of the field refused to return the monkey cub to its mother and father thus ignoring the word of the lord Shembe. Instead, she gave the monkey to her son Zachariah. This boy took it and sold it for ten shillings. Then he was attacked by a disease that peeled off his youth.

When his mother told him to grind, he yawned, and his two jawbones came apart. He went to the doctor who charged him ten shillings. This was the same amount of money which he had realized from the sale of the monkey.

When this woman had passed away, her sister, who had been sent to sell the monkey, reported, that her deceased sister visited her when she was sleeping, and said, that she always saw herself surrounded by monkey cubs. She was hanging over a precipice and the monkeys, who were sitting over her in a tree, said to her: “Shembe advised you to bring our cub back to us, but you did not do so.”

She said: “Go to Shembe and ask him to forgive me, because I ignored the advice of the lord to bring the cub back to the forest.”

(Muntu-Okhona Mjadu in Hexham and Oosthuizen 1996: 117-118)

Again, the theme that those who have committed these acts against innocent animals will pay a price resonates in the narrative about the girl who was trying to sell a monkey.

In fact, *amaNazaretha* are discouraged from keeping dogs and cats as pets, as with the captive monkey cub. What animals they raise, they do for food in accordance with African traditions and Mosaic Law, but where the two do not conflict. In the background of my Sabbath Day audio recordings from Ekuphakameni, where a church house stands adjacent to the outdoor temple demarcated by white stones (Figures 21, 22),¹²⁵ the cooing of pigeons interlace the hymns, sermons, and announcements. Indeed, the birds populate the upper rafters of the church house. Stray dogs and cats are kept away to keep these special vessels of the holy spirit safe.

With regard to life and death, the power of this biblical *uJehova* over lightning readily appealed to Zulu people who live in an area of the world where the risk of fatality by lightning is one of the highest in the world (cf. Gijben 2012). In fact, with so many people who have near-

¹²⁵ I never actually had the chance to attend a service in the outdoor temple due to a variety of logistical reasons, including construction near the temple site.

death experiences from encounters with lightning, versus those who are not so fortunate, within *ubuNazaretha* tradition lies a great bank of oral traditions centred around resurrection stories from lightning strikes. As mentioned, according to *amanNazaretha* tradition, Isaiah Shembe first received his divine mandate to follow the ways of the “Nazarite” after surviving a lightning strike:

There on the wagon, Jehova spoke to [Shembe] and sent him to the land of the East; he said: “There are many suffering people. Go and liberate them from slavery. These people have naked hips (*izinqulu ezisobala*). When you will come to them, tell them that they should worship me their God, the Mvelinqangi of their forefathers and the God of their fathers, and that they should take the vow of the Nazarites. They should no longer drink beer and wine; they should not cut their hair nor shave their beards; they should not use medicines, and they should keep the Sabbath day. On the Sabbath day they should not do any work and kindle no fire in their homes.”

All these commandments were given to Shembe when he was struck by lightning. The Voice told him to go and to preach this message in the country of the East and to teach them all these commandments which they ought to keep.

(Muntuwezizwe Buthelezi in Hexham and Oosthuizen 1996: 21)

As a result of the many dangers of living in the eastern part of South Africa, from lightning to poisonous snakes and an array of diseases and afflictions, near-death and resurrection narratives continue to play an important role in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. As Sithole argues:

Nazarite members are not only regarded by many as backward, uneducated, and unemployed rural people, they are also accused of worshipping another human being like themselves, Shembe. For the Nazarites then near-death narratives are important because they serve as proof that Shembe is not just an ordinary human being, he is the one sent from above. Many near-death experiencers testify that they have met Shembe on their spiritual journeys. While this does give the Nazarites a sense of what may happen to them when they die, it is more important as a tool for confirming or defending their faith against the people who criticise and look down upon them and their church. (2005: iii)

The following lightning testimony comes from a young *umNazaretha* woman pursuing a bachelor’s degree at the time of our interview:

KGC: So, earlier we were talking about some of the miracles that you witnessed. You mentioned you had witnessed a mute child who had begun to speak. Are there any other miracles that you witnessed that you could tell me about?

F/Inanda/19: One that really stuck out to me was... I think I was around five. My elder sister, she’s married. It started like it was a thunderstorm. It was a huge thunderstorm and I’d just come back from church. She used to pick me up. And when we got home, I was in the kitchen. I remember she was holding a kettle. And the thunder was terrifying—and I’m still terrified of lightning and thunder until this day. And I remember my dad was making these pics that they hang around, of our Shembe; he used to make them.

KGC: Those pendants?

F/Inanda/19: Yes, those pendants. He was in the rondavel that connected our house and he was there and he was making them and suddenly, like, a huge like streak of lightning just came into the house and struck my sister.

KGC: Seriously?

F/Inanda/19: And it was right in front of my eyes and she just lay there like ice. She was rock hard. And I remember Dad screaming and coming in. I was just a kid. I was standing there terrified, not really comprehending what was going on. So my dad just came in and he started shouting and calling, “M—! M—! Wake up!” And she was, like, you know, like obviously lying there. And he ran out and went to get blessed water, because we always keep blessed water in our house that’s blessed by Shembe. So, he came there. He forced open her mouth and just turned that twenty-five litres straight down her throat. And, you know, she started coughing at that time. And they took her to the hospital and then when my mom came in—she had just come in from work—at that time, it was the third Shembe, A. K. And then she took what she had, the money, and we took a taxi because it’s like five minutes drive actually to Ebuhleni from where we live and I went with my mom and she came and she was devastated, “My child has just been struck by lightning and Shembe was like, “She’ll be fine.” And that’s all he did and said, “God bless you.” He didn’t give her anything. He’s just like, “Use the water, use the blue seal Vaseline, and she’ll be fine.” She really was fine. And she still lives to this day. Even she used to wear a ring. She has that mark on the finger that everytime I look at her, we used to kid around like, “Remember the time you were struck down by lightning?”¹²⁶

Although there are innumerable near-death and resurrection stories among members of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* (cf. Hexham and Oosthuizen 1996), I have included the above from my field research because the tone of the speaker helps indicate the relatively common place of these types of events in *ubuNazaretha*. Here again, the story demonstrates that for the adherent, the ultimate healing power comes from Shembe—because the father had used the holy water, her sister was healed by the time they got to the hospital. Note here that water, soap, and Vaseline (petroleum jelly) are understood as vessels that carry the healing power of Shembe. I have still not encountered any scholarship that specifically addresses how and why Vaseline entered the ministry of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, but I will examine this mixture between faith, healing, and commerce in Chapter 4, Section 2.1.

2.4.3 Conclusion to Death, Nonviolence, and Natural Living

With the passage regarding the dead (Num 6:6-7), the manner in which the points of African Naziritism start to circle upon each other becomes increasingly evident. The life force that is preserved in the growing of hair is indicative of a larger attitude towards generally allowing nature to grow unfettered. Beyond the implicit call for nonviolence presented in this

¹²⁶ Interview with researcher, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 27, 2011.

hermeneutic, and echoed by the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill” (Ex 20:13//Deut 5:17) and Gandhian philosophy, both of the above sections demonstrate that, in a general sense, African Nazarites also seek to foster a respect for the natural environment and the fellow beings living within it. For Rastafari, this respect for nature extends to animals and results in *Ital*, or an organic, vegan, and salt-free diet. While *amaNazaretha* remain omnivorous, they do so in accordance with the hygienic laws of the Old Testament with regard to draining the blood of “clean” animals before consumption. Here we might posit that the Zulu proximity to their traditions, i.e. being indigeneous to their lands for millennia as a people, made the abandonment of meat a non-issue. Note that the Hindu idea of vegetarianism has been absorbed in Rastafari but not *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. In this regard, I would argue that the displacement from Africa to the Caribbean, in addition to contact with Shaivism and Gandhian philosophy facilitated the advent of *Ital* in Rastafari routinization in Jamaica.

While an ideal of agrarian self-reliance lies at the heart of African Naziritism, as will be explored in Chapter 4, Section 2, the exigencies of modernity are increasingly in conflict with this model of sustenance. For example, while Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* stand against the use of modern medicine, contradictions exist since some African Nazarites belong to their religious tradition and are yet practicing medical doctors. In Chapter 4, Section 1.2, I will explore this matter a little further with reference to an interview I conducted with a recent MD graduate who counts herself a member among the Ebuhleni *amaNazaretha*. With regard to healing, Rastafari proscribes herbal remedies, including ganja and other plants, in keeping with indigenous practices, but condemns *obeah*, or African forms of sorcery. Likewise, *muti*, or the manipulation of malignant spirits is not recommended for *amaNazaretha*. As the many resurrection stories in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* reflect, the spirit of Shembe represents the ultimate healing power. Moreover, the African forms of sorcery, *obeah* and *muti*, represent types of spells that go against the spirit of human flourishing; they are typically evoked to cause the demise of someone else in the community, thus going against the call from the Decalogue to respect one’s neighbour (Ex 20:15-17//Deut 5:19-21).

3. Conclusion to “Biblical Nazirites, African Nazarites”

This chapter represents a formal response to my primary research questions related to the complex interactions of naziritism with both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Wide

variations within naziritism were explored in both the contexts of biblical history (13th century BCE to 3rd century CE) and the inception of Rastafari in Jamaica and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* in South Africa during the postcolonial contexts of the early-twentieth century. The list of characters, literary or living, who can be identified as “Nazirites” or “Nazarites” (in English) includes Tribal Nazirites, military heroes like Samson who were expected to grow their hair and abstain from wine as part of their lifetime calling (13th to 12th century BCE); Cultic Nazirites, average citizens living in Judah, particularly during the Late Second Temple Period, taking temporary vows not to cut their hair, drink alcohol, or come into contact with the dead (200 BCE – 20 CE); and then African Nazarites, Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, nonviolent revolutionaries in South Africa (1910 –) and Jamaica (1930 –) creating self-reliant communities on the margins of hegemonic empire.

In order to bring a sense of coherence to the conflicting practices and varied contexts associated with naziritism, I first presented some of the basic historical-critical exegesis that accounts for the differing representations of “Nazirites” in the Bible. In so doing, I demonstrated that two contradictory portraits of Biblical Naziritism exist: Tribal Nazirites and Cultic Nazirites. The Tribal Nazirites that represent some of Israel’s oldest oral traditions are understood as long-haired warriors expected to abstain from alcohol and be ready to fight military battles for YHWH to deliver the Israelites from the hands of their enemies. In contrast, by the time the Laws of the Nazirite were codified in Numbers 6:1-21, after the Judahites were returned from exile in Babylon by Cyrus the Great of Persia (7th to 6th century BCE), over the ensuing centuries, the idea of naziritic consecration gradually slipped, by the time of Jesus, from a lifetime calling into a thirty day vow. The depiction of Jesus through a number of naziritic motifs helps perpetuate a conflation between the “Nazirite” (NRSV) of the Old Testament and the “Nazorean” (NRSV) of Matthew 2:23.

Since the Laws of the Nazirite that omit the payment practices associated with Cultic Naziritism (Num 6:1-8), in tandem with the Matthew 2:23 conflation, are central to the living theologies of both religious movements, I used this exegetical framework as the basis on which to present my findings regarding the heretofore uncharted field of “African Naziritism.” Behind these key passages, however, recall that the Ten Commandments also remain a strong ethical compass reverberating in the background of a more central naziritic hermeneutic. Yet, from within that theological framework, a certain cooperation exists with a number of other,

particularly Old Testament, biblical passages, as well as African and Indian theologies related to notions of indigeneity on a variety of issues. These oscillations of selective resistance and persistence were often very fluid, and sometimes inconsistent, when comparing Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* internally and against each other.

Rastafari hail “JAH Rastafari,” or Haile Selassie I, as the contemporaneous messiah of YHWH who has descended, according to the traditions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, from an unbroken line of 225 kings dating back to the biblical Solomon. Neither Haile Selassie nor Marcus Garvey, the man who allegedly prophesied the 1930 coronation of HIM, were actually adherents of Rastafari. Unlike the polycephalous inception of Rastafari, the inauguration of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* in 1910 represents a much more centralized phenomenon. According to *amaNazaretha*, Isaiah Shembe routinely received instructions directly from *uJehova*, or YHWH of the Old Testament. Since the 1970s, however, at least four new factions have emerged, generally with a progeny of Shembe as its “Living God.” With reference to both the literature and the evidence from my field research, I also demonstrated how the conflation between the “Nazirite” of Numbers 6 and the “Nazorean” of Matthew 2:23 was crucial to this consecration hermeneutic and I provided a number of precisions with regard to terminology by considering the Rastafari and *amaNazaretha* hermeneutics against the historical-critical exegesis. Outside of their respective messiah figures and their connections with YHWH, within the central naziritic framework of “consecration” (Num 6:1-2, 8), “hair growth” (Num 5, 7b), “abstinence from alcohol” (Num 6:3-4), and “avoiding the dead” (Num 6:6-7), a number of additional themes arose that were particular to each Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

For example, while both sets of African Nazarites generally grow their hair, most Rastafari allow their hair to grow ungroomed into knotted locks, or dreadlocks. Rastafari and its scholarship has linked this practice to biblical naziritic precedents, particularly Samson as the “anti-Nazirite;” African sources as diverse as the Mau Mau, Masai, and Ashanti peoples; and Indian influences related to Shiva worship. Yet, though dreadlocks represent the dominant expression for the vast majority of Rastafari, not all devout adherents keep dreadlocks, while some even cut their hair. For many of the latter, however, the decision to cut their hair represents a concession they must make to live in mainstream society and gain employment. In contrast, *amaNazaretha* generally comb their hair, thus preventing locks from forming as it grows. Although some dreadlocked *amaNazaretha* could be spotted among the Ebuhleni faction, they

represented a stark minority even during events which gathered upwards of 100,000 people. The idea of consecrated hair growth, outside of the biblical link to naziritism, is also connected with precolonial Zulu traditions regarding the sacred nature of hair. Likewise, *amaNazaretha* continue to face much prejudice in the public sphere today regarding this religious practice.

For African Nazarites, the notion of consecrated hair also extends to a notion of “consecrated heads.” Rastafari understand their long dreadlocks as a “living crown” they wear permanently on their head, indicative at once of the strength of their “life force” and their reverence for the natural world. For Rastafari, the dreadlocks are at once reflective of a variety of African figures of resistance and persistence, in addition to the lifestyles of the sadhus, devotees of the Indian deity Shiva. Additionally, the turbans of the Bobo Shanti Rastafari reflect a form of African persistence that are always worn in public and communal spaces, yet Nyabinghi protocol insists on removal of headwear within the tabernacle. On the other hand, in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* the persistence of a number of precolonial Zulu headwear items bore a plethora of embedded meanings in the context of the congregations, particularly during the Sabbath services. Men are distinguished by *imiqhele*, or “fur crowns,” that were once reserved for members of the Zulu royalty, but now extended for all males. The married *amaNazaretha* women wear *isicholo*, baskets once made of their own hair. *amaNazaretha* women who have not remained virgins prior to marriage must wear scarves around their heads. Finally, the virgin maidens cover their heads and torsos with white veils during the Sabbath services, but on the according days, dance proudly, hair and breasts exposed, in accordance with Zulu traditions, yet singing the hymns of Shembe.

In keeping with the naziritic framework, this chapter also demonstrated that like the Biblical Nazirites, the African Nazarites also condemn the use of alcohol. Unlike the Cultic Nazirites, however, for whom the vow was temporary, both Rastafari and *amaNazaretha* advocate a lifetime commitment to the principles of naziritism. African Nazarites are generally highly critical of the accessibility of alcohol in society. Alcohol is viewed as an artefact of colonialism that was introduced into indigenous societies, much to their detriment. For *amaNazaretha*, the proscription against alcohol extends to all forms of intoxicants or pollutants. For Rastafari, however, marijuana, among other plants and herbs, are consumed for medicinal purposes, while the use of a *chalice*, or ganja pipe, denotes an inherent criticism of the Christian eucharist and the sanctification of wine. In both cases, however, modern medicine, particularly

chemically manufactured pharmaceuticals, are generally avoided, though a cleaning ritual exists for *amaNazaretha* who have returned to their temples after a medical treatment or procedure.

The wide notion of abstinence in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* is connected to the reading of Num 6:3-4 in the 1893 *iBaible* that includes all mind altering substances, especially when weighed against the healing power of Shembe, viewed as the ultimate source for salvation and physical recuperation from ailments. With regard to the debasing nature of alcohol, during one of my interviews with Vukile Shembe, the current “Living God at Ekuphakameni,” he discussed how alcoholism also played an instrumental role in the initial split of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* in the 1970s, as a number of potential heirs from the many wives of J. G. Shembe came under its influence. I also discovered a number of younger men drinking beer and smoking marijuana during one of the stops along the way to Mount Nhlankazi with the 2011 Ebuhleni pilgrimage. They mentioned that they understood their actions as “sins,” and were joining the church to help them overcome their addictions.

As directly opposed to alcohol as a reminder of colonialism, though not a “required” practice, the vast majority of Rastafari use marijuana in pipes, spliffs, or food to help induce healing, meditation, and reasoning. Diverse indigenous cultures over history have set precedents for ritual ganja use, but the most pertinent to the sacramentalization of this plant during the inception and routinization phases of Rastafari were no doubt the presence of Shiva and Kali worship in Jamaica, as well as a number of Central African influences pointing towards the design of the water pipe typically used to smoke, known as a *chalice*. Though Rastafari overturn the sacred nature of wine in the Christian eucharist with this gesture, they nonetheless refer to a number of biblical passages in support of this “holy herb” (Gen 1:12; Ex 10:12; Prv 15:17; Ps 104:14).

Moving along to the final point in the naziritic framework, both sets of African Nazarites interpret the proscription to stay away from the dead foremost as a call to nonviolence. The idea is echoed in the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt not kill” (Ex 20:13//Deut 5:17). Moreover, the “life force” that is contained in the consecrated hair can also be contaminated through contact with the dead. These factors, along with a metaphorical reading of the saying, “Let the dead bury their dead” (Mt 8:22//Lk 9:60) generally prompt African Nazarites to pursue activities that lead to human flourishing rather than its demise. Along with allowing humanity and nature to grow, African Nazarites generally stand against abortion and birth control, and even chemically

processed foods, since these examples are understood as against the flourishing of life. Likewise, African traditions related to the manipulation of malignant spirits, such as *muti* and *obeah*, are also forbidden for African Nazarites since these types of practices generally go against the idea of fruitful living and the call from the Ten Commandments to respect one's neighbour (Ex 20:15-17//Deut 5:19-21).

For Rastafari, the call to nonviolence generally extends to the animal world as the reading of "dead body" in the KJV could include animal life as in the original Hebrew, i.e. נפש מת (*nepesh mêt*). In this regard, most Rastafari follow an *Ital* diet—organic, vegan, salt-free. With regard to not eating animals, Rastafari also build a rationale based on the Book of Enoch, one of the scriptures of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, in which the eating of flesh is cited as one of the evils for which the Lord flooded the Earth in the story of Noah. The move to *Ital*, also reflects an Indian version of a spiritual diet more than an African one. Along with the idea of Ethiopia's Balm Yard in which unclean animals and alcohol are not allowed, Rastafari understand their body as a product of nature that ought to be treated with utmost respect so they can be "clean" as they praise JAH. While the acceptance of an otherworldly universe of spirits is acknowledged, Rastafari understand that they will be able to conquer any "duppy," or malicious ghost in such a state of cleanliness.

With regard to death and killing, *amaNazaretha*, however, slaughter "clean" animals according to Mosaic customs, yet juxtaposed against Zulu traditions. Notably, pork has been purged from the diet in accordance with Judaic dietary laws. Yet, although *amaNazaretha* are not vegetarian, their oral traditions beckon a respect for the natural world at large. For example, what animals are killed are done so only for food. Moreover, the "clean" animals designated for consumption, as with all other living things, are to be treated with utmost respect. Cruelty against animals is also discouraged, as is the idea of keeping them in captivity; hence, pets such as dogs and cats are not allowed. For *amaNazaretha*, the fauna are to run free while the branches of the flora grow wild. The various resurrection stories among *amaNazaretha* are also essential to consider for attitudes regarding life and death; the ultimate source for miraculous healing is Shembe.

In a holistic sense, the overarching naziritic framework of consecration, hair as life force, abstaining from the ingestion of "unclean" items, and an attitude that encourages the unfettered growth of life also includes an idea of agrarian self-reliance at the heart of African Naziritism.

For both *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari, Gandhi's ideals of nonviolence and "ashram" life contributed to their living theologies. Where modernity has encroached on pastoral idealism, the idea of self-reliance has been extended as a metaphor to the flourishing of the religious community.¹²⁷

Finally, two more practices on which Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* differ are male circumcision and baptism. While male circumcision represents a central practice for the idea of consecration in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, I could find no evidence of circumcision being central to Rastafari. At best, the circumcision status of a Rastafari male is probably best related to his religious upbringing prior to conversion. Although some Rastas have railed against the practice in accordance with Leviticus 21:5, both sets of African Nazarites condemn traditional practices such as scarification or tattoos. In *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, however, the practice of circumcision has precedence in both Judaic and pre-Shakan Zulu traditions. In fact, *amaNazaretha* men may only carry a ceremonial staff once circumcision has been performed.¹²⁸ Baptism, while not applicable to Rastafari, represents a key rite in the initiation process of *amaNazaretha*, and can be included in the naziritic profile inasmuch as it represents another by-product of the Nazirite / Nazorean conflation.

If anything, the stark differences in interpretation of the naziritic laws related to hair growth, abstinence from alcohol and/or intoxicants, and attitudes towards life and death demonstrate that when discussing the naziritism of either Rastafari or *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, we are in many ways not discussing the same thing. Dreads or "combsome," *Ital* or flesh eating, the biblical traditions, especially as they are translated, disseminated, and expounded upon with African traditions, extra-biblical material, and tangential Indian influences, leave much space for living hermeneutics and exegesis, especially in the contexts of structural liminality and religious hybridity. In the process, a dynamic of selective resistance and persistence has emerged. Sometimes, the various hybridic sources are deemed mutually reinforcing; other times they are hotly contested by adherents and scholars alike. I have argued that alongside the background of the Ten Commandments, a hermeneutic continuum between the "Nazirite" of the Old Testament and the "Nazorean" of the New Testament provides the framework for the African, Indian,

¹²⁷ See Chapter 4, Section 2 for details.

¹²⁸ In Figure 3, note that the researcher was permitted to climb Mount Nhlankakazi with a walking stick, but the ceremonial staff was not an option due to his ambiguous status regarding circumcision.

Judaic, Christian, and European influences that have been accepted and rejected by African Nazarites, even where they do not agree on particular points.

For reference, I have synthesized my main finding into Table 2 below. This table does not purport to be a “definitive” checklist of the religious groups and adherents themselves since many people who consider themselves Rastafari and *amaNazaretha* usually exhibit one of more deviations from the complex set of tendencies and practices. With relation to my original question regarding naziritism in each, however, these findings comfortably represent the dominant images that emerged.

Table 2: African Naziritism

Practices	Rastafari	<i>Ibandla lamaNazaretha</i>
Lifelong Commitment	Encouraged	Encouraged
Consecration	JAH Rastafari Haile Selassie I	<i>uJehova</i> Shembe
Hair Growth	Dreadlocks	Combed
Alcohol	Discouraged	Discouraged
Intoxicants	Ritual Marijuana (Ganja)	Discouraged
Nonviolence	Encouraged	Encouraged
Diet	<i>Ital</i> (organic, vegan, salt-free)	Includes “Clean” Animals
Modern Medicine	Discouraged	Discouraged
Herbal Medicines	Encouraged	Discouraged
Malignant Sorcery	<i>Obeah</i> Discouraged	<i>Muti</i> Discouraged
Male Circumcision	N/A	Yes
Scarification / Tattoos	Discouraged	Discouraged
Spirit Possession	N/A	N/A
Baptism	N/A	Yes
Ideal of Agrarian Self-reliance	Yes	Yes

CONCLUSION TO PART ONE

The first part of this work centered on providing a formal response to my main research questions regarding the roles, functions, and manifestations of naziritism in Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. In order to accomplish this heretofore unchartered task, Part One has been divided into two chapters. Chapter One addresses the main theoretical and methodological concerns of the study, while Chapter Two provides, in great detail, the specific answers to the issues surrounding naziritism. By employing a comparative methodology of “living hermeneutics and exegesis” that analyzes phenomena (rituals, practices, behaviours) alongside in-depth qualitative data within in a theoretical framework that includes the notions of “religious hybridity” as well as “structural liminality” and the “liminoid” process as they apply to new cultural phenomenon, this research discovered “oscillations” or a “dynamic of selective resistance to modernity and persistence of indigeneity” in the living naziritism of adherents of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. The following conclusion intends to recap the main points and arguments in this regard.

First, in Chapter 1, since I was studying two postcolonial theological and cultural movements from the perspective of “religious studies,” it was necessary to recall the potential Christian and western hegemonic connotations that the word “religion” might carry. I argued that although an ethnographic study ought not *a priori* include the notions of the “sacred” and the “profane,” where such notions may exist alongside a reverence for the Bible in the hermeneutics of a postcolonial religious movement, their very forms and meanings may indeed have changed, as is the case with both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. In the process, it was also necessary to demonstrate that sometimes the so-called line between the notions was very unclear or variable. Next, with regard to my comparative approach, I argued that by starting with something so central as the Laws of the Nazirite, this study was able to go from inside to outside, rather than from outside to inside.

Next, since both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* each embody aspects of African, Indian, Christian, and Judaic spiritual heritage, it was necessary to address both the notion of cultural “mixing” and apply a theory regarding the creation of new cultures to account for the complex interrelationship of ideas, philosophies, thoughts, and practices associated with African Naziritism. After arguing against the notion of “syncretism,” a possibly harmful colonial relic to account for the birth of new religious movements exhibiting more than one spiritual influence, I

have argued that the formation of new religions, especially ones with more than two discernable religious influences, could be better understood through the theoretical concepts of “religious hybridity” in addition to the concepts of “structural liminality” and the “liminoid” process as they apply to the formation of new cultural phenomena.

Based on these theoretical notions, and in conjunction with both historical-critical and a number of African approaches to exegesis, I also built a methodological approach I designated as “living hermeneutics and exegesis” that would help account for the “oscillations of resistance to modernity and the persistence of indigeneity” evident in Rastafari and *amaNazaretha*. In other words, the innovation of a new theoretical framework proved necessary to discuss the complex interactions of the markers of modernity and indigeneity evident in the lifestyles of African Nazarites. In so doing, I also alerted the reader to a “dynamic of selective resistance and persistence;” that is, the study could neither demonstrate a blanket refusal of all things “modern” nor an outright acceptance of all things precolonial, or “indigenous.”

From here, I provided a short literature review detailing some of the key primary and scholarly works on *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* or Rastafari, especially ones of particular interest for the various themes of this work. The literature on Rastafari remains more voluminous than that on *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and indicates the larger global popularity of the former. Finally, in tandem with the theoretical framework and the literature review, and to counter-balance my potential research biases (despite the overwhelming evidence in the literature), I also demonstrated how my open-ended, self-reflexive, organic approach to field research (open participant observation, semistructured interviews, and informal focus groups) allowed any themes related to naziritism to arise without prompting from myself as researcher. I also followed a spirit of “indigenous exegesis” (Turner 1969), moulding myself to the expectations of the communities I was studying, in the interest of sincerity and deeper findings.

Having provided the details of my theoretical and methodological approaches, Chapter 2 went on to provide the core answers to my original research questions. Before broaching the particular naziritism of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, I provided a short synopsis of the historical-critical exegesis of Nazirites in the Bible. I described how the lifelong calling of the Tribal Nazirites, long-haired military heroes who abstained from wine, contrasted with the temporary vows of the Cultic Nazirite, a symbolic reminder of Israel’s days in the wilderness, symbolic of long lost “indigenous” culture. Indeed, the temporality and the call not to come near

the dead within Cultic Naziritism directly conflicted with the original expectation of Nazirites to deliver YHWH's people from the hands of its enemies in military battle. The "African Nazarites" borrow aspects from each Tribal and Cultic Naziritism and, in the process, have emerged as "peace warriors" representing the call to action personified by their respective messiahs, Haile Selassie I and Isaiah Shembe.

In this regard, the second larger section of Chapter 2 is specifically devoted to providing the detailed responses to my original research questions regarding the roles, functions, and manifestations of naziritism in Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. I thus framed the respective consecration hermeneutics within the central conflation between the "Nazirite" of the Old Testament (Num 6) and the "Nazorean" of the New Testament (Mt 2:23). Apart from the common adherence to a way of life that mirrors the Ten Commandments juxtaposed with naziritism and the Nazorean conflation, both Rastafari and *amaNazaretha* generally exhibited lifelong commitments to hair growth as an extension of consecration and the preservation of one's "life force," abstinence from alcohol, and attitudes that encourage ways of life that lead to human flourishing and respect for the natural world since death represents a form of pollution. Yet, from here, the basic similarities regarding naziritism seemed to end.

"JAH Rastafari!" chant the dreadlocked ganja smokers in the hills of Jamaica. For Rastafari, the praise "JAH" evokes Psalm 68:4 (KJV), King Ja Ja of Opobo—a West African king deported to the Caribbean in the late 1800s, in addition to the Sanskrit / Hindi chant of Shiva and Kali worshippers, जय, pronounced *Jaya* or *Jai*. The chant "JAH Rastafari" denotes the position that Haile Selassie was the contemporaneous messiah sent by YHWH. The hermeneutic accords with the traditions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church that anointed Selassie the 225th in an unbroken line of kings dating back to Solomon and Queen Makeda (of Sheba), thus providing a genealogical connection to the Davidic line. In the process, the dominant colonial images of a "White Monarchy" and "White Jesus" became usurped by a legitimate African monarch. The historical act of an envoy from England handing Selassie a golden sceptre accorded with Isaiah 43:3. For many of the dispossessed in Jamaica, this moment represented the fulfilment of Garvey's call for a Black God and Webb's prophecy of a Black Christ. Howell's *The Promised Key* (1935), marks the first time that the Ethiopianist messianic longings in Jamaica were attached to the person of Haile Selassie in writing. Selassie's own theological tradition and the

fact that he partitioned a portion of land in Ethiopia, Shashamane, for African repatriates serve as further support for this hermeneutic.

Unlike Selassie's alleged seminal root, the immaculate conception narrative of Isaiah Shembe's birth points to something closer to a divine root in the initial consecration hermeneutic of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* that links this Zulu prophet with *uJehova*, or YHWH the Lord of the Old Testament, yet as the sons and grandsons of Shembe have taken over leadership of the church, a new seminal root has been established. Whereas Haile Selassie's death and the termination of the monarchy in Ethiopia raised serious theological questions for Rastafari (a religion without a leader, so to speak), Isaiah Shembe's son J. G. first inherited Ekuphakameni and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, but after the death of the second "Living God," *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* started to break into factions. Today, three of the other four factions are led by various individuals of the Shembe family, while a fourth led by someone outside the new seminal root, Mthembeni Mpanza,¹²⁹ has also sprung forth. For their respective followers, these leaders represent "Living Gods" who continue to reside over the universes of the Zulu and biblical kingdoms while usurping the idea of a "White Jesus" and "White Monarchy" as the heads of society. By drawing on a number of neologisms introduced into the 1893 *iBaible* and their own inspirations, Isaiah Shembe and his son, J. G., have left behind a legacy of Zulu literature, *Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha*. The Shembe hymnal contains the liturgy for the beginnings of the Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Sabbath Prayers, as well as 242 hymns.

With the respective consecration hermeneutics in place, I was able to provide portraits of both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* based on a living naziritic exegesis. First, like the Tribal Nazirites in the Bible, African Nazarites generally take on their calling as a lifetime commitment. Yet, unlike the Tribal Nazirites who were military warriors, the African Nazarites are nonviolent revolutionaries who can be likened to "peace warriors." The very execution of the living theologies in both cases represents the forces of change. The call for nonviolence extends from a hybridic interaction between the proscription of Cultic Naziritism to avoid contact with the dead (Num 6:6-7), the commandment not to kill (Ex 20:13//Deut 5:17), and Gandhian *satyagraha*.

Next, though African Nazarites generally refrain from cutting their hair, or "life force," as part of their theology (Num 6:5, 7b), Rastafari, borrowing from biblical, African, and Indian

¹²⁹ For transcriptions of my interviews with Mpanza, see Appendix 2, Section 3.

sources, generally grow dreadlocks as a further expression of their indigeneity, while *amaNazaretha* generally comb their hair, thus preventing knots from forming. The practice of hair growth parallels the idea of allowing the foliage to grow free, without cutting it. While both Rastafari and *amaNazaretha* discourage practices of scarification associated with African traditions, and tattoos, in accordance with Leviticus 21:5, male circumcision represents a key rite for *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, while it does not in Rastafari. Many Rastafari read a contradiction between Leviticus 21:5 and the practice of circumcision. For *amaNazaretha*, since circumcision represents a pre-Shakan Zulu tradition, the link to the chosen people of the Old Testament became synonymous with a precolonial indigenous practice.

In the Shembe Church, the call to abstain from alcohol extends to intoxicants of all kinds, the 1893 *iBaible* facilitating this reading (Num 6:3-4). In the process, *amaNazaretha* have abandoned the consumption of Zulu beer, a traditional fermented beverage dating back to the precolonial era. For Rastafari, due to a complex dialogue on the role of marijuana in Shiva worship and traditional Central African cultures in tandem with a number of biblical passages that praise “herb,” the sanctification of the “holy herb,” or ganja, especially as against the Christian eucharist and the sanctification of wine, became inextricable from routinization. The Rastafari *chalice*, or water pipe, used to smoke ganja endures as a ubiquitous reminder of this stance against alcohol and for marijuana. In so doing, the herbal medicinal approach embedded in both African and Indian indigenous traditions maintains a central place in the idea of healing for Rastafari, yet *amaNazaretha* typically place no stock in such practices as they are associated with *muti*, the spells of the *inayanga* and *sangoma*. Both sets of African Nazarites, however, stand against these forms of African indigeneity that manipulate the spirit world for nefarious purposes, only Rastafari have separated the spiritual aspect from the herbal components, condemning *obeah*, but not the potential benefits of ingesting plant life. For *amaNazaretha*, the notion that healing could come from elsewhere, be it a hospital or a tonic, is secondary to the ultimate power of Shembe.

Lastly, in tandem with Num, 6:6-7, a complex set of beliefs regarding life and death and, by extension, processes that either lead to flourishing or decay were also reviewed. Procedures like abortion, treatments such as birth control, which somehow impede the production of life are not tolerated. Modern medicine, particularly pharmaceutical drugs, is also avoided as a hegemonic and chemically polluting force of “Babylon.” Since death is viewed as a source of pollution,

especially for the “life force” contained in one’s hair, and in addition to the biblical commandment not to kill, African Nazarites generally encourage an ethic of nonviolence. For Rastafari, for whom meat is generally not on the menu, the call for nonviolence is extended into the animal realm. The rationale for an organic, vegan, salt-free, or *Ital*, diet combines a reading of certain passages from Genesis in tandem with the Book of Enoch, one of the scriptures of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, that places the eating of flesh as one of the evils for which the Lord flooded the Earth in the Noah story. This type of reading in favour of vegetarianism is simply not present for *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* who continue the tradition of the ritual slaughtering of animals for consumption. Yet, though pork has traditionally been on the diet of Zulu people, it has been banned in accordance with Judaic traditions.

These attitudes against contamination by the dead also play out into the spiritual world. As mentioned, African Nazarites are discouraged from practicing *muti* and *obeah*, but their existence is not denied. Likewise, neither religious group exhibits spirit possession since the practice can also be understood as coming into contact with the dead, thus violating one of the key laws of naziritism. Yet, African Nazarites are still in communication with their ancestors. Rastafari endure as the voices of their forebearers, living reminders of the atrocities inflicted on African people during colonialism through slavery and via neocolonialism to capitalism. For many Rastafari, mystical experiences in which they can communicate with their forbears persist. In *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, the church has become a way to preserve essential elements of Zulu ancestry that were actively sought to be destroyed by the colonial, imperial, and apartheid regimes. And through it all, hums an ideal of agrarian self-reliance integrally connected to a sense of indigeneity that is increasingly at odds with the complexities, impositions, and opportunities of modernity.

PART TWO: FURTHER EXPLORATIONS FROM THE FIELD

INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO

Having presented my theoretical and methodological approaches, and having defined African Nazirism in Part One, the tone of this work now shifts somewhat in Part Two. Whereas Part One has been designed to respond to the intricacies regarding the questions surrounding nazirism, Part Two explores a number of themes that emerged from the research itself—findings I credit to the open-ended field research methodology I employed to approach interviews and focus groups in Jamaica and South Africa. In this regard, while some links to nazirism and the theoretical concerns and methodological approaches of this study will be made evident, Part Two can also be understood as an additional set of information pertaining to religious cultus and culture that provides a larger, more enhanced understanding of both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* at large. Also, since nazirism is so central to the theologies of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, we will no doubt revisit some of the core themes already presented (consecration, hair growth, attitudes regarding intoxicants, life, and death), in addition to some peripheral themes already mentioned in the previous half of this work alongside the theoretical concerns related to religious hybridity and liminality, as well as resistance and persistence. In fact, the cases reveal as many peculiarities as trends within the parameters of what can be identified as Rastafari or *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. As such, they are presented with the intention of providing a larger picture of the complexity, parallels, and contradictions between each other and within themselves.

With regard to the qualitative research methodology that I developed for this study, the selected excerpts sometimes display my asymmetric ignorance at play, while in others, I sometimes recap, or repeat, what was said by the interviewee or simply present a statement as a question. I developed these latter techniques within the semistructured interview as a manner through which to offer the speaker a springboard to keep talking by letting them know that I had heard and/or processed what they had said. Part Two is also, at some level, intended to demonstrate my field research methodology at work—how I would allow themes to arise in and of themselves. Allow me to justify some of these choices before moving on.

As I have mentioned in Chapter 1, Section 4, though I had set my field research goals quite conservatively—not knowing whether or not my integration into the groups would be successful, at the end of one year spent in both South Africa and Jamaica, I was left with quite a vast repertoire of primary qualitative data. From a total of 412 hours of audio recordings that

include 65 interviews with 42 participants, 40 focus groups, and 100 observation sessions that together represent over 1000 relevant pages of transcribed material (12 point, single-spaced), choosing exactly what to include in this work represented a challenge in and of itself. In Part One, I included what was most relevant to the completion of the naziritic exegesis. But since I could not include *everything* that was said regarding naziritism, I use Part Two as an opportunity to engage with some of those issues in more depth in a number of social and religious contexts.

Many of the core naziritic themes no doubt reappear here in Part Two as echoes of Part One. Yet, as I mined the data, it also became evident that I had obtained a variety of information either beyond, ill-fitted, or tangentially related to naziritism. In other cases, I found myself with hours of interviews from individuals considered major living historical figures of either Rastafari or *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, some of whom inhabit only a few pages of the academic canon. For these reasons, though I have relegated large tracts of interviews from four influential African Nazarites (Mutabaruka, Dermott Fagan, Mthembeni Mpanza, Vukile Shembe) to Appendix 2, I have generally allowed the framework of Part Two to be governed by the weight of the research itself.

Contrary to the style of Part One, Part Two presents my findings somewhat more descriptively, while citing scholarship where it can shed further light on the material. I have also built a dialogue of resistance and persistence into my commentary. In this regard, the information included in Part Two helps demonstrate that while naziritism certainly marks a valid and long overdue perspective from which to analyze the living theologies of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, it is certainly not the *only* way. Thus, both consistencies and inconsistencies to the naziritic framework will be presented alongside a number of theoretical and methodological concerns.

Also worth stating in this introduction is the fact that there are two themes that have been mentioned in Part One as markers of indigeneity with biblical correlations, namely walking barefoot and polygamy, but I could not include them under African Naziritism for a number of reasons. The practices marked cases either too exceptional or inconsistent to set within a particularly naziritic framework. Nonetheless, as both barefootedness and polygamy both have biblical and indigenous precedents, they are explored in some depth in what follows.

For *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, I grappled over whether or not to include walking barefoot under “consecration” since almost all the members do so when they are participating in the

context of their worship ceremonies. Yet, since the “Living God,” or reigning Shembe of each faction is allowed to wear shoes in the same contexts, in the holy ground of the temple, that aspect alone made the practice worth extracting from the naziritic analysis. Since the person who was “most consecrated” to *uJehova* did not walk barefoot, tying the practice to naziritism became somewhat problematic, if not slightly misleading. One sacred dance group also exists, *isiKotshi*, that wears black combat boots (cf. Chapter 3, Section 2.1.3)—yet another “exception” to the barefoot principle. Still, walking barefoot during worship services remains one of the central practices associated with *amaNazaretha* en masse and remains peripherally connected to naziritism inasmuch as it represents a Mosaic theme (Ex 3:5)¹³⁰ that also speaks to indigeneity. In fact, if it were not for the *sui generis* nature of the shoes worn by the “Living Gods,” M. V. and Vukile Shembe, in addition to the *isiKotshi*, I would have included walking barefoot alongside male circumcision for the *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* naziritic consecration hermeneutic.

For Rastafari, however, the issue of walking barefoot just proved too niche-oriented to include under naziritic consecration at large. While there are certain schools of Rastafari thought that advocate the practice, they are among the minority. Moreover, those Rastafari who walk barefoot tend to do so *everywhere*, not just on “holy ground.” Finally, the most historically notable barefoot Rasta, Mutabaruka, also expresses no interest in the Bible as a source of authority, though he agrees that it can serve as a useful point of reference on a number of matters including naziritism.¹³¹ With regard to bare feet and Rastafari inception, Lee includes the following testimony from a Howellite elder at Pinnacle: “[Leonard Howell] loved to walk barefoot. His feet have touched this stone” (2003: 4). Clearly, barefeet also have their place in Rastology.

For the purposes of this study, the issue of bare feet and holy space marks a nonpareil illustration of the complexity of the dialogue on resistance and persistence and the ability for indigenous behaviours with Old Testament precedents to sometimes fall outside tidy exegetical categories. For *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, while bare feet are often cited as the great equalizer among churchgoers, I noticed that both Vukile and Vimbeni Shembe wear shoes during services and public appearances, as an indication to help set them apart as the Living Gods of their

¹³⁰ “And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” (KJV)

¹³¹ See Appendix 2, Section 1 for details.

respective factions. For Mutabaruka and other Rastafari who walk barefoot all the time—whether at a Binghi or in the litter-strewn streets of downtown Kingston, clearly the line between sacred and profane space, as expressed in Exodus 3:5, has been blurred. From my own experience, walking barefoot for so long definitely changed the way I now step on the earth and understand myself as a living being on this planet. In this regard, my desire to perform “indigenous exegesis” (Turner 1969) revealed to me a world of “living theology.”

With regard to walking barefoot at Ekuphakameni, Becken offers an analysis about the inscription on a stone at the original Shembe temple that sheds additional light on the subject of flexibility in the process of creating religious customs:

Two months ago I stood at the gate of Ekuphakameni, the High Place, the centre of the Nazareth Baptist Church, some 12 miles from the entrance to Durban, waiting for an interview with Johannes Galilee Shembe, the present leader of this movement. People passed by, paying reverence to a whitewashed stone about 3 feet high, to the right of the entrance where my motor-car was parked.

Curious as to the meaning of this custom, I drew nearer and could read the inscription on that stone: “1931 – *lamiswa ngale – sosikhathi lelitsche – khumula izichathulo uma ungena kulelisango* (Eks. 31/55) – Ekuphakameni.” (In the year 1931 this stone was erected. Take off your shoes when entering this Gate (Exodus 31/55) – Ekuphakameni.)

So this stone was erected when the founder of this movement, Isaiah Shembe, who died in 1935, and whose mausoleum could be seen amidst the trees of a garden, was still ruling in this place.

Now there is no Exodus 31:55 in my Bible, but Exodus 3:5 reads: “Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” And Exodus 31:5 refers to cutting of stones for setting. Did [Isaiah] Shembe combine these two passages into a new unit? It seems so, because at least in this stone both motives of the Old Testament have been combined and have literally been put into a new reality, which is recognized by the members of the Nazarite Church. (1966: 101)

Here we have a deliberate instance of living hermeneutics and exegesis at work in keeping with Bhabha’s notion of *in media res*. I submit it as a subtle echo to the words, as well as religious and spiritual approaches, of the “Living Gods” I was so honoured to have met in this capacity and that have been included in this work.¹³² If the qualitative data revealed anything, it was that within the theological discourses of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* adherents, a great deal of creativity and innovation could consistently be discerned.

As for polygamy, though the Old Testament includes stories of a number of patriarchs with more than one wife, thus resembling African marriage traditions, the practice, versus

¹³² cf. Appendix 2

monogamy, was simply too variable among the African Nazarites. Some of the Rastafari I spoke with described how they do not proscribe to a formal system of marriage, instead relying on an agreement between partners, and—in some cases—the community, or an informal, often serial monogamy. Other Rastafari I spoke with were also polyamorous, sometimes the women as much as the men. Still other Rastafari engage in informal forms of polygyny, while others subscribe wholeheartedly to monogamy. Within the Shembe Church, both polygyny and monogamy are acceptable formal marriage practices. I will include a few more thoughts on polygamy and monogamy in tandem with issues related to feminism in Chapter 4, Section 1.

All of that having been established, in this second part of the work, Chapter 3, “Living Worship,” is divided into three sections. The first explores the idea of land occupation. While some of the lands African Nazarites inhabit in South Africa and Jamaica are legally owned, both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* have also established living and worship sites on state owned lands. During the early decades following their inceptions, both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* were subject to much persecution in their countries. Many of the early worship sites were destroyed by the government. Today, however, the governments and general populations of Jamaica and South Africa are altogether much more accommodating of African Nazarites in these liminal spaces.

The next two sections of Chapter 3 describe the particular worship services in which I was able to participate. While the importance of the Sabbath can be viewed in the shadow of naziritism inasmuch as it appears as a holy day in the Ten Commandments, in the worship ceremonies of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* there also persist African traditions embedded in the Rastafari Binghi or the *amaNazaretha* sacred dances that are at least as great an importance in the overall living theology of each group. For this reason, I chose to treat the Sabbath alongside other forms of worship I was able to observe, in the interest of providing a larger portrait of resistance and persistence at play.

More specifically, Section 2 relates information from the observations I conducted with *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. In Section 2.1, I include three sub-sections from my field research with Ebuhleni *amaNazaretha*: Sabbath services, the 2011 pilgrimage to Mount Nhlankakazi, and the sacred dances. Section 2.2 presents qualitative material culled from my time spent among Ekuphakameni *amaNazaretha*. First, I include details pertaining to the Sabbath services, citing a sermon from Vukile Shembe on the topic itself. Next, I discuss the experience of attending the

2011 Founding Day ceremony at Bhekumesiya during which a rather amusing story around the polluting potential of the researcher emerges.

Next, Section 3 provides descriptions of the participant observation sessions I was able to conduct with four different Rastafari groups in Jamaica. Section 3.1 explores some of the activities and perspectives of the School of Vision Rastafari: the camp in the Blue Mountains (Mount Zion Hill Temple), the Sabbath services in Papine, and Binghi performances at Mount Edge Guest House. Under the leadership of Head Priest, Dermott Fagan, School of Vision has most notably combined Rastology and UFO theory. Next, the significantly shorter Section 3.2, through the experience of attending a Binghi at the ruins of Pinnacle with the Howellites, demonstrates how much more saturated the Rastafari field is compared to *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Section 3.3 describes day-to-day life as well as Binghi worship and Sabbath services of the turbaned Bobo Shanti in Bull Bay. I cite at length from one of the Bobo Priests to expand on a number of themes. Finally, Section 3.4 is a chronicle of the four days I spent at a Binghi with the Nyabinghi order at Scotts Pass, an “Earthstrong,” or birth week celebration, in honour of Haile Selassie I.

Next, “Chapter 4: Living Communitas,” through a play on Turner’s notion of “communitas,” broaches two themes that arose out of the field research itself and demonstrate how theology can contribute to community building. The first section, “Female Nazarites,” not only discusses the fluctuations of monogamy, polygyny, and polyamory discovered within African Naziritism, but also the ability of certain women to be able to empower themselves within the theological frameworks of these religions and the complicated social structures of the secular contexts of Jamaica and South Africa. The next section looks at the ideal of agrarian self-reliance against the advent of capitalism. Through the various testimonies presented, we see how the frameworks of modernism ultimately confuse the matter of how to farm to feed oneself. Thus, African Nazarites have extended the metaphor of community into their general activities and the world of business. Internal economies have sprung up around the movements that often provide adherents a source of income, while keeping this money within the community.

A short conclusion ties together the main points included in both chapters of Part Two. In it, the main relationships of the material included in Chapters 3 and 4, with the theoretical concerns of Part One, are also highlighted. Some final considerations are also provided.

CHAPTER 3: LIVING WORSHIP

This chapter approaches the theme of “living worship” from the perspective of land occupation and praxis. The first section looks at the notion of land reclamation in Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and the increasing acceptance of these liminal sites by government authorities in the contexts of South Africa and Jamaica. African Nazarites generally continue the indigenous traditions of worshipping through dance, music, singing, prayer, and preaching. Yet, for the majority, the idea of celebrating the Sabbath on Saturday in accordance with Judaic traditions permeates their hebdomadal narrative. The bulk of this chapter thus focuses on the various expressions of worship I was able to observe with primary reference to a) Sabbath services, the 2011 Nhlankazi pilgrimage, and sacred dances I observed with Ebuhleni *amaNazaretha*; b) Sabbath services and a founding day ceremony at Bhekumesiya with Ekuphakameni *amaNazaretha*. For Rastafari, I focus on Binghi services, camp life, and Sabbath services I observed with Rastafari at c) School of Vision, d) Pinnacle e) Bobo Hill, and f) Scotts Pass. I will include both endogenous and exogenous analysis of the material in relation to naziritism, resistance, and persistence. The varying lengths of the sections reflect only the actuality of my research findings. In addition, we must recall that these excerpts from my field research are also representations of cultural movements that are constantly evolving.

1. Land Occupation

While many of the worship sites of African Nazarites have been purchased through the official legal frameworks regarding real estate ownership, *amaNazaretha* in South Africa and Rastafari in Jamaica have also become notorious for occupying lands while converting them into holy spaces. Attached to these communities, a spirit of agrarian self-reliance has permeated to varying degrees, depending on the particular circumstance or issue in question. Many Rastafari camps throughout history, for example, such as Pinnacle, which had been razed by the government in 1954 (Lee 2003), and even among those operating today, such as Bobo Hill in Bull Bay and the School of Vision in the Blue Mountains, started as communities built on heretofore vacant lands. That these latter have ultimately received judicial tolerance points to the changing attitudes towards Rastology on the issue of “squatter” rights by the public and government officials over the years. Likewise, *amaNazaretha* have also inducted their white stone temples onto plots of land heretofore “unclaimed.” Whereas the government set about to impede the development of

early settlements and worship spaces pertaining to both sets of African Nazarites, today, the climates in both South Africa and Jamaica are much more accepting of these communities.

In fact, during a Sabbath service I attended in Estcourt, a government representative was present to address the request of the congregation (Figure 23). The Estcourt *amaNazaretha* had asked the government for assistance to help them build bathroom facilities somewhere on the grounds. In the following response, the representative addresses the congregation and their request. She pauses intermittently during her talk so a member of the church can translate for the gathering:

Female Government Representative: I greet the leadership of the Shembe Church and all the worshipers who are here together. It's a very great honour for me to be here with you today. I greet you in the name of the Government of KwaZulu-Natal, but also in the name of the African National Congress. I also bring you greetings from our Premiere, Dr. Zweli Mkhize.

We have come to pay respect and honour to your members and your leaders of the Shembe Church. We know that you are a highly respected organization and that you are respected by one and all, because you bring the message of peace and harmony to all of us. We also know that this was a very important year for you, because it was the year in which you celebrated a hundred years of the existence of the Shembe Church. And we were very honoured, on that occasion, to be able to celebrate and worship with you.

We also today want to thank you and acknowledge the fact that you were with us last week when we were commemorating, honouring, and remembering the people who passed away during the days of violence. We really appreciate your presence, that you were with us, when we were thinking of those people who are no longer with us. And we know that you will continue to preach the message of peace, harmony, nonviolence. And we need people like yourselves in our society, to help us to bring peace, to help us to heal old wounds.

And we're very grateful that you have welcomed us in your midst today with warmth, love, and friendship. We will remember that and we will take it into our hearts. Thank you very much [...] It is my very great honour to thank the congregation for the wonderful time that we spent with you. I'm going away with peace in my heart, which I will take with me.

We've also listened to your needs. We've heard what you've said. And we will do our best. We cannot promise, but we will try. That we can do. We can try our best.

I also thank you for your very generous donation to buy cold drinks and other snacks. We really appreciate it, and I will make sure that everybody that's with us this morning benefits from that. It's wonderful of you. Your hospitality, your love, and your warmth is wonderful. Thank you.¹³³

¹³³ Participant observation, Estcourt Temple (Afternoon Sabbath Service), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 27, 2010.

Compare the cooperative attitude of the South African government with regard to latrine facilities today against that of the health inspectors sent to evaluate Pinnacle only a few years after its initiation in Jamaica. As Lee has reported:

In January 1941, health inspectors went to Pinnacle and concluded that it presented “unsatisfactory conditions: the shacks were not weatherproof; the rough beds were made of sticks with no mattresses and scant, filthy bedding; the latrine accommodation was entirely inadequate, and the water had to be brought from some distance away.” One would think that health inspectors intended to improve the well-being of these impoverished, starved people. Instead they tried to stamp out and destroy what they described as a primitive jungle camp. The assistant director of medical services “advised the clerk to instruct the Chief Sanitary Inspector to make another visit to Pinnacle. There he will tell the owner that he must service the construction of many latrines. This will be the first step in getting him to abandon the camp. I also suggest that systematic inspection and inquiry should be undertaken to identify the causes of the Pinnacle illnesses. This would help weaken the leader’s grip on his inmates.” (2003: 131-132)

Here we see the approach of an older government that could only understand the substandard latrine conditions from a perspective of “resistance.” Rather than engage in a discussion about how to *improve* the situation, the Chief Sanitary Inspector saw only an opportunity to use towards stamping out this Other.

A minister¹³⁴ in Estcourt made a similar comment about the history of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, after the words of the aforementioned South African government official, in tandem with my presence as a Canadian researcher:

The evangelist has urged me to say something about what has happened. Indeed we are grateful for the presence of our visitors among us. We are grateful for the respect from government because we *amaNazaretha* have a history of conflict with the government. The old apartheid government did not like any positive thing that was done by and for black people. I remember the time around 1922, Isaiah wanted to go Nhlankakazi but the government did not allow him. The soldiers were sent to stop *amaNazaretha* from their pilgrimage. It was around that event that he composed Hymn 3.¹³⁵

But now things have changed and we are very grateful. Even as we were growing up we were ridiculed and accused of worshipping a human being like us. But now *ubuNazaretha* is respected here in our country and the world over. We need to be proud of who we are. Not be shy and hide our identity. A few weeks ago I was at a conference in Cape Town, and the people there knew who I was and I was treated the way a Nazaretha should be treated. My food was prepared on Friday because I told them when I

¹³⁴ In the Ebuhleni faction of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, ministers are all male and divided into three positions: preachers, evangelists, and reverends.

¹³⁵ “Lord, Lord, bless/This of the Nazaretha,/Crush its enemies,/So they do not rise up against it./Awake, wake, Oh Lord,/Let it be fought for by you,/Walk in front of it/So they do not rise up against it./Even when we go to the mountain/That you chose for us,/The one called Nhlankakazi,/Let [this Nazarethism] not stumble” (Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]: 53).

was here that I keep the Sabbath and they cooked my food the way I wanted. I told them I don't eat pork and chicken¹³⁶ and that was respected. But we are really grateful for the visitors.¹³⁷

Needless to say, in the cases of Rastafari and *amaNazaretha*, government officials are increasingly acknowledging the value of the African Nazarite way of life, not only authorizing the occupied land, but facilitating their continued existence.

2. *amaNazaretha*: A Tale of Two Holy Cities

As discussed, Ebuhleni was the first splinter group that, in 1977, broke away from the original holy city of Isaiah Shembe, Ekuphakameni. My experience of the Sabbath services at each, while demonstrating a number of visual similarities in the case of attire, resembled each other surprisingly little in actual practice. While *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* has clearly outlawed all forms of work on the Sabbath ("Prayer of the Sabbath" 25; Hymn 200), one can find many vendors selling their wares, from plastic necklaces and photo-pendants, to CDs, food and soft drinks, around the Ebuhleni temples and large gatherings on Saturdays. Many *amaNazaretha* from either faction commented on the doctrinal inconsistency of this growing practice of vending on the Sabbath that had been occurring on the Ebuhleni side.

Ekuphakameni, however, represented a much more austere group following the various theological protocols more faithfully. Apart from there being no vendors at the Ekuphakameni services, the congregants are encouraged to fast on the Sabbath itself, unless completely unable and in the interest of health. On the Ebuhleni side, though fasting is still generally recommended, by eating food that was prepared prior to the Sabbath, some *amaNazaretha* sidestep the fasting requirement by at least adhering to the law about not lighting a fire on the holy day. Nevertheless, there remain many Ebuhleni *amaNazaretha* who continue to fast in keeping with the earliest traditions.

Another general point of comparison: the time spent on one's knees during the lengthier Sabbath services presided by Vukile Shembe in Ekuphakameni was significantly longer and doubly painful for me, since I was only able to attend Sabbath services inside of the church building with a concrete floor, as opposed to the adjacent outdoor temple in the grass that had

¹³⁶ In addition to the pork taboo, many *amaNazaretha* also keep chicken out of their diet since the birds are rather indiscriminate eaters that often consume matter considered "unclean."

¹³⁷ Participant observation, Estcourt Temple (Afternoon Sabbath Service), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 27, 2010, translated from Zulu by Nkosinathi Sithole.

some construction work taking place around it at the timing of my visits, thus preventing its use. A few temples I visited within the Ebuhleni faction also had church houses next to the outdoor white stone temples, but these were only ever used during the rain.

Note that while I was unable to attend any sacred dances on the Ekuphakameni side for a number of logistical reasons, I was able to penetrate deep into that world in the context of Ebuhleni. In this section on the “living worship” of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, I can therefore only provide comments on what I actually observed. The following subsections are divided as follows: a) Euhleni Sabbath services, pilgrimage to Nhlankakazi, sacred dances; b) Ekuphakameni Sabbath services and a Founding Day ceremony at Bhekumesiya.

2.1 Ebuhleni: Sabbath Services, Pilgrimage to Mount Nhlankakazi, and Sacred Dances

I conducted my field research with Ebuhleni *amaNazaretha* during the period marking the final few months of the life of Mbusi Vimbeni Shembe, second Living God at Ebuhleni and son of A. K. In fact, during the final weeks of my field research period in South Africa, M. V. passed away and was succeeded by Mduduzi Derrick (April 2011). Although Sithole and I attended regular Sabbath services in places like Estcourt and Edendale, we also pursued the “perpetual pilgrimage”¹³⁸ that followed M. V. Shembe’s train to various temple locations across KwaZulu-Natal, where they would remain at a given temple for typically one or two weeks. My journey with Ebuhleni culminated with the January 2011 pilgrimage to Mount Nhlankakazi where, according to *amaNazaretha* tradition, Isaiah Shembe received the word of Jehovah in person. I was also able to witness the sacred dances on two separate occasions: at eMakhosini Temple (November 13, 2010) and at Ebuhleni during the 2011 January Meeting that occurs after the pilgrimage to Mount Nhlankakazi.

2.1.1 Ebuhleni Sabbath Services

My field trips with Nkosinathi Sithole into the Ebuhleni faction took me deep into the mountains and rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal to participate in 19 Sabbath services at the following sites: Estcourt (4), eMakhosini (2), Enhlanheleni (3), iKhayaletu (2), Khulani (3), Nkonzenjani (1), Mount Nhlankakazi (2), Ebuleni (2).¹³⁹ While the “Prayer of the Sabbath” from the Shembe

¹³⁸ my term

¹³⁹ See Field Maps, Map 3 for relative locations. Note that although I could not place Nkonzenjani on the map, it is somewhere in the vicinity of Khulani.

hymnal (*Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha*) is reserved for two separate services on Saturdays, during the course of lengthier special occasions, such as the pilgrimage to Mount Nhlankakazi and the January Meeting at Ebuhleni, a Sabbath Prayer could also be conducted at a temple during the Friday evening service. Otherwise, Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday. The congregants are encouraged to wind down, meditate, and stop working, eventually saying their evening prayers, and preparing themselves for the lengthy Sabbath services of the morrow.

The morning Sabbath service starts at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday and runs about two hours. There is then a break before the afternoon Sabbath service that starts at 1:00 p.m., which also runs about two hours. Before and after the Sabbath service, recorded instrumental versions of the Shembe hymns are played over the loudspeakers, where applicable. During the break and after the afternoon service, many items are available for sale, such as religious paraphernalia and food items, preserved and prepared. I will discuss the implications of these income opportunities in relation to the notion of microeconomy in further detail in Chapter 4, Section 2.

The morning and afternoon Sabbath services both follow the same general format. Services begin after one of the male leaders calls the Sabbath to order. Only male leaders, or ministers—in increasing order of rank: preachers, evangelists, and reverends—can preside over the Sabbath services. The call to order then receives a response of “amen” from the congregation. Next, a small procession enters the outdoor temple, walking on their knees, carrying a ceremonial pillow that represents the spirit of Shembe. Meanwhile, the congregants call out prayers from their positions on mats in the grassy area of the temple. After the ceremonial pillow has been placed into an indoor tabernacle that has been set-up within the bounds of the temple (Figure 24), the service continues with the “Prayer of the Sabbath” from the Shembe hymnal, which alternates between prayer and hymns, kneeling and sitting, call and response (cf. Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]). Note that some aspects are variable. For example, not all temples have a tabernacle area constructed and not all temples have access to audio equipment. The Sabbath liturgy takes about thirty minutes to complete and ends, as per the hymnal, with the congregation kneeling and voicing prayers aloud.

Once the Sabbath liturgy for the hymnal has been completed, the sermons begin. Sermons usually take up a particular theme of interest to the presider and are interlaced with additional selections from the hymnal and passages from the Bible. The number of presiders is variable, based to some degree on the size of the congregation, which can fluctuate from about a

dozen at a small temple to over 100,000 at a large gathering. However many people sermonize at a given Ebuhleni Sabbath service—usually anywhere from two to five, that there is one main presider for each service is also evident. The sermon usually runs over an hour, after which, especially at the larger Sabbath gatherings, some time is also reserved for *imbongi*, or praise poets, to present *izibongo*, or praise poetry. After this portion of the service, the ceremonial pillow is once again removed from its house and the temple by a small procession of members on their knees. At this point, additional statements can also be made by various members. Finally, once all the speakers had spoken, members could approach the senior ministers, walking on their knees, to speak a personal prayer and leave a donation. At the very end of the services that are part of the “perpetual pilgrimage,” M. V. Shembe would field special healing requests from the sick or afflicted in an area separate from the temple. Where and when the “Living God” was not present, healing requests and personal prayers would be taken by the most senior ministers present. All but M. V. Shembe, the leader, or “Living God,” walk barefoot.

During the services, the congregants are divided into three sections: men and boys, adult women, and virgin maidens. During the sabbath service, most men wear *ibeshu*, or a kind of kilt made from cow skins and various strands of fur (Figure 25, cf. Figure 9), in addition to a white dress shirt and a black V-neck sweater underneath a white surplice. Should a male *amaNazaretha* not have been able to afford an *ibeshu* as of yet, he is encouraged to wear black dress pants. Where black pants and white dress shirts are not available to a member, other variations in colour can be observed among Ebuhleni *amaNazaretha* (cf. Figure 9). *imiqhele* or “fur crowns” (cf. Figures 3, 9, 12, 13, 14) are also worn by males during the Sabbath. *imiqhele* can also be worn on other particular occasions, the Morning and Evening Prayers non-inclusive.

Also, all women wear white surplices over their clothing. Over the surplice hangs a white shawl, or *inansuka*. Newly married women who consummated in keeping with *amaNazaretha* law wear blue shawls, or *inansuka eluhlaza*, for a time. While the married women who maintained premartial virginity, and the accompanying marriage rights, don *isicholo*, a traditional Zulu headpiece adorned with beads, women whose lives have lead them in a direction in conflict with *amaNazaretha* marriage expectations—i.e. lost their virginity before marriage, cover their heads with a scarf. Although the scarf is supposed to be white, many on the Ebuhleni side are not necessarily aware of the requirement and scarves of various colours were observed. See Figure 26 (cf. Figures 15, 23) for a depiction of the variations in attire within the adult

women's section. Finally, the virgin maidens wear white cloths on their heads that veil their faces and the white surplices over their dresses (cf. Figure 16). In general, the juxtaposition of a European-style white surplice over traditional Zulu attire is a great visual example of “nonapologetic hybridity” (Dube 2002) at work.

With regard to the content of the Sabbath services, among *amaNazaretha* the idea of preaching coming from a “stream of consciousness” or “divine inspiration” marks a cherished notion. Take the following excerpt from a sermon, for example:

Minister:¹⁴⁰ I have been urged to preach to you here. I pray that what I will say will come from God not me. As I am standing here, I remember, a long time ago I was in Gauteng in the temple there. There was an evangelist who was preaching a sermon. He said as a young boy he could not speak. He was dumb. He grew up to be more than ten years [old], but he was unable to speak. His parents took him everywhere trying to get help for him, but nothing happened. He went to the doctor and *inyanga*, but nothing helped. Then at some point J. G. Shembe arrived in their area.

The people who were *amaNazaretha* told the boy's father to take him to Shembe, because people who are crippled when sent to Shembe, they are able to walk. And those who can't have children get them. The father took this boy to Shembe as told, but when they appeared in the place where they saw the temple they were going to, all were surprised when they heard the boy ask, “What is that place?” That was how he was healed and was able to speak. When they went to J. G. Shembe, they said, “We had been bringing this boy here who was unable to speak, but now he can.”

When this boy had grown up, having converted to the church with all his family, he went to J. G. and asked to be able to speak well. Shembe did not understand what he was talking about because one could still tell that he had been unable to speak. When Shembe told him, he did not understand what he meant. The young man said he wanted to be able to speak to the congregation like other men who were good speakers. When they spoke to the congregation, they listened. Shembe said, “Hmm, if I were you, I would ask that God be with me when I preach, because those people you are talking about are just tools for scaring the demons.”

Haven't you heard that an empty tin makes more noise? As I am standing here, I am asking God to be with me. But I warn you to be careful not to come and look inside

¹⁴⁰ Note that in instances where I have cited material from the worship services of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, I simply refer to the speaker delivering the sermon as “minister.” I left these speakers anonymous because, while I had permission to record at these events (via Nkosinathi Sithole who had made my presence as researcher known to the necessary church authorities), I did not have the express consent of the minister to use their words as I was recording in the context of open participant observations, during which I never interacted with them personally. Needless to say, this fact also means that I could not provide any further details about their place of origin or age, as with the interviewees included in this study. Note that while many of the sermons given within the Ebuhleni faction are filmed and ultimately sold on DVDs that identify the ministers, this kind of information was simply impertinent to the ethical framework established in Chapter 1, Section 4 and, therefore, merited no further follow-up. Though some of the ministers could be theoretically traced through the records of the Ebuhleni faction—again, the congregation is actively involved in making this information available through various media, I made sure not to overstep my ethical boundaries in the presentation of this qualitative material.

the tin because you may find that it is empty and not run away from sin. If someone tells you something, don't look at who that person is, but do the good that person is saying. Perhaps I am an empty tin, but the noise I will make is meant to help you change your evil ways and do good. {sings Hymn 164¹⁴¹ with congregation}

As I am singing this hymn, I am thinking back. Today, I was thinking about the fact that we are a spiritual family, that we belong together spiritually. Sometimes you can be born with your siblings, but you do not belong together with them spiritually. You are spiritually different. You are not brothers and sisters in spirit. You are brothers and sisters only physically.

At home there was this brother of mine who was also my spiritual brother, but today he is no more. What I have inside me, he also had when he was still alive. We were brothers.

There was a day when I was singing this hymn we have just sang. I had not known he was in hearing distance, but as I was singing, I heard him joining me, singing with me. He was my brother.

But God does His own thing, because this brother of mine died. The brothers I have now, I do not hear them joining me when I sing. The difference between Shembe and Jesus is that Jesus said, "All of you who are heavy laden, come unto me and I will make your loads light. For my yoke is light." But when Shembe came he said: {sings Hymn 143 with congregation}

Hymn 143:

1. Our faith,
This of the Nazaretha,
Is a slippery rock
That defeats many people.
2. You who like to follow us
Where we are going,
You must first purchase bravery;
Where we are going.
3. The path is narrow,
It has stones and thorns,
It is trod by few,
Where we are going.
4. Indeed, you are brave
To tread on that path,
The slippery rock
That defeats many people.
5. Come, all heroes,
Sound the clarion call
And protect the cowards,
Be armed quickly. (Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]: 145)

¹⁴¹ "The service of that place/Is peace and kindness./We enter by means of others,/And we are welcomed with kindness./You, home of peace,/Rejoice in us,/We are greeted by the Holy Ones,/We greet you, our friends./Gates of Kuphakama,/Rise up, that we may enter,/We desire you,/Home of peace./The sun and moon/Do not shine there,/Is it only the Eternal One/Who is the sun at that place./The light of the sun/Does not compare/With our home,/To which we are destined" (Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]: 161).

Yes, that is what Shembe said.

He said we should buy resilience if we want to travel on this journey. It is indeed a slippery rock. Maybe some of us are deserting by now, because [they are annoyed] the sun is too hot. We are not different from people who are not here in this sun. We are also made of blood and flesh. But Shembe said we must be strong. He says, in this hymn, this way is filled with stones and thorns. When we travel to Nhlankakazi, we walk on stones and thorns. Sometimes we walk over tarred road, and the tar can be too hot.

I felt very sorry one time when we were on the pilgrimage. There was a boy. *iNkosi* always says that as we are here, the devil is here with us as well. The devil had got this boy. When we were arriving in that place where we prepare [...] and the stone, where we make a covenant with God that will never be broken. This boy said, “H—, I am going back now! Look, here is Shembe driving in the car but we are suffering like this? No. I am going back. It means God does not want us to get to His heaven.” I felt very sorry for him. I wished I had not heard him.

There are things that it is not good to hear. And there are things that it is not good to see. I once saw a Nazaretha man smoking a cigarette, and I wished I had not seen him. I ran away.

May God be with us and let us conquer the one we have heard about. I heard that when Isaiah Shembe had finally agreed to come to the East [of South Africa] to create this church, there was this man who suddenly appeared and said, “I have heard that you have agreed to do this job. Wherever you go I will be there. If you convert ten people, five will be mine.”

Shembe turned around and asked where the man came from, and he said, “I come from Sikhova Sikhalemini, the ‘place where the owl hoots during the day.’” I wish this man from Sikhova Sikhalemini can get to me or you.

As we are here, we are here to make corrections. But we are also here to rectify our matters. Shembe is able to do his own stuff. He loves us, but not all of us. God does not love everybody. There are people He loves and those He does not.¹⁴²

In this sermon, which the presider hopes “will come from God not me,” he raises a number of themes. After positioning Shembe as the prime healer, the speaker also mentions that his grace is only reserved for those who are worthy, i.e. those who can sustain the many ardours of being a fully participating member of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

The idea of an elect of Shembe who are able to cope with the rigours of being *umNazaretha* recurs in a number of testimonies. The following excerpt echoes some of the previous themes:

Minister: May the Lord choose me. If I could, I would run away, but here in this home, you eat whatever is served to you. I would run away if I could, because this is hard. This place I am in now is unlike anywhere. There are some people who will enter heaven

¹⁴² Participant observation, Estcourt Temple (Morning Sabbath Service), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 27, 2010, translated from Zulu by Nkosinathi Sithole.

because of the things they heard here. Some will go to hell because they did not listen. {recites Prv 16:25¹⁴³}.

Here in Ekuphakameni, we are serving from the big pot. Everyone serves from his side. We should be careful you *amaNazaretha*. Everyone needs to wear their sizes.

There is a story which was a dream. She saw Nazarites going to Shembe, carrying their membership cards. She asked what they were doing and she was told that they are taking their cards to Shembe. They are giving up *ubuNazaretha* because they say it is difficult.

One day the minister N— spoke about the man who was swallowed by a snake. It took him around places in the river, but Shembe said, “Take him back.” This N— was there in the people who were returning the cards.

She asked if this N— was also giving up the church. But she was told that no he is not giving up, but his faith is taken from him because he responded to something that did not concern him.

I am going to be brief, *amaNazaretha*, because there is a lot of work to be done after the service. {sings Hymn 81¹⁴⁴} May Shembe be with us. Let it not happen that we see this on earth, but not see it in heaven.¹⁴⁵

Notice how the members who wanted to return their memberships were subject to a church leader who was suspected to be under the influence of one of the malignant spirits, in this case one that had taken the form of a snake. As with the naziritic law against coming into contact with the dead, the minister, by engaging with these dark forces has also lost his mastery over them and, by consequence, infected his flock.

Along with the emphasis on the elect who must follow the religious norms of their church, the theme of Shembe as a healer and helper is also reiterated in many of the sermons. In the following, the presider relays the resurrection story of a child:

Minister: You too if you have something that is getting destroyed, but if you come to Shembe, you will get help. One day my child got ill. Another had passed away. They took her to all the places because women have many hopes. Then one day, this child died, and my father came and prayed for her, and she was resurrected.

My brother who is not a member of this church, took her to many *sangoma*, and they said she is no longer alive. She died a long time ago. I came and took her to where the congregation was, at Gibisila.

She came to Gibisila, and found U— who said, “Why did you let the child become so sick?” The child was having fits and seizures, but when she used the blessed

¹⁴³ “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (KJV).

¹⁴⁴ “God Almighty,/Have mercy upon us,/That we may discard/All works of darkness./Clothe them with light,/Our hearts,/That we wait with hope,/Oh, our Liberator./Oh, the luck that they have,/Those who have overcome their transgressions; Nobody can count their riches,/Their livestock./Clothe them with light/Our hearts,/We will meditate with hope,/Oh, our Liberator” (Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]): 103).

¹⁴⁵ Participant observation, Enhlanhleni Temple (Afternoon Sabbath Service), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 19, 2010, translated from Zulu by Nkosinathi Sithole.

Vaseline, the seizures stopped. In a week's time, she was able to walk, but she could still not speak.

We kept taking her to *iNkosi*, and as time went by she was able to speak, though with difficulty. She went to church and school, but she still could not speak properly and she could not hear. Then one day the preacher asked for a maiden to read the Sabbath Prayer and she stood on her knees and read it. That was the day she got healed. From then on she was able to speak and to hear properly.

I was saying you too can have another hope, but Shembe is the castle of castle. I am asking God that my speaking be what he wants. There is a story I want us to listen to and to do. {recites Eph 4:27-30,¹⁴⁶ sings Hymn 69¹⁴⁷}. God has come to us.

We must thank Him. We must thank Him with good deeds. When I came here from Nelisiwe, I got a job, which has given me some money. Here is the thing. There is this man who wants us to do bad things. But we need not allow him space. As we are *amaNazaretha*, we should not speak evil words. King of Kings I am your young child. I beg forgiveness for what I have said which is bad and ask for the blessing for what you wanted me to say and I said.¹⁴⁸

Recall that such incredible healing stories are relatively commonplace throughout the various generations of Shembe leadership. They typically share the theme that faithful devotion to the norms of the church will enable such miraculous occurrences. Moreover, as already alluded to, healing emerges as one of the main reasons for conversion to *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

Along with the idea of an elect being healed by Shembe, in many conversion stories, there also resides the notion of a calling to join *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. The excerpt from this next sermon provides a sense of how closely tied the world of dreams and waking often are for *amaNazaretha*:

Minister: I choose the Lord of Ekuphakameni.¹⁴⁹ I am grateful, you *amaNazaretha*. I thank my evangelist for giving me this opportunity [to speak]. I will talk about my joining this church. I was lost.

One day, I went to Durban, to *iNkosi*. First, I asked my friend, "What is it that you see here in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*?" But then, suddenly, I said to my friend, "Let's leave everything and join *iNkosi*." Then, I saw things changing for the better.

¹⁴⁶ "Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (KJV).

¹⁴⁷ "The word of the Lord/Has come upon us;/Let us welcome it/Wholeheartedly./Give thanks, oh friends,/For those blessings/That Jehovah, our Lord,/Has brought to us./What do you say, people, About these blessings/That we possess/Together with our children" (Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]: 95-97).

¹⁴⁸ Participant observation, Emakhosini Temple (Morning Sabbath Service), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 13, 2010, translated from Zulu by Nkosinathi Sithole.

¹⁴⁹ Note that despite the particular faction to which they are affiliated, *amaNazaretha* also refer to their God as "Lord of Ekuphakameni," referring at once to the founder, Isaiah Shembe, and his progeny who now lead the various factions. By contrast, the "Living God at Ekuphakameni" refers to the title of the individual at the head of the Ekuphakameni faction, currently Vukile Shembe.

In my home town, there is no one who is a member of the church. Before I joined the church, I had a problem. I used to dream about being among *amaNazaretha*. One day, I said to my mother, “There are many whites chicken I see passing by me.” One woman told me that those are not chickens, but *amaNazaretha*.

Then one day, H— came to preach at my work, and many people were criticising him, saying they will never join the church. But I said playfully that I will join him. But now I *am* here.

Now I know that the main thing that frightens people about *ubuNazaretha* is the laws. We should try to keep the laws of *ubuNazaretha*. But some laws are not so difficult to follow. We should help one another. If you see someone trespassing, you should advise your neighbour.

Let me talk about one mistake I normally make. My wife would say that it is time to wake up and pray. So, I might say, “No, it’s fine. I will pray later.” She would then say, “No, lets pray now,” and so we did. Afterwards she would say, “What have you lost now that you have prayed?” That is what we must do. Try to keep the laws.

Like I said, the laws are what make people fear this church. If we do not keep the laws, we may be punished when we pass over. We will be asked what we did, and be found guilty. I thank you.¹⁵⁰

Many themes emerge from this tale of conversion. Once again, in a “stream of consciousness” style, the speaker links the dream narrative to the fact that he is now speaking in the temple which he had originally disregarded—living proof of conversion and calling. While the speaker emphasizes that many of the laws of the church are difficult to maintain, some pose less of a strain, such as the call echoing the biblical commandment to be neighbourly (Ex 20:16). Of course, as with many religions, Shembe adherents preach “righteousness,” “respect for divine laws,” and “fear of God,” as the ways to ensure a good life in the now and the hereafter.

Finally, the following sequence from a participant observation session not only demonstrates my observer effect and involvement as researcher, but also illuminates significant aspects of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* history and theology. During the Sabbath service I attended at Nkonzenjani Temple, the presider asked me to say a few words for the congregation. After I had spoken, the presider utilizes my presence as an Indian and an outsider to argue that Shembe is indeed a universal Lord, for people of all shades.

KGC: *Sawubonani*.¹⁵¹

Congregation: Amen.

KGC: {with Nkosinathi Sithole translating intermittently for the congregation} My name is K. Gandhar Chakravarty and I’ve come here from Montreal, Canada. Being here is definitely a priviledge and a blessing as I get to continue some of my research on

¹⁵⁰ Participant observation, Estcourt Temple (Afternoon Sabbath Service), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 27, 2013, translated from Zulu by Nkosinathi Sithole.

¹⁵¹ Zulu for “greetings to all.”

Nazarites. And I must thank my university – the University of Montreal, the Canadian Government, and Gerald West at UKZN who have all made this trip possible for me.

Congregation: Amen.

KGC: I have been given the great honour of being in KZN for six months. I've been here for two months already with my guide and friend, I guess now, Nkosinathi Sithole. And we visited a lot of different places from iKhayaletu to Edendale and I must say that, without fail, the warmth and generosity I have been greeted with, even if the languages aren't always there for me – understandably, has been very overwhelming and has made the trip very pleasant and very enjoyable at a personal level too.

Congregation: Amen.

KGC: And so in conclusion, thank you all on behalf of your large and vibrant church for allowing me into this sacred space and I give my humble greetings to Shembe.

Congregation: Amen.

Minister: {directed at KGC, in translation} I'm happy that you've been to a place where God is. We believe that Shembe is God. There is no one who is like him. We hope that you are going to take the idea of *ubuNazaretha* and plant it overseas.

I remember that, around 1954, there was a white man who came from overseas. He came here with his wife and daughter and he stayed in a hotel in Durban and he bought the daily newspaper.

His daughter had a sickness. She couldn't menstruate. All the doctors overseas had failed to heal this girl. So, finally, he crossed the seas to South Africa, looking for a doctor who could help him.

So, he was sitting there in his hotel next to the sea. I'm telling you this story so that you will understand what is meant by Hymn 53 which states, "Tell this news throughout the Earth." So, one day, the newspaper said, "There is a man in KwaZulu-Natal, in South Africa. The thing about him is he performs miracles. He is like God." So, he asked the boys from Ekuphakameni about where Shembe was, and they said, "He's in Inanda."

So, he took his family and went to Ekuphakameni. It was during the July Festival, so there was [sacred] dancing. The white man went to Shembe to report that his daughter was sick. Shembe said, "But how can I help you? Because there are doctors, white doctors." Then, the white man took up the newspaper and said, "I read about you. I read that you perform miracles."

So, Shembe called the leader of the dancing girls and said, "Take this white child and dance with her." Then, before she even started dancing, Shembe said, "Bring back the white girl. She cannot dance, but she has been healed."

They went back to their hotel in Durban, and the wife said they shouldn't go overseas. They should wait a week to see what would happen. And during that time, the girl menstruated. So, she was healed.

The white man went back to Ekuphakameni to say his daughter has been healed. He asked Shembe, "How much do you want?" And Shembe said, "I don't want anything." And the white man said, "What should I do?" Shembe said, "What you should do is go back to your home and preach that you have seen God in South Africa."

I'm happy for people like [KGC] to come so you can see this home called Nkonzenjani if it's suitable for Shembe. We have seen in Ebuhleni, there were two men... kind of Indian, something like that. They said, "Is it suitable for you to stay in a

home like this or do you want us to build you a better home?" He said he was going to fix the fencing here, but then he went away and never came back.

We are very pleased to see you because this thing we are talking about here, Shembe, is a very great thing. If you want to get to heaven when you die, you do something good for another person. People where Jesus used to live, they made a song which says, "There is no one who is like Jesus, because he knows our troubles."

We are happy to see someone from a place like Canada, because in this area, like it was the first area where the white people in the American [...] Mission stayed. They are the ones who first came here and built the school, the [...] Primary School. But the problem with them, they were not lucky enough to see Shembe when they came. So, today everyone has seen Shembe—all the nations. So, when you come here, they see that it's not suitable to live in a house like that. And I am grateful that you are saying you have been well-received here in South Africa.¹⁵²

Beyond the allusion to the fact that government officials are now more involved in improving the facilities of *amaNazaretha* worship sites and temples, the presider has interpreted my presence as a foreigner within a Shembe temple as something akin to the story of the "white man" whose daughter's inability to menstruate had been healed. Indeed, all the presider asked of me was that I help spread the messages of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Of course, although I am neither an adherent, nor personally invested in the Shembe Church, the mere existence of this dissertation, in some regard, implicitly serves as a medium through which to plant at least some of the ideas associated with *ubuNazaretha* overseas (without proselytizing), especially for a reader whose first experience with *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* may indeed be through this work.

2.1.2 2011 Ebhleni Pilgrimage to Mount Nhlankakazi

My journey to Mount Nhlankakazi started to take place before it occurred in linear time. Here, I have included an excerpt from my first meeting with Nkosinathi Sithole in order to reveal some of the preparatory qualitative work I conducted to help gain an understanding of what, in this case, the sacred dances meant to a bilingual and erudite member of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*:

KGC: So, for me, I don't know, I mean, this is again without having any experience, practical experience... for me, you have these types of dances that preserve the traditional Zulu, I haven't seen them... I don't really have an opinion on it. So, in relation to your research and this proposition that it's not always a "response to colonialism," it's not always colonialism in the centre... how do you make sense of a dance like the *isiKotshi*?
Nkosinathi Sithole: Oh, because actually it's not about the dance as much, but it's about dress. So, actually the Scotch, you know... I think Shembe started this because... the Scotch Dance is normally for younger people. You know, at the time, I said there was

¹⁵² Participant observation, Nkonzenjani Temple (Afternoon Sabbath Service), KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 17, 2010, translated from Zulu by Nkosinathi Sithole.

this conflict because of the people who were embracing Western civilization. So, when he started this... younger people did not like to wear the traditional [Zulu attire]. There was a time when Shembe's successor, Isaiah Shembe's successor said... you know... like for instance the Scotch, they don't dance it at Mount Nhlankakazi. And what he said, J. G. Shembe, what he said, "Isaiah Shembe allowed you to wear this [*isiKotshi*] because there were those of us who did not want to dress in the traditional dress because it was regarded as backwards. So, in order to accommodate the younger members he had to bring in this new style. You can see. If you go to Nhlankakazi, you'll see. In other places, like in Ebuhleni, for instance... because the church was split... we belong to Ebuhleni. So, in Ebuhleni, you'll find that there are the young... and you can see that it's young people, because the traditions started there, with them.

KGC: The Scotch Dance started in Ebuhleni?

Nkosinathi Sithole: No, I'm saying that the tradition started at the time of Isaiah Shembe, because he wanted to accommodate the young. So now, you'll find that it's the younger members who dress in the *isiKotshi*. Because what would happen in the times of Isaiah Shembe and J. G. Shembe is that, as a young boy, you dress in *isiKotshi* you grow up, and you get to a point where you are an adult. Then you move on to dressing in the traditional African dress.

KGC: That's very interesting.

Nkosinathi Sithole: But then, it's not allowed at all on top of Mount Nhlankakazi.¹⁵³

In this dialogue from an expert on the history of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, we can see that although Isaiah and J. G. Shembe innovated new dance styles, at the holiest of sites for the religious movement, Mount Nhlankakazi, the modern Scotch Dance, with its use of combat boots, is not permitted. It was conversations like these that went a long way towards the development of a theoretical framework involving resistance and persistence; moreover such conversations revealed a dynamic of selective resistance and persistence—an accommodation for aspects of modernity and the struggle to maintain aspects of indigeneity in the process.

What I discovered during my field research, however, from my perspective, was more grand than any conversation or text could have conveyed. We began the pilgrimage to Mount Nhlankakazi at Ebuhleni. I arrived alone and waited at one end of the car park. At times like these, waiting alone, I felt quite alienated, as (despite my attire) I clearly stood out as the solitary person of Indian origin. Yet, soon after meeting with Nkosinathi, I would be escorted into places deeper towards the centre of the congregation. It would be virtually impossible to verify, but I would estimate that at any given time there could have been up to 250,000 congregants assembled for this one to two week pilgrimage. In 2011, the pilgrimage was shortened by about one week due to the precarious health condition of then leader M. V. Shembe.

¹⁵³ Interview with researcher, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 1, 2010

From the perspective of being in the field, the first evening at Ebuhleni was relatively easy—just another night of eating steak and *phuthu* (maize meal) and sleeping in the car. The next morning began quite early as all the men assembled to begin the pilgrimage. The same groups that are separated in the Sabbath services also keep their distinctions during the pilgrimage. The group is led by men and boys, bookended by adult women, with the virgin maidens nestled in the centre. As part of the men's group, at the very start of the pilgrimage, I was led through narrow pathways until we finally got to the first temple site in Ebulehni,¹⁵⁴ where we knelt for a short prayer. From here, the crowd headed out towards the main road, taking their first steps in what would be a three day journey to Mount Nhlankakazi. After seeing the expression on my face, as I was literally swept up and away by the force of the crowd, Nkosinathi, who had experienced that sensation before, suggested that it was probably a good time for me to break from the walkers in this pilgrimage and make my own way by driving along with the procession of automobiles that follow the pilgrims. I broke off by the side of the road to get photos of members from all three groups before walking back to my car and proceeding towards Nhlankakazi with nothing but the sea of white surplices and scant cell phone service to guide my way.

En route to the first stop, Esibukweni, three *amaNazaretha* women ended up hitching a ride with me since they were each not feeling able to walk for various reasons. None of these women could speak English very well, so I was not able to converse with any of them in great detail. Along the way, there was a particular prayer stop for which one of the ladies weaved a grass wreath for me. We put the wreath on our heads, with a stone in the middle, and we left a prayer for Shembe (Figures 27, 28).

We pulled up among the last of the gatherers at Esibukweni. One woman left to find her place of rest. I slept in the car again, this time by the side of an unlit country road. The next day, before the group left for Homis, I was asked if I could drive ahead before the pilgrims got underway so that a sick woman could be tended to at the next stop. I was much obliged and brought the woman to her family where she could seek rest in their canteen. Afterward, I parked the car and waited for the pilgrims (Figure 29).

¹⁵⁴ Two outdoor white stone temples exist at Ebuhleni. A second, exponentially larger temple was added at one side of the grounds to accommodate the augmenting number of members.

The third day finally took us to Mount Nhlankakazi. We arrived on a cloudy day and I could not see the oft referenced flat top of the mountain until some of the clouds had passed (Figure 30). A number of paramedics in ambulances attended to those who had sustained injuries along the journey. Since I continued to transport two of the original ladies from Ebuhleni once we reconnected in Homis, when I first arrived at Mount Nhlankakazi I unknowingly parked just on the inside of the women's camping area (cf. Figure 5) as they had urged me to bring them to a certain spot. As I was not able to reconnect with Nkosinathi due to the lack of cell phone service, I ultimately slept there in the car. Since the car was positioned just next to the men's side, that I was officially situated in the wrong area was not evident to me. The next day, after finding Nkosinathi, I moved the car back onto the men's side, from which I originally entered the Nhlankakazi site, before moving myself into the tent that Nkosinathi and his friends had pitched the previous night. Overnight, canteens and shops had been set up for the pilgrims.

From here, most of the services resembled what has already been described in the previous section on Ebuhleni Sabbath services, but with the respective liturgy (Sabbath Prayer, Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer) accompanying the appropriate time of day or week. The Morning and Evening services are significantly shorter than the Sabbath services. For special services, such as *Ukubingelela Intaba* (Greeting the Mountain) and the Sabbath services, the pilgrims would climb to the top of Mount Nhlankakazi, while the Morning and Evening Prayers would be conducted at three separate temples (in accordance with the three groups—men, women, virgin maidens) towards the foot of the mountain.

For the mountaintop services, the pilgrims would wind their way up the path, with the virgin maidens eventually branching off onto another road to the top (Figure 31). The majestic view atop Nhlankakazi was cited as proof by many adherents that this mountain is a "Heaven on Earth" (Figure 32). Loudspeakers and microphones had also been set up for the preachers at the top of the mountain (Figure 33). Personally, it was quite impressive to gaze upon the massive campsite that had sprouted overnight (Figure 34).

On January 15, 2011, the reverends announced that the journey back to Ebuhleni was to begin that day. The call to return happened after an atypically short time spent at the mountain. Usually, the Ebuhleni faction can remain there up to two weeks, but the 2011 pilgrimage to Nhlankakazi ended after only one week. After a full week committed to taking part in this pilgrimage, rather than follow the walking pilgrims back to Ebuhleni for the next two days (the

walk back is mostly downhill), I chose to join the immediate automobile procession to Ebuhleni, but carried on to my own residence in Durban where I could get some rest. A week later, I caught up with the pilgrims at Ebuhleni to observe the subsequent proceedings at the January Meeting, the sacred dances in particular.

2.1.3 Ebuhleni Sacred Dances

Although *amaNazaretha* sacred dances are performed at other designated moments through the year, the gathering at Ebuhleni immediately after the pilgrimage to and from Mount Nhlankakazi endures as one of largest congregations of *amaNazaretha*. Various regional troupes had gathered to perform their dances for each other. Thousands of church members had assembled to take part in this fashion of worshipping that combines dancing, singing, drumming, and *izimbomu*, the metal horn innovated by the Shembe Church (and upon which the plastic “vuvuzela” of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa was based). In this section on the sacred dances, I will reference images from the January Meeting in Ebuhleni, as well as others I acquired at the iKhayaletu Temple site (December 5, 2010).

There are five distinct dance groupings: Zulu men, Zulu women, virgin maidens of marriagable age, virgin maidens of non-marriagable age, and *isiKotshi*. In each group, some members bang drums (either traditional skin or modern), while others blow *izimbomu*. Although some of the dance attire reveals much of the human body, as Papini argues, the current uniforms represent more “modest” versions than the precolonial Zulu equivalents, as applicable to the Zulu men, Zulu women, and virgin maiden dance groups (2004: 55-60). In the context of Ebuhleni *amaNazaretha*, my observations confirmed Brown’s affirmation that creative devices in attire, such as multicoloured plumage, can also help demarcate regional sacred dance troupes (1995: 2). What follows are a few more details on each particular dance grouping.

The Zulu men dress in furs and sport adornments that suggest an integration of the postcolonial encounter and aspects of indigeneity (Figure 35). While the colourful plumage found on the headpieces suggest creativity on an older theme (Papini 2004: 49), the arm adornments also include plastic reflectors fastened onto the leather (Figure 36)—clearly a departure from a purely indigenous attitude. According to my interviews with Nkosinathi Sithole, many of these items have become more ornate over time and are markers of innovation within the church (cf. Papini 2004). Papini describes the additional ornamentation on traditional

Zulu attire as a form of “neotraditionalism” (2004), a motif that can be described as having a resemblance to, and innovation beyond, markers of indigeneity. The stance is echoed by Sithole:

Today men wear around their heads thicker head-ties called *imiqhele* usually made from leopard skin, buck skin or *indlonzi* skin. Some also wear a plumed headdress called *isidlodlo* or *idlokolo*. It is difficult to account for these developments in the dance attire, but I think that it has to do with increased communication, with people copying and borrowing from each other, and has also to do with the creativity of the makers of the dance attire, who develop ways to expand their businesses and make the sacred dance attire more attractive to the eye and at the same time more expensive. (2010: 153)

The plastic necklaces sporting images of Shembe are another modern element that has entered into the attire (Figure 37). Members also wear these necklaces during the Sabbath. The dances of the Zulu men pay great attention to the traditional leg-lift and accompanied heel stomp on the rhythm, but the height of the leg-lift has decreased over the years in the interest of “modesty” (Papini 2004: 55) In one hand, a decorative shield made from animal skin and wood, and, in the other, a ceremonial wand, are handled in tandem with the dance steps (Figure 38).

Similarly, the Zulu women’s dance group also combines elements of traditional Zulu attire with certain modern embellishments, such as plastic beadwork and coloured yarn. As only women who were married according to *amaNazaretha* law are allowed to participate in the sacred dance, each dancer can be seen wearing *isicholo* on their heads around which a fur crown, has also been placed; at the centre, a tuft of black ostrich plumage. The dancers wear long black skirts and black shawls with red tops underneath. The skirts are called *isidwaba* and are “made of the pleated hide from a heifer or bullock sacrificed, at the wedding, to the husband’s ancestors” (Papini 2004: 56). Most women, aside from the drummers, carry an umbrella in one hand and a decorative shield in the other. Although I asked about it when I could, the exact significance of the umbrella remains unclear. Muller has posited that the umbrellas evoke fertility and nonviolence (1999: 183), which seems rather intuitive, but my inquiries bore no such direct evidence, leaving the exact symbolic “purpose” inconclusive. Many *amaNazaretha* tend to explain certain traditions as “they are the way they are,” although I also found that some probing usually revealed additional information. During my field research, the latter was not the case with the umbrellas. Every time I had an opportunity to inquire about it, the conversation never moved past “convention.” See Figure 39 for an image of the Zulu women’s dance group.

With the virgin maidens’ dance groups, the girls who are old enough to be wed wear black skirts, while the younger girls not yet available for marriage wear red skirts. See Figure 40

for an image of the former and Figure 17 for one of the latter. Again, the umbrellas and decorative shields are present. In both virgin maiden groups, the girls dance with their breasts exposed, as with traditional Zulu dance. Over the years, the lengths of the skirts for nubile females has increased in length, though the connection of the attire (or lack of attire) with fertility remains (Papini 2004: 58-61). The notion of fertility does not necessarily connote eroticism in the context of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, however.¹⁵⁵

Finally, and no doubt the most exuberant of the sacred dances, is *isiKotshi*, or the Scotch Dance (Figure 41). *isiKotshi* is also the most telling in relation to the dialogue on resistance and persistence. While the male dancers in the Scotch group retain the Zulu leg-lift and heel stomp, beyond the most obvious colonial artefact – the white pith helmet – the attire in general represents a direct consequence of colonial interaction. The older boys wear white dress shirts and a green tie with a black kilt, black rugby socks, and black combat boots (Figure 42). The younger boys are clad in pink kilts, black bow ties, and white pom-pom head ties, as well as the black rugby socks and black combat boots (Figure 43). Still, the Zulu and modern drums, *izimbomu*, decorative animal skin shields, and ceremonial wands are also ubiquitous among the Scotch dancers.

The example of *isiKotshi* is a clear case where, as scholars, we cannot cry, “resistance,” at every turn, especially in such a context where so many artefacts of the colonial encounter have been assimilated into the sacred dances of a theological and cultural movement. In fact, *isiKotshi* represents the only time in the context of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* ceremonies during which shoes are sanctioned—an implicit accommodation for a marker of modernity, but somewhat of a necessity considering the harder and more frequent heel stomps practiced by *isiKotshi* dancers. Outside the context of *isiKotshi*, all members of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, apart from the “Living God,” walk barefoot at religious events. Yet, as also mentioned, though *isiKotshi* remains one of the more popular dances to watch and perform, the dance form is not sanctioned at Mount Nhlankakazi, the most sacred of *amaNazaretha* worship sites. The dance form was introduced by Isaiah Shembe, and developed by J. G., in order to accommodate some of the younger members whose upbringing bore more Western influence than their parents’ generation (cf. Papini 2004). Eventually, as they grow older, members of *isiKotshi* will ultimately join the Zulu men’s group. As Figures 38 and 43 demonstrate, however, there are also youth initiates in both the Zulu men’s

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Nkosinathi Sithole, December 5, 2010.

and *isiKotshi* dance groups, implying that some boys opt to be part of the Zulu men's dance group from a younger age.

Many of the modern elements in these forms of living worship, the various sacred dances, as juxtaposed against those of traditional Zulu dance, have no profound explanations in and of themselves. As I discussed with Nkosinathi Sithole, much of the cultural fusion can be credited to the mere availability of items in the context of the Shembe Church's history and the desire for something new to come out of the old. We must also understand the sacred dances of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* as a kind of "living exegesis." Papini elaborates this point:

[For] many African readers and discussants of the Bible, Hebrew religion was imagined in scripture as oriented overwhelmingly to community reproduction [...] The Nazarite founder embraced the holy dance on discerning that biblical cultures, just like those of pre-contact Africa, had been founded not on any [...] style of world-negation and denial of the body but on principles of "human flourishing." Inevitably this breakthrough entailed a momentous "Judaizing" challenge to the Western reading of scripture, with major implications for an African church liturgy, and for restoring the ancestral promise of a kinesthetic worship.

Galilee Shembe [J. G.] inherited his father's "Hebraizing" project, but found himself tasked, at a time when Zuluism was in the ascendant, with the trick of balancing pressures for a no-holds-barred move to tradition from his ministers and the increasing number of chiefs who were finding a spiritual home in the Church, against countervailing expectations of greater orthodoxy (or at the least, a much diluted form of "the African") from the Euro-Christian mission-descended quarter and the officialdom whose endorsement he required to get his church registered.

Today's IsiZulu uniforms reflect Galilee's inspired navigation of this difficult terrain. (2004: 61)

While the contrast of white surplices worn over Zulu-inspired *ibeshu* during the barefoot Sabbath services represents a balance between Judaic, Protestant, and African traditions, the various attire worn during the sacred dances of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, on the whole, represent a time consecrated to the persistence of indigeneity, even if in an "enculturated" form (cf. Papini 2004: 49). Again, note the omission of *isiKotshi* from Mount Nhlankakazi where the other dance forms—Zulu men, married women, virgin maidens—persist at this holiest of *amaNazaretha* sites.

2.2 Ekuphakameni: Sabbath Services and Founding Day Ceremony at Bhekumesiya

I conducted my field research with Ekuphakameni *amaNazaretha* for about six weeks during the months of February and March 2011, before my departure to Jamaica. Although somewhat daunting to enter Ekuphakameni unvouched for and unannounced, the many things I had learned

during my field research with Ebuhleni *amaNazaretha* and Nkosinathi Sithole certainly positioned me as less of a “tourist” when I arrived for my first Sabbath service at Ekuphakameni. Although a stranger, my white surplice, *umqhele*, and bare feet no doubt demonstrated a basic knowledge of church protocol, although my admission that I had acquired the items from events associated with the Ebuhleni faction raised some concern among certain members I first encountered in Ekuphakameni. Soon, after a number of key members had sized me up, I was allowed deeper into the dialogues of the congregation. In that short amount of time, however, I was not able to observe as many events and locations as with Ebuhleni. Most notably, I was neither able to witness the Ekuphakameni sacred dances, nor Isaiah Shembe’s mausoleum, for a number of logistical reasons. In this section, I thus focus on the sermons of Vukile Shembe, sole presider of the Afternoon Sabbath services at Ekuphakameni, as well as the Founder’s Day celebration I was able to attend in Bhekumesiya.

2.2.1 Ekuphakameni Sabbath Services

The general tenor of the Sabbath services in Ekuphakameni, as compared with the Ebuhleni Sabbath services, was quite different. Vendors were nowhere to be found in Ekuphakameni and the call to fast seemed to be strictly adhered to by all *amaNazaretha* present. The gathering was significantly smaller than at the services associated with the “perpetual pilgrimage” of Ebuhleni. All of the Sabbath services I attended in Ekuphakameni happened to be held indoors in the church building (Figure 44) due to some construction work in process around the outdoor temple.

The sounds of cooing pigeons are constant in the background of my audio recordings at these religious gatherings—the birds who inhabit the rafters of the church are a testament to the Nazarite respect for life. A microphone and loudspeakers are also in place, but only for use by Vukile Shembe, the sole presider of the Afternoon Sabbath Services at Ekuphakameni. The Sabbath itself starts at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown Saturday.

The Morning Sabbath Service starts at 9:00 a.m., but only runs about one hour. Various leaders preside over the Morning Sabbath Service. After a long break, the bell starts to ring at 1:00 p.m. to signal the start of the Afternoon Sabbath Service. It continues ringing for about five minutes. After kneeling to speak a prayer of admittance, the congregants place themselves on their prayer mats and sit together in silence for about half an hour, at which time the bell rings

again, this time briefly, to announce the arrival of Vukile Shembe, “Living God at Ekuphakameni,” onto the church premises. Vukile presides over a series of sermonizing, biblical recitation, and hymn singing, alternating with the congregation kneeling and sitting, for a period of about two-and-a-half or even upwards of three hours. In the tracts included from my interviews with Vukile Shembe (Appendix 2, Section 4), he speaks about his ruminations leading up to the Sabbath and how he prepares his sermons through “divine inspiration.” At the end of the service, Vukile sits at his altar and receives personal requests, prayers, and wishes from the congregants who have walked and lined up on their knees. During this time, when members of the church make their personal requests to Shembe, the congregation continues singing hymns, with individuals spontaneously taking the lead from their seated positions on their prayer mats. Vukile Shembe waits until everyone in line has received individual audience with him before he leaves the premises. This final part of the Sabbath service can easily take another hour. Once Vukile Shembe has exited the church, the congregation is also free to leave the worship space and carry on with the remainder of holy day.

As with the Ebuhleni faction, the congregants are divided into the same three sections: men and boys, adult women, and virgin maidens. The same dress codes as with Ebuhleni are in place (as outlined in the previous section of this chapter), but with a greater overall adherence to the accepted norms, i.e. *ibeshu* for men (or black pants when *ibeshu* are unavailable), white dress shirt, and black V-neck sweater under the white surplice for men, as well as the appropriate shawls, skirts, and *isicholo* for women, and the virgin maidens whose faces are veiled with a white cloth. Like in Ebuhleni, all but the “Living God,” in this case Vukile Shembe, walk barefoot.

Let us then turn to a sermon of Vukile Shembe to get a sense of what an afternoon Sabbath service feels like in Ekuphakameni. Rather than choose excerpts from the three afternoon Sabbath services I attended in Ekuphakameni, I have chosen to simply include the first from February 19, 2011, in its entirety, in translation, to not only help give a sense of the pace of the lengthy Sabbath services presided by Vukile Shembe, but also as the subject matter of this particular sermon touches on the Sabbath itself, in addition to a number of naziritic themes including dedication to God, avoidance of medicine and healing treatments not divine in nature, and the Levitical law to not cut or mark one’s skin. The delivery style also gives greater insight into the idea of “stream of consciousness” or “divine inspiration” in the conducting of a sermon

as well as the manner in which a presider can consciously draw on different sources to create a living hermeneutic in real time, in this case, two biblical passages (Gen 4:1-12; Ps 1), an *amaNazaretha* hymn, and actual circumstances:

Vukile Shembe: {recites Gen 4:1-12;¹⁵⁶ recites Ps 1;¹⁵⁷ repeats Ps 1; sings Hymn 114 with congregation}

Hymn 114:

1. You created me, Lord,
God, King of kings,
And you placed me in that garden
Because you loved me so much.
2. The garden that lacked nothing,
The garden that had [abundant] fruit.
You commanded me to eat them all,
Because you loved me so much.
3. In the course of time
I was misled, my Lord,
Eventually I ate from that tree
And all my virtue vanished.
4. How can I be restored
To the goodness I had
Before I contravened the laws,
Because you loved me so much.
5. I need it, my Lord,
The soap for washing myself,
So that I can quickly be restored
To the beauty I once possessed. (Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]: 123, 125)

¹⁵⁶ “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth” (KJV).

¹⁵⁷ “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish” (KJV).

Vukile Shembe: These boys who are spoken about in the first book I read, they were brothers, of the same father. Their father is Adam. One was older; the other younger.

I don't know how the heart of knowing God and fearing him gets created inside the person. But most of the time, the heart of knowing God and fearing him, it does not arrive by the age of a person. Sometimes a person may be young, but he has signs in him that show that he has the heart of fearing God inside him. Sometimes the other will not be like that. Sometimes even an older person will not have the heart of knowing God. He does not have the spirit of fearing God, even though he is old. Some even die and get buried not having had the heart of fearing God. The heart of knowing that God is present and is fearsome, is far from him. There are men like that, and women like that, whom when other people see them, they trust that they must know the facts of life and spirit, but it is not like that. One can have all the wisdom of the earth, but when it comes to the things of the way of God, he misses that. His children may have all the food of the world, but when it comes to food for the soul, they are hungry.

Some will be promising. Some people are promising. Sometimes when you look at a person, you think that if I come closer to him in search of Shembe, I can be satisfied. But it is not like that.

It is like a fruit tree. If a person looks at it, he trusts it. That if he is hungry and goes to it, he will get the food to eat. It is like that as we are wearing this white gown. Someone who looks at us, who loves Shembe, when he looks at you he becomes hopeful that if I can come closer to these people, I can find the Lord of Ekuphakameni. Sometimes it is like that; sometimes it is not.

I don't know how the heart of fearing God is grown inside a person, because even if someone is wearing this white gown, it happens that you trust him, because he has worn it for years, some ageing... but if you come closer to him you are disappointed. You will not find the Lord of Ekuphakameni.

In the home of *amaNazaretha*, who are always praying and conducting the Sabbath services, to a point where you trust that there is Shembe there; but there is not. There is Satan. And if you are not careful, you believe in what is done there and hold onto it, hoping that in the end you will find the Lord of Ekuphakameni, that you will see Shembe, but it is not like that. That is when the heart of fearing God is absent.

In the Sabbaths being done, in the prayers being conducted, and in the singing, the heart of fearing God is absent. That is why I say I don't know how the heart of fearing God grows in a person, because even if the person may be old, having spent many years in the faith, but has ways that he now and then travels, that are far from the sign of the people who fear God. Even though when we see him, we think he fears God, but there are things he does that we do not know, but they are signs that there is no heart of the fear of God in this man. He does not have the heart of fearing God.

Even when people are seated like you, it is easy for a person who arrives in search of God, to hope, that with these people... I may find God among them. I may gain the heart of fearing God. I may gain the heart of knowing Him. I may find the light of knowing, take it, and light my home. But sometimes it is not like that.

Some persons may wear the gown of light, but inside it is dark. If you look at him, you trust that since he wears the cloth of light, it means in his inside it is light... but no. Inside him there are shades of darkness and the dangerous hills, so that if you travel closer to him you may find yourself in a hole you have no idea how to get out of.

But I am telling the story of these boys of Adam. I am saying they were following each other in birth. One was younger; the other was older. But the heart of the older one did not have the spirit of knowing God. His ways to God were far from his heart. One day, God called them both and told them to bring the sacrifices of the works. We do not know, *amaNazaretha*, when the fruits of your work get brought to God, because we never see it. We do not know if there is a law that says at a certain time a person will bring a donation from his work. But we never see it. But God called these boys to bring their work so He may bless them.

This is amazing because even though you are not under that law, you are in the front when it comes to wanting the blessing. But in the law of the donation of the work of the person's hand, you are far. But you stay till dawn, here, looking for a blessing.

This young boy, Abel, when the time came to give donations, he looked at his livestock for the finest sheep. He chose the ones that spoke to his heart and he took them to God. The elder one, Cain, because he was in ploughing, when he chose from his produce, he separated them and took the rotten ones. In mealies [corn], he took the rotten ones. From the potatoes, he took the rotten ones. He went with it all to Ekuphakameni to ask for the blessing with rotten things. When he got before God, this book says God did not heed his donation. He did not bless him, he blessed his brother.

There are donations like that here in Ekuphakameni. We always see it. The donations of the rotten things, with flies buzzing. They are given to Shembe, saying, "Here is your donation, Lord." There are those of the men, those of the women, and those of the maidens. A person who does not look at how this thing is that he is taking to God. That if Shembe had been me, what would I say if this donation was given to me? There are many donations like that here. Shembe is followed with them when he is this side, is followed with them when he is that side.

A person would say, "Here are my rotten things, Lord. Bless me." There are worms here and flies there. Even in the sacrifices of the Sabbath, we see that. Which are given to Shembe. Sabbaths that are unclean, they are given here. And is Shembe asked to accept them and give the blessing? When he asks, "What are you bringing to Ekuphakameni?"

Our sacrifices usually do not follow the path of this boy of Adam called Abel. It does not go there. Normally, it goes on the way of Cain. He chooses the rotten and gives them, and God did not mind. It happens even here. You can stay here a long time and God will just watch you, with your rotten stuff until you leave at the end, not having been blessed. That thing does exist.

When this boy arrived at the altar to give his donation, the angel left. It was chased away by the smell of the rotten, which a person buys wherever he buys them, and then wears a white gown and comes here to Ekuphakameni to give it to Shembe. When God ignored his sacrifice, he got angry. He said, "Why is God not blessing me? Why do I suffer like this wasting my time? Dancing and singing, why am I not blessed?" He never thinks about what God is saying about his rotten sacrifice... about his unclean sacrifices.

Because when you dance here, you dance with marks from the cuts of the *inyanga*, which you went to. He was spreading his fats on your body. Since you were born, you come in and out of here, but you have never confessed that sin. That you have been cut by an *inyanga*.

When things go badly for you, you suspect other people. You say you are bewitched... your enemies are like this and like that. But you are the one who wore that dress of lice.

And boys in this house, one will come here having been with his girlfriend, as he is here, he is coming from his girlfriend. When it is time for donations, he comes to this altar of God and gives donations of the rotten.

And woman, she is here knowing that she once gave a potion to her husband, wanting him to love her. One has come from an *inyanga*. She was looking for a potion to oust another woman from the husband.

All these things... no one cares about them. But they are brought here. When a person becomes cursed, he points a finger at his brothers. He says, "It is my mother. Perhaps she was a sinner." But no, what about your own sins? This means your father may be imprisoned, but it is you who lights the fire that fuels your spirit. At the end, the angel of God runs away from you and then you start to suffer. You smell bad.

You say, "Why is Shembe quiet?" I shouted day and night, "Why did you not hear me?" But you know that you are insulting God. Shembe is just your playground. This boy of Adam was like that. He did not fear God like you and me, because we are like that. If we come here to Shembe's place, we do not stop to ask ourselves as we are going to Ekuphakameni, "How is it inside me, this dirt in me? If I go before God, how is it going to be?"

The eyes and mind of a foolish person, they lie to him and say, "Shembe does not see me. God does not see me." He lies to himself and says that this is the church of the minister and the minister thinks the church is his. If he feels like lying on his back, he does that, and raises his knees.

This boy was like that. When he saw his brother taking the best of his sheep to God, he said, "No, you are a fool." Because it was not that he was going to find a winged angel where he was taking the sacrifice. It was just like here. He thought you can take your best there. "It looks like you are not smart," he said to his brother. I do not know whether the spirit of donation was still present in him or not, or the spirit of fearing God, because another person will feel ashamed, even if the fear of God has disappeared from him, but he fears what people will say if he does not go to Ekuphakameni, and then forces himself to come here to Ekuphakameni. But the fear of God has disappeared. He now sees just a home.

It is like that to the person who has lost the fear of God. If you tell them, you are just like a crazy person to them. He says it is because you are not wise.

He got angry, this son of Adam. An animal gave birth inside his heart. God called him and asked him, "What is inside your heart? This animal that closes into your heart, what is it? Do you see this animal?" There is an animal like that, which follows the smell of the seed of sin. Because this boy, when he was not blessed, he hated. He hated his brother. The seed of sin was created. This animal I am talking about, it came closer to him because it smelt the seed of sin.

There is an animal that likes the smell of the seed of sin. There is only one way to control it: to take away sin from your heart. This animal I am talking about likes the fruits of the tree of sin. If there is a seed of sin in the man's heart, it smells it from afar. When it felt that something was happening, it does not miss that. It smells it from far, whether in Jozi or Zululand. He smells it from afar and comes closer and looks. If that seed of sin

sprouts, the smell of sin grows. As the seeds of sin, the smell of sin also grows, and this animal keeps coming closer.

If the smell of deserting grows in a person, it also gets closer. When the time comes for the seeds to flower, it gets excited and comes closer to a person. At this time, God saw this in the boy's heart. Then God called him, and spoke to him, because some person does not know that there is something lurking close to him.

If the fire of Satan grows in the heart of a person, he does not know. You feel like you are covered in a blanket. If someone warns you, saying, "Do you see?" you think he is crazy. Some people do not notice that there is a smell. But he feels that his heart gets cramps when he brings it to God. It feels like he has been hiking a tall mountain. He does not know what happened. He does not know why, but it is because God is light and all the baggage comes to the fore and he feels heavy laden.

There are loads one carries without knowing, whether they are snake's eggs, or the spawns of Satan. As he goes, he does not know that there is an animal sucking at him. There is luggage you carry like that when you go to pray. When someone asks you what this load in your heart is, you deny it. Someone points at his enemies, because sometimes it is easy when someone is shown his sins, to point at his enemies and say, "These are the sins of my enemies." But there is something surrounding his heart, sucking. At the end, he cannot go to God. The thought of things relating to God, they disappear. They have no place. Someone has entered the house, Shembe has no place now.

There are things that are like that, when they have entered a person... they do not speak. They do not tell him, "As you are wearing a white gown, I am also here with you. In your singing and your dancing, I am also there." Someone, when he hears this, because sometimes it speaks, as in the case of this boy of Adam. God spoke to him. He told him, "There is a darkness next to your heart which wants to come in." Some, when they remove this thing, they feel cold and take it back in quickly. Another will feel pain when they move it.

The Satan of the heart is very bad. Because of all the parts of a person, none is as strong as the heart. The heart is the most powerful. The devil of the heart is bad, because Satan stays where there is no strength left in a person. A person has the power to control the foot. The hand, a person can control it. And the ear. But the heart is most powerful. The devil that takes the foot is better, because if the devil can take the heart, it is the end. It gets very difficult, because there is nothing as powerful as the heart.

There are loads like that, that nobody else knows, that even when God has told you that you are carrying a load, you do not want to take it off—even when God keeps asking you how you are going to enter Ekuphakameni with that load. Because the gate is small, it is not entered with loads. When a person tries to leave this thing, it cries, "Who are you leaving me with?" And his stomach complains, and his children cry. Because some person would have settled in that thing. His manhood is there. His children are there. Everything of his is there. He thinks that if he can part with this thing, it will be his end. I am saying another person may not know that he is carrying a load.

As we are talking, you are pointing at your enemies, "This is his load." Where is your load? Another person may likewise not know, only to find that when he tries to move closer to God, his heart gets heavy. It refuses to go to him. Like M—, he did not know that there were loads he was carrying; when he sleeps, when he walks, he was carrying them. He was a leader of a church, this M—, where he was, before he came here

to Ekuphakameni. This load was with him when he was praying for people. It was only when he arrived at the gates of this home that he heard something falling down behind him. He turned to look, but there was nothing.

But he had been relieved of these loads I am talking about. The loads that a person cannot see. He dances, sings, and gives donations, but Satan has planted something inside of him. He is waiting. He is just looking at him. Whatever he does, Satan is watching him. This boy did not know that inside him there was something waiting for him. {sings Hymn 19, verse 2¹⁵⁸ with congregation}

God says to this boy, “What is inside you?” He got angry, this boy. He said, “You are saying that because you hate me. You started by not blessing me. Now you are seeing things inside of me? You want to kill me.” Sometimes when the devil is close to a person, stubbornness also comes. The devil is like a big thorn, but when you try to remove it, where you touch, he wants to kill you, because it is painful.

This boy was like that. God said to him, “My child, be righteous! Be righteous. Cut the plant of sin from your heart. Dig out its roots and remove it; leave nothing. This animal will be disappointed, will get hungry, and leave. But if you do not remove the tree of sin from your heart, this animal will not go away from your heart. It is waiting for the ripening of the fruit and will then move in to eat. Then it becomes the king of your heart. The land of your heart falls under its rule. It invites whatever it likes. It invites the seed of other sins. Be righteous!” But this boy did not do that. He never listened to the word of God. He said God hates him because he loved his brother. He did not hear what the word of God was saying. The seeds of sin became fat inside his heart and this animal moved in and ate. It ate until it was full and then it took his heart and controlled it. It used the earth of his heart.

There are people who are like that, where Satan plants huge fields in their hearts, fields of different seeds. There are plants for winter and some for summer. He eats some while waiting for others. The animal I am talking about is inside of him. Even when he tries to remove it, he cannot. Satan has planted big plants. Even the home of Ekuphakameni, he cannot see. He is unsighted by the ugly one, Satan. Some are like that. They are heavy laden as we speak. There are uncountable fruits of sin.

There is no hope that he will be freed, because no one can take a king away from his land; it causes a fight. This boy did not listen when God spoke to him. After that, he killed his brother. Because a person never listens when you tell him, “No, do not go there!” He never listens.

There is a story that was told by my father one day. He said, “There is a boy here in Ekuphakameni whom I liked very much, with all my heart. Even when he danced, I liked him. This boy had a sister. I also liked her. Even when she worked, I liked her.” He said, “She was like a maiden of heaven. I liked all she did. They always walked together this boy and girl, never separating.” He said, “One day, I saw this boy walking alone.” I asked him, “Why are you alone? Where is your sister?” He said the boy said, “I left her coming along the way.” He said, “I was frightened.” Then, after two days, “I saw her coming. But before she came, I heard the smell of dogs.” He said, “Then I asked her, ‘Why did you not come to the Sabbath?’” She said, “I was held back; my mother was

¹⁵⁸ “Inside me alone/Dwell my enemies/Who fight all/That agrees with you./Oh, Father of the faithful/Set my spirit free” (Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]: 63).

sick.” He said, “I kept quiet and said nothing.” He said, “But whenever I saw her, I was scared.”

He said, “Then one day someone came and told me, but I did not see him.” He said that this person is here, even now. He said that there is a man who tells him things. He said that this man is Shembe. He said, “This man said to me, ‘This girl, you sometimes do not see her, but she goes to the concerts.’”¹⁵⁹ He said, “Then I called this girl and asked her, ‘My child, why do you go to the concerts?’” He said she denied it, even cried, saying she never did that. He said, “I then advised her. I said, ‘My child, a maiden of Ekuphakameni does not attend concerts.’” He said, “She said, ‘Father what happens if I do?’” He said, “I said, ‘Shembe says so, my child.’”

After that, she came and said, “Father, I saw something bad at the concert. I saw people eating feces. They had cooked it and they invited me to come and eat. She said, “I do not eat shit.” *iNkosi* then said, “I asked this girl, ‘My child, what are you going to do?’” She said, “Father, I will never again go to the concerts.”

I am not only talking about that girl with her concerts, but I am talking about you. Because you also have your own concerts that you go to, with your heart, with your walk here in Ekuphakameni... where Shembe said you should not go, should not touch that or say that. To you, also, Shembe is asking, “What you are going to do?”

Someone says, like this girl, “Father, that was my last time. I will never again attend the concerts. I will never again do this... I will never say this.” To you, also, Shembe is asking, “My child, what are you going to do?”

iNkosi said, “After a while, this girl returned to her original beauty. She kept the Sabbath and the U25.”¹⁶⁰ He said, “But then it smelt of dogs again.” But now when she saw her friends [going to] dance, she would say, “It is better if I go with them, but I will stand outside.” Then her friends would see her and say, “Are you no longer talking to us?”

iNkosi said, “When it was to be Easter holidays, one of her friends came to her and said, “I will go with you. You will wear black clothes so that you will not be visible, so that *amaNazaretha* will not see you.” She said, “We will wait until it is dark, as you too say that in that journey of yours, you are not seen.” [...]

What do you say about Shembe? Because he sees you. As we are here, Shembe sees us... even the things that nobody knows. Whether you are a minister and your congregation does not know it, whether you are *umkhokheli*,¹⁶¹ the things your congregation does not know, Shembe knows.

That you are a minister who is like this and like that... you are a minister who does not pray. You are always thinking about an *inyanga*; you are always thinking about a *sangoma*. You are *umkhokheli* who is like that... who does not have the Lord. You are *umkhokheli* who has the luggage of Cain. And a man too, Shembe sees. And the woman, Shembe sees. And a girl, Shembe sees. There is no one, as we are here together in the forest, whom Shembe cannot see.

Even if we do not see you, but the Lord of Ekuphakameni sees you. He sees that you are travelling down that path. You are travelling in the path of apathy. Even though

¹⁵⁹ A “concert,” in this context, implies an event with drinking and “lewd” dancing.

¹⁶⁰ U25 refers to the special monthly meeting for virgin maidens held on the 25th of each month.

¹⁶¹ female leader

you are wearing a white gown, but Shembe sees that inside you are wearing black clothes, like this girl. Her friend said, “You will wear black clothes; no one will see you.”

He said that they then went with this girl. When they arrived where they were going, there were people who asked her, “You girl, where do you come from? Why do you look like the girls of Ekuphakameni?” But she refused. She said, “I am not from Ekuphakameni.” But they saw her. The people see you. Even if you try to hide, they see you. They will ask you, “What brings you here? Are you not from Ekuphakameni?”

This girl denied it. She said, “I am not from Ekuphakameni.” They said, “Speak the truth. What happens if it is like this and like that? Speak. Let us hear you.”

She said that after that, they saw that they were setting the table. She started to feel regret. She remembered the words that her father had said, not to do it again. But the sleep was strong. She wanted to wake up, but she could not. They came and said, “Let us in,” but she said, “I do not eat that,” and they said, “No, we will not do that to you. We know. We are *amaNazaretha*. We will give you [the *muti*] for licking. We will not cut you. It is better to give you that which you will bathe with. Is it not so that *amaNazaretha* do not *gcaba*?”¹⁶²

You say, “Yes, we do not *gcaba* in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.” But you do not know what kind of a person you are talking to. Whether it is a dog, or pig, or what. But, you accept. You give yourself to someone and you do not know if he is a dog or what. Or whether he is a baboon, or Satan.

But you crave; craving is your thing, you *amaNazaretha*. When you try to run away, this thing asks you, “Is it not that you are thirsty?” And you say, “Yes.” Then it says, “So where do you think you will drink if you run away? Here is the water to drink. So and so and so they have drunk here. You too give us your hand, give us your tongue, bring your ear closer. We will open here in your hair.” Then the angel leaves your home. It leaves you. Then you eat and satisfy yourself, because some do that because of hunger. You say, “I want to eat.” Also, here are other men eating. But eating your food will cause you to be unstable, to be jumpy.

They said that to this girl. They said, “We know you are *umNazaretha*. We would not do that to you.” Then she ate. When she ate, it was delicious. She ate quickly. Then she heard them laughing at her. She said, “Why did they ask, do you also eat this?” She said, “No, this is not the *bhoshi*.”¹⁶³ How can you say that?”

While she was still talking, she saw a dog, and then she awoke. She went home, but as she got there she became sick. She was vomiting. Her mother said, “What is it my child? What happened? What did you eat?” She said, “There is nothing mother.” Her mother said, “No, my child. Tell me what happened. Is it not so that you were cleansed by the Lord of Ekuphakameni? What happened, my child?” She continued to vomit until she died. Then, they came to bury her at Ekuphakameni. Blessed is the one who does not travel on the path of the wicked. The book I was reading says so.

iNkosi said that this girl was buried here at Ekuphakameni. He said, “On the day on which she was buried, the dogs were heard barking everywhere—at all four corners of Earth. The dogs barked. Then, they saw one big dog that stood in front of them. It said, “Do whatever you are doing quickly, because we are dying here.” Then they all ran away.

¹⁶² cut the skin with a razor and anoint *muti* in the cut

¹⁶³ toilet

It said, “Work quickly. She will wake up.” He said, “Then I saw that girl surrounded by dogs. Then these dogs changed into people. They became the handsome men and women she used to go to the concerts with.” Then he asked, “Does it mean I have always thought she was going with people, but they were dogs? As for you, the one that gives advice, how sure are you, having eaten what you have eaten, if she changes and becomes a dog? Because you made a promise to Shembe, that you will never do it again.”

iNkosi said, “The dogs took the girl to their king, the big dog. Because there is nothing that does not have its king. Even that path of yours you are travelling, from which Shembe reproaches you... Shembe warns people against certain ways. And Cain too, God warned him that this path he was going on is dangerous.

Because Shembe does not keep quiet; he always talks to a person. Even if you try to close your ear, Shembe speaks. He says, “What are you doing? What do you want there? Who would you blame?”

I am not just talking about the sins of this girl. I am talking about your sins. The sins you commit even in this house of God. Because some people don’t stop doing bad things in His lands. If he is a witch, he comes to do his witchcraft here in Ekuphakameni. Another will even bewitch Shembe, even a trusted woman or a trusted man, to do witchcraft here in Ekuphakameni. There are some who are here for that purpose, who are not here to worship, who are here for their bad deeds. They trust that Shembe does not see them, but he sees them. They are here for their evil intentions.

Then, they took her to their king... this girl. Shembe said that he saw her changing into a bitch, the one I was talking about the other week. The one that Shembe was speaking about. What will you do? How will you escape? In that path of yours? I do not see how you will escape, because I see you are building a house. You are inside. There are no windows. How are you going to get out?

Blessed is the one who does not travel in the path of the wicked, whose heart is in the law of God, who meditates about it day and night. He is like a tree that is planted near a tree when the time comes. It bears many fruits. Let us pray. {hymn singing and donations}¹⁶⁴

In this sermon, Vukile Shembe has drawn on the story of Cain’s insolence to emphasize that there are also people in Ekuphakameni who neither fear nor respect God or God’s law as applicable to *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. In tandem with the Cain and Abel narrative from Genesis, Vukile Shembe also extends the metaphor of the bounteous fruits of the righteous versus the chaff of the wicked (Ps. 1:3-4) to the inclinations of those who do not respect or fear God; such individuals are bearers of rotten fruit.

The idea of rotten fruit also extends to a number of points regarding “unclean” behaviour. In the story of the girl who was attending the “concerts,” events associated with alcohol consumption, “lewd” dancing, and fornication, many themes in the naziritic hermeneutic are also

¹⁶⁴ Participant observation, Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 12, 2011, translated from Zulu by Nkosinathi Sithole.

broached included the taboo on *muti*, *inyanga*, and *sangoma* in terms of not coming into contact with the dead, especially for evil purposes, as well as the interdiction against *gcaba*, a skin cutting practice associated with *muti*. Those who indulge in the pleasures of nightlife, drinking, and fornication are deemed sinful by *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*; they are like Cain, picking rotten fruits off the ground as offerings to God—bringing their “unclean” bodies into the Shembe temples on Sabbath. In the process of sermonizing, Vukile Shembe also draws on the theme of Hymn 114 that alludes to the biblical story of the fall of Eve. The only way one can destroy this “tree of sin” growing inside of them is to lead a righteous life. In this case, Vukile Shembe emphasizes the importance of attending the Sabbath as one of the central rituals of righteousness, but one whose purpose is made rotten by those who disobey God’s laws outside of the context of the church. By setting up his sermon with the biblical passages (Gen 4:1-12; Ps 1) and Hymn 114 from *Izihlabelelo zamaNazaretha*, Vukile Shembe was able to use the various themes in cross-reference as part of one larger dialogue regarding righteous behaviour in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

2.2.2 Founding Day Ceremony at Bhekumesiya

Though I was not able to attend any of the sacred dances or the Nhlankakazi pilgrimage with Ekuphakameni *amaNazaretha*, I was invited to attend the Founding Day ceremony at Bhekumesiya on March 10, 2011. I arrived the night before with four passengers I had offered to pick up and drop off in Ekuphakameni—all young male informants, some of whom had already sat for interviews with me. I spent the travel time bookending the ceremony conducting focus groups with these members. Much interesting information came out these sessions that is worth nothing.

First, with regard to the Ekuphakameni pilgrimage to Mount Nhlankakazi, the informants related how the walking portion has been attenuated due to safety concerns:

KGC: Did you go on the pilgrimage this year?

Speaker 2: Nhlankakazi? Yes, I did.

KGC: Do you start at Ekuphakameni?

Speaker 2: Yes, we start from here.

KGC: And barefoot the whole way?

Speaker 2: Not the whole way. We take buses at [...] near by V—’s house.

KGC: Oh, you don’t walk the whole way.

Speaker 2: We don’t walk the whole way. The problem is that it crosses by Ebuhleni, so we are two factions, so... we cannot have...

KGC: So, you can't walk by there?

Speaker 2: No.

KGC: So, you take the bus near there and then you start walking again?

Speaker 2: And then at [...] we get off and start walking again.

KGC: Where's that?

Speaker 2: It's nearby Nhlankakazi.

KGC: Oh, you go all the way until there? So, you don't walk as much?

Speaker 2: We don't walk much. It takes us one day to get to Nhlankakazi.

KGC: Okay, you don't do it like the other group?

Speaker 2: No.

KGC: The other group, they take three days.

Speaker 2: They take three days, yeah. We should be walking also as them, but the problem is that there would be trouble.¹⁶⁵

KGC: And you can take buses because you are not as many people?

Speaker 2: That's what we do. We take buses.

[...]

KGC: Are there some people who walk the whole way?

Speaker 2: On the Ebuhleni side. Because there is too many of them and their chiefs are the ones who only [...] some of them. They do not allow us to go through their places.¹⁶⁶

In addition to these reflections on their pilgrimage experience regarding the bus ride to get past Ebuhleni and the lands owned by Zulu chiefs in the Ebuhleni faction, the young men also mentioned that there are no vendors at Nhlankakazi during the Ekuphakameni pilgrimage. All members are encouraged to fast and only to eat porridge at times when they simply cannot tolerate the fasting.

Beyond these brief insights into the Ekuphakameni pilgrimage to Mount Nhlankakazi, an interesting series of events occurred that raise questions about the polluting influence of the researcher. Upon arriving at Bhekumesiya, one of the informants scuttled off to his aunt's house somewhere nearby and returned with some maize meal and *amasi* (fermented milk). I was offered some, but at first declined as, even though I was hungry, something about the smell and texture of the *amasi* simply did not appeal to me. Bear in mind that I rarely refuse food in my personal life, and this occasion marked the only time during the field research that I was prepared to politely decline an offer. As one of the informants insisted that I at least try it, I ultimately took but a spoonful and continued to abstain.

¹⁶⁵ With "trouble," the speaker is insinuating the possibility of skirmishes between members of the two factions. See Field Maps, Map 3 for relative locations of Ekuphakameni and Ebuhleni. Note that I was unable to locate Bhekumesiya on the map, but after leaving Ekuphakameni, we travelled for about an hour and fifteen minutes south on National Route N2 and then proceeded for another hour and a half further north into a rural area.

¹⁶⁶ Focus group, Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 9, 2011.

A series of somewhat humorous events unfolded after this interaction over the *amasi*. The first occurred the night before the Founder's Day ceremony, when after refusing the *amasi*, one of the informants proceeded to define it, rather unappealingly, as "rotten milk:"

Speaker 2: It's delicious. Mr. Gandhar can't take this thing, huh?

KGC: I could, but I'm not hungry.

[...]

Speaker 2: This is Nazarite food. Best food.

KGC: Do you eat things like steaks as well?

Speaker 2: Yes.

KGC: You'd eat that too? And beef stews and things?

All: Yes.

[...]

KGC: How do you make the sour milk?

Speaker 2: You milk the cow, and then you take the milk, and you put it in a sort of bottle made of clay. And then you put it inside there.

KGC: Okay, and it just goes sour?

Speaker 2: Yes, we put it for a couple of days.

KGC: That's it?

Speaker 2: It's like a... rotten milk, in fact.

KGC: Ya, that's what it seems to be. Obviously, you eat it. So obviously it doesn't make a problem in your belly, right?

Speaker 2: Ya. This is what I was trying to avoid to say, "It's a rotten milk."

KGC: But fermented?

Speaker 2: Yes, but...

KGC: Do they add an agent to the milk? Some agent they add, so that it doesn't actually go rotten?

Speaker 2: A homemade one is that you just take it, and you put it in that container, put it there for a couple of days, and it's going to go strong. But the factories, I don't know how they make it. They put the cream.

KGC: So they don't add anything? It's just milk?

Speaker 2: It's just milk.

KGC: Fermented?

Speaker 2: Ya. It's just milk. I don't know how they make it anyway.

KGC: But it doesn't create any problem in your belly or anything like that?

Speaker 2: No. {laughs}

KGC: Obviously not. You eat it. No thanks, I'm okay.¹⁶⁷

Though I am clearly perplexed by what is being said about the whole process of making the "rotten milk," note the balance that I must establish between being the "polite researcher" and trying to gain further information on what is happening and being said.

¹⁶⁷ Participant observation, Bhekumesiya, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 9, 2011.

Lo and behold, the next day, the two young men who continued eating the *amasi* and maize meal started to complain about stomach problems before the Founder's Day ceremony began. The complaints continued after the service as well. While I blamed the *amasi*, which I surmised must have spoiled, the informants presented another possible reason in keeping with their theology. As the accusation came quite unexpectedly for me, and so as not to "spoil the punchline," I have included the dialogue leading up to this rather bold deduction below for the reader to discover:

Speaker 2: The whole day, my stomach has been... I've been going to the bathroom from ten o'clock, maybe. It was just, hey!

KGC: Your stomach is still upset?

Speaker 2: Ya, and I was like, "Hey, what am I going to do now?" And I was sitting right in front [during the service]. I couldn't just stand up.

KGC: Are you okay now?

Speaker 2: Ya, okay now.

[...]

Speaker 3: {complains about an upset stomach}

KGC: Oh, that's why you left the service?

Speaker 3: Yes.

KGC: I thought it was because I was taking over the space.

Speaker 2: Mr. Gandhar said he thought it was because maybe you were taking over the space.

KGC: Because he left right after I said, "Hey, can I switch spots with you so I can lean on the tree?" I thought, "Maybe he wants to go lean somewhere else."

[...]

Speaker 2: Aie, my stomach is still screwed up, man. I ate *amasi*. That's why I'm sick, I think. We ate *amasi* yesterday.

[...]

KGC: So, your *amasi*, your sour milk must have gone bad.

Speaker 2: Ya.

KGC: It was no good anymore?

[...]

Speaker 2: That's why we're sick.

Speaker 4: Why?

Speaker 2: Because we shared the *amasi* with Mr. Gandhar last night.

KGC: Because you *shared* with me?

Speaker 2: Yes.

KGC: That's why you're sick?

Speaker 2: Yes.

KGC: Why?

Speaker 2: Because you are not circumcized... sorry about that.

KGC: {laughs} How do you know I am not circumcized?

Speaker 2: I know.

KGC: How do you know?

Speaker 2: I know. Lot of you people from West don't circumcize.

KGC: Don't blame me. I had one spoonful. If I had more, I would probably be sick too.

Speaker 2: We are not supposed to share with someone who is not circumcized.¹⁶⁸

The awkwardness of the moment, when the link between the possibility that I am uncircumcized and the cause of the upset stomachs, was quite humorous for me, in my mind; still, I felt the need to remain ambiguous about my particular status. The exchange marks a great example of the kinds of situations in the field that we simply cannot predict.

I must, however, mention that there was a certain jocularly in the speaker's approach pertaining to my polluting influence as a Western researcher, but I nevertheless believe that, as with many jokes, there remained a gem of truth deftly embedded in the accusation. Note that while I neither deny nor confirm my circumcision status, my response, "How do you know I am not circumcized?" is taken as proof that I am not. Later on during my research, two of these informants revealed that they were in fact part of Vukile Shembe's personal security force—i.e. as I was interviewing and conversing with them, they were also assessing to what degree I could be trusted to get close to their leader. Circumcized or not, I believe that my sincerity ultimately carried me deeper towards the heart of the Ekuphakameni community.

As for the Founding Day service itself, once again, there were no vendors present around the outdoor temple, and fasting was generally observed. After one of the ministers called the service to order, the congregation waited for about thirty minutes for Vukile Shembe to appear and walk into the temple. Loudspeakers had been set up for the Living God at Ekupahameni. Vukile Shembe proceeded to preside over a seven hour service. He spent the first five and a half hours sermonizing, praying, and leading hymns, while the congregation alternately sat and kneeled. The last hour and a half was spent receiving personal prayers and donations, as well as blessing livestock while the congregation sang hymns. The lengthiness of the service can best be explained by the significance of the day. In this capacity, Vukile Shembe was the very image of a God-King blessing his flock.

In my case, I used the opportunity towards the end of the service to make one-on-one requests to actually ask Vukile Shembe for an interview. While I realized that the request was most likely unusual, to say the least, for someone who must be accustomed to receiving personal prayers for healing, success in business, blessings for loved ones, etc., Vukile Shembe

¹⁶⁸ Focus group, Bhekumesiya, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 10, 2011.

nonetheless quietly acknowledged my question and told me this request would be possible to fulfil. I paused, and asked him if there was someone I could talk to so I could book an appointment. He motioned towards a man who acted as his secretary. From here, I was able to obtain contact information to book my first interview. Finally, once all the requests and prayers had been received, Vukile Shembe exited the temple.

2.3 Conclusion to Section: amaNazaretha Living Worship

In the preceding, I have painted contemporary portraits for each of the first two factions of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, Ekuphakameni and Ebuhleni, based on the observations I made during my field research: the Sabbath services of each, the sacred dances and pilgrimage to Mount Nhlagakazi of Ebuhleni, and the Founding Day Ceremony in Bhekumesiya with Ekuphakameni. While these representations are far from complete regarding the complex cultus of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*,¹⁶⁹ I believe that what I have included comprises the most pertinent segments from the field research data collected in relation to worship. A comparative analysis of the information, however, points to a number of general conclusions.

First, the original faction, Ekuphakameni, continues to subsist as an austere group that spends more time fasting and kneeling in prayer. While commerce could not be seen at any of the worship services associated with Ekuphakameni that I observed during the course of my field research, vendors were always present at the major events associated with the Ebuhleni faction. In fact, I argue that the exponentially larger membership base of Ebuhleni can be credited to the commercialization of an enculturated form of indigenous persistence so scorned by Ekuphakameni *amaNazaretha*. Finally, while bare feet remain the great equalizer among members—from the uneducated to the professionals, note that in both Ebuhleni and Ekuphakameni, the leader, or Living God, has been distinguished, not only via their elegant robes, but through this Western marker of modernity, namely, footwear.

3. Rastafari: Camps, Binghamis, Sabbaths

As mentioned, since Rastafari represent a much more polycephalous group than *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, in the interest of obtaining broader findings, I had to scatter my time across various houses in tandem with their own calendar of events. In this section, I will present some

¹⁶⁹ Indeed, there are many additional aspects that I have not been able to include in these sections such as baptism, marriage, and the ritual slaughtering of animals.

of the findings from my participant observations relating to worship with School of Vision at Mount Zion Hill Temple, the Howellites at the Pinnacle, the Bobo Shanti in Bull Bay, and the Nyabinghi in Scotts Pass.¹⁷⁰ All but the Howellites represent members of an operational camp. The Binghi I attended with the Howellites was held at the ruins of Pinnacle, the first Rastafari community that was founded by Leonard Howell.

Among all of these mansions with which I spent any significant amount of time, Nyabinghi drumming and chanting, often for hours on end, is key to the congregation's worship. Even within Rastafari mansions that celebrate the Sabbath on Saturday in accordance with Judaic tradition, Nyabinghi worship endures as a central element. Beyond any daily and weekly forms of worship, Rastafari celebration is also punctuated by a number of events referred to as a Binghi. A Binghi typically runs for several days and includes Nyabinghi worship, in addition to "reasoning," intellectual exchanges between adherents, among praises to JAH Rastafari.

The material included in the section on the School of Vision details aspects of camp life at Mount Zion Hill Temple in the Blue Mountains, the regular Sabbath services held in Papine Square, and the Sunday Nyabinghi drumming and chanting during dinner services at Mount Edge Guest House. Unfortunately, the section on the Binghi at the Pinnacle is quite short as a rather unendearing companion made observation quite difficult. As short as the section is, it also demonstrates the relative saturation of the Rastafari field as compared with *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. The next section provides details on camp life and the worship services of the Bobo Shanti at Bobo Hill. It cites, at length, from an interview with one of the priests who describes various aspects of Bobo theology. Finally, I conclude with a presentation of my participation in and observations of the "Earthstrong" celebration held in honour of Haile Selassie's birth at the Nyabinghi centre in Scotts Pass.

3.1 School of Vision: Mount Zion Hill Temple, Sabbath Services, Binghi at Mount Edge

As mentioned, School of Vision has been recognized as the leading mansion that has combined UFO theory and Rastology. At the head of this camp, Dermott Fagan, about a decade and a half ago, occupied some land and started to build a community deep into the Blue Mountains, across the valley from Newcastle Military Base where he once served as a Sergeant in the Jamaican Defence Forces (JDF). Today, the camp can accommodate upwards of 100 people at a time.

¹⁷⁰ See Field Maps, Map 6 for relative locations.

Figure 45 depicts the main house (centre) that includes Fagan's quarters, and some of the smaller units up the hill; the school is to the right.

After driving deep into the mountains along the one winding, broken up road (B1) that accesses this area of Saint Andrew Parish, and after going down a dirt road for a time (about 15 minutes by foot), one can finally see an inconspicuous natural staircase made of logs dug into the side of the hill (Figure 46). This point marks the start of a 45-minute hike to reach "Mount Zion Hill Temple. The mere naming of the site points to the theology at play between the Old Testament and the present circumstances of the School of Vision congregation in Jamaica. A few metres before the main gate, an ominous mural of Haile Selassie gazes back at the traveller (Figure 47). The main gates in Figure 48 announce that here we stand at the entrance to a new Zion, a Rastafari Zion.

At the top, the camp members are generally friendly to curious visitors and seem happy to sit down and share their ideas. In Figure 49, a number of residents can be seen lounging in the school. Moreover, Fagan and priest Fire Marshall can often be seen conversing and reasoning with visitors who represent a broad international audience that have typically chosen Mount Zion Hill Temple as the destination for their hiking excursion. In fact, guest home owners in that area of the Blue Mountains often recommend this mix of exercise and cultural experience as a great option for an active afternoon excursion.

With regard to their theology, the School of Vision Rastas are convinced that at the time of Rapture, Haile Selassie I and his celestial army will descend in flying saucers painted the Rasta red, yellow, and green to pick up the faithful followers at Mount Zion Hill Temple. Figure 50 shows a detail of the School of Vision banner that is evidence of this millenarian theology. As Fagan explained to me, in his hermeneutic, "the children of the heaven" who impregnated the "daughters of men" in 1 Enoch 6-7 are aliens.¹⁷¹ Note also the I.N.R.I. painted in Rastafari colours in the trail of the flying saucer's flight depicted in the bottom left of Figure 50 that emphasizes the Davidic line from which both Selassie and Jesus Christ hail according to Rastology and the traditions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

At the camp, an ideal of self-reliance is constantly at odds with a lack of produce and the great distance of the site from both the nearest town and closest source of clean water. Beyond the few food-bearing trees that grow there, such as bananas and plantains, it is common

¹⁷¹ See Appendix 2, Section 2 for details.

knowledge that ganja is also raised at Mount Zion Hill Temple. Needless to say, selling this crop has also become a source of income. To the best of my observational capacity, ganja selling, consumption, and possession seem largely tolerated in Jamaican society today; indeed the smell of burning marijuana was as ubiquitous in settings populated by Rastafari as elsewhere across the island.¹⁷²

Financially, the community is also partially reliant on monetary donations, and sometimes a visitor might rent one of the rooms, but, ultimately, according to my observations, the School of Vision community generally subsists in relative austerity in an area with no running water. The members collect rain water to address their needs, but the glass of drinking water I was handed seemed to have some mosquito larvae swimming in it. On one occasion, as I was descending from Mount Zion Hill Temple, I witnessed a couple of male adherents lugging cases of locally manufactured soft drinks up to the top. Though Fagan champions the call for an *Ital* diet, clearly some rule-bending occurs. I assumed that the soda represented a treat for the children who also live at Mount Zion Hill Temple.

Outside life in the camp, the community organizes itself around its weekly Sabbath service held every Saturday down the mountain road and in the central square of the Papine area of Kingston, near the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus. After a fire has been lit (Figure 51) and the banner raised, the flag bearers (Figure 52) take their positions and the first service commences with praises to Haile Selassie I, JAH Rastafari. The Sabbath is divided into two services, with a break between; each segment runs about three hours in total and follows the same general sequence of events. First, various congregants take turns reciting biblical passages and praising JAH Rastafari (Figure 53), while Fagan adds hermeneutical comments in between presentations. Fagan often employs a didactic, Socratic methodology for this manner of commentary. After the readers have spoken, Fagan proceeds to deliver a longer sermon. Much of the thematic content from Fagan's sermons is paralleled in the segments from an interview and a focus group that I present in Appendix 2, Section 2. The sermon is followed by group Nyabinghi drumming and chanting (Figure 54). And each service peters on this note.

Beyond their camp and Sabbath services, I was also able to observe members of the School of Vision a number of times on Sundays when they would perform Nyabinghi drumming

¹⁷² At the reggae concerts I attended in Jamaica, for example, it was common to see ganja vendors selling their wares as openly as those merchants selling peanuts.

and chanting for dinner patrons at Mount Edge Guest House (Figure 55). The diners were invited to provide donations in exchange for the live music. Here, we see a clear case where a sacred form of worship can also be performed in a secular context, without there being any real crisis for the adherents. Though at a much less lucrative level, like popular reggae artists preaching Rastafari, so too are the School of Vision adherents earning money while spreading their messages. Still, there are many Rastafari adherents outside these contexts who would scorn the act of performing the Nyabinghi in exchange for money.

By consciously bringing their theology into the secular sphere, however, the adherents also expose themselves to the criticisms of non-believers. Though the incident I am about to present represented a sole occasion of indignation against the School of Vision adherents that I happened to witness, I have included it because it represents much of the tension that exists between Rastafari and the Jamaican bourgeoisie today, a sentiment echoed at several of the conferences I attended at UWI. The confrontation was instigated after one of the Rastafari brethren killed a lizard.

As the consequential interactions unfold between the Rastafari congregants and one of the female dinner guests, Fagan eventually explains how the community he represents are peaceful and vegetarian, but that they advocate the killing of lizards for two reasons: a) because they carry disease; b) because they are symbolically representative of the crocodile on the Jamaican coat of arms, and thus the Queen of England:

Female Guest: {referring to the dead lizard} It's so beautiful. Why on Earth would you want to do that? That's disgraceful. That makes you less than human.

Dermott Fagan: What?

[...]

Female Guest: How ignorant can you get? This thing is so much smaller than you. And you killed it? Don't you know the environment needs lizards?

[...]

Female Guest: [...] because you have killed something unnecessarily.

Dermott Fagan: No, you don't know.

[...]

Female Guest: You have killed something so small and so harmless and so necessary for the environment. That makes you lesser than this. Because you have done something so philosophically unnecessary. I'm sorry. I'm a philosopher. I have a degree in philosophy, so...

[...]

Male Rasta: You don't mind if the lizard bite you and give you malaria, fever? We're different. Everyone is not the same.

[...]

Female Guest: Yes, because it makes you so much lesser because you have killed something which is so necessary to the environment, but so unnecessary to you. Because it is smaller than you and harmless. It's like *this* and you stand and walk and talk.

Male Rasta: A mosquito is small, but it can kill you. You do what you want. So, you don't want to kill it?

Female Guest: But you could also do enough to protect yourself from that.

Male Rasta: What we should do? Rub up with some oil that Babylon give you, some chemicals?¹⁷³ Well, we don't use that.

Female Guest: But you can use, there are natural oils and things that you can use as well.

Male Rasta: We don't want those oils to use. So, therefore, if a mosquito bite you, you use the oil. If it bite me, I'm going to kill it. We are two different people.

Female Guest: Oh fine... I don't even feel proper...

Male Rasta: Oh yeah? You allow a cockroach to eat with you?

Female Guest: [...] because there are lizards to eat and the lizards eat flies as well. And the lizards also eat the mosquito larva as well.

Male Rasta: So, when the cockroach approach your food... what do you do when the cockroach approach your food?

Female Guest: Do you realize that human beings are the most destructive animals on the planet. There are too many of us. We are essentially very destructive. So what happens—

Dermott Fagan: Madam.

Female Guest: Excuse me just a moment. What happened is you are just epitomizing the destruction that human beings carry out. We destroy the planet. We kill off species of animals. We kill off species of plants. And we destroy the environment with what we do. Even little things like this. And it's all a part of something called chaos theory that... you've never heard of chaos theory? It's a matter of physics whereby things build up and multiply. So, what happens is that you create destructiveness. {Rastas laughing} And somebody else does it. And somebody else does it. And somebody else does it. It all adds up.

Dermott Fagan: That's what you think?

Female Guest: Yes, it is.

Dermott Fagan: Well, first of all, I am responsible for the group here.

Female Guest: Mm, but you weren't responsible for the lizard though?

Dermott Fagan: Nah.

Male Rasta: Aye, don't be sarcastic. We are reasoning. Just have a reasoning, man.

[...]

Dermott Fagan: It is my opinion, ma'am, that you are not even exercising minimum tolerance to realize that—

Female Guest: But who's going to speak for the lizard? {Rastas laughing}

Male Rasta: Six hundred million black people died in the Middle Passage. Who will speak for them?

Female Guest: I hate to say this about the Middle Passage bit, but can we get over it, really?

¹⁷³ Note here the stance against the chemical products of "Babylon," or the West and modernity, that are understood as poisons that directly conflict with notions of indigeneity.

Male Rasta: Who speak for it? You speak for the lizard? Who speak for those six hundred million black people who died?

Female Guest: It wasn't six hundred million. In actual fact...

Male Rasta: You are speaking for one lizard. I am asking, who speak for those?

Female Guest: Yes, but you haven't spoken for the Jews who died in the Holocaust.

Dermott Fagan: That's six million.

[...]

Female Guest: I don't think you recognize your own history. Slavery ended in Sudan in 1907. It ended in Mauritius.

[...]

Female Guest: I think that, you know, you weren't there at the time.

Male Rasta: My parents were there. How many years did it take for you to wipe history from your mind?

Female Guest: Are you living that history?

Male Rasta: I'm not reliving it. I just put a question to you.

Female Guest: [...] wrote, "History teaches us that man learns nothing from history." [...] reliving that history and going on about it.

Male Rasta: We don't relive history. If you don't know where you are coming from, you are not going to know who you are, you are not going to know where you're going.

Female Guest: I don't embrace that. In actual fact, anthropologically, we all come from Africa. We all come from a certain area of Africa called [...], all of us. So, there is no point in saying that you are African or whatever else. You got to sort of get over it, because, in Africa, there has always been misery.

[...]

Male Rasta: I'll never forget what happened. I'll forgive, but if I said I forget, I'd be lying.

Dermott Fagan: [...]

Male Rasta: Take her fully then, because I am finished with her.

[...]

Dermott Fagan: One of the things, if you are going to have a thorough reasoning [...] If it is reciprocated [...] It's not because I am academical in your league. It's not about academical achievement. That is why I'm speaking to you. And I am speaking to you through the power of intelligence and experience [...] It's not true that we don't respect others' rights. Number one, I am a vegetarian. Most of us are vegetarian. We also believe in peace. And it's not because we sought to abuse *crocodilo espagnole*.

Female Guest: It's not the Spanish crocodile. It's actually [...]

Dermott Fagan: When we say that, it is [...] from the crocodile family.

Female Guest: Um, you made a mistake there, but we won't go into that.

Dermott Fagan: If you look at it from a spiritual point of view, my action there was to dramatize how we regard that lizard. {Fagan gives a lesson on the symbolism of the heraldry on Jamaican currency with the crocodile on top of the coat of arms}

Female Guest: My husband is a leading [...]. And he can explain everything on a bank note. [...] I think he would be able to explain that heraldry to you.

[...]

Dermott Fagan: So, we know that this is a British logo, this lizard. Because it is a British coat of arms that was given to this nation, because of their conquest over this nation until

independence [...] government is epitomized by this lizard. We know, that by the reflection of this lizard coming from England, it is what they use to invade Africa, first to West Africa, and stole some people for four hundred years [...] so when we disrespect the lizard, it is not because we are cruel. It is because we want to show our disdain for England and slavery.¹⁷⁴

If the connection between the lizard, the crocodile on the Jamaican coat of arms, and England are somewhat difficult for the outsider to see, it necessary to mention that, for Fagan, the members of the global elite are in fact members of an alien reptilian race (cf. Appendix 2, Section 2). In this case, Fagan's intention of using the killing of a lizard as symbolic of his desire to destroy a neocolonial global infrastructure ruled by this race while drawing attention to the horrors of the Middle Passage and colonialism certainly worked. On the part of the dinner guest who has now unwittingly become part of this dissertation by mere virtue of being in a public space and performance, the sentiment she expresses about the Middle Passage ("but can we get over it, really?"), though she has cast it in a scholarly light, sheds insight into the global unwillingness of Western countries to account for the era of slavery by ignoring the cries of displaced Africans for repatriation. It is somewhat ironic that the lady mentions the Jewish people, since Israel was finally designated a site for repatriation as a global gesture to provide reparations for the abuses against Jews throughout history.

3.2 Binghi at Pinnacle: Remembrance of Leonard Howell

On June 17-18, 2011, the "Leonard Howell Symposium" took place at the University of the West Indies in Mona, Kingston while the Howellites were simultaneously conducting a Binghi at the ruins (Figure 56) and modern-day tabernacle (Figure 57) at Pinnacle (in Sligoville) in honour of its now deceased founder. The symposium featured key figures and scholars of Rastafari today including Clinton Hutton, Michael Barnett, Miguel Lorne, Jahlani Niaah, Junior Negusa, K'adamawe Knife, Robin "Bongo Jerry" Small, and Carolyn Cooper. Though still scorned by much of the Jamaican bourgeoisie, many thinkers and business people over the decades have acknowledged the value of Rastafari as a cultural export and draw for tourism dollars. Still, as open to be "on display" as the Howellites were during the symposium (Figure 58), the mood was completely different on the sacred grounds of the tabernacle.

¹⁷⁴ Participant observation, Mount Edge Guest House (School of Vision Nyabinghi Drumming), Blue Mountains, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, May 8, 2011.

First, as with the oldest of Rastafari traditions, filming was not allowed during the Binghi at Pinnacle. The solemnity of the adherents and their devotion to the Nyabinghi drumming and chanting, and my own observations, also left me with the impression that talking would also not be appreciated. Moreover, some of the Howellites repeatedly encouraged “participation,” a comment indirectly pointed to the foreigners present. Unfortunately, an American graduate student “studying” Rastafari had tagged along with me from the symposium. Although I tried to drop hints to the student to stop speaking so much and just “observe,” unfortunately the burdensome companion did not seem to pick up on these. In my effort to remain polite to the fellow student, I tried my best to answer the rather basic questions about Rastafari without getting too loud. Inside, however, I was becoming irritated, because I really just wanted the student to stop talking so I could engage in proper participant observation according to the field research methodologies I had developed.¹⁷⁵

Eventually, a member of the congregation came over and scolded us for brazenly talking in the tabernacle, but I learned two valuable lessons at that moment: a) academically speaking, the Rastafari field is more saturated than *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*; b) as a scholar, always go into the field alone. Otherwise, the Binghi bore no real surprises—reasoning sessions during the day and Nyabinghi drumming and chanting at night, while burning incense and, for the most part, smoking ganja throughout the ceremonies. Still, I may have gained more insight into this experience had I been left unfettered. In retrospect, I should have been more direct with this fellow student.

3.3 Bobo Shanti: Bobo Hill, Sabbath Services, Binghi

Although Leonard Howell’s camp Pinnacle marked the first of a series to come, of the Rastafari camps operating today, founded in 1958 by Prince Emmanuel Charles Edwards, the Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress (EABIC)—aka the Bobo Shanti—endures as the oldest. While the original settlement was on Spanish Town Road, since 1972, the Bobo Shanti have occupied a piece of land up the hill from the beach in Bull Bay, where they have remained unmolested by the Jamaican government for over three decades. The Bobo Shanti are easily identified by their African-inspired turbans and ceremonial robes.

¹⁷⁵ cf. Chapter 1, Section 4.

A theme of self-reliance permeates the activities of the camp members. The ceremonial robes are handmade (Figure 59) and clothes are handwashed in a nearby stream (Figure 60). The architecture of the houses reflect the sentiment of the adherents that all buildings and structures about the camp should be made by the labour of one's own hands, as opposed to industrially (Figure 61). Take the flag poles, for example; they are simply large branches that have been trimmed, painted in the Rastafari colour triad, and planted into the ground (Figure 62). Yet, a notable allowance for modern technology exists. While the camp members light solely by kerosene lanterns at night, one solitary source of electricity, a spliced electric wire, runs into the main office at Bobo Hill so that a computer equipped with the Internet can be used for correspondence with a now international community of adherents and sympathizers.

A tone of austerity and solemnity also dominates at Bobo Hill. Before entering the camp, all persons must empty any objects they have in their pockets. After being signed into the registry and reciting a prayer of admission, my objects were returned and I was escorted into a room where I could sleep on the floor in a sleeping bag. Cell phones are to be turned off for the duration of the visit. Shoes are not to be worn indoors or within holy spaces. One worship area, for example, is outdoors (cf. Figure 59). Fasting is observed as much as possible, and strictly on the Sabbath, while food seems generally scarce, though just abundant enough to feed all the congregants. The camp subsists on donations and the sale of natural, handmade brooms. Like at School of Vision, though some food-bearing plants are scattered about the grounds, admittedly more produce could be grown on-site to accommodate the grander vision of self-reliance.

Like with the other African Nazarites who maintain the practice, Sabbath is observed on Saturdays. On Sabbath, the congregation dresses in white, while the colourful robes are worn on the other days of the week for daily ceremonies to praise JAH Rastafari. While shorter daily prayers are timed at various moments throughout the day, the Sabbath marks a much lengthier allocation for worship. On Sabbaths, the congregants dress exclusively in white. No filming or recording is allowed. As each new person enters, they are expected to collectively greet the room and acknowledge everyone present. In the front of the room are the head priests. They read from the Bible and preach about Selassie's divinity and the repatriation of the African Diaspora. Theological points are emphasized with drum beats and rattle shakes by various members present. The main concerns of EABIC endure on a placard placed on the outside face of a building (Figure 63). On the wooden benches in the tabernacle, the men sit on one side of the

room and women on the other. The service, led by the priests, and which can proceed for several hours, is interspersed with recitations of biblical passages, sermons, and Nyabinghi drumming and chanting.

I also had an opportunity to speak with one of the Bobo Shanti priests at length. Here, I have included the segments of the interview that are most pertinent to naziritism, resistance, and persistence in the context of living worship. In the first excerpt, the priest and I discuss the use of electricity as a marker of modernity, as well as some of the steps towards the establishment of the camp.

KGC: So, there's no electricity?

M/Kingston/40: Well, we have a generator, but it needs repairs.

KGC: But, are you on the power grid?

M/Kingston/40: Ah yes, we have electricity running the computer, but it is from outside JPS [Jamaica Public Service].

KGC: Is that new in the history of EABIC? Is the computer new?

M/Kingston/40: Oh, it's borrowed light. People assist us, because usually we don't work with outside. Everything is self-government [...] Usually we keep a generator, because we are a self-government and we have to produce everything for ourselves.

Because when you involve yourself with the outside world, they tend to dictate your actions. We can't afford that. We can't afford to align ourselves with the government of Jamaica, or whichever government, because we are a government unto ourselves. Bobo Hill is a government within the Jamaican government.

Because, if you notice, we fly seven banners, and none of them is a Jamaican banner. In certain countries, that would be treason. But because they recognize the authority of Prince Emmanuel, they can't really come and bulldoze the place or tear it down or lock us up for treason or anything like that. So, we are a government unto ourselves, within the Jamaican government.

KGC: I'm also curious about the relationship to Babylon System and the whole idea of self-governance. The land itself, is there a deal according to Jamaican real estate law?

M/Kingston/40: What happened is that the Jamaican government allow us to occupy this land, because we used to be at 54B Spanish Town Road and eventually through persecution, they bulldoze it down and tear it down and all of that. What happened was that when we came all the way over here, they leave us up until now. From 1972, we have been here.

KGC: So, the ones from Spanish Town moved here and just started to live?

M/Kingston/40: Yes.

KGC: So, no one really owned the land?

M/Kingston/40: No, we just occupied. They call us "squatters." But because of Prince Emmanuel's authority and power and his very spiritual significance [...] from a spiritual perspective, it's hard for the world to accept that he is God in flesh. But, what happened, when His Majesty [Haile Selassie I] came here in 1966 from Ethiopia, he wrote a constitution where he made our church the head of the gathering of the people in the

Western diaspora. But the Jamaican government do not reveal this to the Jamaican public. They have this paperwork, this constitution locked away.

KGC: No one has access?

M/Kingston/40: No, not the Jamaican people. But we know. We here know, because we [...] these things and teach the congregation. But, like I told you, his work is to come and save the people, which is of our true nature and that is the teaching of God being in the flesh. So, the world is not of such a culture. So, definitely, they would be against us.

But, because, like I told you, His Majesty wrote a constitution making us the head of the people, not the Jamaican people. But true we have to go through protocol, because everything has to go through the Jamaican government. He wrote the constitution, handed it over to them, and let us be the head of the people. When he wrote such a constitution, it makes Prince Emmanuel His personal ambassador to Ethiopia. So, here is really the Ethiopian Embassy in Jamaica, but it is not officially recognized by the Jamaican government.

So, we constantly fight this battle on a daily basis. We constantly fight until they actually recognize us officially. The United Nations has us registered in there as a government from the 1960s and 70s. So, it's not like we're just "squatters" here. We actually have aim and objectives. We actually [...] a government for the people here. But, through colonialism and imperialism, one continent behave like they don't want to respect authority of the Ethiopian sons and daughters. So, you constantly amplify these battles on a daily basis, until we get the recognition.

And how are we going to get the recognition? [...] When people from outside take the knowledge back to the world now and spread it. Over time, eventually, the people become conscious and aware that they have no choice but to give us authority. So, that's why we live by prophecy and history, because we are waiting for the prophecy to be fulfilled. So, that's the constant battle we fight on a daily basis.¹⁷⁶

In the above passage, the priest clearly expresses his perception of the word "squatter" as a derogatory term against people who wish to live in accordance with principles grounded in ideas regarding indigeneity that embody an ideal of inhabitation outside the norms of the capitalistic legal framework. Yet, the priest also makes a number of claims that would be very difficult to substantiate, such as the constitution written by Selassie in their favour and their registration as a government by the UN. Still, the fact remains that Bobo Hill remains undisturbed by the Jamaican government for over four decades now.

In the next excerpt from our interview, the priest describes how a Rasta can be both "at war" and nonviolent in acts of devotion:

KGC: Part of the battle, it's a spiritual battle?

M/Kingston/40: Yes.

KGC: And this, the Nyabinghi worship, that itself is the weapon if I understand. It's a sort of "peaceful weapon?"

¹⁷⁶ Interview with researcher, Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress, Bull Bay, Jamaica, July 16, 2011.

M/Kingston/40: Right.

KGC: It's a reverberation?

M/Kingston/40: Right.

KGC: It's a vibration. You are sending it out?

M/Kingston/40: Right.

KGC: Not only in the sound, but also with [...]

M/Kingston/40: Exactly, my lord. Exactly, my king. It's a constant livity that keeps going on and on until it builds a crescendo where they have no choice now but to put us up as the people who are supposed to govern people. So, that's the war. The war is a spiritual battlefield. If you notice, when you listen to the priests, them culture [...] and everything, they give you a history. What you don't hear from me, you hear from someone else. And by the end of the service, you get an understanding of what the whole aim and objectives of what our government is. But because mainly it's spiritual, that's why it's difficult to prove it to the people.¹⁷⁷

From here, I redirected the interview back to the subject of the integration of aspects of modernity in tandem with indiginity. In this case, I used the King James Bible as the point of reference:

KGC: I don't mean this to sound weird, but it's always been something I've been very curious about, with the EABIC, there's this kind of reverence of Africa if I understand.

M/Kingston/40: Right.

KGC: At the same time, you use the King James Bible, which is a product of, as you well know...

M/Kingston/40: Right, the white world.

KGC: So, what is the balance there?

M/Kingston/40: Okay, the King James Version is not the original Bible. However, the word remain one and the same, meaning that wherever King James get these words from or these books from, it came from us also, our foreparents from in Africa, because we are the first ones that wrote the Bible.¹⁷⁸ Even it is a thousand years or a million years back, the word still transcended through time and dispensation. Now, King James only authorized it. He didn't really wrote it. See, the words have to be coming from somewhere else.

Now, his majesty said that he glorified in the Bible. He is the one who told us that the words remain one and the same. So, despite the confusion that may occur in it, [...] are how they actually teach certain things within the Bible. Like, they tell them it's a shame for a man to have long hair, and they say a lot of things, contradict a lot of things that's natural and in the Bible.¹⁷⁹ But through Prince Emmanuel come now as the annointed teacher. He teaches us how to interpret it. So, we still use it because it is originally written by us. They may corrupt it to a point, but they cannot totally corrupt all of it.

[...]

¹⁷⁷ Interview with researcher, Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress, Bull Bay, Jamaica, July 16, 2011.

¹⁷⁸ Pointing to the stance that *The Kebra Nagast* and the various additional books recognized by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, such as the Book of Enoch, have greater authority and historical accuracy than the KJV.

¹⁷⁹ Note the reference to naziritic hair consecration.

M/Kingston/40: For me now, I have to be practicing my language which is Amharic, the Ethiopian language. So, I study just how you would study the English language. But these things, it takes time to learn it. So, you take your time, and one-two, one-two... but what we do is keep using the slave master language. Because even the slave master language came out of Latin, and Latin came out of Africa. Because everything have to come from one source. Everything came from Ethiopia. They may mix it up and add their paganism to it or heathenism or whatever, but if you who have the spiritual truth in you, the perfect teacher to guide you, you can't go wrong.

Even if you have to use their Bible, even if you have to use their language, even if you have to wear their clothes, even if you have to eat their food, but we all *aim* now to have our total everything that is indigenous to us. That's the aim and objective. It's really to leave not only of the West, but to abandon the way they dress, abandon the way they eat, totally everything, completely.

But it takes time because we're living by history and prophecy. Man wasn't originally made to die. Man is a living being, an eternal being. But because slavery and the colonialism from the white world teach us so many [...], we lose that gift. We still have it, it just lay dormant in us. All it needs is this, the salvation to resurrect it.¹⁸⁰

Despite the Ethiopia-centrism that credits the Latin language to African roots, the passage points to a number of key issues at the intersection of naziritism as well as resistance and persistence. First, despite expressing the position that the African version of the Bible, in this case a likely reference to the scriptures of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, maintains greater authority than the KJV, for the Bobo Priest, the theme of biblical inerrancy maintains a shadow in the KJV. That is, despite its inaccuracies, the KJV can still act as one of the implements in Keeffe's notion of "Aboriginality-as-resistance." But, like the other accommodations for modernity mentioned in the interview, such as food and clothing, they should only be regarded as a means to an end in the struggle for the persistence of indigeneity.

After this exchange, the dialogue naturally progressed into a discussion of the regimented and austere Bobo Shanti religious practices aimed towards a spiritual life:

M/Kingston/40: Man's higher nature, which is his spiritual side. If him learn how him can access it and tap into it, him can live above certain levels within himself. So, even though we are breathing bad air and we are eating the foods that a lab created, there is a side to man that if he knows how to resurrect it, him can very rarely eat food and still live and live forever. So, man don't really need plenty food to live. All him need is just a little amount to survive.

Let me tell you something. Every Monday is fasting. Every Wednesday is fasting from six to twelve midday. Every Friday is fasting from six to twelve midday. Every Sabbath is fasting from six to twelve midday. Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, from the moment you go to you bed, you don't eat again until midday.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with researcher, Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress, Bull Bay, Jamaica, July 16, 2011.

[...]

M/Kingston/40: If it's a ritual, if you take it as a ritual, because each time when you're going to eat, you have to break your fast. And you have to break your fast with a special cup of water. And you have to turn to the east. And you have to pray. And you have to wash out your mouth. And then you wash your face. And then you pray. That's a ritual. When you do it like that then, the power comes onto you [...]

During Lent, 40 days of fasting. We only eat one time per day. For instance, when I get up tomorrow, say Lent start tomorrow... when I get up tomorrow morning, I don't eat until twelve o'clock midday. And then I don't eat again until the next day, twelve o'clock midday. 40 days you do that.

KGC: What's the meal?

M/Kingston/40: It can be a variety, but it starts with fruits, soup, porridge. You don't really need plenty food.

KGC: And when you're fasting you need less food.

M/Kingston/40: Yes. So, that spiritual side within man rise when you do that. When that side of you rise within yourself, it becomes like it takes over the carnal side of yourself as opposed to when you wasn't doing it. Like, your carnal side, every minute you feel like you need something to eat. When you are not living spiritually, your flesh takes over.

But when you are living the order, when your spirit takes over... and when your spirit takes over, all it really needs is prayer, fasting, singing, and chanting. That's how powerful it is. It may sound... but if you try it, let me tell you... very, very powerful. And if you do that as a continuous thing and regular and live that way, by the time, if you practice it seriously and you worship the God in flesh seriously, I am telling you, there is no limitation to what you can become and what you can do. Because, what happened, that same spirit that lives within man, lives within all things. That is the God. It lives within the trees. It lives within the air that you breath. It lives within the dog, the cat. Nothing can exist without it. It lives within even the wood as electromagnetic force. In man, it is referred to as the birth of life. In lizard, the birth of life. But in dead things like these, electromagnetic force.

So, nothing on Earth can exist without that spirit that connect all things within the universe. Now, when you do the things that I mentioned to you earlier—the fasting, and the praying, and the chanting—you become *one* with that fire, with that power. And when you become one with that eternal and omnipotent power, it's easier for you now to become anything. Because what happened now is God Himself now hauls you up and bring you to His powers, because you are doing the things that appeal to the spirit. That's the way it works and that's how man was created to be.

But just because the world commit flesh-eating, the world come and change the Sabbath, the world just come and change the whole order of the universe just to suit their purpose, which is quite against the God that you and I are talking about. That's how deep it is. So, it's a power. It's a *livity* that's incorporated in our lifestyle. Prince Emmanuel come and incorporate it forward in our lives. Slavery beat it out of us and teach of their ways. Now, Prince Emmanuel forward who come and teach us how we're supposed to live like gods and goddesses. And these are the things that you have to do to get the power.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ Interview with researcher, Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress, Bull Bay, Jamaica, July 16, 2011.

For the Bobo Priest, flesh-eating and the Sunday Mass are corruptions of the laws of “JAH” laid out in the Old Testament. We have already looked at the major significance of vegetarianism and the Saturday Sabbath for Rastafari living exegesis in Chapter 2, Section 2. For the Bobo Shanti, their founder, Prince Emmanuel, was the messiah who was able to reproduce this “lost” knowledge through the Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress and the camp at Bull Bay.

In this final excerpt, in tandem with notion of Prince Emmanuel as the bringer of knowledge, I find it fascinating how the Bobo Shanti priest argues against a central aspect of Christian theology—Heaven, Hell, and the afterlife—by borrowing from the Hindu notion of chakras to ultimately make a point about an indigenous notion of living divinity:

M/Kingston/40: When they say, “Heaven,” Christianity teaches you that God is up in the sky. They say you have to die to go to heaven in Christianity. Now, that is Balam culture. That is *evileous* and very diabolical. It’s not true.

Okay, what happened now is this. What we come and learn now from Prince Emmanuel. We learn that man is God. We also learn that man is the first everything, meaning man is the first heaven. Now, when the Scripture read, or when you read the Psalms or the hymns and they talk about heaven above, it actually mean the heaven up here {points to space above his head}, above your shoulder. It doesn’t mean what’s up in the sky.

Christianity teaches it like it is up in the sky, when it is really up here, because, if you notice, God put your brain and your shoulder here. He never put it on the side or at an angle. Him put it above. So, everything is governed from up here. If here is not correct, your whole constitution can’t be correct. So, here {pointing to the space above his head}.

In India—I don’t know how much you know about this, but—in India, you have what is known as Hinduism. You ever heard of chakras, the seven major centres within the body?

KGC: {nods}

M/Kingston/40: Now, the seventh one is the crown chakra that’s above the third eye. The third eye is right here, which is the sixth chakra. The seventh one is above it. Now, the seventh one is called the *keter*, which is the crown chakra. That’s the throne room of the living god. That’s the heaven in man. Okay, now what man needs to do now, is that they can tap into that heights within himself and let God take over him as opposed to let the flesh take over. Because God keeps Himself pure and holy all the time, He doesn’t mix with impurity, the more man and woman practicing purity, then the God walks out of him [....]

M/Kingston/40: Man is God, and woman is Goddess.¹⁸²

This exposition on the inherent divinity contained within each person draws from both demonology (Balam) and Hinduism to argue against Christianity. This type of cultural cross-

¹⁸² Interview with researcher, Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress, Bull Bay, Jamaica, July 16, 2011.

referencing is common in Rastafari expression and indicative of the various sources that influenced its inception. For Rastafari, heaven and hell are simply hegemonic devices invented by Christians to control people. The excerpt reiterates the notion that for African Nazarites, they are expected to create their own heaven or hell, based on their actions, in the here and now.

3.4 Nyabinghi at Scotts Pass: Earthstrong of Haile Selassie I

The Binghi at Scotts Pass primarily unites adherents of the Nyabinghi mansion, the most loosely organized of the Rastafari houses today. While some permanent residents live on-site around the tabernacle (Figures 64, 65), most of the congregants who were present for the one-week celebration of the birth of Haile Selassie I had arrived especially for the Binghi. Instead of referring to this special week as the “birth week” of Haile Selassie, Rastafari refer to this type of celebration as an “earthstrong” for two reasons. First, the phonetic similarity of “week” and “weak” prompt the use of “strong,” since Rastafari do not wish to promote “weakness.” The use of “earth” over “birth” emphasizes the continuance of one’s life and legacy on Earth, rather than evoking the solitary act of “birth.” Similarly, birthday is referred to as “earthday.” For my part, I decided to leave the Binghi after four days of observation since I had suddenly become quite ill.

The start of the celebration was marked by praises to Haile Selassie I and the lighting of a large fire which would be kept lit for the duration of the Binghi. The remainder of the week was dominated by Nyabinghi drumming and chanting interspersed with presentations from adherents. At the Binghi in Scotts Pass, I also observed a more formal form of reasoning in which individuals would be given the microphone and would be permitted to speak for as long as they wished, unabated. From here, once the mic was passed along, the next member would be free not only to speak their mind, but to also comment on or rebut content from previous presentations, some even referencing conversations from previous days prior to the Binghi. The messages and concerns expressed by the presenters were quite diverse, ranging from straightforward readings from the Bible, to recitations of the words and utterances of Haile Selassie I, and even intricate discussions about the Illuminati and the New World Order. Although I did not encounter any Rastologies at this event that outwardly incorporated UFO theory as with School of Vision, worthy of note is an ongoing dynamic of hybridic, living hermeneutics in which theories about Freemasonry and fears regarding their alleged desire to create a one world government have entered the theological dimension of a growing number of

Rastafari adherents. I also discovered a great example of Rastafari openness to hybridity in one of the homes at Scotts Pass where a painting exists that portrays various leaders and revolutionaries from a number of different countries and religious orientations—Marcus Garvey, Mortimo Planno, Nelson Mandela, Mohandas K. Gandhi, and Malcolm X—yet all under the Jamaican flag (Figure 66).

A number of canteens and merchant stands had also been set-up for the course of the event. Preserved and cooked *Ital* foods were available for sale in addition to roots wine and other fermented, non-alcoholic beverages. Finally, whether in the tabernacle or in the surrounding homes, sacramental ganja smoking was also prevalent throughout the *earthstrong* celebration. In fact, it was at Scotts Pass where I best observed the solemnity with which Rastafari can partake and share marijuana, sometimes for hours on end, passing their *chalice* and sharing their ganja (Figure 67). Sometimes younger adherents would provide the ganja and *grabba* and prepare the *chalice* as a gesture of respect for their elders.

Although much of the activity during the course of the Binghi was festive in nature, even the solemnity of the Nyabinghi drumming inspired jovial exclamations and gesticulations, some adherents also took the opportunity to stress religious protocols, or “order.” As expressed by the following speaker, full commitment to the chanting by all present represents an essential component of the Binghi:

Male Speaker 1: We talk about the discipline. Nyabinghi should not have security. Why? Because every Rastaman, every Rastawoman that come through that gate there, must enter into the gates with thanksgiving and into the courts with praise. So, it need I to look upon you and tell you to bathe yourself. Once you are a Rasta, you are supposed to be endowed with the discipline and that integrity towards His Imperial Majesty. So, we don't need security.

It's just like how law wasn't intended to be a part of creation. Because everyone should know what to do to maintain good living. But because you have disobedient people, then law have to come into play. And just like at the Binghi, yes we have to institute guidelines, the dos and the don'ts, at a Nyabingi gathering. And as long as one do the dos and the don'ts, we should not have any disharmony during the days of the Nyabinghi.

So, we appeal to each and every one. This is the hundred and nineteenth earthday of our divine majesty and we look forward to a great gathering. Again, when we come together, make everyone put a voice into the chant. Sometimes the gathering is big, and the chant is left upon a few ones. You are not here to be spectators. Every Rasta is a star. It's all of I-n-I putting a voice together to make one mighty voice. This is not a dance where the sound system's over there and you are over there and you dance. Every voice

put together—one voice, two voice, three voice, and, when it multiplies, one mighty voice in the name of His Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile I!

Congregation: Selassie I!

Male Speaker 1: Haile I!

Congregation: Selassie I!

Male Speaker 1: Haile I!

Congregation: Selassie I!¹⁸³

After this speaker, another male adherent made a presentation before the congregation. He was then followed by an elderly lady who again took up the theme of “dos and don’ts” in relation to preserving the integrity of Nyabinghi chanting:

Female Speaker: Give thanks and praises to His Imperial Majesty at the one hundred and nineteenth earthday. Yes, what do I have to say? Now, whosoever don’t know the chant, please don’t take the lead. Don’t lead the chant. Because these chant is the thing that *we* know. And when you lead the chant and you don’t lead it right, you can mess with the order.¹⁸⁴ So, listen me brethren. If you see you don’t know the chant, let me. I who been chanting from twenty-two years—57 years! It is we who know these chants!¹⁸⁵

During the next day, the theme of proper comportment and order also arose in the speeches.

In the next segment, the speaker discusses the convention that one’s hat should be taken off before entering the tabernacle:

Male Speaker 2: You must have reverance for this tabernacle. This tabernacle is one of the few places that we try—from all over the world, it’s the centralized tabernacle. It’s in the centre in Middlesex—whether [you come from] Saint Thomas or Papine, we can centralize right here. So, as a Nyabinghi man, when you come in here, please remember to take off your hat at the gate. You shouldn’t be walking into the tabernacle and forget to take off your hat.

Male Speaker 3: Rasta don’t wear hat. Rasta wear crown, crown upon your head.

Male Speaker 2: Ya, it’s what you put in the tabernacle that you will get out. That’s why we ask for a certain order to be put in that we can come and gather. Because if you come to the tabernacle to hold a meditation—you come and you leave, and you hold a good meditation and you go, the next person comes here holds a good meditation, when the other person come, he can detect the meditation that you are leaving there, you know. So, that’s why we try to keep it as a higher meditation.¹⁸⁶

The protocol against hats is of course opposite the Bobo Shanti requirement for turbans during all praise ceremonies and public appearances, yet in both cases, it is the consecrated nature of hair that guides the principle. As with the other Rastafari groups encountered, comportment and protocols were central to the worship activities.

¹⁸³ Participant observation, Scotts Pass (Earthstrong Bingi of Haile Selassie I), Clarendon, Jamaica, July 22, 2011.

¹⁸⁴ delivery

¹⁸⁵ Participant observation, Scotts Pass (Earthstrong Bingi of Haile Selassie I), Clarendon, Jamaica, July 22, 2011.

¹⁸⁶ Participant observation, Scotts Pass, Clarendon, Jamaica, July 23, 2011.

3.5 Conclusion to Rastafari Living Worship

In the previous, I have presented portraits of the four Rastafari houses with whom I spent any significant amount of time. While Nyabinghi drumming and chanting, in addition to reasoning sessions, were common in all the scenarios, each group displayed varying degrees of formality around their worship services and daily activities. The Bobo Shanti represent the most formally regimented group of the four presented, while School of Vision leader Dermott Fagan runs his mission in a more interactive, Socratic manner with his following. The Nyabinghi are grouped around various major events spread around tabernacles across the island of Jamaica throughout the year, while the Howellites represent a much more diminished group than during their heyday, but essential living witnesses to the life and acts of the first man to preach the divinity of Haile Selassie I, i.e. Leonard Howell, in tandem with communal, agrarian self-reliance. The examples chosen in the previous sections also demonstrate the ongoing tensions between the persistence of indigeneity and resistance to modernity, as manifested in various contexts of naziritism.

4. Conclusion to Living Worship

In this chapter, I presented portraits of African Nazarites and “living worship” from the contexts of my field research. Overall, I have ascertained a great respect for the Judaic Sabbath within the various groups, factions, and mansions, in addition to great reverence for other considerations involving naziritism. Yet, there also exist unique forms of worship, in each Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, such as Nyabinghi worship or the *amaNazaretha* sacred dances, that clearly demonstrate living hermeneutics that go well beyond the Bible and that, at some level, represent “enculturated” forms of indigeneity. How *uJehova* or JAH are worshipped by *amaNazaretha* and Rastafari is thus significantly different. Moreover, the cross-section of academia and Rastafari that is occurring in Jamaica today is not paralleled with *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Within each are also varying degrees of resistance and persistence.

For *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, compared to the almost constant vending of food items and religious paraphernalia in the Ebuhleni faction, Sabbath Services at Ekuphakameni included a respect for fasting fostered by all present; moreover, no vendors could be found at the Ekuphakameni gatherings that I observed. While I was not present for any of the Ekuphakameni sacred dances, those associated with the Ebuhleni faction showed much hybridic innovation between markers of indigeneity and modernity, yet the dance that noticeably borrows most from

the West, *isiKotshi*, with its pith helmets and combat boots, was not allowed at the most sacred holy mountain, Nhlangakazi. The seven hour Founding Day Ceremony service with Vukile Shembe, “Living God at Ekuphakameni”—five and half hours of which was devoted to a sermon interspersed with communal hymn signing, sitting, and kneeling, as well as the nature of the Sabbath services led weekly, revealed a much more arduous approach to being *amaNazaretha*. Although I would posit that for most Western eyes unfamiliar with *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, the portrait of Ebuhleni already seems like a very difficult lifestyle to uphold—and it certainly was for me, to give an idea of how stark the contrast in practice was compared to their visual similarities, I refer to one member of Ekuphakameni I interviewed who described the approach of the rival faction as a “picnic.” Indeed, the identities of the two factions in some way play out like a Dickensian “tale of two cities,” but the very parameters by which righteousness and decadence are measured may be completely foreign by Western standards.

The sections on the various worship services of the Rastafari mansions I observed also revealed a number of key differences. First, we explored the camp (Mount Zion Hill Temple), the Sabbath services, and the Sunday Binghi busking sessions of the School of Vision located in the Blue Mountains. I showed clear instances where the “line” between “sacred” and “secular” had clearly dissolved. I also discussed some of the key aspects that set the School of Vision apart from other Rastafari houses, namely their belief that Haile Selassie I will descend in a flying saucer during the time of rapture to claim the adherents, in addition to the belief that the financial world is run by a race of reptilian aliens masquerading as humans. The Pope, the Queen of England, and Ronald Reagan are the head of this three-headed “Balam.”¹⁸⁷ Next, while the section on the Binghi at Pinnacle failed to demonstrate any additional details in relation to my study, it demonstrated the relative saturation of the Rastafari field and the mistake I made as a researcher on this particular occasion by not going into the field alone. The section on the ascetic Bobo Shanti revealed a community centred on fasting, prayer, praise, and meditation. The Bobo Shanti help demonstrate that for Rastafari, Nyabinghi endures as the dominant form of worship in the context of sacred spaces. Finally, amidst the small commercial enterprises that have sprung up on the grounds as Scotts Pass, in the tabernacle, the elders called for more attention to “order,” suggesting that many of the younger congregants were not in fact as well versed with

¹⁸⁷ See Appendix 2, Section 2 for details.

the Rastafari traditions suggested by the red, gold, and green on their clothes and the dreadlocks on their heads.

The increasing commerce at various sites associated with African Naziritism suggest ongoing accommodations for modernity, but especially where the income can be employed towards the greater benefit of the community.¹⁸⁸ The approaches to “living worship” and “righteous” behaviour also demonstrate an adherence to the notion that heaven and hell are in the here and now—in this view, our own lives are the reflections of the choices we have made and the lifestyles that we lead. While both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, recognize the world of spirits, the traditional African forms of “witchcraft,” *muti* and *obeah*, and their associated arts such as skin cutting have disappeared, but the African Nazarites are still listening to the voices of their ancestors while building the kingdoms of their new theologies. Yet they are only maintaining those indigenous traditions that do not conflict with the precepts of various readings of a naziritic hermeneutic. Rastafari represent the reincarnations of their ancestors, in a manner similar to how Selassie is understood as YHWH, or JAH, in the flesh. Rastafari, as the progeny of slaves, are living reminders of the horrors of slavery, in addition to the ongoing struggle for repatriation and reparation. For *amaNazaretha*, Shembe stands with the keys to a heaven both on earth and in the afterlife. The various factions into which the church has split, however, has complicated the issue of who now represents the “true” Living God. In every case, and for all the African Nazarites encountered, the ideal of agrarian self-reliance that is so essential to the notion of indigeneity is constantly at odds with the realities of surviving in the modern global socioeconomic infrastructure.

¹⁸⁸ See Chapter 4, Section 2 for details.

CHAPTER 4: LIVING COMMUNITAS

Although Turner's notion of "communitas" specifically distinguishes a "modality of social relationship from an 'area of common living'" (1969: 96), I have herewith affixed it to the notion of "living," as in the title of this chapter, to emphasize that in the process of selective resistance and persistence, the living heremeneutic or tangible manifestations often stem from the theological universe. In other words, as we have already seen so much of, what we can observe as ethnographers in the "living" world in "real time" is often a direct consequence of the theological precepts from which an adherent of a religion bases their actions. Especially where there is a community in place enforcing a certain kind of "discipline," collectively, the threads linking the world of the imaginary to that of praxis can, at times, be quite evident, even self-conscious or "nonapologetic."

The previous chapter approached this idea by presenting and commenting on some of the worship services and activities that help define the "living communitas" of African Nazarites today. In this chapter, I present material on two subjects of which I do not present myself as an expert, but in the interest of a larger discussion on issues around the themes of this study, I have included the topics "Female Nazarites" and "Self-Reliance and Modernity: Internal Economies" as reflections of living communitas and as the final significant topics of this work since they not only represent strong areas of concern that arose in and of themselves with the participants during the course of my field research, but they also help provide an even larger understanding of the thrust and complexities of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

1. Female Nazarites

In colloquial settings, when I happen to mention that I have been conducting research on Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, I am often asked the question, "But aren't they sexist?"¹⁸⁹ Likewise, the scholar Imani M. Tafari-Ama, has experienced the same line of questioning, but with several additional edges in relation to her identity as a Rastawoman. She also provides a number of responses:

"How do you remain committed to a movement where male domination is so strong? Don't you pose a serious threat to patriarchy within Rastafari?" some cynics ask. My usual retort is that I-an-I remain committed to Rastafari because it is more than having a

¹⁸⁹ The stance of African Nazarites against homosexuality (in keeping with biblical interpretations) represents another common censure against Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

relationship with a man; it is about having an identity, seeing the almighty in oneself and experiencing a fusion with that One. It is about sharing a cosmic consciousness, exploring spirituality, and finding my holistic self-realization, which is at once a creative and re-creative process. It is the authentication of myself as a black queen, with no apologies to the norms and ideology of Babylon. (1998: 89)

On the side of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, as mentioned, Nkosinathi Sithole is the first doctoral graduate to be a scholar of his church; there are simply no female *amaNazaretha* scholars studying their own church today. Nonetheless, as with Rastafari, the youth generation of African Nazarites are increasingly finding themselves in university contexts studying the general gamut of accredited programs. With regard to *amaNazaretha* females, Muller has written extensively on the subject in *Rituals of Fertility and the Sacrifice of Desire: Nazarite Women's Performance in South Africa* (1999).

While both sets of African Nazarites represent patriarchal communities in the formal sense (cf. Rowe 1998; Tafari-Ama 1998; Yawney 1987), it is too simplistic to label them chauvinistic from the onset. As Tafari-Ama has emphasized:

Without a doubt, Rastafari is a patriarchal movement. However, as with all social systems, Rastafari has, over the years, experienced dynamic shifts in gender power relations as a result of females revisiting their own self-definitions, juxtaposed against designations ascribed by males who created the movement. (1998: 89)

Although women are not granted the same space to publicly voice their ideas in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* as with Rastafari, as we shall see, the religious lifestyle to which they adhere often helps enable success in the modern world, for example, by not falling into all the trappings and temptations that come along with university life and modernity.

In my opinion, when broaching the subject of women in an Other religious community, placing the protocols into the foreign context is essential for a proper understanding. For example, in both Jamaica and South Africa, violence and rape are realities with which women, especially among the poor and black, must contend every day (cf. Dartnall and Jewkes 2013). Without trying to be facetious, when basic survival and safety represent day-to-day concerns, the fight for equal pay, for example, perhaps represents something just too far away for the context. In response to these daily threats and concerns, the African Nazarites I encountered, unwaveringly champion the call to respect women; though a westerner may be unfamiliar with the culturally-specific manners in which this ethos manifests. In other words, for African Nazarites, “fidelity” (Ex 20:14//Deut 5:18) and “polygamy” can be mutually exclusive.

While some African Nazarites practice monogamy, Shembe Church members are allowed to marry more than one wife in accordance with both Old Testament and Zulu traditions, and some Rastafari practice polyamory or informal polygyny as a reflection of their “enlightened” consciousness and a form of African persistence (cf. Rowe 1998: 83; Yawney 1987: 192-193). As theologians, when studying the religions of Others, when we encounter ideas that go against something so seemingly fundamental as certain legal codes of conduct in the West, such as marriage and monogamy, echoing Beaman (2007), we ought to submit that just because alternate models for community do not reflect those of the West and the cry for “women’s liberation” (which have, of course, ushered in great changes towards gender equality in the context of post-industrial capitalistic countries in as much as they have offered women the opportunity to earn money lap-dancing on the strip), it would nonetheless be quite hasty to point the finger of blame against religious communities that offer women some of the safest environments possible in the context of the Two-Thirds world today. Many of the Nazarite women I spoke with discussed how the principles imparted by their religious lives give them the strength to exist in the secular sphere.

1.1 Rastafari as the Voice of Feminism in Jamaica

Whereas mainstream Jamaican society has popularized a voice such as Vybz Kartel, who sings odes to “beat up di pussy”¹⁹⁰ (*Mi Beat Up Di Pussy* 2010) and to “force it in” during the act of defloration (“Virginity,” *Pon Di Gaza 2.0* 2010), in a context where violence against women and rape, even of minors, is prevalent in society, in my opinion, Rastafari has no doubt emerged as the voice of feminism in Jamaica. While many in the media bombardment make it “cool” to disrespect, devalue, and subjugate women, Rasta “Kings” address their soulmates as “Empresses” and “Queens,” their noble equals. The female presence within Rastafari is indeed strong. As Mutabaruka has asked his audience in “Dis Poem,” is it “his-story her-story our-story the story still untold” (*The Mystery Unfolds* 1986)?

With regard to the narratives of Rastawomen, Cashmore has argued that we must pause to consider the social and historical circumstances in Jamaica that have influenced Rastafari attitudes regarding polyamory:

¹⁹⁰ beat up the vagina

The general subject of sexual relations for Rastas stems from the lack of family structure in the days of slavery. The matrifocal emphasis led to children never having fathers on a permanent basis and they came to be reliant on females, a reliance which continued after slavery [...] the reliance on women was seen as a vestige of colonial domination and its ramifications, including the emasculation of blacks. Part of the Rastafarian imperative was to restore manhood and a sense of dignity, to upgrade morally black men; sexual attitudes have to be set against this background. (1979: 78)

During the many seminars and lectures I attended on the subject of Rastafari at the University of the West Indies, the theory above continues to be expounded in almost any discussion related to Rastafari women. Moreover, Rowe's comment regarding relations between the sexes is worth recalling: "Having its origins among the roots of the African Jamaican population, Rastafari [sic] inherited all of the complexities of race, gender, and family relations common to this stratum of society" (1998: 75). But colonial vestiges are not the only factor with regard to Rastawomen today.

My field research indicated that although Rastafari has been gaining adherents across the globe, its popularity has been declining in Jamaica, especially among youth. As Louis Chude-Sokei has expressed, in its nation of origin, Rastafari stands on a precipice:

Take for example the stoning of Bunny Wailer. On the level of popular knowledge—as opposed to the towers of "critique"—the stoning of this semilegendary Rastafarian singer, the last living member of the original Wailers (Bob Marley and Peter Tosh both dying in the 1980s), signifies a crucial moment in diaspora. For you see, Wailer was more than just a singer: he was perhaps the last living symbol of black revolutionary desire from his generation. And his was a generation that helped thrust a mythic "Africa" to the forefront of black popular culture in the West Indies and, via reggae music and Rastafarianism, the world.

His being stoned in Jamaica by this new generation, the raggamuffin generation, signifies that something has radically changed in certain suburbs of the city I call diaspora. (1994: 80)

Only few Jamaican youths today seem at all interested in the theological and spiritual dimensions of the Rastafari movement. Indeed, many of today's torch-bearers, such as the many musical Marleys (Damian, Stephen, Ziggy, Ky-Mani, Julian), are the children or grandchildren of central post-routinization Rastafari visionaries. Collectively, such figures continue to wield a tremendous amount of cultural influence, regardless of the declining popularity of Rastology in Jamaica.

In this regard, I had the privilege of encountering two active women ambassadors of the younger Rastafari generation: Donisha Prendergast (granddaughter of Rita Marley) and Cen'C Love (granddaughter of Bunny Wailer). Both Donisha and Cen'C represent excellent examples

of living feminism at work in Rastafari, but, at the same time, part of a nostalgia that in some ways fails to adequately represent “the raw present of Jamaican ghetto life” (Chude-Sokei 1994: 80). That is, as young Rastas born into the legacies of their grandparents, they no doubt experienced certain privileges that most Jamaican youths never will. Today, Donisha is an actress and community activist who has been working to spread Rastafari’s messages of universal peace and love, such as with her recent film release *RasTa: A Soul’s Journey* (2011). Cen’C Love is a reggae artist whose recent release “Casanova” (*Love Letter* 2011) openly critiques popular Jamaican machismo and infidelity. She represents a voice contrary to the Rastas practicing informal polygyny. In the fashion of their forbears, who spoke about respecting women—another stone the raggamuffin dancehall generation cast at Rastafari today, the voices of these two “Empresses” have garnered admiration from both Rastafari and popular audiences.

Before getting into their messages, however, I should mention that the main reason Rastafari sometimes gets labelled as chauvinist (apart from its stance against homosexuality): the Bobo Shanti practice of quarantining female residents based on their menstrual cycles. The Bobo Shanti are the only Rastafari mansion that govern women in this manner according to the biblical passages (Lev 15:19-28) and the practice is often mistaken in popular perceptions of Rastafari as definitive (Tafari-Ama 1998). During my stay at Bobo Hill, I had the opportunity to discuss this topic in depth with a priest. Unlike “first Rasta” Leonard Howell who practiced polygyny at Pinnacle (Lee 2003: 153-160), the Bobo Shanti subscribe to what can be described as either strict monogamy or serial monogamy:

KGC: Are there marriage guidelines or anything like that?

M/Kingston/40: Well, yes, there have to because man and woman kingdom is the balance of creation. So, if a man sees a woman that he loves here, or the woman vice versa sees a king that she loves, a prophet or a priest, and they both check for one another and they love each other and they want to become one flesh, all they have to do is come and declare it to the congregation and let it know that this is “my wife” or this is “my husband” who decided to become one flesh.

KGC: Is it a monogamous situation?

M/Kingston/40: Ya, very monogamous also. You can’t cleave to no other flesh as long as you take unto yourself a particular woman unto yourself. But she lives a particular principle which is also called, “The Twenty-One Day Principle.”

KGC: Tell me about that. I’ve heard about that and I am curious.

M/Kingston/40: {chuckles} Okay, all right. The Twenty-One Day Principle is like this now. Well, the woman, because she experiences what is called menstruation, her cycle... okay, say for instance, I have a wife here {interruption from a male adherent}. Twenty-One Day now is like this.

If I see a queen that I love and I want her to be my wife, we want to be husband and wife, what I need to make sure to do is to make sure that she gets her own gates, which is her own house. I have to build a house for her. Why? Because she has to go through menstruation. Okay? So, she have to separate herself from her King-Man at that particular time, because it is improper for him to live with her in the same house while she is menstruating. It is called pollution and it affects the spiritual side of man, which eventually affects the family of the black man and the black woman.

So, when it comes to that now, the Twenty-One Day Principle, the first seven days is when she actually goes through the issue with herself, within her house. Her first day, is the very first day of the twenty-one days. Now, she does that for seven days, where she lock herself totally from the congregation, she lock herself from her King-Man. Now, the other seven days now is where she actually prepare now to get ready for a purification. So, that make it fourteen, okay. And when she reach fourteenth day, if I decide I want to have a child with her, okay, that would be the best day to go and lie with her, because her head is ready. If she doesn't have a King-Man, she'll have to stay in-house until actually twenty-one days. But if she has a king, he can visit her, or she can visit him.

KGC: You can visit after fourteen days from the first day of menstruation?

M/Kingston/40: Right. From the fourteenth day, you must reach the fourteenth day, because, at that time, her head is ready, meaning she can easily become pregnant when she reach fourteen days. So, if she doesn't want to have any children, then she will stay an extra seven days in-house. When she reach the seventeenth day, she can actually open up the gate and everything, but no one can enter if she doesn't have a King-Man. If she's just a single woman, she can open up her gates and everything and come at the front gate and clean up the place and whatever and people can talk and she can talk. But what happen, you can't touch her and she can't touch you. Now, if she's your woman, that's a different thing. You can go in unto her at fourteen day, but when you into her at fourteen day, you and her can still cannot be a part of the congregation. You and her have to stay within that house until twenty-one days.

KGC: Okay, and those days, you are free to go in unto her?

M/Kingston/40: Ya.

KGC: Then at twenty-one?

M/Kingston/40: You and her can come back in this tabernacle.

KGC: But are you still free to go in unto her?

M/Kingston/40: Ya, you are still. After twenty-one, up until her twenty-seventh day until she go back in again, because she have to separate herself again by the twenty-eighth day, which is when the cycle starts again.

KGC: So there are two weeks?

M/Kingston/40: Right, window of opportunity to make children. So, if a man lives with a woman and sleeps with her while she is in... when she is menstruating, he is doing himself great harm, spiritual harm, because that's not the principle of how a man is supposed to live with his woman. She is supposed to live in her own gate. She is a queen. She is supposed to have her own gates, and you are supposed to take care of her and make sure to provide food for her and everything. She can't do it herself because she is in-house. So, you assist her with everything that she needs. While she is in-house too, and you go to the gate to visit her, to go and carry food for her when she reach five days or

six days, she can't speak to you. You can speak to her, and she can only write letters. And you read the letters. You can't touch nothing. You can't even touch the letters. You can read them, and she takes them back, because she is supposed to rest the letter on a particular place at the fence or at the gates where you can read. You can't touch nothing from her, because if you touch anything from her, you receive the pollution. And when the pollution hits you, it affects your brain, and you become imbalanced in your mind. And while he lives that way with her, he actually sharpens his own life span. That's how serious it is. It leads to death. Pollution leads to death.¹⁹¹

Needless to say, the three out of four weeks during which a woman is considered “unclean” because of her menstruation cycle makes observing women around the grounds at Bobo Hill quite rare. Whether the Twenty-One Day Principle may or may not represent an affront to the feminist sensibilities of the reader, recall that the custom implicitly accommodates the theological expectations of the adherents—no one at Bobo Hill lives there against their will—and that within Rastafari the practice is unique to the Bobo Shanti. Again, the particular situation for Rastafari, from monogamy to serial monogamy to polyamory to informal polygyny (cf. Rowe 1998; Tafari-Ama 1998; Yawney 1987) depends on the Rastas in question, while the actual “domestic structures” could be about as fluid as for any persons living in modern society.

Against informal polygyny, for example, Cen'C Love, in her song “Casanova,” rails against Jamaican machismo and infidelity:

You're working, you're working
 You're always working
 But I think you're really lurking in the middle of the night
 Telling me lies like you think this is a joke thing
 Look into my eyes and tell me why [...]

Casanova, where you gonna go tonight?
 Where you going to go tonight?
 Ah, you mash up¹⁹² your love life.
 Where you going, because you ain't coming over?
 Where you gonna go tonight?
 Where you gonna go tonight?
 Ah, you mash up your love life. [...]

You ask me what I'm doing, do I have any plans?
 Because you would like to talk in person
 I said I don't know what you have in mind
 But two wrongs don't make it right

¹⁹¹ Interview with researcher, Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress, Bull Bay, Jamaica, July 16, 2011.

¹⁹² mess up

That important to you?
 You do what you got to do
 I can't stand you Jamaican guy [...]

After all I've done for you
 You give away my loving and you take me for a fool
 Been here before, but baby I'm through
 Can't keep pretending, I'm telling you

Casanova, where you gonna go tonight?
 Where you gonna go tonight?
 Ah, you mash up your love life.
 Where you going, you ain't coming over?
 Where you gonna go tonight?
 Where you gonna go tonight?
 Ah, you mash up your love life.

I stayed up late last night
 I waited for you right here
 And when I woke up you still weren't there
 I can't keep playing blind
 Which honey is sweetening your tea
 When you ain't spending your time with me? (*Love Letter* 2011)

Clearly, not all Rastawomen condone informal polygyny and Love's cry against these cheating men resonates in the experience of so many women; but note that her complaint is not directed at Rastafari males per se—her song is speaking to the archetypal “Jamaican guy,” reflecting the point that whatever chauvinisms a Rastaman may carry are more likely reflections of Jamaican culture at large rather than the mores of the movement itself (cf. Rowe 1998: 75; Tafari-Ama 1998: 92). Love's ironic use of the Casanova figure takes emphasis away from the “conquest” aspect of bedding multiple partners and places it on the pain the unfaithful partner has caused. Of course, like with all youth living in the world today, concerns about STDs and unplanned pregnancies are an additional factor to the accumulation of woes during the time spent waiting for her man to return.

Finally, outside of issues of sexuality and fidelity, I present the following segment from my interview with Donisha Prendergast to evoke a portrait of an independent, empowered Rastawoman living in the world today. In the interview, Donisha discusses her life as a youth growing up within the influential Marley family, her journey towards becoming a Rastafari activist, her political opinions about Marcus Garvey and the death of Bob Marley, and what it means for her to be “Rasta.”

Donisha Prendergast: I was born in Kingston, Jamaica to a young married couple, very recently married. My mother was 19, my father was 20 when I came into this world. My mother's a performer. She's been performing since she was about 12 or 13, and her brother, Ziggy Marley and the Melody Makers... so, growing up, I was a child of performing parents. So, I would travel a lot. So, I grew up in different countries, seeing different people. When people say that I am "privileged," that's my privilege. It's not money. It was just the ability to be able to learn about people and to be able to communicate with people from an early age.

My father is a footballer, who has evolved into an international football referee. He's been to the World Cup a few times to officiate and now he teaches referees who go to the World Cup. My mother has an early childhood education institute around the corner from here. So, her mandate has been to observe children and to help them to grow in the right way. She has adopted the Montessori method of early childhood education, which is basically that the kids are the leaders and we are the guides. We don't teach them anything. They teach us everything, and we follow their lead.

From that, you can know the kind of foundation I had at home. I'm the eldest child. I have three brothers from my mother and my father. And then later on, after they divorced, I have two younger sisters. I went to the best schools. I left Jamaica when I was maybe 20 or 21 to go to Howard University in DC as an acting major. So, my transition from high school... I was the youngest person to graduate that year. I've always kind of been the youngest in my circle of friends.

KGC: Can I ask how old are you now?

Donisha Prendergast: 26, I will be 27 in December. So, I've kind of always been the youngest and mostly always the only girl in a group of guys, because I have brothers and I have lots of uncles, so... and I was a tomboy when I was growing up too.

KGC: Did you play a lot of sports and such?

Donisha Prendergast: Ya man. Actually, me and my father started the first girls' football team at a high school in Jamaica, at my high school.

KGC: Who did they play against?

Donisha Prendergast: {laughs} At first we had to play against the boys' football team and then other high schools started to form their own girls' football teams.

KGC: Okay, wow.

Donisha Prendergast: At first it was intramural. It was cool. And then I did hockey too, girls' field hockey. I did swimming. I did drama. And I did a lot of outreach when I was a young person, when I was in high school. My grandma was always big into outreach. And my mother... my mother's nursery is next door to an orphanage. So, sometimes when I wasn't doing anything over there, I would walk over to the orphanage and adopt babies every couple of months. You know me, as a teenager... so, I've always been into that spirit. And my grandma, she travels, and that's all she does... work with people and communities. Those are the memories that I have of my grandma: going somewhere with some food to go cook for somebody. I've had an interesting life.

KGC: What are you doing these days? A lot of things, it sounds like... and by the look of it.

Donisha Prendergast: {sighs} So many things. I'm doing so many things these days and I have to really give thanks for the health and strength and the vision to do all of these things. And the experience, to draw inspiration from. Because, like I tell you, when I

remember my grandma in her younger days, I remember her working in communities and stuff like that. And that's what I am doing nowadays. I'm doing a lot of inner-city community work, workshops and stuff like that. Just exposing them to myself as a young Rastawoman who has certain experiences. I just want to make myself available for them to ask certain questions, to observe.

KGC: What would you say your overstanding as a Rasta brings to your work?

Donisha Prendergast: Clarity, lots of clarity as to why I need to be doing this and not be in school somewhere. Because I have those conflicts too. "Why are you not in school? Why don't you finish school?" Because I just have nine months left to finish my Bachelor's in Fine Arts.

KGC: The one from Howard?

Donisha Prendergast: No, no. I finished that one called Film and Digital Production. Nine months of electives, general electives. I have done all of the course work. So, the conflict is this. Do I go back to Miami and sit in a classroom to learn Spanish electives, or do I stay in Jamaica and do programs with the kids and do projects that are so well needed for the cultural identity of our people right now? Through the documentary that I just finished doing, it has given me—that's why I say Rastafari gives me clarity as to why I am doing these works.

KGC: Okay, so talk to me about the documentary.

Donisha Prendergast: All right, the documentary, *RasTa: A Soul's Journey*.

KGC: It's come out or it's coming out?

Donisha Prendergast: It will be out in September at the Toronto International Film Festival and we'll be back here, maybe in October. This documentary, it has evolved into so much more, so much more than what it was when it was conceived. This documentary follows my journey around the world to discover the roots and the evolution of Rastafari in different countries... what is true and what is not true. And just to kind of demystify some of the things and bring a greater understanding.

And I guess it was also to confront myself too. Because what makes you Rasta? I hear that question all the time. "Are you Rasta or do you just wear dreads?" You know, and I really had to ask myself that question. Ya, I went to church and all these things, but what is it that Rastafari really is? Rastafari is a movement of people, "Back to Africa." But Africa is no longer just a physical place. Africa now is also a spiritual, a mental, an emotional space. What does it mean to be Rasta, to bring back these things, to do works, to be heroes, to be leaders, to be queens and kings? That's what it means to be Rasta, to be that African identity in this confusion. You know, outside of Haile Selassie I, the first, and HIM being the reincarnation of Christ... outside of the Bible and all of this religion and stuff, practically, how can I as a Rasta help society? And after doing this documentary, after travelling, we went to Ethiopia, Israel, South Africa, Jamaica, Canada, England, Washington DC, and India. And in India...

KGC: You were speaking to Rastas in all those countries?

Donisha Prendergast: Umhm.

KGC: That's incredible, wow.

Donisha Prendergast: And Rastas really living a Rasta life... not just wearing the dreadlocks and playing reggae music, Bob Marley music... growing their own food.

KGC: Like Muta-style, in a way.

Donisha Prendergast: Ya. Home-schooling their children, images of Africa around their home, natural, organic elements. The only thing left for Rastafari to do as I saw it in the different places of the world was to formalize programs, because that is what I've been doing since I've been back in Jamaica. I realize that they are never going to put Marcus Garvey into the schools. They are never going to really teach about him. Marcus Garvey is Jamaica's first national hero. You know about Marcus Garvey?

KGC: Yup.

Donisha Prendergast: A little bit, right?

KGC: Sure.

Donisha Prendergast: In Jamaica, we don't. They don't teach about Marcus Garvey until you are in maybe about sixth grade—no, sorry, maybe about eighth grade, but like about two semesters. And then they test you and then you never hear about him again.

KGC: Someone said something odd about Marcus Garvey recently... that he was Jamaica's first national hero, but also Jamaica's first white-collar criminal, or something of that nature.

Donisha Prendergast: There's a stigma attached to Marcus Garvey for lots of reasons, because what he was able to do was is he was able to start an association of four million black people around the world. This is in... 1923, he started the UNIA. Then from 1928. 1929 and into the thirties, he was able to form an association of four million black people around the world. Now, you can only imagine what that must do to the powers that be.

Just like what Bob Marley did, that's why they killed him. Because nobody can tell me any different. I look at what they have done to our leaders in history.

KGC: Just a second please. Let's back up. Because I have had similar thoughts about that. You hear that "they" killed Bob Marley, but—I mean, I know he was shot, but isn't the official story that he died from cancer?

Donisha Prendergast: Of course.

KGC: But what was it... we don't know?

Donisha Prendergast: We don't know. How come Bob Marley, a good, healthy, strong man who ate well, who exercised daily?

[...]

Donisha Prendergast: The story is that he was playing football one day, and he stubbed his toe on the gravel, and it got infected. He didn't take care of it and it got infected. And the doctors told him that he had to cut it off. And then he said he wasn't going to cut off his toe, because then he would lose balance. And they said it turned into cancer and spread to his head and killed him.

KGC: The infection turned into cancer?

Donisha Prendergast: Now, as I am older, I question it. I see certain things. I have to question it, because, how can I just take that so simply, that Bob Marley, this man who created a revolution through music? Look at how people are living today. It was reggae music that carry this culture of Rastafari throughout the world. I travelled and I saw that. That he died from cancer? I want to believe that God would be so good, that God would just take him like that. Something just doesn't make sense [...] I don't know, but I know that I am not *feeling* that story anymore.

[...]

Donisha Prendergast: Honestly, I wouldn't be surprised if it was those same record company people, management people who did this. Because look at us now. We have no

rights to my grandfather's music; the record companies do. So, if I want to use any of my grandfather's songs in my documentary about Rastafari, about reggae music, I have to license it from them and pay them.

KGC: Island?

Donisha Prendergast: Like, what the fuck? What the fuck?

KGC: Ya, those royalties should go on to the family, I think, generally.

Donisha Prendergast: I don't even care about royalties. I'm just saying, "How dare you tell me that I have to license my grandfather's music from you? How dare you?" What is right and what is wrong? What is real? Listen to the music. The music should be free. How about that? Bob Marley's music should not be sold.

KGC: I agree. I also think music should be free. You are perhaps the first person I have heard that's said that. I've been saying that for years.

Donisha Prendergast: Ya, because music is not entertainment. Music is art. And art is the expression of what the people are feeling, what is happening. How can you sell what people are feeling and what is happening? You can't sell that.

[...]

Donisha Prendergast: That is what Rasta is supposed to do: stand up and do right and do good, especially when it is needed.

KGC: You've just given me a point of inspiration to talk to you about. Now, I don't know if you noticed it, and you'd be the right person to ask, because of the work you did in the documentary—visiting the different Rasta populations in the different countries. From my understanding, in fact, most countries in the world—other Caribbean countries—accept Rasta more than it is accepted in Jamaica.

Donisha Prendergast: Ya man.

KGC: So, how does that make you feel?

Donisha Prendergast: It's just in these days that I am realizing this, because, my entire life, remember, that I grew up as, "Bob Marley's granddaughter."¹⁹³ So, people don't really treat me like a "Rasta."

KGC: I understand.

Donisha Prendergast: So, it's not until these days that I start to walk the streets and start to dress a little less than perfect. Just be real. That's what it is to understand what it means to be a Rasta. How do I feel? I feel empowered. Ya, I feel very sad. I feel hurt about all of these injustices, especially coming to understand certain truths, even about the film that we saw about the Coral Gardens incident.¹⁹⁴ There are a lot of truths about Rastafari that nobody speaks about. We always hear, "Ya man, Irie, One Love, Blessed, JAH Rastafari, Bob Marley music, Jamaica." You don't hear, "Ya man, Rasta's dreads used to be torn out in the streets." Them used to spit on Rasta and rape Rasta women... stone them. To send your Rasta child to school, you have to shave his head and take away his identity.

KGC: Still today?

Donisha Prendergast: Ya man. These are the truths about Rasta. That nobody will hire you because you live differently from them. There are a lot of—like, even this

¹⁹³ Donisha is the daughter of Sharon Marley Prendergast, biological daughter of Rita Marley and adopted daughter of Bob Marley.

¹⁹⁴ *Bad Friday: Rastafari After Coral Gardens*. Dir. John L. Jackson, Deborah A. Thomas. Oxumgirl Productions, 2011. DVD.

documentary, I speak about it. Because, like I tell you, it's not until these days that I am realizing these things, because I've always been treated like Bob Marley's granddaughter. But what does it mean to be Rasta? What does it mean to be Rastafari? And people react to me differently now. I have a lot of friends who are no longer my friends.

KGC: Since?

Donisha Prendergast: Since the documentary and since my evolution. Since I've begun to evolve outside of the image of who Bob Marley's granddaughter is supposed to be to what Bob Marley's granddaughter is supposed to be... the role I am supposed to play. Because, understand, I am a normal girl still. But everybody have a role to play that is serious. And I see how people look upon me. I have to observe the life that I am living and look at the kind of experiences that I am exposed to... certain knowledge that I have gained. I have to understand my role.¹⁹⁵

Like her granddmother, Rita Marley, however overshadowed she may or may not have been by her most famous King-Man, Bob Marley, the Rastafari activist, Donisha Prendergast, shows us that many Rastafari women refuse to remain in the background and are steady at the front lines of living their theology in the world for the benefit of their communities. Her words that expressed the belief that Bob Marley was assassinated will always haunt me.

1.2 Ibandla lamaNazaretha as a Refuge for African Women

Like Rastafari, the Shembe Church has demonstrated a long history of providing women with environments based on respect in a nation where alternate options have been historically few. In a social climate where black women

became the targets of male sexual desire—as domestic servants, prostitutes, or *shebeen* queens [...] Isaiah Shembe established a place of spiritual and economic refuge for widows, orphans, and those women previously in polygamous marriages whose husbands has converted to mission Christianity, a belief system that insisted on monogamous alliances [...] Mission rules required that if a traditional polygamist converted to Christianity, he would have to give up all but one wife. (Muller 1999: xix, 204)

In so doing,

Isaiah's community offered an economic and moral alternative for women and girls who (1) did not want to stay within the confines of precolonial traditional life, (2) did not want to go to the European/American missions, (3) did not migrate to the urban areas, where opportunities for young women were extremely limited in any case, (4) were divorced or widowed, and (5) did not come from the family of a *kholwa* (Christian believer)—the only Africans able to send their daughters to boarding schools in the Cape Colony, or, later, to the Inanda Seminary for Girls. (Muller 1999: 44)

This torch, then is passed on to Isaiah's first successor, J. G.:

¹⁹⁵ Interview with researcher, Kingston, Jamaica, June 29, 2011.

Of Galilee's 1943 edict that made traditional attire mandatory for all church weddings, Nazarties of today say that he foresaw the coming of apartheid in 1949 and understood how its radical separations might be turned to some use. In time, that is, the aloofness of a state committed to the principle of "groups" and "own affairs" would produce a climate of inwardness conducive to Africanist reform of anachronistic customs and tradition, enabling Galilee's move to address deep-rooted male chauvinism, for example, by inculcating an ethos of sacrosanct virginity amongst Nazarite youth, female and male, as a prelude to a church-endogamous marriage rule. (Papini 2004: 55-56)

While monogamy is also practiced in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, for westerners, the logic of polygamy may sometimes be difficult to grasp. Take this conversation with Nkosinathi Sithole and another member of the church, for example, in which I asked about some of the particulars regarding multiple wives:

KGC: Can you marry two sisters?

Nkosinathi Sithole: Ya.

KGC: Yeah, you can make two sisters your wives?

Nkosinathi Sithole: Ya... it's not easy.

KGC: [...] complicated.

Nkosinathi Sithole: But it's not forbidden. {pause} Especially if it's twins. They are supposed to marry [...]

KGC: Seriously?

Nkosinathi Sithole: But it doesn't happen though.

KGC: All the time?

Nkosinathi Sithole: All the time, ya. But it's supposed to happen.

KGC: Oh, that's interesting.

Nkosinathi Sithole: Well, I know there are twins, but they are grown women now. They married one person.

KGC: It might be complicated more at a personal level, I think.

Nkosinathi Sithole: Ya, it is.

KGC: How many wives does [Vimbeni] Shembe have?

Male Speaker: One.

KGC: Just one?

Male Speaker: Only one, ya. But one had 62.

KGC: One man in the Church?

[...]

KGC: J. G. had 62 wives?

Male Speaker: 62 wives.¹⁹⁶

But polygamy does not represent the entire story when considering female *amaNazaretha*—the sanctity of virginity until marriage is also a central requirement of *ubuNazaretha*.

Muller has further argued about the role of the virginity of girls in the Shembe Church in relation to its founder:

¹⁹⁶ Interview with researcher, Mount Nhlankakazi, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 14, 2011.

[Isaiah] Shembe created this hybrid religious community from the substance of archaic Nguni and biblical beliefs about women, virgin girls, and their bodies. In so doing, he reconstituted a sense of order, religious sanctuary, and ritual power by reinventing the feminized notion of cyclicity, a central principle of traditional performance, agricultural method, and cosmological understanding. He authorized these practices by overlaying them with literal readings of biblical narrative. The prophet Isaiah Shembe used his knowledge of the mission Bible and the mythical power of virgin girls to win his battles against the racist state. (1999: xix)

Although Muller has argued that such regulations around polygamous marriage and the sanctity of virginity represent “the denial of sexual desire” for female adherents (1999: xix), I argue that this postulation is inaccurate for two reasons. First, my research among members of both sexes in the Ebuhleni faction¹⁹⁷ made it clear that while females are distinguished by various statuses and accompanying attire related to marriage and virginity, practicing virginity until marriage is required for both men and women, with the obvious caveat that some women will not be marrying virgin men if they are a second or third wife. Note that those male adherents who are not virgins at the time of their first marriage have broken one of the church rules. Second, the few young *amaNazaretha* women I had the chance to interview (three), all discussed how during their pre-marriage period, they were channelling their sexual desire towards a brighter future in keeping with their theology, not denying it as such, and simply waiting to bestow this energy exclusively to their future husband and in the interest of procreation.

All three female participants were studying challenging university programs at the times of the interviews. These opportunities were simply not available to their parents’ generation under apartheid. Only the eldest of the three participants (F/Port Shepstone/23) was married; she was studying medicine during our sessions and graduated during the course of my field research period. Although I had heard a few second-hand stories about *amaNazaretha* women who were discovered not to be virgins at the time of their marriage, for my interviewees, the rules that were being broken by the particular participants were not in relation to this precept. In general, the church continues to make room in the church for women who were not virgins prior to marriage, but they are neither allowed to participate in the sacred dances nor wear *isicholo*.

Other “lesser” deviancies cropped up, however. In the following excerpt, for example, the participant discusses some of the leniencies she allows herself with regard to *ubuNazaretha*, such

¹⁹⁷ I was unable to conduct interviews with any female adherents of the Ekuphakameni faction where no intermingling of the sexes is allowed on sacred sites, such as Ekuphakameni itself or the Bhekumesyia site.

as cutting her hair and sometimes eating on the Sabbath, in addition to some aspects that are most sacred for her, such as maintaining her virginity until marriage and respecting the Sabbath day itself:

KGC: As you are growing older, what about personal decisions that come with the church, for example, to be a maiden, to be a virgin maiden? What's that like growing up in such a...? Like, I see you as someone... I mean you are in the Nazaretha Church. You are part of all these traditions and there is obviously a great value to those traditions and to that way of life to following those rules. So then, when you put yourself in somewhere like Mangosuthu University where there are all kinds of students from all kinds of different backgrounds doing all kinds of different things... what are your perceptions about being at one time in the world of the Nazaretha with this way of life, with these rules to follow, and then being in another world where there are none of those rules at all?

F/Ulundi/22: It is difficult. We try all our best, because the rules say female of Nazaretha is not allowed to have a boyfriend or to be in a relationship before the good time for her.

KGC: Which is marriage?

F/Ulundi/22: Yes. That's it. So, we try all our best that we follow that. Because if you break that law—we saw our sisters not exactly from our families, but we see them, if I can say, sisters from church. They get babies, and their boyfriends move away from them, and we see that this is a difficult life. And another thing, this thing AIDS. To avoid that, we follow these rules. There is not a lot of AIDS in our Church, because we don't engage ourselves in relationships before our time.

KGC: That's it and that is obviously the safest way to prevent AIDS and other sexual diseases.

F/Ulundi/22: Mm. And the increase of poverty.

KGC: Because yeah, if you are waiting until you are married and then you are exclusive with one partner, you can't... you'll be healthy. Which I find is very important in a place like South Africa, which is really suffering a lot from AIDS. So for you there's no regrets about that? Like, when you see other people, your peers, engaging in going to clubs, drinking, and having pre-marital sex and things like that, what are your thoughts about that? Like, when you see people your age doing that?

F/Ulundi/22: Actually, it is very difficult for them because there is not this rule or law, if I can say, from their church. They can do whatever they like. I'm the kind of person who don't like drinking and doing that stuff that they do. I don't care for doing it. Because I know where I come from, where I want to be.

[...]

KGC: And what are the rules that you have to follow in the church?

F/Ulundi/22: You know about *iSabatha*?

KGC: Yes.

F/Ulundi/22: There are things that we don't do, like cooking, because we don't have to do anything on *iSabatha*. We only have to go to church and pray. It is some sort of...

KGC: Obligation?

F/Ulundi/22: No. But fasting, some kind of fasting. If it's a Saturday, we do fast. Because we are waiting for our blessings from God, because we pray.

KGC: Oh, Saturday you fast?

F/Ulundi/22: Yes.

KGC: But don't some people eat?

F/Ulundi/22: We do eat, but after the afternoon service, *iSabatha*.

KGC: But I've seen people eat between the morning and the afternoon service.

F/Ulundi/22: They do, but sometimes if you are on fasting, you have not to eat.

KGC: Okay, so some people fast?

F/Ulundi/22: Yes, some people fast. Others don't.

KGC: You fast?

F/Ulundi/22: Yes, I do. Sometimes. Not every Sabbath.

KGC: And some of the others don't?

F/Ulundi/22: Yes.

KGC: Oh, I see. So, you are encouraged to fast on the Sabbath?

F/Ulundi/22: Yes, we are encouraged.

KGC: Oh, okay. And then, you don't drink alcohol?

F/Ulundi/22: No, we don't.

KGC: And you don't smoke?

F/Ulundi/22: No, it's not allowed.

KGC: And you are not supposed to cut your hair, I think.

F/Ulundi/22: Yes {laughs}.

KGC: Do you cut your hair?

F/Ulundi/22: We do, we do, because rules are there to be broken.

KGC: {laughs} So you do cut your hair sometimes?

F/Ulundi/22: Yes, sometimes I do cut my hair.

KGC: And why do you cut your hair?

F/Ulundi/22: If I don't feel like having it. If it is hot. Just cut it.

KGC: How do the elders look at that? Will you get reprimanded? Will they talk to you about that?

F/Ulundi/22: They do complain.

[...]

KGC: So, which are the most important rules for you to follow out of all of the rules?

F/Ulundi/22: I don't engage myself in unsafe relationships.

KGC: Okay, so pre-marital relationships, dating and all that?

F/Ulundi/22: Yes.

KGC: And why is that important?

F/Ulundi/22: Is it important because I can prevent getting HIV and AIDS, the spreading of poverty by having a baby without his father.¹⁹⁸

While the participant maintained her stance on pre-marital virginity as a way to prevent HIV and AIDS and unplanned pregnancies, I was somehow surprised that, as a university student, her primary reason to cut her hair had to do with fending off the heat, as opposed to keeping up with the latest fashions. We can surmise here, then, that as *umNazaretha*, the motivations for this adherent to cut her hair may not be exactly the same of many of her cohorts.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with researcher, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 20, 2011.

The next participant provides even more insight into what the life of a young *umNazaretha* lady might be like in KwaZulu-Natal today and the social challenges one might encounter when maintaining their living theology in the New South Africa:

KGC: I guess one question I could ask you is sort of, you know, you are a university student, you are obviously very well educated... how does that... going through school and now going to university... like, when you think of yourself as *umNazaretha*, but outside of the church, in society, in the secular world, in the public sphere, what kind of comments do you have [...] in terms of your interactions with non-members of the church?

F/Inanda/19: Well, what I can say is that it's really different for me as a university student because, unlike my parents who being traditional—they've come into this religion and they've been there all their lives. For me, I've come out of [...] university. I've met lots of different people... people's stories from different churches, so I find that it's very difficult, especially for a teenager who was born into this religion, because like people don't tend really to get what's going on, so it's hard to explain yourself, especially when people think you're an intellectual, and they think, "Well, you can't do certain things. How do you manage not being able to wear pants everyday?" Going on campus, it's a jeans and T-shirt life. So, I guess for a person, for youngsters especially who are in this village... and I think it really has to be your faith that keeps you going, because although I've been born into the village and naturally you would follow your parents' footsteps and religion until you reach the age where you can make your own decisions.

For me, I decided at a young age that this is for me. I love it. I'm here because I love it. It's not just because my mom is a minister and my father is a minister and they are in the church and they have positions. It's because I really, really, truly believe in Shembe and his miracles and everything about him. I decided to get baptized at the age of sixteen, because that's when you become a full-member, when you get baptized and you convert yourself to the religion. So for me, I'd say it's come naturally, you know. I don't wear pants. I observe the Sabbath. I don't drink, you know. It's hard being a teenager because things that all teenagers do, but for me I can say that I'm lucky in a sense that I have that since I love it so much. It's a part of me. It's a part of my life. I don't have to find space for it. I just make space for everything else. So for me, it's been good, you know. I don't think I'd be in any other religion.

[...]

F/Inanda/19: Like if you go to Palestine, you have to wear your headdress and respect the rules of the land. And when you come with your Shembe Church and you say, "Well, I have my nine o'clock service now and I cannot eat. Like, if I remember when I used to go to debate. We used to go all over the country and some days it lasted over the weekend and, you know, food requirements... I couldn't eat anything on Saturday that's prepared on Saturday. And people would just overlook that naturally, you know. Even though you made sure that you included that in your consent form and everything, you'd still find that nothing was prepared for you.

But, you know, I don't feel resentful that even though people talk about... even if I go to a certain place, people open a prayer and they will be standing and praying. I'd feel so open because I'm used to kneeling and praying. I'm used to doing things a certain way. Like, I remember at school when we used to pray for exams. We'd all stand in a big

circle and we'd be praying and I'd be feeling absolutely nothing, because this is so unlike me, but the world outside endorses it.

And when you go into the big world—like, I'm a student in university. I'd say if your faith really is not in you, it becomes really difficult. Even if it's a part of you. Even for me there are days when it gets difficult, you know, when people are like, "Okay, let's go to the movies," and everyone is wearing their jeans. Okay, ya sure, you really recognize that, "Okay, I do stand out from this and your points of opinion really differ from what's going on." And these people don't really have to prove anything, you know, because everyone just endorses it.

KGC: The majority rule.

F/Inanda/19: The majority rule and you are forever going to be a minority, unless the whole of South Africa comes to the Shembe Church. And even if it is that way, it's still people who make sure that they say nasty things about your church.

I mean, I remember when my dad, you know, was young, our church was real small, so they used to go to school and people used to make them cut their hair, by force, because they would be like, "It's unclean." And coming from a church where it stresses you cannot cut your hair and they used to force-cut some kids, you know... and that really hurt.

It was one of our ministers. When he used to preach at church, he used to say, "They used to cut our hair. They used to make us stand in the front and they would laugh at us and they would humiliate us." And even now, you have people who will do that. Like, my brother, they used to say nasty things to him like, "Why don't you cut your hair? Why don't you do this?"

You forget that people have such a weird way of making things about you stand out with their things that happen everyday that don't stand out, but your particular one would stand out. I mean, there are people who wear pants every day of the week, but no one notices that. But the fact that I wear skirts everyday, people will notice that. And I feel it's very wrong that people do that, but you cannot help it. It's just the way it is. I mean, I won't say life is not fair, but there are some things that you just have to come to accept.

KGC: And people who aren't enlightened tend to fear what they don't understand, what they don't know about.

F/Inanda/19: And some people, they feel threatened, but we don't come to harm no one.

KGC: It's very ironic.

F/Inanda/19: We harm no one. We don't expect you to observe the Sabbath with us. I don't expect you, because you are my friend, to start wearing skirts with me. I'm fine if you're wearing your pants. But just respect my culture and my religion and where I come from.

So, when I go to certain places, like, we're meeting for lunch on a Saturday and the fact that everyone wants to do things on a Saturday. Like, my neighbour wants to have her wedding on a Saturday and I have to be there. And my neighbour is getting buried on a Saturday. We don't bury on Saturdays. It's a sacred day. I have to be at church, but we're like, "You are our neighbour." And in the Bible it says, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." So you really have to start finding the balance, because when they preach at church, they would be like—okay, there are people who say that they would go to the night service before the funeral just so they can make it on Saturday to church.

And then when you come to church. They tell you that's wrong, because the Sabbath begins at the sunset of Friday evening, whereas Friday evening you were at that service. People are cooking there. There's a fire. You are in the midst of that. And they say if you go to those funerals, you are actually putting those people at a detriment, because you were there and you know what's right and you are still going there and endorsing what is wrong.

So, it becomes really difficult to start separating what's right from wrong and trying to find your place as a human, because as a being of this world, there are certain things you just cannot do. You are going to make mistakes. There are some things that you are not going to do right. But it becomes really difficult when you live in a world that looks down at you, looks differently at you, and you have to find peace with yourself and your church, and what you can do, and try to fit into society, and do stuff that make you normal.

I mean, all we want to be is normal, and people and the world unfortunately doesn't make enough space for us, you know. I feel that. We just celebrated our one hundredth year anniversary last year, maybe in the next hundred years things will be better, but it really is difficult, everyday. It really, really is difficult.

KGC: Did you feel that growing up you had to hide your religion from your peers?

F/Inanda/19: You know, that's interesting, because when you're at home and you're like, one, two, three, it's all natural. And then one day, bang, you're up in the big world. So, there are times, I'd say, now, when we sit and talk with people that are like, "Oh, we went to a party and we were drinking." And there was a time when we were talking with my friends and I said, "But I don't drink," and everyone made that a huge issue. "You do not drink? Don't lie. Like, one drop? You haven't had just like one sip?" I'm just like, "I haven't had it." And they will be like, "Why?" But I don't feel the pressure to do it. I mean, for me, like the parties I've been to are like, I could count them on my hand, on one hand, because there's nothing for me to do there. So when I went to my after party, I remember my younger siblings were asking me like, "Did you drink?"

KGC: The after party for your graduation?

F/Inanda/19: No, like after party. Like, you have those big farewell parties?

KGC: Oh, okay, sure.

F/Inanda/19: And then there's this big after party. And people just going to drink and dance. And I don't drink, but I spent like a huge big chunk of the evening there. So people were like, "She doesn't drink." I'm like, "No," but you guys don't understand. You'll see it as a rule that I feel forbidden... it's not a rule that I can't transcend. But it doesn't feel like that for me. What would actually feel awkward would be for me to stand there with a bottle and pretend that it's fun...

KGC: {laughs heartily}

F/Inanda/19: ... when it isn't!

KGC: That's really interesting.

F/Inanda/19: It will be so awkward, because that's what happens to me. You'd think that there was this boundary that I cannot break, that I feel stifled, like I'm just anxious to break out—but I don't feel that way! Stop feeling sorry for me. What will actually feel weird for me is walking around in pants, because I'm not used to it. And it's not the fact that I feel like I shouldn't do it. It's the fact that I don't want to do it. I do not want to

drink, because I do not feel anything. It's like a craving. Like, I love ice cream, I love chocolates. It's not like that, for me, with beer.

[...]

F/Inanda/19: I've been lucky, you know. I have friends from different religions and they really respect me and that's what I tell many youngsters in this church who would have trouble and would talk to me like, "How do you manage with this? How do you manage to tell people that you don't have a boyfriend and you haven't had your first kiss and you are waiting around to get married?" But I am not waiting around to get married, people! I just want to live my life and this is the path I've chosen for myself, so let it be. And my friends have been very understanding. I try to tell even my younger siblings when they have problems like this, "No, if those people really want to be your friends, they wouldn't expect anything out of you that isn't you. They would appreciate you and love you for who you are." So, yes, I have lots of friends who aren't in the religion and respect me. Like, if they want to go to the movies, they'll make sure it's not a Saturday. If I want to do certain things, they'll make sure that it's stuff that I can fit into and if I don't, I'll go along, maybe just hang around for a few minutes, you know. We all have to make compromises in life.¹⁹⁹

Like adherents of many religions deemed more "conservative" by the mainstream society, the struggles and challenges of this participant are not unlike those of many adolescents the world over. Note also how the participant frames her "challenges" not as types of subjugation stemming from her religious community, but rather a manner of life which just makes sense to her as part of her own traditions.

Sometimes the interaction between the secular and religious spheres are a little less straightforward, however. For example, in the next series of excerpts, the final female *umNazaretha* participant discusses how she does not see a contradiction between the church mandate against the use of medicines and her role as a medical doctor:

KGC: So basically, I wanted to ask you, and it might be a long answer, but as far as I am aware, you'd mentioned that the church is against medicines, right?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Yes.

KGC: So then how do you—well, I guess you can see where the question is going, right? So, on one hand, you are part of this church that's against modern medicine, but you are studying to be a medical doctor...

F/Port Shepstone/23: Ya.

KGC: ... so how do you make sense of these two, I don't know, almost contradictions.

F/Port Shepstone/23: Okay, I said to you... okay, we don't believe in traditional medicine and all this like...

KGC: Oh, you don't believe in traditional medicine?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Yes... actually coming to western medicine as well. So, let's say maybe you drank or you've used those medicine, maybe for some reason.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with researcher, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 27, 2011.

KGC: Traditional?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Yes. So you do the cleansing in the morning before you enter. And the same goes with having an injection, which is like modern medicine, right? Having an injection from a doctor or using any pill from the doctor. So, you do the cleansing in the morning before you enter the church, right. So now, these days, what I just heard was people are saying, well, I didn't hear Shembe himself say it, but people are saying Shembe said because there are a lot of people who has diabetes and they [...] these days and, you know, they are on chronic medication, so it means now that they'll do the cleansing like almost every Saturday for the rest of their lives. So, I heard that if you've just taken pills, then you don't cleanse anymore. You only cleanse if you get an injection or any other things.

KGC: Like?

F/Port Shepstone/23: I'm not really sure if it's true or not, but a lot of people these days they don't, like if they've taken the pill, like pills or tablets, 'cause the pill now is like contraception.

KGC: Ya, I know what you mean.

F/Port Shepstone/23: So if they've taken any tablets, they don't cleanse anymore.

KGC: Like if they took an Aspirin or...?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Yes, but mostly those who are on medication for diseases.

KGC: Okay, cancer meds or ARVs or something.

KGC: Well, that answers my question actually, because it's not so much. Because I think it used to be the church was against medicines, but now that's also changed in the more modern times.

F/Port Shepstone/23: Ya, but still for injections, like vaccines or maybe you went to the doctor and for some reason he gave you an injection only to cleanse in the morning. I'm not really sure how true it is, but it happens. Most people, they don't cleanse anymore for tablets these days.

KGC: So there is no contradiction as such, between you being a medical doctor and then being a member of the church? There doesn't seem to be the contradiction that I thought there would be.

F/Port Shepstone/23: Ya, because another thing Shembe said, he has been encouraging us to go to school and stuff. And he is actually giving blessings to even... like, at the end of ceremonies, always praying and saying, pray that God be with us, the ones at school [...]. And he has been saying there's going to be a time when the world is going to be full of *amaNazaretha* and if we don't have education as a background, then you can imagine what's going to happen to the world. So, he said maybe we should go to school too, you know, learn and stuff [...]

Then now, well it depends on which degree you choose. Now, we're speaking about medicine. Okay, so to be honest with you, it is a bit hard. Let's say now I want to be a doctor, right? Now, someone comes to me and he says, "Well, I really have this problem right now." I believe Shembe is God. Then now it's like, so somehow it is contradicting. Because now I am going to give this person an injection when I believe that Shembe can heal this.

So, it's like now, me now, I don't know, but somehow I can't tell my patients to go to Shembe now for healing, because maybe they've got their own beliefs or their own church or maybe they believe in Western medication... then Shembe, you know. So, in a

way, as we are doing it, the feeling is still there, that you know what, I am somehow against my church. And, I mean, the fact that someone has to do the cleansing in the morning before they enter the church, it means that they are not supposed to be taking these injections or these tablets from the first place, if you know what I mean.

It's like, I mean, "Why do I have to cleanse myself if it's allowed at the church?" The fact that they cleanse means it's not allowed. But at the end of the day, the feeling is there, to be honest with you. The feeling is there to say, "Okay, it's fine. I'm going to get a cleansing." But, really, you know, you could have easily went to Shembe and maybe he could have easily healed this and maybe you didn't even have to do the cleansing in the morning. But it's not an easy question.²⁰⁰

While my original line of questioning on the matter of being medical doctor in the context of a church that officially stands against modern medicine suggests a tension, the participant did not express a feeling that there might be some sort of contradiction there. Yet, upon carrying the conversation a little further, as she contemplated the fact that the church ministers administer a cleansing for those people who have taken injections or medications, she did confess that at some level, acting as a medical doctor made her feel as though she was doing something that goes against the values of her church.

Apart from the idea that the cleansing can overturn the "pollution" caused by modern medicine, I was also surprised when this woman, now working as a medical doctor, also expressed her belief, one shared by many members of the church, that HIV and AIDS can be cured through Shembe's healing power:

KGC: Do you believe that Shembe can heal somebody from HIV/AIDS?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Yes.

KGC: Do you?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Yes. Like, there are certain people who have confessed.

KGC: Really? They had it?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Yes.

KGC: And he healed them?

F/Port Shepstone/23: With the healing for any other disease or any other problem, like I can go there and say, "I'm HIV positive now," and then I get the healing. You can go there, and say the same thing, but you won't get the healing. The next person can go there and not get the healing. Then the fourth person can go there and get the healing. You know, at the end of the day, I can't really tell who gets the healing, because at church, there are people who have HIV. I'm sure they have gone to Shembe to say, "I have this disease and I'm asking for the healing, but they haven't been healed, you know. But then there are those that confessed. There was this one in Durban who confessed that, "Well, I didn't do the virginity test afterwards," but that's what she said, you know, saying that after she went to Shembe now, the doctor said, "Well," the doctor did the test and she

²⁰⁰ Interview with researcher, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 17, 2010.

didn't find the virus anymore. So, I have heard a couple of people, a few people actually, saying that they have been healed. But there's quite a lot of people at church who have the virus.²⁰¹

Some members join the church after having been affected, while others are certainly breaking the rule regarding pre-marital virginity. In this manner, HIV and AIDS have also come into the Shembe Church. With regard to modernity and indigeneity, the participant's stance on the validity of modern medicine, but the greater healing power of Shembe marks another instance of selective resistance and persistence at work in her personal hermeneutic.

After that exchange, we discussed another sensitive topic; namely, that while both *amaNazaretha* men and women are expected to remain virgins until marriage, ostensibly eliminating the spread of STDs, in practice, deviance from the regulation either by members born into the religion or new converts has brought HIV and AIDS into the church, representing a sometimes difficult topic to broach with many of the elder church members:

KGC: Now, from what I understand, this expectation of virginity, there is an expectation of virginity with men as well, right?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Oh.

KGC: Is it?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Well, the rule is there with them, but...

KGC: You can't really test men for virginity.

F/Port Shepstone/23: They can't really follow that, so if he does not have a girlfriend, if he is still a virgin and stuff. So, most men, when they get married, they are not virgins unfortunately. Unfortunately, it is that, but the rule is there. The law is there; they are supposed to be.

KGC: But it's not uncommon for men to have had some partners before marriage?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Yes. Actually, it's very common.²⁰²

KGC: So, how does that make you feel that women are being very sanctified and sacred, that virginity is sacred—sure, they are being tested. But the men, it's like they are encouraged to be virgins, but no one's really following up on that. What are your thoughts about that?

F/Port Shepstone/23: I wouldn't really say they are "encouraged," because it's like the rule is that for them that you are not allowed to have a girlfriend. So, oh yes, if you don't have a girlfriend, it means you are going to be a virgin, and you are going to pick your wife at church, and then you are going to get married, just like that way. But they don't follow that and then somehow it can't be followed.

You know, there's this stigma as well that it can't be followed. You know, there's this stigma as well that, you know, if you are a man and you do not have a girlfriend or you haven't had sex before, it's like there's something wrong with you upstairs. But they are not supposed to listen to that. The rule is there for them as well, but you'll find that

²⁰¹ Interview with researcher, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 17, 2010.

²⁰² Note that this opinion does not reflect a documented finding.

most of them, if not all of them, when they get married, maybe like five percent of them will still be virgins. But most of them, they will even have two, three, four kids before they get married.

KGC: So, do you feel that's a bit of a double standard? Or does it not bother you?

F/Port Shepstone/23: It does. Like, I remember when I was still on the virgins' side, we used to talk about [...] Because these days, I'm not sure if you've heard, the number of people who get AIDS everyday is rising very high.

KGC: Especially in South Africa, it's a huge percentage. Isn't like thirty-three percent of the population has AIDS or something like that.

F/Port Shepstone/23: Yes, it's very bad. In hospitals, in the ward, you'll find that maybe about eighty-five of every patient in the ward has AIDS.

KGC: Eighty-five percent?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Yes.

KGC: In the hospital?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Like, I'm just saying that from my perspective, not really that maybe it's a documented thing. I'm not sure. But in Durban, in hospitals around Durban and stuff and even in rural areas these days. Like, you can't say maybe townships have bigger numbers than rural areas. You'll find that even in rural areas, it's very bad.

So you can see now, it's like they're supposed to follow it as well, so I heard that most people now they are trying to adopt the fact that if someone picks you at the church, you should first go for virgin test. I had like two tests before I got married. So now we are trying to follow that which was not supposed to have been a matter, you know, because if you don't have a girlfriend and you are a virgin. I also tested and I don't have a boyfriend and I'm a virgin then.

You see, it was not supposed to have been necessary, but today it's necessary at the church because you'll find that maybe the lady is twenty-six-years-old and she's still a virgin. You know, been through so much but still survived it and stuff and then now she meets this man who picks her up at church, but still, she has got AIDS.

KGC: She can end up with AIDS even if she was never... even if she only had one partner.

F/Port Shepstone/23: It happens almost everyday at the church. You'll find that this innocent woman just get picked by this man and then she just assumes that, "Oh, he is from church, so he must be negative. He must be HIV negative." Because he's not supposed to have any girlfriend. But then after a few years, she starts getting sick. I mean, it shows that he had done something before.

But basically to answer your question, we are really concerned as the ladies, up to a point where before you get married these days you test the men. Like the wife and the husband, they will get HIV tests before they get married. But most people who are still maybe blind or something that they don't do it. But most people, especially those that are aware, because most people are aware. They speak about AIDS on radio, TV, at school these days we are talking about AIDS. Most of us will get tested before we get married. And the question that arises, at least with me, was, 'cause before we went for the test, I was so convinced that D— is really the one sent by Shembe for me. Then the question was, now if I find D— to be positive, will I stop the whole thing just because I find him to be positive, though I believe that now he is the one for me. It was a very hard decision.

KGC: You did tests?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Ya, we did tests.²⁰³

Although the call for pre-marital virginity exists for both *amaNazaretha* men and women, the realities of infidelity and the cultural double-standard regarding the virginity of men have brought HIV and AIDS into *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. The taboo against contraception has no doubt exacerbated this problem. Yet the assumption of virginity, and the impossibility of testing men, has also made the topic of HIV and AIDS a difficult one to discuss, at least for the Ebuhleni faction. Since the protocols regarding the separation of men and women at Ekuphakameni are much more strict, I was not able to speak to any *amaNazaretha* women in that faction.

After establishing a rapport with F/Port Shepstone/23, and a professionalism between her expertise as a medical doctor and mine as an ethnographer, I was able to inquire a little bit further about the virginity tests associated with *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Zulu culture. I leave her remarks here for the curious reader:

KGC: And you mentioned this again now... you said there's a virgin test?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Yes.

KGC: What does that mean or what does that consist of?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Okay, basically it's been happening. It's like part of our tradition, Black people now. So, for our church, I'm not sure if you've noticed, Nazareth Church it's more, it's like, basically it's almost the same as... okay, basically it has the same cultures and traditions that Black people were following back in the days. So, those are some of the things that are similar. In some communities, they still do it even if they don't belong to our church, but in our church—I don't know if you'll be here in June, 'cause that's when they do it. Before the July ceremony starts, there's I think about five days for it and millions of girls get tested and...

KGC: And what is the process?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Okay, basically what happens is... okay, there are old women, right? Basically, they know how... I don't know how to explain it, but it's like, basically, they know a female's private parts, in a way. So, there's this thing that they do with the hymen. So basically they say they look for the hymen.

KGC: So there's certain elder women, and they are charged to perform the check? Is that it?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Yes.

KGC: So, how does it happen?

F/Port Shepstone/23: So, basically, we will queue. Like, we will make multiple queues. And then maybe there's like ten of these old women sitting down. And you will go to your woman [...], right? She's like sitting down on the [...], just sitting down [...]. But it has to be in a steep area, right? So, say maybe she's sitting up here. So, you come and you lie on your back down here.

²⁰³ Interview with researcher, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 17, 2010.

KGC: I see. Like on a hill or something?

F/Port Shepstone/23: {chuckles}

KGC: Yeah, I know it can be a bit sensitive.

F/Port Shepstone/23: She's like sitting up here and then you lie down there and then you come closer to her and then basically she retracts the labia and then she looks, basically.

KGC: So it's really just that simple? It's just her going there and taking a look? Again, I was going to ask you, being a future medical doctor and all. It's less embarrassing perhaps.

F/Port Shepstone/23: So, now... so those women, basically, they are trained. They know what they are looking for. I'm not really sure what it is, but most people they say it's the hymen.

KGC: Umhm.

F/Port Shepstone/23: Ya, because for us, like young Black girls, you are told you can't use the—what's this pad?

KGC: A Maxi pad? A tampon?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Ya, like there are things as a child you are told you can't use this because they know that at some point in your life you will do a virgin test and it can destroy your hymen and stuff. So some small mistakes can happen in a way.

KGC: And then you're like, "Oh, well, I really haven't."

F/Port Shepstone/23: So ya, but at church, what makes it different from what they do in the community is before it starts, right, we're praying. Like those women, they like basically, we ask for Shembe to be with us and it's a very spiritual thing, if you can understand. So those women, they actually ask for Shembe to somehow be their eye, in a way. Like, to make them see the real thing, in a way. And then after that we take the oath. So you don't just go there if you know that, you know, you take the oath and you say, "I, so and so, promise to stay a virgin until I get my husband." So basically, we take an oath before the virgin testing starts.

KGC: So do they give you a certificate or something afterwards?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Yes, I have one.

[...]

KGC: Is the virgin testing done every year?

F/Port Shepstone/23: It's not just every year. Maybe sometimes you can do it like four times a year, but there's not a rule that says do it once or twice a year. Like, it depends. In some communities, they are still very strict, and they do it like maybe after every three months. Where I come from, I remember they do it. Remember, I told you they do it during that July ceremony? So, before we go to that July ceremony, we do it at home to make sure that we go there clean, right? And then they do it in December as well. So, we get it in December as well. So they have to do it like at small branches in November to make sure that when we go to the big ceremony in December, they know that we are going there clean. So, I know there are some communities that do four times, even five times a year. But you do it yearly up until you are no longer a virgin.

KGC: Yeah, until you get married... basically.

F/Port Shepstone/23: Ya, but some people they... you do lose like a couple of girls along the way.

KGC: Yeah, of course, they're—something happens... they get tempted.

F/Port Shepstone/23: Yes.

KGC: And then there's just no point to get tested anymore.

F/Port Shepstone/23: Ya. It's very embarrassing. That's why if you are not a virgin, you just don't go there. You've got to tell your parents that, okay, this has happened.

KGC: What happens if one of the elder ladies, like if it happens, oh, she discovers, oh, she's not a virgin. Then what do they do?

F/Port Shepstone/23: It's very embarrassing because basically everyone will know in the community. First of all, everyone in those queues will know or anyone passing by will know because they shout at you, "Why do you come here from the first place?" For them it's like, "Argh! It's so disgusting." They make it sound like that.

KGC: So, it doesn't happen very often?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Yes. So, then they call your parents, right. They talk to them, and obviously when you go back to your community, they are going to know.

KGC: And then I guess there's a stigma on women who aren't virgins and have had intercourse while not married?

F/Port Shepstone/23: Yes, in our church it's there.²⁰⁴

I feel very privileged for the time and frankness that this participant offered me in regard to her traditions and her views on medical science. While she has obviously not ruled out the utility of medical science, she still places more value in her own traditions. The same is true, at large, of African Nazarites with regard to a dynamic of selective resistance and persistence on many complex issues.

1.3 Conclusion to Section

As we have seen, in environments where women face grave dangers each and every day, especially related to issues of ethnicity and poverty, the African Nazarites have drawn on principles of nonviolence and offered alternate patriarchal spaces that offer safety and respect for women. Rastafari men, monogamist or polygynist, refer to their female partners as "Empresses" or "Queens." In *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, though men and women are encouraged to remain virgins until they marry, deviations from this regulation are steadily bringing HIV and AIDS into the church. Like for all communities in the world today, the threat of STDs is another major concern for Rastafari in Jamaica, who also do not practice birth control and can be polyamorous. Yet, in the Shembe Church, for the women who are in loving marriages where both parties are healthy and have practiced the appropriate protocols, there appears to be a relative freedom not offered to them elsewhere in society. Also, while the two Rastafari women I happened to have had the chance to interview, Donisha Prendergast and Cen'C Love, represent public figures who grew up in the legacies of their famous grandparents and parents, the majority of Rastafari

²⁰⁴ Interview with researcher, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 17, 2010.

women that I observed in Jamaica were no doubt from a less privileged socioeconomic stratum. The particulars of anyone's domestic sphere will depend on the people in question, but I have tried to demonstrate how in a general sense, being an African Nazarite, whether Rastafari or *umNazaretha*, affords these women, especially among the poor and Black, opportunities that most cohorts in their societies simply do not have since, despite certain realities, the core of the theology preaches a respect for women seldom seen in the mainstream.

2. Self-Reliance and Modernity: Internal Economies

African Nazarites generally preach an ethic of self-reliance, but where modernity infringes on indigeneity, acquiescences and adaptations ensue. Though the utopic ideal is that of a human walking in step with nature and raising one's own sources of nutrition in a manner that respects the sanctity of family and community, the sheer realities of urban and peri-urban living mean that many African Nazarites today maintain employment outside their religion. For others, the series of events spawned from these communities of like-minded individuals offer occasions for commerce as either a primary or subsidiary source of income. Where an ideal of agrarian self-reliance is impossible to achieve, African Nazarites tend to extend the metaphor to their financial dealings, thereby spending their money within the community, whenever possible. In the following sections, I will explore a few examples of these religiously oriented internal economies at work.

2.1 Internal Economies: Ibandla lamaNazaretha

For *amaNazaretha*, the call to self-reliance is expressed almost daily (apart from Sabbath Day), during the Morning Prayer:

21. You must never be idle. It is a sin to be lazy. A lazy person is like a dog which survives by begging food from human beings. At the end of the prayer, take your hoe and till, that is how you will live, and refrain from begging food from people [...]
25. You should be ashamed of begging food from people, when God has given you hands with which to work, and not to beg. Now, you go around begging with those hands! Why don't you work with those hands!
26. All the lazy people will be thrown out. Their blood shall be demanded from their hand, it shall not be demanded from the hand of God; because they cast shame on God through their laziness. God has given them hands with which to work; they do not work, they keep their hands for begging for food. They cast shame on God. (Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]: 9)

The words of one youth participant from my field research directly reflect the mandate to work presented in the Morning Prayer, thus revealing how embedded the mandate can be in the expressions of *amaNazaretha*:

F/Inanda/19: Yes, you work hard. It teaches you not to beg. You have your two hands. Go out there. Find yourself. I mean, the Scripture is written that Shembe, the founder wrote that, “Understand that you live in a world with kings, with presidents. Respect the rule of the land.” Being a Nazaretha doesn’t mean doing what you want and trample over other people. You be humble. You remain humble. You respect the rules of the land. You respect your president. You respect your king. You respect your teacher. You respect your employer who gave you your job. You do your job to the fullest so that the person who pays you that money at the end of the day feels self-fulfilled as well. You do not steal from another person to feel great about yourself. You do not criticize a person, if you are a beggar on the street, who doesn’t give you money, because you also have your own hands. You work hard. You give. You take. It’s the same thing. There isn’t a separation. Shembe just decrees harmony. He fosters it. He believes in it, you know. It’s harmony. Work hard. Pray hard.²⁰⁵

Muller has argued that in the context of the Shembe Church, “Nazarite economic production was underpinned by a Protestant work ethic/ideology of hard work as honorable and indolence as sinful” (1999: 45). Here we can see a hybridic interaction between a capitalistic notion in relation to one’s own religious and indigenous traditions.

While the Ekuphakameni faction demonstrated no real signs of this trait, as mentioned, vendors were ubiquitous at Ebuhleni gatherings. Despite the command not to engage in commerce on the Sabbath Day, many of the “pilgrims” were also travelling vendors carrying foodstuffs and religious paraphernalia (necklaces, furs, garments, CDs, DVDs), some of whom would even sell their wares on the Sabbath. The media sold at these events are generally recordings of sermons, hymns, or praise poetry (*izibongo*). For some, their conversion to the church and associated forms of employment are seen as complementary. Muller identifies such “commodification and entrepreneurship” as “central characteristics of Nazarite spirituality” (1999: 5), but, according to my research, the comment more accurately applies to the majority Ebuhleni faction. One 43-year-old participant I interviewed, for example, told me that he used to earn 2,600 rands a month working at a garage, but since converting to the Shembe Church, he quit his job as a panel beater and started selling ear decorations and plastic necklaces with photos at the perpetual pilgrimage sites of the Ebuhleni faction, where he has been able to gain up to

²⁰⁵ Interview with researcher, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 27, 2011.

10,000 rands on a good month. This type of economic improvement through church and community interaction was very much encouraged on the Ebuhleni side.

The nature of the internal economy at Ekuphakameni is rather different, however, where the commodification of the church is not encouraged. In our interviews, Vukile Shembe expressed his opinion that unchecked interactions with the urban landscape invariably lead to a life away from agrarian self-reliance.

KGC: If you look at the twentieth century, it's been a huge time of technological development and obviously the Internet, cars, all the things we associate with life in the third millennium (now in the second decade), obviously weren't there a hundred years ago... a lot of the things. Even electricity was very scarce in those days if it was somewhere... probably not much at all. So, a lot of changes have happened over a hundred years. And, in some senses, we can see that a lot of those changes have come into play with the reasons for the split [between Ekuphakameni and Ebuhleni]. Some of the aspects brought by modernity in terms of technology, wealth, those types of things. So, I guess, the question I'm trying to ask is: as the leader of the Ekuphakameni side, what is your relationship, as the head of the church, with modernity, meaning the technologies, the networks, the corporate world, all these things that we can associate with the modern West?

Vukile Shembe: I have a problem with most of them, of the innovations, especially the ones that have an element of diverting a person's focus away from God and affecting their loyalty to their faith, especially the Internet, because there is no way, to an extent, that you can restrict people's access to it and what they view in it and what they read in it.

At the same time, you can't run away from the fact that there are certain things that are necessary, as far as some of them are working. They need to access those things often and again, but it would be an advice that you can pass to a person that you need to exercise self-discipline when it comes to such things. Because, really, to some, these things do make their lives easy as far as their work responsibilities are concerned and such things. But, generally, most of them, they have an element of ending up affecting a person's spiritual focus.

If a person can find a way—I don't know if there is any, but if a person can find a way of managing that, of making sure that their exposure to these things doesn't end up affecting their loyalty to God, then you can't prevent them from accessing. What you can do is just raise your consciousness to them about some of the consequences these things bring with them to a person who is dedicated to God's service.

KGC: So, it's not necessarily regarded as a negative thing. The question would be how it is utilized and for what purposes?

Vukile Shembe: Yes. Often, it ends up being negative, holding that negative effect with use [...] And the very fact that a person using these things cannot avoid developing an attitude against rural residence, because you need to access these things. And, most of them, to access them, you have to move to the cities. You become exposed to a kind of life that is not really, that doesn't create, that doesn't encourage loyalty to God. There is just little space to monitor your loyalty to God, living in the cities. But you have to stay there because you need these things, because they make your life easy, in a way.

KGC: And, yourself, you mentioned that you do go on the Internet sometimes to do research or to find out certain things. So, I think it's again, it's the kind of dichotomy or dualism of modernity.

Vukile Shembe: I do believe that, you know, with a certain degree of commitment, we can be able to live without these things. Because, an easy life, to an extent, is not all that much a necessary life.

KGC: You can see things like the Internet as a complication. I mean, when you are just talking about living a pure life and you mentioned, for example, in a rural setting... so, you have some food to eat, some food is growing, some animals to give food... you have shelter. The rest seems to be quite complicated.

Vukile Shembe: And with the exposure to these things, beautiful houses, mansions, and all that, people start developing an unnecessary complaint to God and grievances that, "My life compared to what I've just seen."²⁰⁶

But even at Ekuphakameni, over time, because of increasing numbers of adherents living on site, some of the original farming lands from three and four generations ago and the ideal of agrarian self-reliance have given way to living quarters to accommodate a growing membership, while more and more *amaNazaretha* plan their life around "corporate" expectations:

KGC: And, in terms of what I understand, a lot of the original vision of Shembe was to create communities that were self-sustaining or self-sufficient in that sense. I think they were Nazaretha, Bhekumesiya. As far as I understand, they were farming communities as well.

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: And even here in Ekuphakameni, there is some food that is growing. It used to be a larger farm from what I understand.

Vukile Shembe: It used to be. Only now, that people are lazy, they don't want to work.

KGC: So, that's going on here at Ekuphakameni?

Vukile Shembe: Yes, a lot.

KGC: People are buying food instead?

Vukile Shembe: People are buying food and wasting a lot of money. Because they have to take public transport. Well, a few have their own transport, but you waste a lot of money going to town to buy fruits and vegetables that you can grow in your backyard.

KGC: Right.

Vukile Shembe: And in these places that Shembe provided for them to work in.

KGC: So, is that something that you would encourage?

Vukile Shembe: It is something that I encourage. There is a conscious drive. We try to put food together, cooperatives, so that people can learn to be self-reliant when it comes to things like food and money.

KGC: Because then, if you are fed, it makes the so called necessity of finding a job in a factory within the western framework almost obsolete.

Vukile Shembe: Yes, and you have to adjust. As soon as you get a job from whoever provides you with employment in town, you have to adjust. There are certain things, times and all that, you can't honour. For instance, you find people having to work on the

²⁰⁶ Interview with researcher, Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 20, 2011.

Sabbath Day, because that's what their work requires. And you can't tell a person without providing an alternative to absent themselves from work. But, with these things that Shembe introduced, there was a way of a person being able to observe the Sabbath Day throughout his life.

If you look into the [...] of what it means to be a Nazaretha, it goes to an extent where it starts making a person who is supposed to be selected when he picks the kind of employment. You have to consider the requirements of being *umNazaretha* before you can accept or decline employment. Shembe encouraged people to be farmers most of the time, not because he was entrenching them into slavery as the way that most of them used to look at it, but because it allowed you more time to pray. You pray on your own terms. There is no person looking to get your score of the day, of the work you have done. It's self-discipline. And you get that special allowance to observe the Sabbath Day, which is supposed to be the central thing when you are considering that there are things to take part in and there are things to discourage against being part of.

KGC: And, moreover, it fits into the third category of rules that you had mentioned.

Vukile Shembe: Yes, nature. Because there is a responsibility, especially a spiritual responsibility that we should cultivate land. My father once said, "It's a sin to be *umNazaretha* and not have a garden."

KGC: It's rare now?

Vukile Shembe: Yes. He said there are three laws of the soil that work to bless a person's harvest. So, if you don't have a garden, they lay a charge against you before God. It was something profound. I haven't heard it anywhere else. I was listening to this tape and I got this part, yes. So, rather than working to exact pleasure, people must try to develop a way of trying to explain a benefit for them into adopting that kind of life. So, there is a conscious drive of trying to bring people back to being farmers and all that. Because, really, there is no excuse you can make. Land is available and it gives you time, except for if you're lazy and which is a sin. It's a sin to be lazy.

KGC: And it's biblical as well. I mean, the idea of toiling in the earth.

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: And eating from the sweat of your brow.

Vukile Shembe: Yes. People don't want that. They want to sit in their offices, wear ties and...

KGC: What do you think about that? What do you think about corporate culture?

Vukile Shembe: I think it's corrupting, spiritually. Because, however hard you can try, either your spiritual life is going to be complicated or your work life is going to be complicated. If you hold onto your spiritual principles, it's definitely going to interfere with your work requirements. If you hold onto your work requirements, it's going to affect your spirituality. So, there is no way you can reach a balance.

KGC: Unless you revise the type of work you do to feed yourself?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: Then, there can be a way?

Vukile Shembe: Corporate work, I don't think there is a way that a person can safely practice Nazaretha by being in the corporate world. You are going to have to face a

situation whereby, every now and then, you are going to breach a certain law in order to survive, in order to make it, in order to meet the targets.²⁰⁷

Examples of continued peri-urban agriculture at Ekuphakameni include raising corn in fallow space and goats around the grounds (Figures 76, 77).

Along the lines of these criticisms pointed against the increasing influence of corporate interests, one member of Ekuphakameni discussed how his faction once intervened to stop the blessing *en masse* of Vaseline proposed by Ebuhleni. As one participant from Ekuphakameni relayed:

M/Noodsberg/24: And there was another issue [with Ebuhleni]. They were saying they wanted to sell Vaseline. They said they are going to make a deal with Blue Seal, the company that's producing Vaseline and their king is going to put his fingers in all of the Vaseline—not all of them... I don't know how they are going to do it, but they're going to sell it in bulk.

KGC: Pre-blessed?

M/Noodsberg/24: Yes, pre-blessed, exactly. And we were saying, “No, it doesn't work like that.”

KGC: It's too commercial?

M/Noodsberg/24: Ya, it's not about business.

KGC: You have to go and get the blessing?

M/Noodsberg/24: They were degrading the Shembe original.

KGC: So, you use Vaseline here in Ekuphakameni?

M/Noodsberg/24: We do use Vaseline, but not the way they were saying. If you are sick, you just go to the leader and the leader will identify whether you need water or you need Vaseline or soap. Exactly. Unlike the way they were doing it. Because there's many of them, so it would be a lot of business for them. But we said, “It's not an issue. You are not going to make it. We would rather go to court.” Anyway, we went to court and we beat them.²⁰⁸

Despite the blockade against “pre-blessed” Vaseline, in the Ebuhleni faction, the sale and blessing of petroleum jelly remains a central spoke in the internal economy (Figures 78, 79).

Although I have not encountered any scholarship that addresses the source of this healing tradition associated with the blessed Vaseline, I was able to enquire about this topic in both the Ekuphakameni and Ebuhleni factions. During the course of my research on the Ebuhleni side, the elders I spoke to about Vaseline described the petroleum jelly as a “vessel” that carried the holy spirit and healing power of Shembe, but it was in fact this spiritual force that was primarily acting.

²⁰⁷ Interview with researcher, Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 20, 2011.

²⁰⁸ Interview with researcher, Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 19, 2011.

I also had the opportunity to inquire a little bit further into the matter with Vukile Shembe. His approach to healing involves approaching each request on a case-by-case basis, representing a stark contrast to the blessing *en masse* approach:

KGC: With the idea of hygiene and cleanliness we were just talking about, I noticed in the Ebuhleni side, people come often to get three things blessed for the purpose of healing: Vaseline, soap, and water. Is that something that's practiced here?

Vukile Shembe: Yes, it is practiced, but under strict observance. You can't just show up with your bucket of water and your soap and...

KGC: Because that's what they do in Ebuhleni.

Vukile Shembe: Ya, I am aware.

KGC: So, how does it work here? How do those things come into play? How does it work here?

Vukile Shembe: It has to be on an instruction and, then again, spiritual advice. There are people also that God has given a gift of being able to pray for people. At the time of the person coming to you, the spirit would guide you with the problem that the person is laying before you. What should you do? I related a story to you about the vision that I saw that told me to take water and pray for it.

KGC: With regard to the lady who had an evil spirit inside her?

Vukile Shembe: So, that's how it works. You can't just have a person who is going to show up with a bucket of water and tell you to pray for him. It's not the approach we would take to deal with a member's problem.

KGC: So, there would be certain conditions where water is appropriate, certain conditions where soap is appropriate, and certain conditions where Vaseline is appropriate?

Vukile Shembe: Yes, according to the advice of the Holy Spirit.

KGC: So, soap, in a way, I can understand, because it's a naturally cleansing thing, in a way. I don't know if anyone has asked you the question before, but you can imagine from an outsider's perspective, the practice of using Vaseline and healing— not necessarily on the skin. That's intuitive as that was where it was designed to go. That's how it's advertised. But the practice of eating the Vaseline, is that something that is also done here?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: And what kind of conditions would you eat Vaseline for?

Vukile Shembe: You know, any kind of condition, as long as the Holy Spirit dictates it.

KGC: That this is the method?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: And who introduced it? Was it your great-grandfather who introduced Vaseline?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: And is there a story, is there a tradition behind that innovation? I mean, obviously there was a day where he wasn't using it and then...

Vukile Shembe: It's not supposed to be Vaseline per se. It's supposed to be oil, but, commonly, over the years, the only common form of oil that has been used is petroleum jelly. So, it has been adopted as part of the tradition.

KGC: Because it's so perplexing for me, in that sense, because I don't know of a precedent in any other group where they use Vaseline as a healing vessel.

Vukile Shembe: Well, Shembe introduced it. It does, actually, amazing, help a lot of people. It's something unheard of when you think about the practicality of a person praying for petroleum jelly and it actually, through its use, healing someone. It's amazing.

[...]

Vukile Shembe: I have a practical case, a particular case, I remember, of a young woman who had a stroke. The guidance of the spirit was that I must pray for petroleum jelly. I prayed for it. She used it for, I think, hardly a month and her hand was healed.

KGC: Even if it is not blessed, it has healing properties—if you have small cuts and things like that. It helps. There's something about it. There's a certain property. But is there no tradition about the day that Vaseline was chosen?

Vukile Shembe: No, there is none that I know of.

KGC: So, it's still quite mysterious, the actual circumstances of how Shembe decided to use Vaseline?

Vukile Shembe: Yes. There were a lot of things that he had been introducing over the years. It was all around him having made contact with that thing. Because to some people he would just say, "Bring a handkerchief. Pray for it."

KGC: I see.

Vukile Shembe: And some he would... you know, there are a lot of things that he had asked people to bring to him and actually prayed for and had some proof of effectiveness.

KGC: So, is it a vessel? These items serve as vessels to carry the spirit?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: That's the main purpose?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.²⁰⁹

The issues around Vaseline—itsself a product of the industrial age—and the various opinions about its role in the church are excellent reflections of the sometimes indistinguishable tensions between modernity and tradition found in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

Finally, of the many stories of miracles in the Shembe Church, among the youth I interviewed in both the Ekuphakameni and Ebuhleni factions, I heard a few tales of a "mysterious man wearing a hat" who came into their school or university to pay for their school fees after they had prayed to Shembe. Take the following, for instance:

F/Ulundi/22: Ya, my friend, she was studying in Mangosuthu. She finished her diploma in Public Management. She didn't apply for a bursary, but she went to church to pray and asked Shembe to help her on her studies, because her parents were struggling to pay her tuition fees. And then, when she got to school, her name appears on the list of people who have bursaries. She don't know how that happened. And then she went to [...] at school, the Financial Aid Department and asked if does she got a bursary or a loan. They said that, "Yes." Then, she asked them why, because she didn't apply for it. They said they don't know, but she have the bursary. There are miracles.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Interview with researcher, Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 20, 2011.

²¹⁰ Interview with researcher, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 20, 2011.

Granted, one might argue that paying tuition for those in need is somewhat “less impressive” miracle than raising the dead, but the venture is indicative of the practical world in which African Nazarties also employ their theology of self-reliance as applicable to *communitas*.

When I interviewed Vukile Shembe, he shared something with me in further relation to his involvement in the business world. The intention with his own enterprises outside of the church is to give back to his flock through programs such as financing *amaNazaretha* students or community building:

Vukile Shembe: I’ve been trying to raise a culture of education, education to an extent of arming oneself in order for them to be able to make advised choices. That’s why it’s the practical angle of [...] concerned, life is concerned. So, part of the funds that I am trying to raise, being involved in business, is to finance the education of these students. And, also, there is a lot of neglect of buildings, particularly on this site. So, that also needs money and it needs it as early as last year. So, we try to do whatever we can to raise funds, to meet these challenges.

KGC: So, you don’t see a problem, as such, with the concept of money?

Vukile Shembe: I don’t. It’s a person’s relationship with the money.

KGC: It’s how the money is spent? It’s how the money is utilized?

Vukile Shembe: Yes. It’s what you consider money to be. When it gets to a part where you can’t even come to church because you are chasing after money, because you are rushing after a meeting, because you have to take care of an appointment... then it becomes a problem. If anything at all, it would only be acquired as a token of advancing God’s worship.²¹¹

Although I was not able to verify whether a similar program for tuition funding was in place with the Ebuhleni faction, I could only surmise as much based on the testimonies of the adherents I had interviewed. This kind of direct prayer to a “Living God”²¹² clearly possesses the capacity of having one’s wish granted. With this kind of internal spending of funds on the congregation itself, the agrarian model of self-reliance is extended as a metaphor into the infrastructures of modernity and nurturing the community. The lingering metaphor that epitomizes this ambiguous relationship is the empty Coca-Cola bottles used to beat the animal skins of the Zulu drums while the long metal *izimbomu* sound (Figure 80).

2.2 Internal Economies: Rastafari

While the academic literature on the reggae industry and the commercialization of Rastafari is quite extensive (Edmonds 2003; King 1998; cf. Murrell 1998b: 438), many among the Bobo

²¹¹ Interview with researcher, Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 20, 2011.

²¹² cf. Appendix 2.

Shanti and Nyabnighi stand against the commodification of their prayer traditions into reggae music. As Edmonds writes:

By the early 1970s, individuals aspiring to careers as singers had come to realize that projecting a Rastafarian image was part of the formula for having a profitable career. The artists who took on the image of the sufferer/singer were often not Rastas, but sensing that the commercial world was attracted to the Rastafarian elements in the music, they “locks” (adopted the dreadlocks hairstyle) and invoked Rastafarian ideology in their lyrics to boost their chances of economic success. For many, the key to success lay in clothing themselves in the Rastafarian image, employing Rastafarian language, and espousing Rastafarian ideas. This wearing of the Rastafarian mask became so pervasive that Rastas often bemoaned the fact that many jump onto the Rastafarian bandwagon for monetary gain. (2003: 93)

Of course, as already discussed, Rastafari is not as popular in Jamaica today as it was a few decades ago.

Still, many Rastas earn their living as vendors, performers, and artists at the various events organized by the community. As Nettleford has written:

It is not by any means a coincidence that the Rastafarian tends to involve himself if he has a choice in what are regarded (at least in democracy) as the highest expressions of the creative spirit—religion, branches of the arts (painting, sculpting, performing), literature (particularly poetry) and philosophy (though many members of the established order would still not take them seriously on this). In the more practical matter of earning a livelihood, the Rastafarian will prefer to achieve the indices of prosperity *by his own efforts* in a self-employed situation, and in creative ways. (1998b: 233-234)

Part of the expression of this self-employment as it applies to living *communitas* is what Hutton and Murrell describe as a “communitarian economic philosophy” (1998: 37). Many of these endeavours involve entrepreneurship in the world outside Rastafari, as well as contributing back to members of the community as much as possible.

Nettleford has provided a succinct portrayal of the pliant and evolving nature of the Rastafari internal economy:

More than any other protest group in the African diaspora, the Rastafarians have made an important psychological leap in the elevation of Selassie to divine status. They are also concerned about bread but as a group they have probably done more than most in Jamaica to fend for themselves, whether by composing and performing music, engaging in co-operative fishing, manufacturing curios for the tourist industry or painting pictures for paying patrons. This has had serious enough implications for economic planning in Jamaica in terms of micro-entrepreneurship and self-reliance, except that public planners have not (until lately) taken them seriously enough in this regard, perhaps because such activities are too “*folksy*” for the statistical needs of annual Economic Reports. (1998b: vii-viii)

Yet, some things have changed in more recent years.

Mutabaruka, for example, was named resident Folk Philosopher at the University of the West Indies during the 2003-2004 academic year. In 2007, Muta was also the artist in residence at Merritt College in Oakland, California. As already seen, the academy is increasingly listening to Rastafari philosophy, while more and more scholars affiliated with Rastology emerge. Moreover, many “middle-class entrepreneurs have built thriving businesses exploiting” Rastafari culture, and despite intermittent political frictions and its decline in popularity among Jamaican youth, Rastafari and reggae also remain top draws for tourism dollars in Jamaica (Edmonds 2003: 93-95). Somewhat ironically, as Edmonds argues further, while the “cooptation by political and commercial forces has dulled militancy of the movement and has short-circuited its potential as an agent of social change [...] the cooptation and commercialization of Rastafari have also served to further entrench it in Jamaican society,” while the “Jamaican establishment eventually came to embrace reggae, with all of its Rastafarian overtones” (2003: 95-112). But, Rastafari do not necessarily need outside investors to make ends meet.

Today, almost anywhere one goes in Jamaica, but especially at reggae concerts and certain Binghi grounds, Rastafari are present, selling their various wares, from *Ital* cuisine, to handmade items such as art pieces and clothing, and also various fermented non-alcoholic drinks (Figure 81). Note, however, that the commercial aspects were of a smaller scale at the Binghi I attended at Scotts Pass—just a few cooked food items, drinks, and fruit vendors. Even these smaller forms of commerce were non-existent at Bobo Hill and the Pinnacle, where the tradition of “carrying” one’s own food to share with the congregation was generally maintained. None of the camps I visited, however, demonstrated great proximity to the ideal of agrarian self-reliance. A variety of reasons accounted for the lack of produce, from funding to labour issues.

For Rastafari involved in life outside of the camp lifestyle, however, by engaging their religiously oriented commerce with their own communities and the outside world, adherents are both able to maintain an internal economy based on theological principles, while sharing those ideologies with the uninitiated. Bob Marley remains the quintessential example of this phenomenon. His major albums and tours fueled by the music industry powerhouse, Island Records, his messages resonate with Rastafari *livity*: sharing, humility, charity, rebellion, and the pastoral. Being part white, part black Jamaican, and the first international champion of the movement, Marley almost single-handedly turned a Black African movement into something

well beyond issues of race. Moreover, the name, image, and sounds of this reggae prophet, like so many artists who claim Rastafari as their religious tradition, continue to sell merchandise around the world, continuing to blur that line between modernity and indigeneity. But the interaction between resistance and persistence has become even more complex in Rastafari today.

Clothing lines sporting the characteristic red, gold, and green, and other Rastafari themes, are easily purchased on the Internet and various retail outlets. But some designers maintain a more “roots” approach to their work. One great example is Jackie “Amba” Cohen-Hope, and her label Mutamba. Showcased at Caribbean Fashion Week, the largest industry event on the islands, Mutamba fashions run alongside notable international design labels and are worn by supermodels such as Nell Robinson and Jaunel McKenzie, regulars on the international circuit (Figure 82). Yet, contrasted against the haute couture of her peers, there is something truly “Rasta” in Cohen-Hope’s approach. First, the exclusively female pieces are tailored via a “one size fits all” ethos wherein both a size 2 or 8, for example, could look great in the same piece. Cohen-Hope achieves this goal by using loose pieces of fabric with adjustable pieces built into the design—a knot here, a wrap there. Each piece is also unique and made as one piece, even a “pantsuit” (Figure 83). During later observations of Cohen-Hope’s mostly direct-sales business model, I saw the same dresses once worn on the runway sold to upper-middle class women who could comfortably convey the looks. The fashion models who I had the chance to speak with,²¹³ some of whom had worked with Mutamba in previous years, all mentioned how they loved the freedom embedded in Mutamba’s designs and how they especially enjoy her insistence that they walk the runway barefoot, as opposed to wearing high heels, as is generally the norm. In a world that parades its own patriarchal structures through various presentations of the female body, in my opinion, Mutamba’s designs are a welcome change of pace.

With Mutabaruka, I had the opportunity to inquire further into the matter of how to be both Rastafari and living within the infrastructures of modernity simultaneously. In the following excerpt, he credits his Rastology as a process through which he has been able to recognize the “illusions” of Babylon:

Mutabaruka: But what me say is that you cannot escape White Supremacy, you know, because you’re living in the western world. Even in the East you can’t.

²¹³ Cohen-Hope invited me backstage as her assistant.

KGC: Lights, automobiles.

Mutabaruka: Ya, car, parties, all of the trappings that the western world have. But the awareness of it is what is important. Because illusion is only illusion if you can't use the illusion. You have to know how to use the illusion. That is really what me say. The illusion is one thing, but no one says illusion is better for you, because then you won't get trapped with it. So, a man can... you can drive a car, a Mercedes Benz, but you have to know it's an illusion. You see, if you don't know it's an illusion, it catch you.

KGC: You get caught up in it?

Mutabaruka: Ya.

KGC: You give it powers?

Mutabaruka: You give it life! Not only power, you give it life. So, the idea now is that you're in it, you know, but you don't make it—you just be aware of it, because it's very difficult to change it and sometimes if you can't change something, better you just leave it alone. Don't pressure yourself, because it will kill you. So, you have to know now, this thing is really illusion, all of these things. But, guess what? If you know it is an illusion, my way of life—me can use a wood fire, coal stove, a gas stove, and electric stove. Four kind of cooking. Me can—for many years, me no cook. Me no eat cooked food.

KGC: You were a raw foodist?

Mutabaruka: Ya man. So, come upon here now and we get to another level and we cook. So, we have raw food, where you don't cook. Then you have cooking, where you don't have no stove, so you use wood fire and you use kerosene oil stove, coal stove, use electric stove. So, you have four different things there. Some people now, if the light gone, them can't cook. It's only electrical stove them know about. You have some people now, them have a gas stove and if the gas gone, you can't go cook with coal, because we don't know how to make up a coal stove. And you have some people who don't have coal, so they can go down there and chop some wood and cook. So, what I am saying to you now is: in the illusion, knowing said electric stove is an illusion, but you still use it, but in using it, you know it's an illusion, because what happened now? If you don't have it, you're not going to starve. That is what I am talking about—using the illusion. But you have to know it is an illusion.

KGC: And not make it the only option?

Mutabaruka: You have to have options in your consciousness. And that is what Rastafari enable I to do and many more like I, that it offer an alternative to Western illusion. So, even though you are there, you don't make it become you. Now, the problem I have with the creation here is that, like in Jamaica now, I just tell you Rastafari culture is one of the most powerful aspects of Rastafari. See, Christianity have a faith over there—that you believe and eventually things are all right.²¹⁴

The parable of the various types of cooking fuels has been applied with great scrutiny by Rastafari to so many aspects of living. In fact, during many of the reasoning sessions, I heard debates on the merits and demerits of tofu based on evidence that the processing makes it unhealthy, while farming the crop is arguably harmful for the environment. It is this very

²¹⁴ Interview with researcher, Murdoch Spring, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, June 3, 2011.

resourcefulness and ability to see and revisit alternate options that have contributed to the often flourishing internal economies of Rastafari around the world.

In either case, whether someone uses a wood fire to cook, or wears the Rastafari colours, one is making a statement about how they have chosen to live within a community. For me, the *Itribution* box, an Iyaric play on “contribution box,” set up inside the tabernacle at Scotts Pass for donations, as a metaphor, best embodies the multiple layers of meaning embedded in the idea of a religiously oriented internal economy (Figure 84). First, by eliminating the prefix “con” from “contribution,” Rastafari make a point that they do not involve themselves in “cons” or “con games.” Next, by evoking the “I” language of Iyaric, the act of donating into this box suggests at once a positive contribution both to the community and the self, as in *I-n-I*. Finally, as many Rastafari I encountered informed me, the green stripe of the Rastafari colour triad is on top, suggesting a “Rasta at peace,” versus when red is on top, meaning “Rasta at war.” While, both the concepts of “war” and “peace” in Rastafari include nonviolence, the act of donating into the *Itribution* box symbolizes achieving peace with oneself and one’s community.

2.3 Conclusion to Section

In the previous, I have shown how in the workings of the religiously oriented internal economies of African Nazarites, there are inner tensions between adherents due to the degree of commercialization of aspects of their theological traditions into cultural capital. For some adherents, the commodification of traditions they hold sacred—whether the blind blessing of Vaseline in the Ekuphakemni faction or Nyabinghi drumming and chanting fused into popular reggae music—represent grave trivializations. For others, the religious communities they are part of afford them ample opportunity for self-employment through creative endeavour, thus extending the metaphor of agrarian self-reliance into the secular world.

3. Conclusion to Living Communitas

In this chapter, I have explored two distinct issues to provide a better portrait of the manner in which the theologies of African Nazarites manifest in the real world. In the universes of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazarethu*, we discovered areas where women who would likely be severely at risk outside the Nazarite community have found safe havens and often the source for self-employment in an atmosphere with greater respect and dignity as compared to their cohorts. Yet, the realities of AIDS and HIV position these congregations as something less of a “refuge” for

women today. Whereas Rastafari has for several generations offered a pedestal for feminist voices in Jamaica, *amaNazaretha* women are seldom heard in the public sphere, their leadership roles relegated to the female population. In the majority of both cases, however—except where the traditions are more austere or “ascetic,” African Nazarites are generally encouraged to be self-reliant, even in the sphere of “Babylon,” while contributing back to their fellow adherents as much as possible. The examples I have included emphasize the way in which a theological disposition in the context of community guidance fosters living communitas.

CONCLUSION TO PART TWO

The previous two chapters have explored the notions of land reclamation, worship through dance, singing, prayer, and preaching, as well as the peculiarities of being a female African Nazarite in addition to the idea of an “internal economy” that works as a metaphorical extension of the theological ideal regarding self-reliance. I included these themes inasmuch as they shone through from the bulk of qualitative data itself and are related to naziritism and my theoretical and methodological concerns regarding hybridity, liminality, resistance and persistence, and living hermeneutics and exegesis. The following reconsiders the main points from Part Two.

First, in Chapter 3, with regard to land reclamation, we have seen that although lands are often officially owned through the appropriate legal frameworks, in many cases, African Nazarites, whether Rastafari or *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* have also established worship sites and/or communities in “liminal” spaces—or spaces on the “margins” of society that they have occupied and are now generally accepted and tolerated by the Jamaican and South African governments. Though many of these sites were historically persecuted and/or destroyed by the authorities, today, in some cases, the government or the larger community has even offered forms of support to these communities. In many cases, the ideal of total agrarian self-reliance has proven unfeasible however; on the other hand, many African Nazarites are working and flourishing within the frameworks of modernity today, as doctors, lawyers, teachers, artists, and other professionals.

The next section of Chapter 3 provided portraits and analysis of the major open participant observations I conducted with Rastafari in Jamaica and *amaNazaretha* in South Africa. Apart from the variances in naziritism detailed in Chapter 2 and the conclusion of Part One, the varying images and descriptions of the groups contained in Chapter 3 also helps to clearly demonstrate that while Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* are quite different from each other, within each movement, there exist notable inconsistencies in the theologies and practices between the various houses, factions, and figures. My research revealed a much more commercialized form of *ubuNazaretha* at work in the Ebuhleni faction as compared to the original holy city of Shembe, Ekuphakameni. While Nyabinghi worship permeated the services at Mount Zion Hill Temple (School of Vision), Pinnacle (Howellites), Bobo Hill (Bobo Shanti), and Scotts Pass (Nyabinghi Order), each mansion stood both within and without the core of Rastafari in a number of ways.

Yet, for most African Nazarites, the importance of the Sabbath Day in keeping with Judaic tradition remained essential, alongside the preservation of a number of traditions associated with indigeneity and modernity. For *amaNazaretha* the fur skins worn beneath the white surplices, in addition to walking bare foot, remains a testament to this hybridic complexity. For Rastafari, Nyabinghi worship, with its mixture of African, Judaic, and Christian traditions, with the further injection of Iyoric, reveals a similar layering of multiple traditions of influence, the final image at once a product of structural liminality and creativity at work.

With regard to *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, a comparison of a number of major events associated with either the Ebuhleni or Ekuphakameni factions revealed a number of key similarities and differences. Although I was neither able to attend the sacred dances nor the Nhlangakazi pilgrimage of the Ekuphakameni faction for a number of logistical reasons, the similarities in attire—a hybridic ensemble reflecting African, Christian, and Judaic influences—belied the different approaches to temple worship exhibited at both factions. First, services were significantly longer and more arduous at Ekuphakameni, involving more time spent on one's knees. Also, while vendors were ubiquitous at the major events associated with Ebuhleni, selling food and sodas on the Sabbath, even between the morning and afternoon services, contrary to Shembe's original mandate ("Prayer of the Sabbath" 25; Hymn 200), all the events that I attended with the Ekuphakameni involved mass fasting and no vending. The ongoing commercialization of *ubuNazaretha* at Ebuhleni marks a key difference between the factions.

Although Nyabinghi, as a form of worship, traversed the theological landscapes of all four mansions portrayed, varying degrees of formality and informality were also noted. While the atmosphere with the Howellites at Pinnacle was perhaps the most solemn of all the sites I was able to visit, the Bobo Shanti were by far the most ascetic and ordered in their lifestyle. Next, while School of Vision and the Nyabinghi at Scotts Pass both shared a dialogue about Free Masonry and the Illuminati in tandem with their Rastology, the added theory regarding UFOs most specifically applies to Dermott Fagan and his followers at Mount Zion Hill Temple in the Blue Mountains. Since my research with Rastafari explored the theological world of camps and congregations—as opposed to reggae and the music industry, activities revolving around commerce were few at the worship events I presented. Those vendors present at Scotts Pass generally sold homemade wares.

Next, the section on women within the communities of African Nazarites suggested that while HIV / AIDS has more recently brought the status of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* as safe havens for women into question, both groups have traditionally offered women a sense of security and dignity not offered in the highly racist and exploitative historical economic models of Jamaica and South Africa. Though Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* are largely patriarchal as religious movements, the women of these groups have found their leadership and mentorship roles within the community. In the process, in keeping with biblical and African traditions, “monogamy” and “fidelity” are not always mutually exclusive. Although having only one wife could be an acceptable arrangement within *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, the potential for polygyny among *amaNazaretha* marks a much more formal marriage—read legal—agreement than among Rastafari whose relationship practices can fluctuate from monogamy to serial monogamy to polyamory or informal polygyny.

Finally, Chapter 4 explored the notion of “internal economies” as it applies to African Naziritism as a metaphorical extension of the self-reliance ideal in the absence of complete agrarian sustenance. Adherents of both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* cite the increasing infringements of modernity and capitalism as the reason for which surviving solely from farming and/or herding, i.e. “off the land,” has become increasingly impossible. Yet, in the process, by selling their wares within the context of a religious community’s events, many African Nazarites have also found primary or secondary sources of income while effectively keeping this money within a population of the faithful. The issue of the “internal economy” clearly exposes the kinds of oscillations between resistance to modernity and the persistence of indigeneity evident within African Naziritism.

In short, while Part Two addressed some of the major themes that arose from the field research, the analysis nonetheless took the larger theoretical and methodological concerns detailed in Part One into account in the presentation of this primary qualitative data. In so doing, I believe that I have 1) provided a deepened understanding of some of the major activities and ideas associated with the religious movements themselves and 2) shown some of the practical applications of the theory and methodology that were already expounded upon in the previous part of this work. Thus, if we were to draw a line between the various sections of the two chapters in Part Two, with land ownership and reclamation, we see that African Nazarites have occupied liminal spaces where they have been relatively free to develop hybridic theologies that

at once maintained aspects of precolonial indigenous African culture, integrated Indian philosophies regarding nonviolence and self-reliance, and accommodated aspects of modernity. In these spaces, unique forms of worship have developed around these hybridic interactions. Within these social and religious structures, the women of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* have traditionally found a source of empowerment in societies that historically provided opportunities of exploitation. Yet, the outside world has also been encroaching on these communities. As more and more African Nazarites are forced to find employment within “Babylon” for basic survival, the ideal of self-reliance has been extended as a metaphor to spend one’s earnings within one’s religious community, thus creating internal economies beyond the farmlands.

**GENERAL CONCLUSION AND THEORETICAL DISCUSSION:
RESISTANCE AND PERSISTENCE... AT HOME AND ABROAD**

In conclusion, I think it essential to reiterate that both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* are relatively new religious movements, each in about their fourth to fifth generations of existence. While *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* recently celebrated their centennial (2010), Rastafari must wait about a decade and a half for the same milestone. Since their inception in the early 1900s, both movements have witnessed the world changing dramatically from the horse and buggy era, to the advent of automobiles, airplanes, and helicopters—and now the Internet. Adherents of each have also been subject to tremendous political upheavals in the context of Africa and the African Diaspora over the last century, but particularly in South Africa and Jamaica where basic human rights have been, and are often still, in question.

Like anyone who considers themselves adherents of a theology rooted in some concept of “indigeneity,” African Nazarites, at large, have been steadily adapting to the increasing changes and challenges posed by modernity, especially to notions related to agrarian self-reliance versus capitalism—these are in essence the poles to which “indigeneity” and “modernity” refer in today’s global context. In this regard, as they have grown alongside the technological advances of the twentieth century, African Nazarites have successfully resisted the demonization of their ethnic and cultural reference points such as skin colour and hair; their practices have become the living emblems of their theologies. But, in the process, they have dispensed with some markers of African indigeneity, such as the hermeneutical use of alcohol and malignant spirits, in search of a modern hermeneutic of peaceful existence.

Like with their interactions and reinterpretations of the Bible, in the narratives of African Nazarites, the “sacred and the profane” have been usurped under the “Aboriginality-as-resistance” model where “the means to express these elements are drawn from the resources of the dominant society” (Keeffe 1988). Indeed, the overall picture of “sacred and profane,” in the contexts of African Naziritism, with their respective messiahs and practices, are barely recognizable against any “normative” Christian denomination; additionally, Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* are quite different from each other despite the common biblical language adherents employ to define themselves. The varying degrees of commodification of Rastafari and the Shembe Church also point to the growing popularity of both theological and cultural movements. This final reflection and analysis shall review the main points of each of the preceding chapters before offering a few closing theoretical comments and suggestions.

1. Main Findings and Chapter Review

First, in the introductory Statement of the Question, the main research questions, objectives, and thesis were laid as bare as possible alongside some scant descriptive material that painted portraits of both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* in the broadest possible strokes. A key distinction between both groups arose in relation to the relatively “centralized” nature of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* growth in southern Africa as compared with Rastafari’s more “decentralized” international expansion, primarily on the basis of the worldwide appeal of reggae and other genres of music associated with the nation of Jamaica. The founding fathers of each of these religious movements applied the idea of a “Black Messiah” to Isaiah Shembe and Haile Selassie I, respectively, in league with African, Indian, Judaic, Christian, and European traditions.

While Isaiah Shembe was both the first prophet and founder of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, neither Haile Selassie, nor the alleged “first prophet” of Rastafari, Marcus Garvey, were adherents of Rastafari as a religious movement (though Haile Selassie’s precoronation name was literally Ras Tafari Makonnen). Beyond these core distinctions lay so many other contrasts, of which I provided just a glimpse, yet adherents of both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* were talking about themselves as “Nazarites,” while creating unique hermeneutical structures. Thus, this research set out to decode the frameworks of naziritism evident in Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. In this regard, the Statement of the Question, in its final paragraph, succinctly presented my main thesis, and perhaps it is one worth repeating as it also highlights the main intersections of my theoretical framework:

Based on the literary evidence and the findings from my field research, this dissertation argues that both *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari perpetuate a conflation between the “Nazirite” from the Old Testament and the “Nazorean” of Matthew 2:23 through the hailing of a modern saviour. Within this theological framework, both Rastafari and the Shembe Church have provided renewed life to the long defunct Ancient Judaic purification rites of the Nazirite, but have also adapted them in the context of messianism for the benefit of Africanness and the postcolonial concerns of indigeneity. Thus, through the persistence of indigeneity, the influence of Indian ideals of peaceful resistance, and the appropriation of various biblical themes in addition to various artefacts and technologies belonging to modernity, both Black African movements have successfully empowered the dispossessed by creating liminal communities wherein expressions of self-reliance flourish outside the auspices of a subjugating elite; a hermeneutic of naziritism unifies the discernable hybridic roots.

Part One was specifically composed to prove this thesis, while Part Two was designed to provide further entryways into the aspects of naziritism alongside my larger theoretical concerns.

The first chapter of this work, “Theoretical Concerns, Methodological Approaches,” thus addressed what were ascertained as the most relevant historical dilemmas to conducting religious studies and ethnography in the context of the Two-Thirds world, and particularly Africa and the African Diaspora. The study commenced by addressing the concept of religion itself and the “autopoeticism” of Christianity in scholarly works in the field. Although the notion of religion is problematic, we now use it mostly for convenience to discuss cultural movements that embody a theology. As a consequence, notions associated with the “sacred and profane,” where they may exist in the new religion with a biblical foundation, may be completely foreign or unrecognizable compared to a “normative” Christian denomination. Yet, since the precepts of ethnography largely come from the Western scholarly tradition, it was important to demonstrate in what ways the study both fits and frees itself of potentially hegemonic theoretical and methodological frameworks. In this regard, while both the act of writing or conducting a study in the English language has been criticized as potentially hegemonic, in my study, the approach provided a common medium of second-language communication with both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, while allowing for new exegetical considerations to surface, especially in the case of *amaNazaretha*.

The next section of Chapter 1 reveals a comparative approach that takes the four points of naziritism into consideration, as per Numbers 6:1-8 and the “Nazorean” (Mt 2:23) conflation: a) consecration (Num 6:1-2; Mt 2:23); b) consecrated hair and consecrated heads (Num 6:5, 7b); c) regarding alcohol and intoxicants (Num 6:3-4); d) regarding the dead (Num 6:6-7). Though religious phenomena are considered in this study through open participant observation, the approach is not purely phenomenological in the sense that testimonies from interviews and focus groups are given equal significance to any rituals or practices encountered. In the process, I argue in favour of an “organic” approach that accounts for specific contexts (Patton and Ray 2007)—especially relevant since the interpretations of the Laws of the Nazarite manifest quite differently within both religious movements.

In the next section of Chapter 1, the antiquated nature of the concept of “syncretism” was discussed. First, the notion generally regards a particular denomination of Christianity as “normative,” while regarding traces of indigeneity as a “slipping back into heathenism.” Instead, the idea of “religious hybridity” regards multiple influences as normative in the creation of new religions. As this process has more to do with the imaginary universe, rather than genetics, we

can use the term “religious hybridity” without risking the same kinds of pejorative potential as syncretism. Furthermore, the notion of “religious hybridity,” as with a chimera—a hybridic product of the imagination with three points of origin, better lends itself to describing new religious movements that exhibit more than two primary influences, as with Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* (African, Judaic, Christian, Indian, European). Furthermore, Turner’s concepts of “structural liminality” and the “liminoid” process, as they apply to the appearance of new cultural phenomena, help account for the routinization of these hybridic influences under the umbrella of a new religion with a new name.

Based on these considerations, I have argued in favour of a theoretical methodology of living hermeneutics and exegesis that employs the concepts of “religious hybridity,” “structural liminality,” and the “liminoid” process to help understand the oscillations of resistance to modernity and the persistence of indigeneity, or the dynamic of selective resistance and persistence, exhibited by African Nazarites and perhaps other religions, especially of the Two-Thirds world, that borrow from multiple established points of reference, from oral traditions to scriptures. I connect Bakhtin’s notion of “living hermeneutics” (1975) as it applies to the process of reading and interpreting a novel in connection with one’s personal, real-time concerns to both the oral and literary transmission of the Bible and the potential for creative, hybridic interpretations and exegesis. Moreover, as with Ukpong’s definition of African exegesis, the focus of this methodology is on the communities themselves, rather than the original hands behind the scriptures of the Bible (2000). Yet, living hermeneutics and exegesis, like with the African approaches, recognizes “the full array of historical-critical methodology” (West 2008: 39). It is exactly this conceptual relationship that allows the exploration of the twin notions of resistance and persistence, or the loss of certain markers of indigeneity alongside the acceptance of various markers of modernity.

As there was clearly a terminological bias in previous scholarship that defined the persistence of precolonial indigenous traditions as forms of “resistance” to colonialism, even in some instances such as the sacred *amaNazaretha* dances or the very language of Rastafari that “nonapologetically” (Dube 2002) incorporate aspects of the hegemonic culture, in keeping with Sithole (2010) and Keeffe (1988), it became essential to build a postcolonial discourse regarding the “persistence” of indigenous traditions that effectively takes colonialism away from the centre of the dialogue, while allowing agency for the adherents of the Other religion. Consequently, as

with West (1999; 2008), I have argued in favour of academic representation that considers non-scholarly voices, in addition to open-ended storytelling and reading with “grassroots or subaltern readers” towards greater reflexivity and relevance for theological studies in Africa (Dube 2001). In this regard, West’s notion of “re-membering” (1999) also helped tie together the points regarding liminality and hybridity with regard to living hermeneutics and exegesis to account for oscillations of resistance to modernity and the persistence of indigeneity.

Following this exposition of the theoretical framework and methodology of this study, I presented a brief literature review of the primary sources of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari, in addition to some of the key academic works written about each. For Rastafari, after listing a number of key primary texts regarding inception—notably *The Promised Key* of Leonard Howell and the King James Bible, yet others of which can be described as “proto-Rastafari,” a largely synthetic presentation of scholarly works is presented. This decision was made because the body of academic work on Rastafari is quite vast compared to that existing on *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. In this regard, by exploring a few works in a little more detail in the section on scholarly works on *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* (Hexham 1997; Oosthuizen 1967; Sundkler 1961; Vilakazi 1986), the section delves further into the insider / outsider problem and argues that the ethnicity of a researcher cannot *a priori* decide the credibility of an academic study. The Zulu *iBaible* (1893) and the Hymns of Isaiah and J. G. Shembe are also cited as central.

Finally, in Chapter 1, having presented my theoretical concerns and literature review, I detail the specific qualitative anthropological field research methodologies I developed for my year of ethnographic field research in South Africa and Jamaica: open participant observations, semistructured interviews, informal focus groups. Recalling that, in ethnographic studies, the observer becomes the principle implement of observation, I discussed the various manners through which I was able to conduct my ethnographic research in the most ethical manner possible. Everything from my manner of transportation, to my clothing and eyeglasses was considered so that I could intergrate into the services as seamlessly as possible despite the obvious differences cast by my appearance and speech as compared with the people I was researching. I did my best to modify my behaviour to accord with the practices of the adherents. In the end, my sincerity and approaches were quite successful, and I was able to obtain data well beyond my original goals.

In Chapter 2, “Biblical Nazirites, African Nazarites,” based on the findings from my field research and literature review, I have provided detailed answers to my primary research questions, i.e. the why and how of naziritism in the contexts of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari. After a brief review of the evolution of Nazirites, Nazarenes, and “the Nazorean” in the Bible, I have described how both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* perpetuate a conflation of the Nazirite from the Old Testament and the Nazorean from the New Testament as personified in a living Black Messiah—Haile Selassie I for Rastafari and Isaiah Shembe for *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*—who is at once representative of African royalty in addition to YHWH from the Old Testament. I have also narrowed in on the Laws of the Nazirite (Num 6:1-8) and used a theoretical approach grounded in liminality and hybridity in tandem with a conceptual methodology that employs living hermeneutics and exegesis to account for the African, biblical (Judaic, Christian), European, and Indian characteristics evident in the naziritism of either *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and Rastafari: worship of *uJehova* and Shembe / JAH Rastafari; the consecrated quality of hair, the human body, and nature; abstinence from alcohol. Apart from the issues of dreadlocks and marijuana, I pinpointed a few additional differences in the living hermeneutics of *amaNazaretha* and Rastafari that pertain to the interpretation of naziritic laws regarding death and pollution.

First, whereas visions and dreams are often central to the theological reality of Rastafari adherents, Nyabinghi drumming and other forms of living worship aim at “nonviolent war” against Babylon, or the “oppressor.” The chanting and rhythms themselves, in this hermeneutic, act as incantations to bring peace, prosperity, and equality to the world. That is to say, while Rastafari have maintained communication with the ancestors; they have jettisoned the African practice of slaughtering and consuming animals. *amaNazaretha*, however, have maintained the practice of ritually consuming slaughtered animals, alongside communication with the ancestors. Dances, dreams, visions, and meditations can all service this end. Gone in both movements, however, is the African and Pentecostal notion of “spirit possession.” Next, while both sets of African Nazarites have condemned traditional African forms of sorcery, Rastafari have embraced African and indigenous notions regarding the healing power of certain plants and herbs (in keeping with an ideal of agrarian self-reliance), while the healing power of Shembe, the Holy Spirit, usurps both African and modern forms of medicine. Similarly, Rastafari are generally wary of medical doctors. On both sides, however, as more and more professionals around the

globe can also be considered African Nazarites, aspects of modernity, such as the medical practice, have found ways to exist seamlessly within the living exegesis of adherents. In this regard, African Nazarites, with their various affiliations, are taught to be entrepreneurial and create their own destinies in the here and now, as a metaphorical extension of the call for self-reliance. The overarching evidence portrayed two very different religious movements with a number of common points of reference centrally related to naziritism.

In Part Two, a few themes that arose from within the body of qualitative data itself have been presented and analyzed based on the theoretical and methodological concerns, as well as naziritic findings, exposed in the previous part of this work. In this regard, the two chapters in Part Two provide an opportunity to apply the theoretical findings of Part One to a number of practical themes. The themes were grouped into two larger categories: worship and communities.

The first section of “Chapter 3: Living Worship” discusses land ownership and reclamation by Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, and the increasing acceptance of occupied sites by the governments of Jamaica and South Africa. The next sections of this chapter provide representations of the most notable participant observation sessions I was able to conduct, alongside the relevant theoretical and methodological findings. By comparing the Sabbath services, pilgrimage to Mount Nhlankakazi, and sacred dances I was able to attend with Ebuhleni *amaNazaretha* with the qualitative data from the Sabbath services and Founding Day Ceremony I attended with Ekuphakameni *amaNazaretha*, I was able to conclude that the greater membership of Ebuhleni can be credited to their greater openness to the commercialization of aspects of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* tradition.

On the other hand, the representations of the participant observations I attended with four Rastafari mansions in Jamaica exposed quite an array of diversity under the banner of Rastafari. First, the sessions with the School of Vision revealed the growing trend of Illuminati and UFO discourse within Rastafari alongside Nyabinghi forms of worship. School of Vision also displayed the ability to employ the “spectacle” of their worship practices, particularly Nyabinghi drumming, for modest financial gain. In the solemn tabernacle at Pinnacle, I realized what a grave error I had committed when I allowed an uninitiated scholar to tag along. The lesson would prove invaluable for my future interactions at Rastafari Binghis where I continued to arrive alone and participate in the services to the best of my ability. In this regard, I was able to

experience the arduous and ascetic manner of Bobo Shanti worshipping that involved fasting and long hours in prayer, worship, and meditation. Indeed, the portrait of a Bobo Shanti priest is far removed from the Rasta “dreadlocked hustler” combing the beaches or the streets of Kingston. Finally, and especially revelatory for this study, was the Binghi held at Scotts Pass in honour of the “earthstrong” of Haile Selassie. Here, I witnessed biblical readings in the Nyabinghi tabernacle within an order that once called to “burn the Bible” and “burn Jesus.” The Nyabinghi, once one of the most radical mansions of Rastafari, now maintains international adherence from people of all races and a less militant approach to reading the Bible. Though still scorned by many, the use of the Bible in the Nyabinghi order demonstrates the continued openness of Rastafari to include non-African voices.

Finally, “Chapter 4: Living Communitas” explores both the place of female African Nazarites in two largely patriarchal contexts and the ideal of religiously oriented internal economies that maintain a balance between ideals of self-reliance and the realities of living in a capitalistic society. I have argued that the communities of the African Nazarites offer their largely poor and black female constituencies opportunities for independence and dignity often not found within the larger exploitative structures of Jamaica and South Africa, two rather violent societies where women are consistently devalued and at risk. The religious traditions of African Nazarites have also provided subsistence alternatives to the options provided by national capitalistic economies wherein the ideal of agrarian self-reliance is taken as a metaphor for community building through internal religious economies and support programs.

2. Final Theoretical Reflection

But what does all of this information really say? First, this research has exposed that some of the frameworks we currently employ to describe religion, such as “resistance movements” or “liberation theology”—as well intentioned as they may be, are potentially hegemonic. For this reason, I have borrowed from the concepts of liminality and hybridity to create a methodology of living hermeneutics and exegesis to help adequately address oscillations of resistance to modernity and the persistence of indigeneity. The evidence suggests a paradigm shift in our approaches to new religious movements, especially those that hold agrarian self-reliance and indigeneity as key principles of their hermeneutical frameworks. Recall that the earliest Biblical Nazirites, “like Samson,” were tribal in nature, centuries later serving as the subjects of lore

recalling a sense of indigeneity associated with the pre-monarchic period of Israelite and Judahite history. African Nazarites have not only picked up on several tribal aspects of naziritism, but they have also honed in on one key influence from the cultic period (cf. Table 1), namely the avoidance of the dead. This adherence, in turn, in conjunction with Gandhian philosophy and the Ten Commandments, has fostered a theological mandate for nonviolence, as the basis upon which to both resist and persist. Gone in Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* is the tribal call for military war and struggle. Today, the African Nazarites, these “peace warriors,” beat their drums and chant their hymns—these are the mediums through which they have chosen to bring change. And their messages are continuing to be acknowledged by growing numbers of adherents and sympathizers around the world.

Rastafari already live in many countries considered part of the West and *amaNazaretha* have expanded their temples into a number of neighbouring African countries. I found it fascinating to conduct a study of African Nazarites in two nations in which policies about diversity management and reasonable accommodation are simply not as progressive as, for instance, in Canada. Many children in South Africa and Jamaica who do not cut their hair, for example, are still sheared by teachers and ridiculed by peers. Many schools will not accept children from these religious groups unless they have cut their hair prior to arrival. What a scandal might be caused in the Canadian media if a school in urban Montreal, for example, turned away a Sikh student for wearing a turban and keeping a beard, or a Muslim student for not shaving. Yet, for Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, their growing acceptance in their host societies is evidence of the effectiveness of the nonviolent battle that continues to be waged.

Finally, and I think in some way most significantly, what Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* both demonstrate is the strength that a community can offer a theological existence towards subsistence within and without the frameworks of a globalizing world. Many of the African Nazarites I interviewed, who described a seamlessness between the secular world of business and the religious world of theology, and for whom a form of employment acted as an extension of one’s faith, remain exempla of the sacred / secular fallacy. Perhaps in their maintenance of principles of indigeneity, i.e. farming and self-reliance, alongside involvement in the frameworks of modernity there lies a lesson for the West. In this regard, Mutabaruka’s point

that self-reliance is “the other man’s resistance”²¹⁵ cuts to the heart of the dialogue on persistence. In other words, often what conflicts with the colonial or capitalist economic structures, various aspects of indigeneity, for instance, get marked as forms of “resistance” by the dominant hegemonic culture—even when the banner of “resistance” is waved by freedom fighters. Yet, in the hermeneutics and practices of each Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, we can clearly see the accommodations that members have made for aspects of modernity in relation to their theology—cars, business ventures, soda pop, etc., while so many, albeit sometimes “enculturated,” markers of indigeneity persist.

2.1 Resistance and Persistence: At Home and Abroad

In closing, what remarks can be made about resistance and persistence “at home” versus “abroad,” as alluded to in the introductory words of this work? As already mentioned, one of the key historical differences in the development of both religious movements is the fact that *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* was established on the indigenous lands of the Zulu people, at least within the legal context of the pre-apartheid “homelands.” Yet, the founders of Rastafari are deeply connected to the slavery of their ancestors, one that displaced so many Africans across the sea to the New World in what we now call “diaspora.” One might intuitively conclude that more of what can be considered “indigenous” from an African perspective was lost in the process of displacement. But is this really the case? Perhaps if we refer back to the points of African Naziritism found at the end of Part One in Table 2, we might be able to draw some final theoretical hypotheses based on the overall evidence.

First, and in common, each group has taken on the lifelong commitment associated with tribal naziritism, but they are consecrated to respective messiahs; both Selassie and Shembe are understood as representatives of YHWH on Earth and representatives of African royalty. African Nazarites are also called to nonviolence alongside a naziritic hermeneutic and Gandhian philosophy. Also shared by both sets of African Nazarites is abstinence from alcohol, general scorn for modern medicine, avoidance of scarification and tattoos, and condemnation of malignant forms of sorcery associated with African forms of spirituality, while closing the door to spirit possession. *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, with the practice of male circumcision, have reinstated a tradition associated with the pre-Shakan Zulu era that accords with Mosaic law;

²¹⁵ cf. Appendix 2, Section 1.

oddly enough, Rastafari chide the practice in keeping with the principles of naziritism—the act of cutting one’s skin on par with one’s hair. Next, while baptism figures centrally for conversion to *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, there exists no equivalent for Rastafari apart from the fact that some discuss being “baptized by the spirit of Rastafari.” Gone from the hermeneutics of African Naziritism is the idea of spirit possession associated with both forms of African spirituality and Pentecostalism. But, finally, the ideal of agrarian self-reliance associated with indigeneity persists as central in the theologies of each movement, though, more and more, adherents of both Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* are finding it difficult to maintain pastoral lifestyles within the confines of modernity.

So, in relation to the question of naziritism “at home” and “abroad” can we conclude that one group has maintained more African indigenous practices than the other? In this case, one might surmise that Rastafari, because of the displacement caused by the Caribbean slave trade, would maintain less of what can be qualified as “African,” having been deracinated from their ancestral lands. In fact, apart from their respective messiahs and histories, it seemed that among the points of African Naziritism that differed on the side of Rastafari—dreadlocks, vegetarianism, ganja—there lay one common thread: the Indian influence. The evidence has thus demonstrated that, aside from the Gandhian notion of “ashram” life and nonviolence shared by both movements, Rastafari have incorporated a greater Indian influence in their hermeneutical framework than *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Likewise, among the differing points detailed in Table 2, with the practices of ritual slaughter and consumption of livestock in addition to baptism and circumcision, *amaNazaretha* exhibit a greater recourse to African and biblical traditions in their living exegesis. With regard to *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, apart from the strong historical Gandhian influence in KwaMashu during the early twentieth century, any other traces of Indian spirituality I found were speculative, at best, and were not included in the dissertation. If the images of *amaNazaretha* bear some resemblances with Hindu traditions, it is likely no doubt due to the strong influence of Indian spirituality at Phoenix and Ekuphakameni during the inception and routinization of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. If we refer to the Mount Nhlankakazi pilgrimage, however, apart from the fact that the site is located atop a mountain—a trait shared with the Mosaic Sinai tradition, the overall tenor resonates more with Zulu, Christian, and Judaic influences.

In this regard, I could include one final hypothesis as follows. Although both South Africa and Jamaica hosted Indian indentured labourers after slavery, the greater presence of Indian forms of spirituality found in Rastafari can perhaps be credited to the process of displacement itself, resulting in a greater openness, than in *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, to non-African and non-biblical traditions and the desire to create a new form of “indigeneity” abroad. Apart from the appeal of reggae music, it is perhaps this theological element that helps account for Rastafari’s international appeal—i.e. the broader, and continued, openness of Rastafari to the ideas of the Other during inception and routinization has facilitated its transnational and transcultural acceptance and adherence. Indeed, in writing this dissertation, as I have responded to countless people from all walks of life who, curious about my doctoral research, had inquired about the topic, it became self-evident that basically everyone had at least heard of Rastafari while few, if any, were familiar with the Shembe Church / *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* prior to our conversation. Thus, in the ballet between religious hybridity and the liminoid process in their specific social, cultural, and historical contexts, more of what can be considered indigenous to Africa has persisted in the hermeneutics of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* versus Rastafari, neither movement right nor wrong, but subject to a wide variety of influences that required meaning during a period that witnessed great political and economic changes.

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APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Research: Symbolic-Spiritual Resistance, Liminality, and Hybridity in South Africa and Jamaica²¹⁶

Researcher: K. Gandhar Chakravarty

Research Director: Solange Lefebvre

A) INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS

1. Research Objectives

My research examines Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and their respective appropriations and hybridizations of religious themes as cornerstones in their pursuits of human dignity. I will also investigate how both groups created liminal communities that existed outside the dominant religious and political spheres – both geographically and ideologically – so that they might live with a dignity not proffered by the governing bodies.

2. Research Participation

I would like, with your permission, to make an audio recording (mp3) of an interview so that I might better understand the way you understand the world.

3. Confidentiality

All personal information collected will be kept confidential. No question requires you to provide any nominative information. No personal information allowing your identification will be gathered, kept, distributed, or published in any way. I will be the only person granted the privilege of listening to the recordings. I will transcribe the interviews on a word processor. Any information that could possibly identify candidates will not be included in the transcripts (i.e. place of employment or anything else that could specifically locate or distinguish the interviewee). Both the audio files and the transcripts will be coded as follows: (Sex/ Region of Origin/Age, for example, M/Ekuphakameni/36/ or F/Durban/72) to help ensure anonymity. The audio files of the interviews will ultimately be destroyed after the findings have been thoroughly mined or after seven years – whichever comes first.

²¹⁶ a working title

4. Benefits and Disadvantages

By participating in this research, you are contributing to the understanding of contemporary spirituality. Your participation could also give you the opportunity to better understand your beliefs and understanding of the spiritual world.

By participating in this research you will not be subjected to any particular risk or disadvantage.

5. Opt-out Right

Your participation is totally voluntary. You are free to opt-out at any moment, on simple verbal notice, without any prejudice and without having to justify your decision. If you decide to withdraw from this research, you can communicate with the researcher, at the telephone number or the email address provided on the last page of this document. If you withdraw from this research, data collected prior to your withdrawal will be destroyed.

6. Indemnity

Participants do not receive any indemnity.

7. Dissemination of Results

I will also offer each participant the opportunity to read my work prior to publication – i.e. any article or piece of writing in which I have either cited or referenced their interview. If upon reading the work the interviewee decides that they no longer want their words to be part of my findings, they maintain the right to disassociate themselves from the work. I will follow-up with my participants by email, wherever possible, or by post upon their request.

B) RESEARCHER'S DECLARATION

I declare having explained the goal, nature, benefits, risks and disadvantages of this research and having provided answers with the best of my knowledge to all the questions asked.

Signature of the researcher

(or its representative):

Date:

Last Name: _____

First Name: _____

For any question related to this research or to opt-out from the project, you can communicate with K. Gandhar Chakravarty by email at [...] or by post:

K. Gandhar Chakravarty

Chair of Religion, Culture, and Society

Faculty of Theology and Religious Science

Université de Montréal

C.P. 6128, succursale Centre-ville

Montreal, Quebec H3C 3J7

Canada

Any complaint related to your participation in this research can be addressed to the ombudsman of the University of Montreal by telephone at [...] or by email at [...] (**the ombudsman accepts collect calls**).

A copy of this information sheet must be given to the participant

APPENDIX 2: PORTRAITS OF FOUR “LIVING GODS”

This appendix focuses on four individuals who represent pivotal living historical figures of Rastafari and *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*: Mutabaruka, Dermott Fagan, Mthembeni Mpanza, Vukile Shembe. They are presented as “living gods” in keeping with the African and Indian notions that there is a divine spark in all humans (Warner-Lewis 1993: 112). With the appellation “living gods,” I wish to point to the philosophy at play; I in no way wish to imply that these four individuals are somehow “above” others, though their significant influences within their respective communities are undeniable. Yet, as defined in the section on naziritic consecration (Chapter 2, Section 2.1), they are each indeed a “God-King” in their own right—distinct voices representing a way of life. Many young Rastafari converts today cite the influence of Mutabaruka’s poetry over and above Bob Marley’s lyrics as the key factor in their conversion process. Fagan is the head priest and lawmaker of a small village in the Jamaican mountains. Mpanza is the first non-Shembe to start his own faction of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Finally, the formal title of Vukile Shembe translates to “Living God at Ekuphakameni.” Needless to say, for many adherents, the four individuals presented herein are actually regarded as living gods by many of their followers.

Though Mutabaruka’s words figure as part of the academic register and Mpanza was one of the collaborators of Vilakazi’s work (1986), to the best of my knowledge, this thesis marks the first scholarly work that has included the voices of Dermott Fagan and Vukile Shembe. While that in itself marks a landmark for this study, taken together, the words of all four also represent a valuable collection of primary source data that I have made available for future analysis. For the portraits of each “living god,” each section begins with a short biography before the presentation of relevant interview material. Each figure is as representative of the typical chroma associated with their religion, inasmuch as they embody aspects that are perhaps more particular to themselves as individual beacons within an array of complex social networks.

Though Mutabaruka is representative of the minority of Rastafari who do not follow the Bible, as we shall see, he nevertheless sees the didactic utility of certain passages, particularly the Laws of the Nazirite (Num 6:1-8), even if he cannot claim the passage as a source for his particular conversion. Also, while few Rastas claim to have never smoked marijuana, Mutabaruka marks one of the few. Yet, during one of our interviews, he described how he has nothing against marijuana, as such, and has consumed it in edible forms. Apart from his many

works of dub poetry and his weekly radio show on IRIE FM, Muta is also distinguished by being the most recognized “barefoot” Rasta. Indeed, this Jamaican Moses figure has not owned shoes for about 40 years.

Although various central aspects of the School of Vision’s living theology have already been presented (Chapter 3, Section 3.1), Section 2 of this appendix provides an opportunity to delve deeper into Dermott Fagan’s Rastology that incorporates UFO theories related to an alien race of reptiles who rule the world by cloak and dagger. Outside of his theology, I have also included more personal historical elements about the life of Fagan—his days as a construction worker and drug dealer in New York, his conversion to Rastafari, as well as his arrest, incarceration, and deportation to Jamaica and the events leading to the occupation of land in the Blue Mountains and the establishment of Mount Zion Hill Temple.

Section 3 then shifts into the world of *amaNazaretha*. First, I include tracts from my interviews with Mthembeni Mpanza, the first person outside the Shembe family to start his own faction of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. He discusses the presence of an angel in his home and the events that led to his decision to start another faction. Still a minister somewhat precariously connected with the Ebuhleni faction, Mpanza’s desire for a more academic approach to the Zulu Bible, i.e. the use of newer translations, is gaining increasing support from the followers of Shembe.

Finally, Vukile Shembe’s testimony represents a valuable reference for a number of reasons. First, he is in fact the “Living God at Ekuphakameni,” the first holy city of his great-grandfather Isaiah Shembe. After the death of Vukile’s grandfather, J. G., during the 1970s, the church would split for the first time. The majority would follow Vukile’s uncle, A. K., to Ebuhleni, while J. G.’s son Londa K., Vukile’s father, became entrusted with Ekuphakameni. After Londa K. was assassinated in 1989, the Ekuphakameni faction was without a leader until the succession of Vukile Shembe, in 1998, once he had reached adulthood. In the excerpts from the interviews, the then thirty-year-old Living God not only shares the story of how his father had preordained him shortly before the assassination, but then relocated the young Vukile to a rural *amaNazaretha* family where he grew up as their son until he reached adulthood and took possession of the Ekuphakameni faction.

That I have only been able to include male adherents is a reflection of the breadth of *my* findings. As an editor, I would have preferred to have composed a more balanced section with

female voices; alas, as a man, my interactions, on the whole, occurred more frequently with male Nazarites in the context of two religious groups that are largely patriarchal. I have hence devoted a section to female African Nazarites in Chapter 4. The various lengths of the tracts included for each individual also reflect nothing more than an indication of the research I was able to obtain, especially as related to this study. From over thousands of pages, I have included that which has not been reproduced elsewhere in this work and that which I found most pertinent for each—in the interest of my themes and sometimes beyond. The inclusion of this appendix fulfills my methodological mandate to “write with the Other,” a direct product of the African exegetical devices of reading with non-academic voices and open-ended story-telling.

1. Mutabaruka

Poet, barefoot prophet, radio and television show host, former resident Folk Philosopher at the University of the West Indies, Mutabaruka travels across the winding roads of Jamaica in his black SUV while fielding calls on his Blackberry. The ringtone is the same sound of a saw cutting wood that is featured during his internationally broadcast radio show, *The Cutting Edge*, from Montego Bay-based station IRIE FM. Once home, the icon loves nothing more than to humbly farm the valley in his backyard (Figure 68)²¹⁷ and offer visitors the same *Ital* cuisine once featured on an episode of Anthony Bourdain’s *No Reservations* (Travel Channel). During an interview at his residence in Murdoch Spring,²¹⁸ Muta relayed how he used to be affiliated with the Twelve Tribes and, later, the Nyabinghi, but now he considers himself a non-aligned Rasta. Especially since he is also a public figure across diverse media (literature, music, radio, television, Internet), Muta also described how his non-affiliated status benefits him professionally as he gets called to do events (DJ, speaking, poetry) at events associated with various Rastafari mansions.

Mutabaruka is also one of the few Rastas who vociferates against smoking, tobacco, and even ganja. The sentiment has been immortalized in his track, “Dispel the Lie:”

²¹⁷ In the interest of scholarly documentation, I conducted an inventory of edible foods that regularly grow in Muta’s yard. The produce fall into three larger categories: trees, plants, herbs. Trees: ackee, soursop, guava (pear-shaped), ortanique (orange), seville orange, coconut, avacado pear, june plum, mango, banana, plantain, almond, breadfruit, bamboo (to eat and build). Plants: sugar cane, a relatively mild scotch bonnet pepper, cho cho, green peppers, pumpkin, dasheen, bush cabbage, cabbage, pak choi, tomatoes, lettuce, okra, bird peppers, aloe (leaf of life), spinach. Herbs: garlic chives, basil, Ethiopian thyme, scallion, parsley, fever grass/lemon grass, guinea hen weed, search my heart, cerasse, turmeric.

²¹⁸ June 8, 2011.

dispel the lie
 about Rastafari
 drug religion
 a misconception
 sent by Babylon
 to cause distraction
 from identification
 with our African roots

dispel the lie
 that I
 Rastafari
 only get high on smoke
 tryin to find self
 through clouds of social
 frustration [...]

dispel the lie
 that I
 Rastafari
 can only see clear
 when smoking a spliff
 or takin a whiff
 from a chalice
 in a palace
 I-n-I
 see no God in cloud of smoke

a yoke
 sent from slavery
 to discredit I philosophy
 about Jah in man
 man is one
 no smoke reveal Jah to I
 dispel the lie (*Blakk Wi Blak...k...k... 1991*)

As will be seen in the interviews, while Muta maintains a stance against smoking marijuana, because of the harm to one's health that smoke inhalation can cause, he supports decriminalization (as broadcast by the sticker on his car window) and, as with any other edible vegetation, ingestion of marijuana.

Here follow the tracts from our interviews that broach diverse topics including cultural revolution, self-reliance, hybridity, living hermeneutics, as well as the meaning of Rastafari in his life and various aspects related to naziritism:

Mutabaruka: You know, you have military revolution and you have cultural revolution. So, there's a time when you look upon the situation and how the environment stay. You know, a bloody revolution don't make no sense now. Me rather a cultural revolution which to me—the most powerful revolution is a cultural revolution. To me, that is where you live your culture and the people gather existence by living *your* way... is the other man's resistance. If you plant your own food, the supermarket get a lick. If you make your own clothes, Hilfiger and all them people get a lick.²¹⁹

[...]

KGC: You probably know this, but Krishna also went down on a basket. His mom sent him down the river.

Mutabaruka: And him raise from the dead too, on the third day. He was born on the 25th of December.

KGC: Krishna?

Mutabaruka: Like Buddha.

KGC: I'm not sure what they say.

Mutabaruka: Thing is that these thing was before Christianity.

KGC: That's true.

Mutabaruka: Like Buddha is five hundred years before Christianity.

KGC: Krishna is two thousand years before Moses.

Mutabaruka: Ya.

KGC: Krishna is old, 3500 BCE.

Mutabaruka: Before Moses.

KGC: So it's 2000 years before Moses. Moses they say is 1500 BCE and Krishna they say is 3500 [BCE]. They say.

Mutabaruka: I think Buddha is five hundred years before [500 BCE].

KGC: Yes, Buddha is younger. Shiva starts to come also around 3000 [BCE]. Shiva was a later god. He wasn't there from the beginning. He's another god of the bull, fertility...

Mutabaruka: Ya.

KGC: ... and destruction towards good, destruction of evil and... cannabis.

Mutabaruka: That's where Rasta get it from. From the Indians who came here as indentured labourers. Not all Rasta will tell you that.

[...]

KGC: You never smoked ganja, did you?

Mutabaruka: No.

KGC: Never tried it?

Mutabaruka: Well, me eat it.

KGC: You eat it?

Mutabaruka: Used to eat it. Make cake with it.

KGC: Still today?

Mutabaruka: No, and cook it like vegetable.

KGC: In the olden days you used to?

Mutabaruka: Ya, we used to cook it like vegetable, like callaloo. But me never smoke it.

KGC: But you did use to use it as a food?

Mutabaruka: Ya, me use it as food, as enhancing.

²¹⁹ Interview with researcher, Murdoch Spring, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, May 22, 2011.

KGC: Not any longer?

Mutabaruka: No.

KGC: How long ago did you stop using ganja?

Mutabaruka: Me not stop.

KGC: Oh, you never stopped using ganja?

Mutabaruka: But me not use it—I mean, me not stop use it. It's not like me start and stop.

KGC: I understand. Like, you might cook it up one day if you are in the mood?

Mutabaruka: Ya, if me have a ganja tree, me not going to chop it down. Me going to carry, go up there, and go put it up with the callaloo in my pot.

[...]

{working on a bamboo table with his helper}

Mutabaruka: Look over this here now. When me cover this with a table cloth and put four stump around it, when people come in here they're going to say, "Wow!" Them say, "Wow!" With the cover you don't know there bamboo underneath it. They'd never know there's bamboo underneath it. "Wow, {imitating "white people"} Muta, where did you get this table from? It's beautiful." Shit. Say, "I got it in the bushes."

Helper: White people style.

Mutabaruka: Ya, white people. You know, {imitating "white people"} "Muta, Muta, this is *fantastic* underneath this tree." {pause} "This is *wonderful*." Tie a cloth upon it and put out some nice, nice food. You can put candle and some incense to burn. And the birds them chirp.²²⁰

[...]

KGC: So, what do you mean by Marcus Garvey Jr. was teaching you? Was that in a school?

Mutabaruka: In school, ya. I was going school.

KGC: How old were you at that time?

Mutabaruka: Sixteen.

KGC: Okay, and he was your school teacher?

Mutabaruka: Well, high school. He was very interesting because him had an organization, and we joined the organization, because we was very active in the Black Power thing, you know. So, that's our first connection, really, with Black Power. And there's other teachers there too. I had my first introduction to Malcolm X who was one of the teachers. The other album, *Message from the Grassroots*, and we listened to it and we also had the [...] Bible from Malcolm X, as a youth. So, we then [...] of Black Consciousness from school and then we transformed into Rasta, because a lot of aim of the school was not only political, but was searching for also a political thing.

The Black Power Movement is political. It never offered any spiritual consciousness. It was more social, political. So, as youth, Rastafari become part of that experience where it was not only social, but it was offering something other than these politics. And Rastafari at the time was non-political. So, we make the transition from Black Power. Even if it's not a transition, I will still maintain that Black Power thinking. Because Rastafari is really a Black Power Movement with a spiritual nucleus. That's how I define Rastafari. As a Black Power Movement, it was formed out of the need to free ourselves from White Supremacy, colonialism, and slavery in that time when it started. It

²²⁰ Interview with researcher, Murdoch Spring, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, June 1, 2011.

was started for that. So, as a youth, we maintained that Black Power consciousness, African redemption, and then now we add Rastafari to the whole perspective. So, we started to move in that direction.

KGC: I understand, about Marcus Garvey, Marcus Garvey Jr., there's the common theme of Black Power in both the political side and the spiritual side, but can you give me any more details in terms of... maybe I can rephrase the question. As a youth, at that time, was it a natural thing to go from Garvey to Rastafari?

Mutabaruka: Natural progression? Ya, because Rastafari was the root of the cultural activity. And as a youth, because you rejected the colonialism. And Rastafari appeared to be anti-colonialist. And also, it was talking about Africa and Marcus Garvey, and being a youth who is very aware of Marcus Garvey, the transition was simple to move from that to that, because you didn't have to give up one for the other.

KGC: I see. So, what is the theological role of Marcus Garvey Sr. then?

Mutabaruka: Marcus Garvey wasn't a Rasta, you know.

KGC: I know that. And neither was Haile Selassie. But I guess some... I don't want to lead you too much, but...

Mutabaruka: No, say what you want to say, man.

KGC: A lot of people, they liken Marcus Garvey to a John the Baptist kind of figure. What are your thoughts about that?

Mutabaruka: Ya, because of biblical manifestation... how people interpret their role in this time as related to the Bible. Because as Rasta, we tell them is Israelite too. As 400 years, Israel were in captivity. And it's 400 years black people in captivity. The metaphors, the similarity is drawn between biblical things. Because John the Baptist was the person who spoke of the coming of this man who shoes he couldn't fill. Rastafari relate that to Marcus Garvey who spoke about... there was a time when Marcus Garvey used to defend Haile Selassie as a black king. Him say, "It's a great day when a black man is the king that black people can see. Marcus Garvey asks the question, "Where is the black man's kingdom? And where is the black man's king? Because we used to worship the King of England, because we were colonial."

KGC: In school even?

Mutabaruka: Ya man, we sang the British National Anthem... King George of England. You know, it was like, "England!" As a child, you know? Motherland—they used to refer to England as the Motherland. So, then, Marcus Garvey started to ask the question, "Where is the black man's king and the black man's kingdom?" And Marcus Garvey, in his *Philosophy and Opinions* redirects black people to an image of God. Marcus Garvey asked the question.

He said, "If the white man believe in a white God, let him worship God through his own spectacle. If the Jews want to believe in the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, let him so do. But, we, black people, though late it might be, must worship God through our own spectacle, through the eyes of Ethiopia." As a matter of fact, it's one of the first times we hear Marcus Garvey refer to Ethiopia, and not Africa. So, in his *Philosophy and Opinions*, when him say, "We, though late it might be, must worship God through Ethiopia," he's relating that we should see God through our own eyes, rather than through the eyes of the European.

So, the black people in the movement and outside of the movement who love him, who was reading the Bible, because a lot of them was Christian, the Black Power, the

Marcus Garvey movement was full of Christians. That is one of the requirements too. Christianity was part of the Marcus Garvey movement [...] So, what happened now is that a man by the name of Leonard Howell. Leonard Howell now as a next person who listened to Marcus Garvey and him hear Marcus Garvey say, “Where the black man king? Where the black man kingdom? How come everybody else have king and queen and we not have none? Why we worship King George of England and all these things?” So, in 1930, when Ras Tafari was crowned, because you know that Haile Selassie’s name was Ras Tafari?

KGC: Makonnen.

Mutabaruka: The word Tafari mean, “one to be feared.” That’s what it mean. Ras is a title, so...

KGC: Something like Duke?

Mutabaruka: Ya, like a Lord. So, Ras Tafari was crowned in the 2nd of November, 1930, as the King of Kings, the Conquering Lion of Judah, Emperor of Ethiopia. So, these people in Jamaica who was reading the Bible, the started to say—well, Leonard Howell, to be precise, Leonard Howell look upon the whole event and him say, “Well, this is the black man king. This is a black man king now. We should get rid of this King of England. This is our true king now.”

So, they arrest him and charge him for sedition. Them charge him, because now him was talking against the Motherland, the King of England. So, him start to say, “This is the king. This is our redeemer.”

Him never start it as a religious movement. It started as an answer to imperialism. It started out as a redemption and a force against imperialism and British colonialism. Just like the Mau Mau in Kenya. Just like the Nyabinghi in Uganda. Nyabinghi started as a rise-up against British colonialism, British invasion of these territories.

So, Leonard Howell declared this thing, “Ya, black man king. More power for the King of Kings, Emperor Haile Selassie, the first.” So, when it happened now, the people who were reading the Bible started to see these titles that Haile Selassie had in the Bible, like the King of Kings, the Conquering Lion of Judah. All of these titles now. They started seeing the Bible, and them say, “This is the black man king returned to come get us out of White Supremacy, colonialism, and slavery.”

So, they go around the island, starting to preach this, saying, “Our redeemer is here, the Black Messiah has come. Away with the King of England. This is our king now.” So, the persecution started now. So they had to run into the hills and they formed a community at Pinnacle, outside of Spanish Town. So, Leonard Howell—they wasn’t called the Rastafari at the time. They was called the Howellites, off of Leonard Howell name. There was no Rastafari.

KGC: Do you know about how many people were in that community?

Mutabaruka: No, I don’t know. But they were called the Howellites. I don’t know at what stage the movement switched to Rastafari, but the sympathy for Rastafari was there before when he was crowned Emperor Haile Selassie, the first. Because Haile Selassie is his name at birth. It wasn’t given to HIM at the coronation. It was given to HIM at birth, by the church, because everybody in Ethiopia, they have a churchical name. So, Haile Selassie... when they take on to themselves, like this crown, they start to use the church name.

So, Ras Tafari Makonnen was no longer a Ras; he was the king of all the kings in Ethiopia. So, when you read the Bible now, as a former slave who was reading the Bible, looking for a direction outside of British colonialism. And given that a lot of the experiences of the biblical oppressed can be connected to the present day oppressed, it started to make sense to the people. And then the title, King of Kings, was very important as a black man.

KGC: The tradition of the Ethiopian Church, the lineage up to Solomon?

Mutabaruka: Well, that come later, you know. Because that was not the focus of the thing. That come when people start to read about Ethiopia.

KGC: I see.

Mutabaruka: This wasn't a typical point. The argument about Haile Selassie came because he was crowned Emperor of Ethiopia and that Marcus Garvey was saying, "We must worship God through Ethiopia." So, when Leonard Howell declared that, it wasn't of a religious nature, you see. It was more of a sociopolitical nature where you are now addressing the Motherland Africa as opposed to the Motherland England. So, you are now shifting your mind from a white idea into a black consciousness.

KGC: So, from displacement to...

Mutabaruka: Replacement. You are replacing the white man's thinking for a black-centred perspective. So, this is what Leonard Howell was offering. He's offering a black perspective.

So, now, the people who started to follow Leonard Howell and the people at that time recognized that we must worship God through our own spectacle. So, Haile Selassie become the Messiah, the Black Messiah, the Redeemer. And this now started to resonate amongst the people by way of their religious mindset. So, that is now where the religious mindset trip in. Because now, black people could now connect to Africa... and history now, in a very meaningful way.

KGC: So, that's ironic, in a way, in the sense that the Bible originally, by the whites, was used as a way to...

Mutabaruka: Oppress the people.

KGC: ... condone slavery.

Mutabaruka: Ya, and now a set of people is using it to get themselves out of slavery. So that is what I'm taking about now, the replacement, you see.

[...]

KGC: And how do you view Haile Selassie, personally?

Mutabaruka: Haile Selassie, to me, is the Almighty.

KGC: A living god?

Mutabaruka: You see, me no use the word God, you know. You see, most Rasta in this time, we don't say God.

KGC: Okay.

Mutabaruka: Because God connotates a pre-condition of the mindset that give way to non-acceptance of what I say or what Rasta say. Because if I start to tell you about God, you have already created a mind.

KGC: A tainted overstanding?

Mutabaruka: So, we separate Haile Selassie from the concept of God.

KGC: But, by Almighty, do you mean that in a..?

Mutabaruka: Supreme.

KGC: Do you mean that in an earthly way or in a divine way or both?

Mutabaruka: Well, I no separate divine from Earth, you know.

KGC: Okay.

Mutabaruka: The Earth... I no separate divine, spirit from flesh, flesh from spirit. Two of them worked in accordance with each other. So, when I say divine, I talk about divine in the flesh, divine in life, manifest in the physical. And if it is not manifested, you don't know what it is, so you can't define something outside of the physical.

KGC: So, a body without a spirit... there's nothing there?

Mutabaruka: Ya, anything else is just speculation. So, what Rastafari help these black people to do is to see themselves as divine beings on Earth rather than just former slaves. Is lifting up themselves out of the idea that there is a man up in the sky that going to come save you. We say the knowing of Haile Selassie in the *livity* of Rastafari is what help us to save *weself*.

KGC: And then, with your overstanding, what would you say would be the progression of—as you mentioned—between the Howellites towards Rastafari and then the inclusion of locks, *Ital*?

Mutabaruka: Well, it moved now from just a social conditioning into a culture manifestation. We have to now bring in the indentured labourers who came to Jamaica through Chinese and the Indians. And, at one time, Leonard Howell give himself an Indian name.

KGC: Gave himself?

Mutabaruka: Ya, he had an Indian name. Him name Gangamaharaj... aw shit. I have the name inside. Him gave himself an Indian name. I don't know if he thought it was African name or what, or he was moving amongst indentured labourers, but him actually give himself... change him name from Leonard Howell.

[...]

Mutabaruka: I surmise that the idea of the smoking of the herb come from the group what them call indentured labourers.

KGC: The Indians?

Mutabaruka: Ya.

KGC: As well as the locks?

Mutabaruka: I don't know if the locks come from the Indian. I won't say the locks come from the Indian, because no Indian ever locks around here.

KGC: No saddhus?

Mutabaruka: No, saddhus wasn't here. Saddhus is a small group of people in India. They didn't come here as indentured labourers.

KGC: What I was looking at—maybe we could talk about this—is if I'm looking at an Indian influence in Rastafari, the whole thing with ganja is that it's used to pray to Shiva, the deity Shiva. And he's a locksman. Shiva himself is a locksman—maybe one of the earliest ones we know. And, my understanding is that for thousands of years, the ones who keep locks in India, it's seen as a very spiritual thing. So, even if there weren't locksmiths coming, they had this idea of locksing being a spiritual way of life. This is my hypothesis right now.

Mutabaruka: But we never privy to that. That culture never privy to Jamaica.

KGC: But through the Indians, I'm saying.

Mutabaruka: Ya, but... all right. The locks reasoning would more fit with Samson.

KGC: So, you are saying there is more of a biblical source?

Mutabaruka: Not only a biblical source, but there is a reasoning that if you take a certain part, it's going to lead you to a certain part. You see? It's like if you is a vegetarian, you automatically going to have a certain thinking about animals. If you do certain things, it leads you to certain things. Like, one and one equal two. So, if you go here, it going to carry you to there.

So, whether or not you are connected. You don't have to be connected to any Buddhist to have a certain Buddhist thinking. Because if you take a certain part, it going to carry you down that road. And then going to be similar to a man 5000 miles away and some people in the Amazon or some people deep in Africa going to have that same thing. Say, "How that man have the same thinking? I never come in contact with him yet." Because the path direct you to the same station, you see.

So, I would say that a lot of Indian influence came in Jamaica, just like the Chinese influence. But the herbs of it is one of them where I could say it's an Indian influence. The locks, now, to me, is a different thing, because I know Rastaman who don't know nothing about no Indian tradition and nothing about nothing. And them look upon the tree them, and them feel, say, them locks is like the tree. That why them no cut them hair.

They look upon the Earth and say, "Scissors and razor is almost like anti-human." They see scissors as one of the implements of imperialism and colonialism. And man still say if you let the locks grow, you're going to develop a certain connection with the cosmos. You see, that is a spiritual way.

KGC: Would you say those are the types of thoughts you had when you decided to start keeping the locks? Based on an observation of nature?

Mutabaruka: I never read Bible for locks. Bible never make me locks. And no Indian never make me locks.

KGC: So, part of it is being in nature?

Mutabaruka: Ya man. Part of it is natural, just like how we are animals too. See, certain things me no go for. The Rastafari school of thought where I come out of, we never wear animal product, we never eat animal product or drink animal product. You see, our locks... no wear shoes. It's part of the whole path that you take [...]

No one is going to come and teach you it, but, as I said before, one and one equal two, so if you do this, it going to carry you to next step. If you do step A, it carry you to step B, or to C. Or if you start at C, step C carry you to step B and step B carry you to step A. So, nobody don't have to sit down and tell you this. Or you don't have to read it.

The experience now, to me, is the greatest part of Rasta—the learned experience. Because Rastafari have a learned behaviour. Rastafari experience the behaviour through time. The learned behaviour is what you do when you read the Bible and you try to mimic what you read in the Bible and connect it to Haile Selassie. The experience is where you live it with Haile Selassie in your thought. So, it's the mindset of Haile Selassie that is carrying you to point A. So, Haile Selassie don't have necessarily to be telling you anything, but because of your natural—just saying, Haile Selassie, and devoting to a lifestyle, it will eventually carry you to point A.

Now, you have people who see it from different way. You have people who see through the Bible, people who read the Bible and say, Haile Selassie. You have people who sit down with the next man and say, "Haile Selassie." There are people who just say,

Haile Selassie, and carry it through at certain part. Most of the Rasta that I grew up with and I know, them say, “Haile Selassie,” and them start to want to go to the East, them want to plant food, them want to get natural things. You see?

The Rasta who read the Bible, them now, they direct it to Christian way, principle. So, them get into the biblical manifestation of this thing. So, when they speak, they articulate Rastafari through Bible prophecies, just like I say, John the Baptist. And they do that because of what they read in the Bible.

But Rasta now is not really in the Bible. And they are not connecting Haile Selassie with Jesus Christ. Them not connecting Haile Selassie with the returned Messiah. Them not connecting, them say, with Israel. Them connecting themselves before Israel. In other words, they are going back now to before, [when] Israel was Cush; it was Ethiopia. And the anciancy of Ethiopia is what defines Rastafari rather than the peripheral Israelite reasoning, because, to me, Israel is a periphery of African thought. It is not the main thought. Israel, it not the main African thought, but Israelites were African people. But Israel become that way because Europeans take that part of African history and make it become the main tree. But Africans themselves didn’t see it that way. But because of gun and because of force, it become the mainstream thing in Africa and all over the world. But even Yoruba tradition is before Israel. The Yoruba tradition come before Israel. But you are not going to know that if you don’t read about that.

So, we go back now to the experience that I speak of, which is the main—to me, the greatest attribute of Rastafari is the cultural expression of Rasta. That is the big power of Rasta. That a set of people can use a secular music and redefine spirituality by using this music, they is able to change people all over the world who never come to Jamaica. And listening to the music now make you start to move from point Z to point B if you don’t never come Jamaica.

So, it’s not like the Bible going to influence him now. But listening to the Rasta make you start to think a certain way. So, you may start out with listening to reggae. And listening to the reggae, you say, “*Ratted*, smoking herb,” you start to smoke herb. And when you start to smoke herbs now, it make you start to think a different way now. You start to shun certain little thinking, political ideas... when you have Western political ideas. You start to look upon the Queen as some devil thing. You know, you start to look at different ways. So, you move from point C to point B to point A without reading.

KGC: So, it opens channels, the ganja?

Mutabaruka: No, I never said the ganja open channel. I just telling you that a lot of people who listen to reggae, the next thing that strike them, outside of Jamaica, is smoking. It’s not like it’s *it*. I’m just telling you that it’s one thing leading to the next because of the first thing that lead you to that.

So, you have people who listen to reggae and never come to Jamaica and declare themselves Rasta. And because them declare themselves Rasta, they start to do some things that the person of Jamaica who don’t know them and them don’t know have similar thoughts. So, I will say now, I don’t wear animal product. And I go California and I see a white man who don’t know nothing about Rasta, say him no wear animal product. And him not eat this animal, eat that. I don’t know him and him don’t know me, but, as I said before, it’s one thing leading to the next.

So, some people don’t say, “Haile Selassie,” and come to the same conclusion about life that I come to. Some people come to the conclusion out of just mere sitting

upon the veranda, observing things. But Rastafari is the vehicle that these former slaves use from point C, point B, to point A. That is what we use. So, just saying, “Haile Selassie,” the experience now... it carry you to an experience that if you say, “Jesus,” it don’t carry you to [...] But you have Rasta who say, “Jesus.” If you look upon the Twelve Tribes, them say, “Jesus,” but if you look upon the way of Twelve Tribes, they call themselves Christian. A Nyabinghi man would never say him a Christian. Nyabinghi no Christian.

KGC: Now, do they use the Bible too, Nyabinghi?

Mutabaruka: You have man who read the Bible, yes, and quote the Bible, but in the deepest livity of Rastafari—I say not because I come up with it, you know. I can’t experience that as a Rastaman. I move among Rasta who can’t even read the Bible, but them learn Rastafari through experience. And, to me, that is the power. It’s not the reading of the Bible, because I read the Bible. I read the whole of the Bible. And when I read the whole of the Bible, it no show me Rastafari livity. It show me how to be a better Christian-minded person. If I did want that in my life, I wouldn’t bother turn Rasta. I’d have just go on to church. I have never have to turn Rasta come with no Bible.

I could have gone to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and look upon Ethiopia, but I say, “Haile Selassie,” because Haile Selassie, to me, is real, realer than Jesus. Haile Selassie mean more in my experience than saying, “Jesus.” It allow me to free myself more of White Supremacy colonial mentality even though I’m still in the world, but not of the world. Like, you take part in it, but it’s almost like you’re invisible. And you become invisible because of your manifested way of life.

[...]

Mutabaruka: Well, it’s not all Christians that wear crucifix. Roman Catholic wear crucifix. I mean, Anglican, Jehovah’s witnesses don’t wear crucifix and these thing. Crucifixes are a Roman Catholic thing. But what me show you is that the power of the Rastaman come through identity, cultural identity, the creation of a language – *I-n-I, Irie*. That is a creation of a language.

KGC: And a community as well.

Mutabaruka: Ya, we have eating, we have looking, we have Africa... the African actions... that even though him never go Africa yet, but that desire.

[...]

KGC: A lot of people that I’ve been talking to, when they describe their... if you are looking at life as a linear thing from birth to death, their life before Rasta and after Rasta, they say, “And once I joined Rasta, immediately I was part of this community that I never had before.” That’s something that has been coming up a lot in my research.

Mutabaruka: You see, in the Western world, they say your better life is when you are dead. Yet, still the people them who say that, never have that better life yet. So, it’s a speculation. You don’t know. You see, Rasta come with knowing, not believing. If you go to most Rasta, him say, “I don’t *believe* nothing. I *know*.”²²¹

KGC: Yes, knowledge.

Mutabaruka: Knowledge is the power that comes out of experience of Rasta. So, that’s why Rastaman look upon nature.

KGC: So, how long have you been going now with the Rasta way of life?

²²¹ cf. Salter 2008b re. “orthognosy.”

Mutabaruka: Me? Most of me life, man.

KGC: Since 16, 17?

Mutabaruka: Me never start out with this thinking. You see, as me say, it was an experience.

KGC: It came later?

Mutabaruka: Ya, it evolved. Me start out as a normal youth. Me go school, church.

KGC: So, how old do you think you were when...

Mutabaruka: When me start to say, "Rasta?"

KGC: Yeah, when you started saying Rastafari.

Mutabaruka: About 40 years ago, from me about 18.

KGC: And that's also the barefoot, the locks?

Mutabaruka: No, not at school me never walk barefoot. Me not go barefoot to school. The locks come later too. Me say Rasta before me start locks. Me say Rasta before me start walk barefoot.

KGC: When was the last time you ate meat? Also forty years ago?

Mutabaruka: Ya. Me used to eat fish. In me early Rasta days, but me realize that the idea of eating fish in Rasta is a biblical thing. It's not because of experience. Because me say me placed more emphasis on the experience in Rasta rather than the learned behaviour of Rasta. You know, you have the learned behaviour. When a man now him eat fish, because Jesus was a fisherman, because Jesus walk upon the water.

KGC: Shared the fish?

Mutabaruka: Ya. And I said I no follow Jesus with no fish and bread. I no follow Jesus, you understand? So, my experience don't tell me to read the Bible to direct my experience. My experience is of life [...] because in Rastafari, not just natural, not just something. Because you not do the thing outside something. You do it in Rastafari. So, in Rastafari, it show I say I no eat fish, because it's still animal. I no drink milk, because milk is for the calf. Human being is the only animal that unnatural drink milk after it get weened. You see, people force milk upon man. But after an animal get weaned, he no drink milk. I don't drink honey.

KGC: You don't take honey?

Mutabaruka: No.

KGC: Why?

Mutabaruka: Well, honey to me, a Rasta, might sound like a joke, but it's not a joke... it's bees' vomit.

KGC: Oh, okay.

Mutabaruka: You see, it's what they draw from the flowers and pitch it out back... coming from the bees. I don't drink nothing from animal. I don't eat nothing from animal. Then we're gone up to a next level too, because we look upon the whole processing of things, certain things and we try to keep away from it, as I say, we get trapped in the system, you see. If we had the alternative, we would do it, but some people get trapped in it and don't know that there's alternative.

KGC: They are eating death everyday. People are going to KFC, McDonald's, all that.

Mutabaruka: So, that's why now after making this full-cycle starting out in the hills and I plant and then going now the city and then come forward now with this. I saw now, we are going to make use of this now, by making it self-sufficient, you see.

KGC: But it's common sense and it's amazing how much common sense has been taken out of Western media, Western society. People spend good money, hard-earned money to buy a meal that's basically going to kill them slowly, whereas, here, you are growing life. Mutabaruka: I know people from where I come from, where I used to live, people plant carrot and go to the market and sell the carrot and go and buy carrot juice in tin. That is the illusion that the Western world tell you. Instead of grating the carrot or juicing the carrot, you go and buy a tin of carrot juice which have a whole heap of chemical mixed in it. So, I'll just say, it's knowing it that help you, you see. Within Rastafari, because we say it's Rastafari carrying me to this, you know. As I say, other people use other things, but it's Rastafari carry we to this. Rastafari carry we [...] right now. The sun is the most powerful thing upon Earth. Not the son, Jesus, but the sun in the sky. So, them take out the "u" and put the "o" and embody it in a man. And we say, "Burn Jesus," because no man ever named Jesus [...] only Twelve Tribes you will hear say Jesus. Other man say Je-sus. Like, if you go Fagan, him tell you Je-sus. Bobo them will tell you Je-sus.

KGC: Bobo's say Je-sus?

Mutabaruka: "Burn Je-sus," too. The reason for that is because the people who say, "Je-sus," have the same interpretation and condition like the person who say Jesus. So, it's not really the word, it's the concept, you see, because when you say, "Je-sus," what you are really trying to do is move from the European way of saying Jesus, the white man. So, you say Je-sus now with the idea that he is a black man. But if you look upon the concept of the person, about Je-sus, the only difference between him and the man is that one is saying he's a black man and one's saying him a white man, but the concept is the same. And to me, that is the danger of it. It's not the name that is the danger. It is the concept.

KGC: What's the danger with the concept?

Mutabaruka: The danger with the concept is because a man going to go sit down and say Je-sus and still tell you there is a man name Je-sus who born of a virgin.

[...]

Mutabaruka: If you go to places like Lalibela and them place there. And if you go to which part, where you cross the penninsula, you will see the inference. And the historians will tell you too, say, a whole heap of it is Greek. A whole heap of it is Greek. So, when people tell me Ethiopia is the oldest empire on Earth, I agree, but Ethiopia, as a Christian Empire, is not an asset to Ethiopia. To me, it's more a *de-sset*, because it keep the people them in darkness and ignorance in the name of Yesus Kristus who don't have no significance to them.

And why is it that an ancient country is validating their existence through a Jewish idea, Solomon? Because, in Ethiopia, the church don't teach Ethiopian history before Solomon and Sheba. When you hear Ethiopians speak of them history, it stop at when the Queen of Sheba go to King Solomon. And if you listen to a Rasta talk who is imbedded in this, his explanation to define Haile Selassie is that Makeda went to Solomon, had a child, and go back to Ethiopia. And Haile Selassie is the 225th king from Solomon and Sheba.

So, what is he saying now? He's saying that the throne of Ethiopia is of no divine significance if Makeda never go to Solomon and have a child to validate Ethiopia in Jewish history. But Haile Selassie come and say that HIM dynasty exist thousands of years before Solomon, even to the King [...], he was the first Emperor of Ethiopia.

And the Bible show you the first identifiable country in Ethiopia is Cush, which is Ethiopia. And if you deal with science, the oldest fossil of human being them find in Ethiopia. Them [...] Lucy at 3.5 million years. So, Ethiopia is pivotal. But what the church does to find them place in the divine, in the spiritual referral, as I said before, African religion, they define themselves through tradition.

KGC: Which, as you say, is a detriment to them.

Mutabaruka: Well, me [...] look upon Ethiopia and see if it help Ethiopia. I mean, Ethiopia is very religious, one of the most religious country on Earth, one of the poorest country on Earth. And the people them is subjugated to this religious idea, I believe, to the point where I don't see it help them really.

[...]

KGC: Why Selassie then?

Mutabaruka: Because that is what my experience have me into, that Selassie I is. There's a difference between supreme and supernatural. I don't believe in supernatural beings, but I believe in supreme beings, because man can be supreme in his relationship with whatsoever. And, to me, I couldn't say Marcus Garvey is a supreme being, but Marcus Garvey never carry I to this thinking. Because, as I said, Marcus Garvey would never carry me to this thinking. It carry I to a more political awareness and consciousness. You know, White Supremacy have to go down and these things, but I never leave it to say Haile Selassie. That is why Rasta tell you it's a figurative thing. Haile Selassie is.

Marcus Garvey is like a Moses, you know. He lead the people to the promised land, but he never go there. I'm like a John the Baptist who opened the way, like how John the Baptist opened the way to Jesus Christ, Marcus Garvey opened the way to Haile Selassie. So, him taught language. One would use that as a metaphor or a figurative language [...] You know, when a woman say, "Man is dog," she not really saying you have four foot, but it's your attributes, your character, your way. Well, it's that now. When a man say, "John the Baptist," he's reading how John the Baptist opened the way to Jesus Christ. So, they say, John the Baptist, Marcus Garvey. The Bobo them will show you that Marcus Garvey [...] the power of the whole trinity. So, him now declare the trinity in his experience. Him not use the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, because we don't have the ghost thing. It's mother, father, child. Them take out the woman and put a ghost. So, there's no representation of the family name in Christianity.

[...]

Mutabaruka: Ya, so I say now, within the levels of the consciousness, now, I as a black person want to move out of Babylon. You know that song, {singing} "Move out of Babylon, Rastaman." I say, *I-n-I* have to think upon these things and find out. So, I say, if nobody can write me a biography of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, write me a biography. Just like how you write me a biography of Jesus. If a man write about me, him must have a biography to write about who is Matthew, who is Mark, who is Luke, who is John, all of these people.

KGC: And, in fact, the scholarship shows that nothing was written at the time of Jesus about Jesus. The first one was Mark, and Mark and Luke share a lot of common stuff. So, there was a source probably before, but, at the end of the day, what we are left with in the Gospels. I mean, a best case scenario is some people's recollection of an event that

happened thirty, thirty-five years ago. So, imagine you or me, or anybody, even an educated person, let's see, what's today? 2011. Let's look back thirty years to 1981.

Mutabaruka: When Bob Marley did dead make we say.

KGC: So, write a testimony about Bob Marley's death. How accurate is it going to be?

Mutabaruka: Ya, because you have to listen to people and people blow up much. They want to say Bob Marley did this and Bob Marley did that just because them want to make you feel [...]. Not that only, you know. To me, and it can be proven, because there are documents now that come out about it, there's one set of Romans that write the New Testament – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – it's not no four different man. It's one set of Romans, white people sit down, a family, I mean like royal family in Rome, write that. It's not four different people write their divine revelation about a man named Jesus, because me don't know anybody ever named Jesus.

[...]

Mutabaruka: Ya, there is no supernatural being outside of we that's going to go destroy. Good and bad is not outside of man. It's only man have that in them. There is no other creature on Earth that have this thing named good and bad in them. It's man create God and the devil. Man create that.²²²

2. Dermott Fagan

Dermott Fagan's conversion to Rastafari began during his days as a construction worker and drug dealer in New York. After incarceration, Fagan was deported to Jamaica with but a few dollars in his pocket—a former sergeant in the Jamaica Defence Force, now a convicted felon. After getting back on his feet, his call to follow Haile Selassie led to the installation of a Rastafari camp in the Blue Mountains (Mount Zion Hill Temple), commonly known as the School of Vision. With Sabbath services held in Papine Square, attended by anywhere from 30-50 people, and featured in Oliver Hill's documentary, *Coping with Babylon* (2007), the charismatic message of Fagan that intersects Rastafari, UFOs, as well as the Illuminati and the Free Masons are steadily becoming known to the outside world. Let us turn now to some of his ideas and experiences.

Dermott Fagan: [In America,] that is where my life dramatically changed. In America, I realized now that it is a white man's country. Over here, it is majority black people, you will attest. Over there, it is not so. So, to me now, that was my first real culture shock realizing the power of racism.

And I started off over there... first work I started off at was Wells Fargo, the security service in America. Even though I did not have a green card, but I used up certain little facilities at the time when I joined Wells Fargo, but I didn't carry a weapon guarding place like CBC News [...] While I was there as a security guard, I met someone from the union, the International Brotherhood of [...] and I went and I got into the union even without having a green card at that time. And I started to paint, paint

²²² Interview with researcher, Murdoch Spring, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, June 3, 2011.

building like New York University, Trump Towers, Museum Towers, Hilton Hotel, all over.

KGC: Big painting jobs?

Dermott Fagan: Yes, those times I made fifteen US bucks an hour, good money.

KGC: That's good money for the late-seventies.

Dermott Fagan: So, I left [Jamaica in] '81[...] during the eighties [...] and that is when I experienced the power of racism, meaning that I was a member of the union and a good painter, because I always had to work harder than the white guys to show that I am good, to keep the job. But no matter how hard I work, most times on the job I'd be [part of] the first set that would be laid off, while other white people, now, whether they be white Russians or white Jews or whatever, or Italians, they always work mostly around the clock. I could not see myself balancing [...], because I never get to work straight. I always be laid off.

But the only good thing during that time when you're laid off, if they don't call you back in time, you can get a little social service welfare to keep you going. And it was during that time I realized the power of racism and I was discouraged. That is what discouraged me. And I went off now into certain friendships with certain Jamaicans that I met. And I started to juggle herb. I started to sell herb. Some people refer to ganja as a gateway drug. I don't know why they say, but that's what I started off with first until I graduated into the cocaine.

KGC: Did you start dealing cocaine too?

Dermott Fagan: Not only selling it, but using. Yes. You see, I'm not ashamed to tell you these truths, because this is my life and I hope others may hear and you make some conversion. And it is during my experience with the cocaine mainly that I got incarcerated. First incarceration, ten months. After that, I've got almost three years for possession and distribution of cocaine. They looked upon me like a big drug dealer. It wasn't so because I was just running around in circles. If you don't use it, it will be able to show material power if you are not arrested. That is money, big money.

I was going around and around because I was always intoxicated by coke, a different set of people. But, it seems to me like it is when you are down [...] because it was during that experience I met my friend, I call him Bredda Bredda, New York City, West Broadway, Canal Street. They used to have a club there called the Reggae Lounge, Italians only, but mostly reflecting a Rastafari culture.

[...]

Dermott Fagan: It was during that time I met a brethren that I knew from Jamaica. We call him Bredda Bredda and the night I met him in the club, I took him home with me, because he was displaced by his brother who didn't want no dreadlocks in the house. Even though he was encouraged to leave Canada and come over US, while in US, his brother changed his mind and want him to trim and he would not trim. So, I took him in.

And while he was at my place working for me—at the time, I was running Dynamic Construction Company. Construction, painting, dry wall, plastering—I used to be good at that. And the brethren said to me, “Soldier, how do you look at Rastafari?” [I replied,] “I have nothing in relating to Rasta, nor the faith, nor the culture, nor the religion, because I'm an ex-soldier. Never been with no Rasta before. Never been to no Rasta group. Never hear no Rastafari doctrine.” But this brethren said to me, “How do you look at the Emperor?” So, I say, “What do you mean?” Him say, “How do you see

HIM?" Me say, "What do you mean? If I see HIM as God?" Him say, "Ya." Me say, "No, how can you look upon that man and say HIM is God?" So, me say, "What proof you have that HIM is God?" Him say, "All right, soldier, you know that I can read good. Soldier, read Revelation 5, brethren."

And I took up the Bible, because I always loved the Bible, but I never see that white man as God. Something just tell me that's a lie. But I believed the story from Genesis to Revelation, but that white man that them call Jesus, I just look at him and know something isn't right there.

So, I look at the Bible, and I read Revelation, chapter five from verse one to five. And I stop there, because what struck me was that there was a question asked, "Who is able to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof?" And there was affixed a question sign. So, even in my elementary academical state, I look at the question and then I continue and then I read, "And no man neither in heaven nor on Earth was found worthy to open the book or to loose the seals." So you have a big problem. We are reading the next verse now. John said, "And I heard an angel proclaim with a loud voice, 'Weep not. Behold the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah. The Root of David have prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof.'" I don't need no big education to determine... decision that day. I said, "Wait, the problem is now one is found." The solvent was the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah. And when I get to find out now, this Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah point me to one man: Haile Selassie I. At that time, I never have the scriptures or the relevant historical facts that would substantiate the Rastafari doctrine. But that verse alone and forever, I will use that as the key Scripture that brought me or brings me into the Rastafari faith. And then now I get to find out that the same man that carries the title of Conquering Lion of Judah actually is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

[...]

KGC: Was it before or after that moment with Bredda Bredda that the incarcerations happened?

Dermott Fagan: After, because the Revelation. I'm glad you asked this question. Because, you see, as a druggie, that was my state of mind. I was working my own business. I was involved in the drugs, as I said. When I say drugs, I don't refer to the herb, you know. I refer to the coke as a grievous, abnormally for us. It was after that now I got incarcerated.

You could say stubbornness because, at that time, I was appointed by the king to take the Bible and walk, which means I must go and tell the people, but I now in my state of mind did not see myself ministering them while I'm an addict. It will be like a laughing stock. So, maybe my disobedience and my affliction through addiction may have caused my incarceration. But I give thanks and praises also for my incarceration, because it not only give me the opportunity and the time to abstain from the coke, not only by usage, but the distribution. I give thanks for it.

The other big thankfulness I should have... while I was incarcerated for almost three years, I have spent all or most of my time in theology, going through different books. You name it. I read, I read. I was a reading buff. I read everything that is important. I want to know world history, geology, you name it. So, I give thanks for those years in incarceration and I want to say here now that I value my incarceration as a form of university, because I get to meet different people of all nations, different language,

different cultures. Yes, I am thankful. Some people may not recognize or want to realize why a man would want to be thankful for being in prison, but it helped me.

[...]

KGC: Let's talk about the day of your deportation. What was that like, coming back to Jamaica?

Dermott Fagan: That was the most embarrassing moment of my life. Why I say so is that when I left here, I left here as a soldier. And I would like to value the soldier as a form of first-class citizenship, as the defender of the nation. That was my position and category. From there now, I went to America as a soldier, a member of the JDF, feeling proud and so forth to serve the crown, coming back. I came back home in disgrace. I felt disgrace to come back to my country where I used to be a part of the cream of the crop. I came back in an immigration plane in handcuffs. I couldn't kick back over my shoulder not even a few decent clothes. Because, being locked up over there, what you have or had at the moment in your apartment, you would not get the chance really to retrieve it. So, whether it was gold, money, or clothes, everything was left behind. Others took what was mine.

[...]

Dermott Fagan: So, that is how I came home. Fifty United States dollars in my pocket, after twelve years approximately. And before that, I gave up my apartment here, gave up my furniture to my brother... had what I left him and so forth when I came back. I didn't have an official residence, but my furniture was there still and I get to sell what was not sold by them what left I.

So, it was rough being a deportee. And the syndrome that comes with being a deportee, or the stigma rather that comes with being a deportee was humiliating. People did not curse me, because I was not mixed up here in society, because I come back with dreadlocks. So, I tried to cling to the Rasta culture and I try to mix up with the average person, because the average person, if he's not Rasta-oriented, it's not going to be accommodating. So, I just try to keep myself to myself. Was coming back home.

I did not stay long about reconnecting to the dollars, because my masonry skills paid off again. Because, immediately, my daughter, my first child with my wife at the time who died now, she's the one who recommend me to sobriety, an Indian. Sobriety and company development construction. And I utilized my masonry skills again. It came good in three, four months, like I never leave Jamaica. Because I now start to work as a subcontractor.

I have my crew after paying my men them to buy the measurements. Them times it comes over 10,000 dollars in my pocket. Like, yo, why did I leave here in the first place? Yes, so I give thanks. And the people that I work for in the mason capacity, they didn't want me to leave, because if I get something to do now, I'm going to give it my best shot. Because, I want to get a rating. Anything you tell me to do, and I agree to do it, I'm going to put my pride in it, yes? Have you ever tried the neem?

KGC: In tea?

Dermott Fagan: Umhm.

KGC: No.

{Fagan pours KGC some neem tea}

Dermott Fagan: [The tea] is good to reduce sugar in the blood, diabetes and so forth. Because I am diabetic now for more than a year. I use this to kind of suppress the sugar.

[...]

Dermott Fagan: We call here Zion Hill Temple Mount. From the word Zion which means the City of David. Well, all right, coming back home... the Rastafari influence. I started off downtown, Saint Williams Park, where, at the time, one of the elders known as [...] congregation. Judah Coptic was the name of it. I was there with him.

But while I was there, what happened strange, there was most of the people that came there, instead of going to the man who I put myself under, I was the one they was coming to. I knew it was going to cause a little schism. But I tried my best to be diplomatic [...] But eventually the brethren rat on me. He was accusing me that I was a soldier seeking to take over his congregation, but the truth is I wouldn't do that. When I saw myself, at the time, I humbled myself with my knowledge that I came up with to support HIM who I have seen with his order.

And I did not take the accusation lightly, so I left the Sabbath. Cried the whole day, because I felt this place, like I have nowhere to go. At the time, I have a wholesale. I sold that property a few years ago where I am now, because I don't want to leave until the king manifests through the Mark of the Beast.

Anyhow, I started being prompted by others who have seen my qualifications. They say, "You know something? You is a teacher. You is a priest. And I tell you, when you went down to that place, you wasted your time, because it's you." But I never see myself. I saw myself mostly as a student [...]

So, we have Bible study prophecies. Some Sabbath worship now, we want to hold all the commandments. And one of them is emphasized by the word, remember? So, I look at it as the key to the ten. If it was not so, in my simple opinion, while he did not say, "Remember, thou shall not kill, remember, thou shall not steal, remember, thou shall not commit adultery," but, once and for all, within the ten utterances, you have heard the word, "Remember this Sabbath Day to keep it holy."

So, we work it out for ourselves to say, as we are taught here in the West, honour the twelve month calendar. The days of the week start from Sunday. So, numerically, Sunday would constitute the first day. So, we hear that the Bible say, "Six days thou shall—but the seventh," so, in my mind, there should be no confusion which day is the Sabbath. And the seventh day, we find it to be Saturday.

So we hold that all are welcome, meaning, there is no racism here, though you might find the tendency towards Black Supremacy. Black Supremacy, as another brethren say the other day, is to recognize the Black Christ. But we want to stop there when we say Black Supremacy, because I would not preach racial superiority, nor racial inferiority because I don't see.

But what I see Black Supremacy means is that Christ is black and He is above all souls. You will agree to that? But, apart from that, I don't want to discourage anyone because of their race to be a part of. What I represent, it is the Emperor. You see? So, I say all are welcome, so apart from the linguistical problems or effectiveness, I wouldn't stop you if you are considered to be an Indian. I wouldn't stop the Oriental. I would not stop the Caucaisan. I wouldn't stop no one to serve this man, especially if I say that He is the Almighty. Because if He is the Almighty, He is deserving of your worship and praise. So, I wouldn't want him to accuse me or to condemn me.

And then again the Bible said, "Come unto me all ye that are revelated and I will give you rest." So, if Christ said, "Come," who is he that would stop? You see my reason,

my brethren? So, I try to clarify myself in these areas. So, the banner came forth in 1998, but before the banner²²³ was risen, I got a vision, because I wouldn't just put up that.

I got a vision. And, at the time, I was living with an Indian lady who woke me at the moment and asked me, "Who are you going to gather?" [I replied,] "What do you mean? Gather who?" [She said,] "The Emperor." Commissioned me then, from that time, and that is why the banner came forth. Even the baptism that I tried to back-away from, knowing that you don't just get up and baptize people who don't have authority [...] and for both areas it was revealed that baptism should be done.

Because there is no baptism amongst Rastafari groups, as you know. They speak of fire. They have not yet seen, or if they have seen it, will not go to the Orthodox Church. And most of them have gone there [...] for baptism have gone to the Orthodox, because that was the church that was set by His Majesty here.

Well, the problem is that the Orthodox Church does not and even now cannot baptize in the new name. So, there's a problem there between the Rastafari fraternity and orthodoxy, because orthodoxy don't worship Haile Selassie I. They are still stuck with the 2000 years advent of Yeshua. They have not yet seen this new light. So, maybe that is why I am called to do this work, to further sensitize the people that are maybe stagnated in their mind.

KGC: So, you came up to this land in 1998?

Dermott Fagan: Somewhere there, because I am here thirteen years now.

KGC: What was it like when you got here?

Dermott Fagan: Just like over there where you can see that heavy bushery. We would have called that the virgin part, because it's not disturbed when we came. It was like that. The only thing was a little track.

KGC: Like a deer path or something?

Dermott Fagan: Yes. Because the first part where you started to climb, there was a big [...] there and we used to hold onto that to make our way. [...]

Dermott Fagan: We decided to establish outside society, because of the revelation that expressed the Mark of the Beast. One part Revelation 13, verse 16 is a warning that it is coming and it is Lucifer that is bringing it. The other part now is Revelation 14, verse 9 or 10. The Lord Himself is telling you that the individuals that you see with Himself will rot upon those people. So, when we look at it now, we are those that don't plan to take the Mark of the Beast, because you know who is the Almighty and we know that he has warned that it is coming.

Moreover, He told I personally and revealed to others what the Mark is, which we know to be a microchip. You have other preachers out there now, they [...] aware of the danger of the Mark. So, that is why we set this place. We don't plan to be a part of the New World Order as others have said before, so mainly that is my purpose of ordination to gather the people that will not desire.

So, by right, the government should look upon I as a Gandhi, a social revolutionary. Yes, because if we don't plan to take the mark, it means we are not planning to be a part of their government. And that is the first sign of rebellion and revolution. So, though we don't carry guns or intend to, our revolutionary state of mind is

²²³ cf. Figures 50 and 52.

that we will reject Babylon's mark and the system. And there is not long left for that to be manifested. I look for them next year to usher in this microchip for world utilization under the New World Order that is coming. And that is why you'll find even the spirit there now in Africa and Asia, the rebellion of the people against rule and law, is to bring in a different type of concept.

KGC: But how did you find all this stuff out?

Dermott Fagan: Like I say, I am a seer.

KGC: How does it come? How do the messages come to you?

Dermott Fagan: The king show I. Like you go to bed, and while you are asleep, he will come to you and show you what it is and he will tell you what to do. And in our group it's not one of us who will see. So, we make sure that we are always be aware. And that is what we call communication. That's why we always create.

KGC: So, you have telepathic communication?

Dermott Fagan: Well, I wouldn't say telepathic communication, because telepathic communication, in my opinion, would be done while both persons are conscious. That means we are here now, we can communicate through our minds. But that's not what I'm speaking about. I'm speaking about God speaking to you spiritually by divine powers. For example, I have a knowledge to know... I should briefly explain.

Though I have not studied the field, but, basically speaking, when a person is asleep, what they are not taught is that the flesh is there, but the spirit is free. You have that overstanding? In the Hindu cultures [...] because man is astral, man is a star that is sent in the Earth. So, while the man is sleeping in a sub-conscious state, he can be getting visions, communications. His spirit can be brought.

For example, I am sitting here. While I am sleeping, my spirit can leave here and go right into that house. While you are in there, if you are talking anything, I can see and hear. The next morning I can tell you so and so and so. And you'll say, "How do you know?" It's the powers I deal with.

But, for example, you read the Bible, no? Before Christ was born, Jesus, remember that Joseph found that the wife was pregnant and he did not have any sexual intercourse with her. So, it was impossible for him to impregnate that woman, maybe. Then now the Bible said, "While he was considering to put her aside," meaning he did not know it was the work of God. So, from a man's point of view or a humanistic point of view, it would be safe to say that Joseph was of the opinion that the daughter²²⁴ fornicate. But while he was thinking to put her away, God know that if he put her away, under the law, the Ten Commandments shouldn't be stolen. What the Bible said, "The Lord appeared unto Joseph in a dream, said unto Joseph, 'Stop your thinking. Don't do it. It's not so. The work is of me.'" And right away, Joseph now, did not have to worry no more. Why you think he did not have to worry no more?

It means to me that before this episode here, Joseph was acquainted with God from former communication. Like I now, many times I have seen Haile Selassie I in visions. Many times people try to do mean things and king show I them, show I what they plan to. So, if I should get a vision tomorrow morning, I'm not going to have no doubt. You know why? Because, over the years, I have been in contact or in constant

²²⁴ Rastafari often refer to a woman as "daughter," as a reflection of *communitas*. In this case, Fagan is referring to Mary, mother of Jesus.

communication with this man. So, that's why they couldn't tell I about no Allah. Them couldn't tell I about Jesus. Them couldn't tell I about none of the gods, Buddha, all the gods that the people make. That could not hold I, because I have a personal relationship with Haile Selassie that HIM is the Almighty God—man that I have seen with my two eyes.

KGC: Where did you see HIM... in your dreams?

Dermott Fagan: Apart from dreams... when I say with my two eyes, it means I wasn't sleeping. 1999, right up there.

[...]

Dermott Fagan: And when I look, I see pitch black cloud from all the areas coming together. What did I saw? I saw the Emperor. He was sit down like that before me. 1999, when Nostradamus said Jesus is coming, I see Haile Selassie I right there in the clouds dressed in the [...] full imperial suit, warlord suit. That's what I saw. And he sat like this in the throne with his two hands holding onto the rests, looking up into the throat of the North. You see that white cloud up there? Right that direction he was looking to.

KGC: In the air, on his throne?

Dermott Fagan: Sitting right there on the clouds on the throne. My two eyes. And that's the only time I have ever seen him, but before that umpteenth time in vision I've seen him travelling the clouds, walking the Earth, doing terrible things. But that day, it wasn't a vision thing. My naked eye see the emperor. So, I would be one of those that no one can fool, when it come to he's the Almighty. So, that is why we wait for him here.

You know what is unique about the key? While we as black people speak of HIM—you is a man that do your research—if you travel the world, all over people talk of the same man. You know why HIM communicate to us and I'm giving you this testimony? You will be surprised that people tell you the same thing. That's how terrible he is.

[...]

KGC: And then, how many people did it start with when you started building?

Dermott Fagan: This is what is so unique about the school. I have never kept a log book to say specifically how much people constitute School of Vision. And even though I don't, it is impossible to maintain. Why I say so, it is fluctuating.

For example, for this month you might have said fifteen in, say fifteen people are here this month. By next month, you might have a family gone. You might find two family move in. [...] we used to come in more often. [Some might leave], because they become discouraged, because our purpose is not yet materialized. Like in the time of the arc, now a preacher now, have a judgement that just come in. So, we would want to speculate that many people were impressed with Noah and maybe have joined him.

And even to build the arc, to do other things from a communal point of view. But notice, when Judgement Day came, it's only eight people were with that man, you know, including himself. So, if the ark that he built was a boat that sailed on water... in my day, the ark that we work with now is the chariots of fire. Likewise, the same way people fell away, the same way I see it in my day, because it's strictly by faith I work. I am not responsible for bringing anyone here other than myself. And if my child had come with me... his mother left and I got two more children that are born here. No one could say the priest bring them here. Each individual have to have their own conviction, how they are and why they are here. That is how this place is operating. So, right now I couldn't tell

you. I could speculate that right now you have more than a hundred people here right now. And them gone more than that. Enough children, you see. So, that's how the work is.

KGC: And so, I guess it happens pretty organically if somebody wants to move in or be part of the community?

Dermott Fagan: Well, where I am now, and because of my experiences over the years and what I see is taking place now, both amongst us and from a governmental point of view, they kind of forced me now to make more drastic change. So, the way in which people used to come and be a part of this society, it is changing now, because of the behaviour, as I've said, the people amongst me. And, the society that we will have to face eventually.

The key to this residency is that every one that come here must come in the name of Emperor Haile Selassie through the trinity, the key to the temple. If an individual does not confess the name of His Majesty to me and praise in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, cannot be a part of this society. We are seeking now to ratify that. Even those that are coming, seeing that I am the leader, I am the founder, and I really will be responsible.

I want a form of protection now for myself. I am demanding police record until it is changed. I mean, I will have an idea and be cognizant of the person's character. That means if the police or the law should come, I can speak and say, "Officer, yes. I know of this person. This is his record." So, I want to work closely with law and order and authority, until the time when they demand the infusion of this chip. That is when I will declare myself that [...] but they can do. What they plan to do, they will have to do it. But until that day, I am not anti-societal. I'm not against government, because the Bible said we should be solely subjected to their powers. The powers [...] governments are here. Because if there is no government, the world is anarchy. Anarchy is next to chaos and destruction. So, I don't travel that way.

But I want to have a school now where the people are more religiously inclined to serve and to sustain, to justify our purpose by the keeping of the law and the worship and praise of the Emperor. So, I want to have... not control, because I don't want to control no one. But, in the same breath, I don't want to be looked upon as a stupid person or a person that is irresponsible. I don't want that to reach me. But the key to this residency is in the name of the king.

KGC: So, what's it like for you now to be living here in this place that you've built with your people looking across at the old soldier camp where you used to work?

Dermott Fagan: Well, a lady came here, a European lady. I don't know if she was French or what. But she surprised me when she called me. At that time, here was not finished, but the balcony part above the drum here, just frame out. And she called me from up there and say, "Dermott, man check this—," I don't want to use the verb, "Check this {pauses} out." Meaning, she sat and she look and she declared, "Man, it's two governments," which mean, she has the realization or the intricacy to realize that I represent the government of the Almighty God on Earth. And over there is the opposing power, which mean the captive power that took us from HIM in Africa, because if you can't see God as an African manifested through the flesh by the biological and racial characteristics of wooly hair, red eyes, and brown skin... and we are black people.

That would make a biological link. Continentally speaking, we are Africans. And the king is an African. So, we now see ourselves under a captive crown which [...] defend her defense position. That is where she was from. If she want to invade, she invade from there. If she want to maintain, she maintain from there through military tactics and that position. So, what the woman saw is two different powers or force.
[...]

KGC: Now, let me ask you a more practical question. What do you think you'll do when the microchip is introduced?

Dermott Fagan: They or we?

KGC: Well, both. I think there will be an interaction.

Dermott Fagan: In my mind, I think, this is one of the most brilliant questions a man can ask, because there is going to be a confrontation. I see it coming. The confrontation is when this government have everything locked down, meaning that everyone is in obedience or mark is under their control. Where you are, whatever you do, they have access to you, whether you like it or not. And there is a people there that is surviving totally without submission unto them. That's why I say, "Praise be unto God." You notice, to come up here though, you cannot just drive in, you cannot ride in, you cannot fly nothing here. You have to come on your two feet. So, I look immediately at the man that I serve in this capacity as International Field Marshall General. Can't you see right here now the militaristic strategy.

KGC: There is a militaristic strategy here?

Dermott Fagan: Yes I! And if you could not see, look at what I'm proposing now. You cannot ride no bike, no car, no bicycle. Can't drive nothing. You have to come on your feet. So, if you were planning now to invade, which they did a few years ago when they were told that I am planning to overthrow government.

KGC: The military came here?

Dermott Fagan: Yes I. Military and police.

KGC: What did you do? What happened?

Dermott Fagan: Well, as a matter of fact, I was inside my bedroom up there. And the ones that came before, two soldiers – I baptized them. They try to shake off the police so that I know that they were coming, because the only thing I know they could find is herb. That would incriminate us, because we are lawful subjects. I stress the need for lawfulness. In other words, not lawless, but in accordance with law, I stress for that, with one exception, the little ganja issue, which we justify and maintain is our religious and sacramental rights until that day when it is agreed. So, we were not afraid of them.

So, [...] they were told that we were planning something to overthrow. And they were justified in coming based on what they heard. When they came and I was seeking to convince [...] representing the constabulary and the army officers and majors and so forth. I said, "You have been duped. Why would I go over there this 1975 and come here with something to threaten, wherein if we fire gunshot in here, we must expect the [...]. No man. You have been deceived." But during that discourse, you see, they were not fully convinced. And I sent the scribe here. And the only weapon I have is a ceremonial sword. It is still up there. I sent for it. And, matter of fact, it was before ten o'clock in the morning. Sun shine, because we always have devotion right here. And the morning when they came [...] get rough and thing. Because they came through the bush from all

direction. Because, in a raid, they don't know if we have weapons. They can't just come in careless, because this is a mountain.

Man, immediately dark clouds started to gather from all around over our heads. Thunder started to roar. And lightning started to flash. Fire, heavenly fire, passed through we and passed through them. And [...] say, "Jah Rastafari." Soldier and police tremble like leaf up here, because they know that day as soon as something strange is taking place. Because I tell [...], "This is my ceremonial sword I keep here. No guns here. Moreover, you can start to search from my apartment here and if you find a bullet, start shoot. I guarantee at the cost of my life, I don't keep company with gunmen.

And eternal lightning convinced them that day that we are the people of the Almighty God [...] say, "Priest, neither for love nor money will I come back up here. So, what do you think I realized that day? Jah use that occasion to show me if I have sense and that those around us, when they come to deal with force up here, I will do some things. I ain't afraid of no police, no soldier, no queen, no Governor General, no Prime Minister, and no opposition. You know why? If they don't see I speak for myself, I am a Son of Israel and my God and king and saviour is His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, King of Israel, and King of Mount Zion. That is what I established.

So, if the day should come when the mark is declared and the government says, "These people are rebels, because they will not bow to the chip. Let us go and do such and such." I don't know what others will do, but I will call upon Haile Selassie I. And this is where I work, you know. I don't work down here. No, I work above. I will call to the heavens. Then who can tell what I may get?

Is longtime I work for this king, you know. And if I should just use my experience here from 1998, that bring me to about 13 years. But it is much longer that I work in America, the belly of the beast, I preach and teach. And demonstrate through metaphysical and divine powers... thunder, lightning, and fire... hailstone... America. Yes, I proved the king longtime and many men know that.

So, when that time come, I will speak for those that are around me and that are in obedience. My father, I speak to through the chariots of fire. I'm not afraid of no government. I'm not afraid of them ships. I'm not afraid of nothing what them have, because I have a link to the king, 20,000 chariots of fire. I will never be afraid. They will have to kill me. And, my brethren, I am not afraid of that death either. Why? The resurrection is guaranteed unto I. I don't fear death. I don't even know what is death. But, I know, Emperor Haile Selassie is the Almighty God... and not only angels, there is in position 20,000 circles of flashing fire. Why should I be afraid? They will be afraid.

[...]

Dermott Fagan: That's why they don't like the Rasta with our knowledge, because we are dangerous. We are those that are fully emancipated and mentally free in our mind. We are not Jamaicans. We are different from the brown people down there.

What a Rasta man is? An African. We never left Africa. How can we leave from that? We will never let go Africa. You let go Africa, you let go your God, you let go your father, you let go your mother, you let go your culture. It's a wicked thing. It's a wicked thing to even think. It's a wicked thing, me brother. It's a wicked thing that go on—not an African. You deny the African king. You deny your continent. You deny your culture. You deny your history. You deny everything that you ought to be. That man's a dead

person, dead soul. That's a slave. That's a British subject. I don't want to be a British subject. No, my lord. I'm subjected unto them through their forcefulness. But I no British subject. I'm a royal subject of Ethiopia, an Israelite by inheritance. I'm not going to sell out as no British subject. Lightning over there. We are the Ethiopians. We are blood brothers. The people that have left Africa and the Jamaicans are one people.

[...]

Dermott Fagan: They give me name Dermott Fagan. Where that name come from? I find out that name come from Ireland. Do I look Irish to you? The Irish man look different from me. That mean it should be I name? But me can hold it until the king come. When King Selassie I come, no man address me as Dermott. No, you will call me by one name related to African. Everything going to change. Why should you call me Dermott Fagan? That have to go on one side.

[...]

KGC: Do you think that the whole thing is going to collapse at some point?

Dermott Fagan: Babylon System? Well, I wouldn't want to say it collapse. It wouldn't be intelligent for me to say so. What I see, I see a demarcation between two factions of people.

KGC: Okay, so you think it will carry on?

Dermott Fagan: Yes, it will carry on for those that are under the mark. All things will be for those people. But it will only be for a while, because that now will be judged by fire. I know that is not a part of it to justify what you have just said. Won't be able to purchase from them the way we are doing now. So, we will be expected to survive off of our community and through communal efforts until the king intervene.

KGC: Will you have enough food to do that?

Dermott Fagan: Well, that is the only part that would bother my mind, but as long as I try do my best, I said to myself. That's why I see Satan fight against us. Satan fight to destroy the planet.

The plan was to propogate the land with cultivation of diversity. That means we are expected to be sustained through our efforts. Lucifer, now, put it in the mind of the people that they must not farm, because they are farming for me as if they are taking their mind for munitions. You know what I say? The same man or the same God that form manna, that as long as I do my best, my God will not lead me to starvation. Because if him form manna for the people, forty years and forty nights, when they take them out of Egypt to bring them to Palestine, why would he not try to aid me and the factors as here that have tried our best for years. If him have to bring in [...] for those complaining in the wilderness, but [...] So, if He have to come down here and drop manna, He will help me, because Him I speak for when I stand for the Earth. I can't lose.

But to show you how serious I am, I have said in my mind years ago, the same way they call them grass and so big and fat and eating, if I have to go through the grass and me have to find an animal to eat, I will eat it. Me say, me not go dead. Because man is a spirit and me serious about survival. He will have no choice but to come deliver me. I have that faith. Because you know why my faith is so strong? I don't ever plan to go with them. I am not a part of them. Is them capture me and want me serve other Gods. I no be a part of them.

KGC: So, can I ask, what kind of things do you grow here?

Dermott Fagan: All things, or used to grow? Right now, it's just mostly bananas and we are seeking at this time to regenerate and redirect towards efforts of cultivation, farming.

KGC: And then the coffee I see, do you use that coffee?

Dermott Fagan: No, it is by a certain vision I have got over the years... and it is because of the vision that we don't farm coffee, because I realize...

KGC: So, it's just wild coffee. Some mango trees?

Dermott Fagan: Sometimes I feel sorrowful that there is not more.²²⁵

Before the above interview took place, I was able to perform a very unique kind of participant observation at Zion Hill Temple Mountain for Repatriation (School of Vision) when I arrived to Fagan's settlement with a group of Australian and Israeli travellers. Fagan graciously shared many exegetical and hermeneutical points related to his Rastology in this exchange.

Dermott Fagan: When you look at this word, J-e-s-u-s, what do you say?

Female Visitor: Jesus.

Dermott Fagan: But, you have been taught that this word is Jesus, right?

Female Visitor: Yes.

Dermott Fagan: {to KGC} Are you from India?

KGC: Canada, but Indian heritage, yeah.

Dermott Fagan: {to Female Visitor} And you are from?

Female Visitor: Australia.

Male Visitor 1: In Hebrew, we say Yeshua.

Dermott Fagan: So, look at it now. You are from Hindustan, she is from Australia, and you is of the Israeli stock and you all have been trained that J-e-s-u-s is "Geesus," no?

KGC: Yeah.

Dermott Fagan: But today—{to camp member} you have a pen there priest?

[...]

Dermott Fagan: I will show you the deception. In the English language... so now, if I should ask you, J-e-s-s-e, what will you say?

Female Visitor: Jesse.

Dermott Fagan: Ah? You got that right.

Female Visitor: Yay!

Dermott Fagan: J-e-s-t-e-r?

Female Visitor: Jester.

Dermott Fagan: Ah? J-e-s-u-i-t?

Female Visitor: Jesuit?

Dermott Fagan: Right. Jesuit Order. Ah?

KGC: That's a type of Catholicism. Jesuits.

Dermott Fagan: J-e-s-s-i-c-a?

Female Visitor: Jessica?

²²⁵ Interview with researcher, Zion Hill Temple Mountain, Blue Mountains, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, May 8, 2011.

Dermott Fagan: Aye. So, we have four words that start with the same three letters. And when I say, J-e-s-s-e, you did not say “Geesse,” you said, Jesse. When I asked what is J-e-s-t-e-r, you did not say “Geester,” you said Jester. When I asked you what is J-e-s-u-i-t, you did not say “Geesuit,” you said Jesuit. When I asked you what is J-e-s-s-i-c-a, you said Jessica. So now, why in the name of the Almighty God, why now in the same chronological order and continuation and pronunciation that is a law, a law is J-e-s, syllable is Jes-. So, we have been trained with a lying spirit, deceitfully. Instead of saying “Je-sus,” we say “Geesus.” So, you see where the trick comes in now?

Female Visitor: Yes.

Dermott Fagan: So, in grammar, if you spell any word wrong by one letter, they give you an “x.” So, you see now? We have a problem. The problem is this man’s name has been usurped. Usurped meaning instead of you saying “Je-sus,” you call him “Geesus.” Let me show what this man Je-sus looks like.

[...]

Dermott Fagan: Look at Jeremiah 8, verse 21 {recites}. You know, you have some theologians that will twist the meaning of when he said, “I am black.” They’ll say, “No, he is not saying that he is a black person.” I’ll bring you further now to show you that when he says, “I am black,” it is exactly what he means. I am not showing you this to support racism, you know. I don’t hold neither racial superiority or inferiority. I hold racial truth that God make all people. So, I don’t [...] no one and I don’t put myself above no one, but we have to uphold the Black Christ, because it is written. And if I don’t uphold that, I will fall.

Now, look at Daniel 7, verse 9 {recites}. “And the hair of his head like pure wool.” So, you see now, this is the wool {fingering his knotted locks}. It has to do with my African heritage and [...] derived from the melanin, meaning [...] So, it is that the Christ who was crucified, his hair was as wool. Not one that they give us by the name of “Geesus.” His name is not there neither. His race is too. I’ll show you the description, the last writing. Revelations 1, verses 14 and 15 {recites}. “His eyes were of flame of fire.” What colour is fire?

Female Visitor: Red.

Dermott Fagan: Fire reflect red, which means, Christ’s eyes like a flame of fire. It means, the true Christ, his eyes are red. But that is not what we have been worshipping though.

KGC: Red eyes?

Dermott Fagan: No, we don’t worship red eyes, because that has not been given to us. What we have here in the eighteenth century is a European Christ that came from Rome, which is known as “Geesus.” Because that is the image that has been given unto us and it is recognized on the twenty-fifth of December. But when you look at the Scripture, “his feet like unto fine brass as if they were burned in a furnace.” So, what do I do? I use my imagination. Brass is like brown. Then is the heat affect the brass, then it must be dark now. So, that is why now, in your day, when we have now the fulfilment of Isaiah 9, verses 6 and 7 {recites}. The pastors now, they use this and they tell you about, it’s “Geesus.” It was a lie.

Yeshua, that was born in Bethlehem of Judea, Palestine. Archeology and history and the culture never produced Yeshua carrying a government. You read me? Because Yeshua born in a manger or a stable. Yeshu born in paupery, meaning, even though he was not fathered by Joseph, both Joseph and Mary, according to history, were poor

people, because Joseph was a carpenter. So, you look at Yeshua and Jesus' character as a lamb, as a poor person. [...] it means he was not a crown king, because Pontius Pilate was governor for the Emperor of Rome with, I think, it was Constantine during that era. In Israel, the king was Herod who sought to destroy this child. So, there is no history or relativity to show Yeshua from birth until death, the age of thirty-three-years-old, having ruling any government around having a government to rule any kingdom. And that's a fact.

We go further to say, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end upon the throne of David." So, you see, we [...] be not offended. Then, we defend the glory of His Majesty. We put His Majesty to be for us a child is born with the government. Why we say so? When you look at Yeshua, did Yeshua carry a government? No, because the government that ruled Palestine was the government of Rome, like the governor Pontius Pilate. The Hebrew nation was under conquest. That's what I have studied. Nobody teach me these things. I study from America to where I am now. So, what we know now, this second birth, is the birth of this man, Haile Selassie, that was born the 23rd of July, 1892. And, you see, verse 7 says {recites}, that is the coronation, the 2nd of November, 1930, in Addis Ababa, where seventy-two nations or more came, participated and witnessed the ascension.

[...]

Dermott Fagan: Whether you know it or not, you are in the temple of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. You, now, that is referred to as an Israeli... {draws on paper} this is known as what?

Male Visitor 1: [...]

Dermott Fagan: [...] Star of David.

Male Visitor 1: Also known as the shield.

Dermott Fagan: The shield mean protection. But do you know why it is a shield? Or do you know anything about the shield? 1st John 5. You don't have the Septuagint, because Israelis don't accept the New Testament. [...] "For there are three that they record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit." Ghost is superstition. It's supposed to be Holy Spirit in proper translation [...] And this is the trinitarian of Christ by a relationship of sixty degrees. And that is the trinity that binds the heavens. And it is strange today, because this trinity is defined in one name. You know what that means? Haile Selassie I. Did you know that?

KGC: It means the power of the trinity.

Dermott Fagan: Yes, the definition for the name of Haile Selassie I is power of the trinity or power of the trinity. That is why we say now we are in a position to evangelize the whole world to this upgraded truth, because what we know, from the creation of Adam until today's date, whether it be linguistical or historical or geological, you will find no other name recorded in the annals of human history that is trinitarian other than Haile Selassie I.

So, we the Rastafari, we worship the trinity in the name of Haile Selassie. Now, what is unique, he was not born Haile Selassie though. Born Tafari Makonnen. At the age of forty-years-old, baptized in the ancient Coptic Church of Ethiopia, yes, he got the name through the priesthood, Haile Selassie I, which was submerged, that means it was never mentioned from the time of baptism until the age of thirty years later until he ascended to the throne as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

We're back to the key. This is the equation for the trinity. Now, the trinity on Earth... you have to realize that the heaven is dissected by the Earth, because the Earth is one of the planets in the solar system. You agree? Earth is one of the planets. That means there are other planets.

In this planet Earth, there are three that bear witness: the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood. And these three agree as what? So, we have 'w' for water, meaning that the elements, the further you go... it is fluid. You know that? Water or vapour. The word hail, is also water. When it becomes hailstone, it is by the word ossification, that means by the dimensional travel of the water and goes through certain dimensions and it becomes cold and form ice. When it became brimstone, you got the same hail, been hardened with fire. And, we say the water, the blood of Yeshua, as you have seen it is Jesus, and the Spirit of Truth by a similar equation. And that is how you get the key to the circle, 360 degrees. The key of Heaven and Earth. And that is why I show you now the Star of Bethlehem.

The time of the birth of Yeshua, Matthew 2. Yeshua was born in the time of Herod the King. Three wise men came from the east of Jerusalem said, "Where is he, the one who is born King of the Jews for we have seen his star in the East." And come to worship him. So, the wise men, which are astrologers which came from Ethiopia to Palestine, travelled by the star. Their names are recorded in the historical book. They realized through the spirit of numerology and astrology that this is a special child that was prophesied. And that's why Herod sought to destroy. Now, the world's problem is...

You know what this is? This is referred to as a hexagram. Now, if it 66.6 multiplied by five, you get 333 degrees and this is the power of the incomplete circle that is represented by the horseshoe – that little lucky charm, it is the key to Lucifer through the compass and the square. The compass and the square, bringing you to the Gnostic Order, bringing you to the Illuminati, Freemasons. And [...] in this age now of modern technology and the GPS, Global Position Satellite. So, what you don't know, by next year, 2012, you will hear about a New World Order. You have heard people expressing this desire?

KGC: Yeah.

Dermott Fagan: Now, in the New World Order, it's the establishment of the eye... the pyramid that is on the one dollar.

KGC: The US one dollar bill?

Dermott Fagan: Is it the key to the Illuminati. It is the pyramid of Giza, in Africa. There is no pyramid in America. So, what is referred to as stone and legacy, a borrowed legacy. The science of Egypt, Africa is what they used in Europe. They established the pentagon. Because this is a pentagram and out of the pentagram, they have what is known as the pentagon. That is the White House, USA. And this is what they rule through, the compass and the square, was established by the Illuminati. So, hear me now clearly. This is 1787, Virginia {referring to an American two dollar bill in his possession}.

KGC: Oh, I've never seen one. Do you mind if I take a photo?

Dermott Fagan: Go ahead.

[...]

Dermott Fagan: The gathering of the declaration of independence by the founding fathers. One black person was there and he was the servant. He served the coffee and the tea.

So now, what these people planned is that by 2012 onward, they are going to declare a New World Order. In the declaration of the New World Order in Australia, you will have to take the microchip. You heard about it? Micro-biochip. It is smaller than the size of a rice grain. They inject it under the forehead. Once it is injected, it becomes irretrievable which means you cannot take it out. And the reason for that is that once you are activated two weeks or four weeks after the operation, you have now become a recipient of a New World Order, bound by the GPS, Global Position Satellite and the computer. Meaning, anywhere you are or you go, you are tracked and monitored.

That is why the Bible said, Revelation 13, verse 16 and 17, “And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bound, to receive a mark on in their right hand or in their foreheads and that no man [...] the mark or the name of the beast or the number of his name.” So that was a way to tell you from a long time ago that in your day, the system will change.

So, when he says and they call it all, you know who they are referring that caused this problem is the one that they call “Geesus.” Because Christ knew what was coming and the Anti-Christ is the one who was going to bring it.

To show you now that you must not receive the mark, Revelation 14, verse 9 and 10: “And the third angel followed them saying with a loud voice, “If any man worship the beast and his image, and has seen his mark in his forehead or his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of wrath of God which is poured without mixture into the cup of indignation and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lord.”

Now, to explain this, it is two-fold. You have got this warning that this mark is coming and if you don't take, you are going to bring economical and financial hardship. What are we saying? In America, you are controlled by your social security number. In Israel, you must have a security number, identification number. In Jamaica, we have what is known as the TRN, Tax Registration Number. So, this is how they are able now to census you, monitor you and to control you. So, when this chip come now, if you don't desire to be chipped... you're from Australia. If you go to university, you won't be able to go no more. If you're in the banking system, if you don't get the chip, no more banking. If you own a home, lease a home, or pay rent, light, water, all of your material resources will be attached to the microchip, meaning, if you don't plan to be one of Lucifer's recipients of the New World Order [...]

That is why the Bible says, “There are trials and tribulations in this world which you have not seen yet.” [...] it means to me that if you don't plan to have Lucifer's mark, you will have sufferation upon you. Can you imagine you won't be able to have a home, you can't bank, you can't have a driver's license to drive on the road? That is what they are planning for us.

Now, I am here thirteen years. Thirteen years since I've been to this mountain. [...] We have had videos, movies all over. There should have been more visible prosperity [...] But I'm not complaining, because I am a priest who is responsible for His Majesty's banner. The purpose of this banner is to gather those that will not desire to go with Lucifer. And the key to the temple is the trinity. [...] now Yeshua is Haile Selassie I. Because it's the name [...] by confession. If you don't confess Christ, you cannot be saved. [...] His Majesty has said that a soul without Christ is like a ship that is caught upon the high seas and is driven by a fierce wind and it smash into the rock. So is

the soul without Christ. You that is an Israeli by your religious culture, you have been trained to worship Yahweh. Some call him Elohim. Some call him Ya-ho-vah. No problem. What you may not know is—

Male Visitor 1: Adonai.

Dermott Fagan: Adonai, yes. What you may not know is that these are the majestic names for God the Father abiding in the Spirit, because I've never seen Yahweh, because God is a spirit. What you may not have been taught is that same Yahweh through the power of trinity have manifested himself into the Earth to redeem the Earth people from the curse of bondage and Satan, Lucifer. So, that is where now, you have lost out. Because what I know through theology is that the nation of Israel [...] they are still waiting for the Messiah. You know what I say unto them? He came, and you missed it. He came, and you missed him on two occasions.

He came as the lamb of God, because the Bible is there, the Lord himself shall give a sign. And a virgin came, born in Bethlehem of Judah, he preach, teach, do all the works none could ever do. [...] And that man was cut off for three days as the sign of Jonah, three days in the belly of the whale, three days in the grave. But on the third day, through the power of omnipotence, earthquake and resurrection, and he declare [...], because he must come at the age before the fire of Jah to deliver his people again regardless of your language, your nationality, your culture. And the new name for salvation now is not Jesus the Pauper.

No, because we have progress from the lamb to the conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah. The new name, without hesitation or apology would be declared with boldness [...] of faith is His Imperial Majesty. So far, [...] we have left the common age. You could look at Jesus the common guy. No, we have entered the palace.

I'll show you something. My inheritance is through the name, because I am called by Rastafari. That's not a pauper, that's not a [...]. That is autocracy and aristocracy, Haile Selassie I. I show you this. I show you this. Psalm 45. {recites} Touching what? The king! Because what you better know is Israel's king is Israel's God. Because the highest type of man on the Earth is king and emperor. You will agree? The highest accomplishment any man can have on this Earth is emperor and king. You see, him says here, {recites}.

Now, when we speak about a guy being handsome. I don't care what race you come from. The most handsomest man the world has ever seen is Negus Tafari. [...], the king is handsome. I have pictures. I have the king travelling in London, Germany. I can bring out the book. The emperor is the most travelled African I have ever seen. When the king walked through England, oh, Mrs. Queen heart melt {met with hearty laughter by the audience}. I have a picture when the Queen travelled to Sweden and all them place. Oh, white girls weep {more hearty laughter from audience}. Yes, the man is pretty. Yes I! So, I don't want to burden you no more, but as a priest, that's what I have to give. To whom it is given, much is required. So, I gave you what I know. And if there are any questions you want to ask me, I will accommodate you.

KGC: Tell us, maybe more, about the UFOs you saw.

Dermott Fagan: All right, when they say UFO, now the teachers who are supposed to teach us, they cannot teach us, because they are not ordained to teach us. And that is why the Bible said, Malachai 2, verse 7 {recites}. So, I ask if there are any questions you want to ask me, so I am here to answer all relevant questions for edification, no matter what

race you [...]. That's not my business. I'm not concerned about that. I'm concerned about giving you that which would benefit you or edify you. This is the spirit of Christ.

KGC: I was curious about the UFOs, because I have heard stories about that as well.

Dermott Fagan: All right. In Europe, you get punctuations to say that U means something. We look at it to be unidentified. F for flying. O for object. That's what we have been taught, but now we that are the sons of His Majesty, we want you to know that we are not working on identifying flying object. What we are working with is, all right, Psalm 68, verse 17. {recites} So, when we say the chariots of God, Babylon say UFO. Because when them say UFO, in proper, they should say the chariots, which means the ships of the Almighty God.

Let us use our senses now. America. For some reason, I want to use America as an example. It is said that America is a superpower, meaning they are supernatural powers. They have atomic weapons. They have nuclear weapons. They have planes now that are manned through computers. They don't need no human beings to fly them. We are at an awesome point now in human history. So, I am saying, we have planes that can come beside there and stand still. And you don't hear no sound. Are you aware of these things?

And that is where the man's mind now have taken them. Superior knowledge. I know that is not a high school student or a college graduate in our university. I'm saying out of my common sense that if human beings that God made can have this awesome arsenal, would it not be conceivable for the Almighty God, seeing as they are not of the Earth, but abides somewhere else? Should we not have something then, even to protect himself and the angels from even us with our nuclear weapons and so forth? You see my line of reasoning? So, from my line of reasoning, I'm saying now if we have these devastating weapons, it should be more conceivable for us to accept that God have something to put without any time [...] or obstinate in mind.

Now, these chariots here—I'll show you something else. Ezekiel described them; we want to show you them in apparition. You see, Ezekiel described them by what he saw. [...] it must be by the key, because the key is what give you the circle. You got that now? So, when you say wheel, this what you'd have {draws}. So, these here are what is refereed to as observatories, windows within the circle, because the ships are oval, they are circle ships. You see me? And this why now... you've heard about the ascension of Elijah? See it here? {recites} So, we have the ascension.

KGC: Tractor beam.

Dermott Fagan: So, we are saying that the same chariots that the Bible declared to be 20,000 odd, we see here it was utilized. Though the Bible did not tell you how Enoch left Earth, we know that Enoch was also translated. You heard though that Enoch never died, descendant of Adam? Enoch was said to have left the Earth, seen the nine heavens, and them come back to Earth, wrote his book and disappeared, like Melchizedek.

Now, what you may not know is that the same ships here, that ship that took up Elijah is marked here for another entry into the world, into the Earth's atmosphere. And I tell you where we'll look for it. Isaiah 66, verse 15. Now, notice it {recites}. And when we say Lord, now, we have one that is higher than Lord. Yes, because we are speaking of the Lord over all Lords. And that Lord over all Lords is King Selassie I [...]

So, we down here now, we came here under what is known as British colonial conquest. I mean, the Queen of England through the power of the crocodile... you know

the crocodile? In the dictionary, it is referred to as a reptilian form. It is very aggressive and oppressive. It crush, [...], and maim. And it used to be now, that spirit of the crocodile came from England, invade Africa, came into the western regions—Ghana, Gold Coast—and captured we, took us down here. And they worked us for 400 hundred years. For 400 years, we suffered in slavery down here.

And in the West, every other nation and race were climbing the financial ladder. Meaning that the Europeans who had captured us, their children continued education, school, college and that is why they can still have an advantage in maintaining the status quo. Chinese, that are commercial agents, even Indians who were the ones that came here first, if you remember you have the Hindu history. But for some reason, they could not manage the rigour of slavery.

And they brought us, the Africans. So the reggae man say. Don't be offended, because we are Rastas. {singing} "Indian man come. He couldn't live it out. The Chinaman come. He couldn't live it out. The Ethiopian live it out." That means to say that we do the work for the Queen for 400 years. We never get no schooling, never get no medication and in the first emancipation that they declare 1838, 1839, was stipulated that for he that is emancipated for 400 years, he must be redressed. Meaning, we were expecting to get 40 acres and a mule. And we don't get nothing.

So, you know what the Binghi man say? {singing} "400 years in Babylon [...] I don't get none. And *I-n-I* never yet see the fire until Babylon wall burn down." So, my lord, if we got to sit down here, we are not pleased at how we have been abused, decapitation, disenfranchised—every evil, we, the black people of Africa have suffered under the hand of the colonizer. Imagine this.

The Israeli that were persecuted and suffered a great atrocity by the Nazis, did they not get reparation?

KGC: Yes.

Dermott Fagan: Of course. I do my homework. The state of Israel were reparated by the Nazis, Germany who captured Austria, Poland, all over and devastated Europe, persecute them. That means the state that was established 1948 by a British man that gave Palestine unto your people as a national homeland. We look on one side and we look and say, "What? Something wrong. What a robbery!"

Study your history. Your history show that there were a gang of five, whether it was the Stern gang. Their purpose from an Israeli perspective was to persecute the British Crown for the acquisition of Palestine for a national homeland. Isn't that so? The gang of five, some of them turned out to be presidents in Israel, but before that they were government fighters. What were they doing? Saboteur is the word. Sabotage British interests, bombing a pipeline and do everything, because they want a home for themselves, especially after the wickedness of Adolph Hitler. That's how it go.

Now, suppose you get to find out that [...] that place, 1948, are the ones that have this place [...], which is [...] I'll show you something. The reason why I tell you, if I don't tell you. I don't expect your people to tell you that, but I have consultation with rabbis, you know. [...] All right, look at this here. This might be of interest to you. Amos 9, verse 7. {recites} [...] with a question sign. Because, see, when I read this what do I do? I make a correlation and I corroborate Ethiopia with Israel, because the big man is saying that these two people are equated as one people unto him.

[...]

Dermott Fagan: Now, would it surprise you if I told you that I know where Lucifer [...] I will tell you, because [...] But he's a fallen angel. His number is 666, you know. It's the name of a man, so you have to find out, who is that man?

KGC: Who is it?

Dermott Fagan: Now, you might get me in trouble. All right, you want me to tell you? You have to promise me one thing. And why I want it from you must be a binding hope. I'll give it to you, but I want you to—are you married? Do you have children? Okay, mother and father still? This is why I want you to keep this unto yourself. That if you go around and try to bipartisan to people, you might bring a fire upon you and your family and you may not be able to manage. And I say this because of years of experience, because this man, what is he able to do. Revelation 13, verse 18. {recites} In case you did not know that the beast is a man, it is telling you, it is the number of a man... a man. "A," in grammatical language, would be equated to the number one. [...] His, refers to his male gender. {continues reciting} So, you end up with three sixes. {suggests that Ronald Wilson Reagan is Lucifer because he has six letters in each name (Figure 71)}. I alone know that. He is the head of the Illuminati that has the power of transformation into the reptilian order.

KGC: Is he alive still, do you think?

Dermott Fagan: I don't think. I know.

KGC: He's the head?

Dermott Fagan: He's a transformation into your day, because if you look at this man now—He had trickle down economics as the pyramid. If you look at this man here now, before he became president... we didn't know much about him as a governor, like Obama. He was almost incognito.

KGC: He was a B-movie actor.

Dermott Fagan: Isis I, was actor. Now, when he took the oval office, on the day of his inauguration, that's what the inauguration, that's what the lottery produced. I left here 1981, in February the same time he was inaugurated. So, he went to America to take the throne. Now, notice in his presidency the transformation of America to be where it was when Bush came. This man build up the most vast army and military power America has ever seen. You know where he got the money from. He [...] social security. He took the money, tax money from the poor, social security system. He cut all the way around to build up the army and the security forces to where it was supposed to be. When he was declared dead, what did you see, what did the world see? Did they see a body lying [...]?

KGC: I don't remember.

Dermott Fagan: Well, you want me to tell you what happened? All they saw was a coffin draped in the red, white, and blue with federal agents surrounding. No one opened that coffin. You know why? Because his words was before his proclaimed death unto his wife, Nancy, is that if and when he should die, his body must not be reviewed. Instead, it must be locked away unto burial. So, by right, the law of the dead is that... the classification for death is by the production of the body, which means that the proof of death is the presentation of the body, so no one can prove truthfully that Ronald Reagan died. The President of the United States to lie in state with a closed coffin would it not be more profitable for the nation if the coffin was open? That means those that want to pay their last respects.

Male Visitor 2: I'm sorry, but how did they say Reagan died?

Dermott Fagan: Well, that is strange. They did not give you any cause of death, neither official or medical. All we heard is that President Reagan died and his instruction to his wife Nancy was, "Don't let no one see my body." So, what they did is they draped it up in red, white, and blue. We go further now into symbolism. Do you have any understanding of what it means the red, white, and blue?

KGC: Go ahead.

Male Visitor 1: Ethiopia?

Dermott Fagan: Actually, Ethiopia is the first nation [...] Red for the blood, gold for the mineral, and the green for the continent. You know where the red, white, and blue come from?

KGC: France?

Dermott Fagan: Nah, sir. You ever see that on the flag of France?

KGC: Isn't it?

Female Visitor: I think so. Isn't it stripy?

KGC: Stripes.

Dermott Fagan: Okay, but originally the red, white, and blue came from where? England and the Union Jack, the coat of arms belongs to the Saxon, belongs to England. America is not Europe though, you know that? Geographically, referred to as what? North America? Good. Yet still, they are British. Meaning, if you analyze history, the people that came on the Mayflower, where the came from? The ones that occupied or declared America? They came from England. That's what history says, you know. And they came from ships, which is the Mayflower and they smash other place and they call them Plymouth Rock and they were helped by the Indians.

Later on, they went through what is referred to as a civil war, if you study the history of America. And see, the war was between the North and the South. North is the Union; South is the Confederacy. The Confederates lost the war and the Union declared United States of America sporting what colours? Red, white, and blue to show you that they are the children of Mrs. Queen because before they came there on the Mayflower, there was no red, white, and blue in America. It wasn't even called America. It was the land of the Indians.

[...]

Dermott Fagan: Out of all the religions, Rastafari is the only one based on truth, that leads you to the truth. For example, I don't like to persecute, but many different religions around us, the [...] are not strong enough. Islam, submission to one God. And they say God is Allah and his prophet is Mohamed. I question that right away, gramatically, because the word reflect the present tense. Wouldn't you agree? [...] So, if they had said, "He was," it would give us the impression that he is no longer here. So, I question that in Islam. The other thing is that the prophet Mohamed is ignorant. You know that? Or was ignorant, because he's dead. Meaning, the man was not literate. Was not able to either read nor write. And that is a fact. So, we question now, how could God send an ignorant person in a position and in a capacity as a prophet. The prophet cannot be a dunce.

So what you look at, you look at the Koran now to see that it was not compiled by Mohamed, but later on was set by some men who declare it to be the Holy Koran. We question further. He said that in the cave, where he was, the angel Gabriel appeared unto him and gave him the writings which is the Koran. He declared that there is no God but Allah. And he does not begot and neither is he begotten. Wherein you read the Bible and

you read that the same Gabriel to the house of Mary and say that this child which is Yeshua, that you will have, you will be the son of the most high. And he is the only begotten, the first born. I couldn't hold Islam. Then with the Buddha, I say, are they in the position King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Them guys they can't hold me. But we have to respect people's rights, human rights.

[...]

KGC: So, you don't drink booze, alcohol?

Dermott Fagan: Well, a Nazarite is not supposed to. Once in a while, I might sip a little Guinness, that much, but the drunkenness is not for us.

KGC: So, you generally avoid it?

Dermott Fagan: Yes I, because alcohol is not good for your body, so we don't promote alcohol. Like I say, once in a while, I bust a Guinness, whether I'm just mixing it or popping Guinness, but I left them things long time ago. And I think in your research with the Nazirite, have you tried to find out why the law is so strict towards liquor drinking for Nazirites? Why him say you must not drink liquor?

KGC: Just to keep your spirits strong.

Dermott Fagan: Yes, because drunkenness is offensive. Because if you are a servant and you are in a drunken state, it's a different spirit it put you into.

KGC: It's impure.

Dermott Fagan: Yes, and it block your communicative spirit. In other words, when you are into that state of mind, God cannot communicate with you. So far, you know, better not to be in that ready state, obstinance, probably because it would be more profitable for you.²²⁶

3. Mthembeni Mpanza

In the background of my audio recordings from the Ebuhleni pilgrimage to Nhlankakazi, there echo the chimes from an ice cream truck, skulking along with the motorcade that accompanies the barefoot pilgrims the seventy or so kilometres to the mountain. When I arrived for our first interview, I was somewhat surprised to later find that same ice cream truck parked in the driveway of Mthembeni Mpanza, the first non-Shembe to start a splinter group of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*. Though Mpanza speaks against the commercialism he has ascertained in the Ebuhleni faction at large, the iconic Western ice cream truck seems somehow a stark contradiction of the criticism. Mpanza also argues in favour of a more academic vision for the future of *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* and even advocates using a more modern *iBaible* translation. While Mpanza was also one of the contributors to *Shembe: The Revitalization of African Society* (1986), he has earned his living as a magistrate. Here follow the main points from our discussions:

²²⁶ Participant Observation, Zion Hill Temple Mountain, The Blue Mountains, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, April 22, 2011.

Mpanza: Shembe used the word Nazirite as it is found in Numbers 6 of the Old Testament. So we are Nazirite in terms of that biblical understanding. Of course, Shembe developed this vow, because whilst in accordance with the Bible, naziritism was a temporal vow.

KGC: Yes.

Mpanza: But for us, it is a permanent vow. Because for us, you become a Nazarite as soon as you are baptized.

KGC: Okay. For life?

Mpanza: For life. And Shembe specifically indicated naziritism in our case is for life. In his liturgy, in his morning liturgy and the Sabbath liturgy, there are words which are similar, where Shembe says, “Remember that today, you have made an agreement with God that you will remain in the house of God for the rest of your life.” If I were to interpret it in that way.

KGC: A dedication to God?

Mpanza: Yes. So it’s a dedication to God. And that’s what we are. And we are following the same... there are three distinct laws for the Nazirites, which differ from all other laws. And the first law being that you have to avoid, you must abstain from liquor. And the second law, that you should not touch the corpse, and then the third law being that you should not cut your hair. Those laws apply to us.

And Shembe, you see, I don’t know how it grew up to be what it is now, because as a person who is a scholar in Shembeism, I found that what, how people interpret Shembeism is actually not what it is. Because if you read the first verses of the Sabbath liturgy, which are the verses in my view, which are the basic principles of the Shembe Church. Fortunately, I’ve got that book. Now, if you read the Sabbath liturgy, verse 3, 4, and 5. {long pause} You see it says, “Fear Jehovah, oh generations upon generations. And observe his laws which [...] Jehovah a [...] to his servant Moses so that your worship may be acceptable to the Lord of Hosts. Because if you do not worship him as he decrees, he will not accept your prayers. He can never pour his blessing down upon you if you do not obey his laws and observe them.” In number 5, it says, “I beg you generations in the name of Jehovah the Lord, observe Jehovah’s laws.” So for me, these three verses are the basic principles of the Church. And what it means is that in order to understand *ubuNazaretha*, you have to read the Torah. I’m not very happy about the [2010 Mthethwa] translation,²²⁷ but of course—

KGC: You’ve seen this book?

Mpanza: Yes, but at least it helps one understand.

KGC: Someone who doesn’t know Zulu?

Mpanza: Yes. But what it should say, it should say, “Fear Jehovah, oh generations upon generations and observe his laws which here Jehovah wrote through his servant.” Okay, yeah, so the first verse is correct.

KGC: But you’ve gone through it, so you’ve found some other aspects that you...

Mpanza: But at least one understands what is...

KGC: So, would you say it’s inaccurate or that they just could have done a better job?

Mpanza: No, it is accurate here.

KGC: But generally?

²²⁷ Shembe and Shembe 2010 [1936]

Mpanza: Of course, if I were the person who was doing it, I would not have done it in that way. But it is like that because there's too much of a translation following the Zulu way of writing which if it was put in English would not have exactly been like that.

KGC: Oh, I see, gramatically it's following some of the Zulu?

Mpanza: Yes.

KGC: I see.

Mpanza: So that's why I worry about the interpretation of this book or the translation of. Be it as it may, it does give the idea of what is being said. So, what I'm saying is the basic principle of *ubuNazaretha* are these three verses. And Shembe followed these verses to their end. Because everything that *amaNazaretha* do are based on the fact that we follow the Laws of Moses. And if we follow the Laws of Moses, it means that we are bound by Torah. And that's what we have been practicing. So, to Shembe, there are three pillars of the church, the first pillar being that we are bound by the Laws of Moses or the Laws of the Old Testament, the second pillar being that we follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles, then the third pillar being that we follow our customs which are not repugnant to the Laws of Moses.

KGC: Very interesting.

Mpanza: The third pillar is the one that most people don't know. It's not just that we follow our customs, but we follow only those customs which are not repugnant to the Laws of God [...] as a scholar of Shembe, I've advised that if we want to develop *ubuNazaretha* as a faith, we must first study Judaism. I'm a legal person. And as a legal person, my understanding is that if I have to understand the South African law, I must first go for the Roman law and even the Roman history, because South Africa comes from the Roman law. And Roman law, Roman, Dutch law, then African law. You cannot follow this South African law, I mean, as students of this South African law, I have to understand the Roman history, the Roman law, and the Roman-Dutch law. So, the same thing. To understand *ubuNazaretha*, you have to understand the Torah, you have to understand Judaism, even as it is now. Because my understanding is that although I know that because of development, Judaism, as it is, is not like what it was during the time of Moses.

KGC: That's it.

Mpanza: But, at least it is some, it's origin which is more closer to Mosaic Laws than any other religion.

[...]

Mpanza: I want to develop *ubuNazaretha*, because many people don't understand it.

KGC: This is my field actually, Nazirites. So, when I was doing this historical study, I also discovered that after the death of Jesus, with all the new Christian ascetics that were coming out, the rabbis of that time, in first and second centuries BCE, they started to denounce the Nazirite as a practice to the point where it disappeared from history, as far as I understand, and it seems to have been revived by Shembe here [in KwaZulu-Natal] in the twentieth century. So after maybe fifteen hundred, sixteen hundred years of obscurity, it came back.

[...]

Mpanza: So that is the position. In as far as I am concerned, there is somewhere that it went wrong, as far as Nazaretha is concerned.

KGC: What went wrong?

Mpanza: Because I found that I have been reading so many texts about naziritism, but I find that there is a lot of confusion.

KGC: Yes, that is exactly what [*Where Have All the Nazirites Gone?* (Chakravarty 2009b)] addresses.

Mpanza: For example, you will find that other texts will differentiate between the Old Testament Nazirite and the New Testament Nazirite [sic]. But there is something very funny if you read, for example, Acts 24:5. {recites, “ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes”} But, you see, and that’s my question: were they Nazarenes or Nazirites? {KGC explains according to Chakravarty 2009b}

Mpanza: Which version of the Zulu Bible do you have?

KGC: The one that the *amaNazaretha* use.

Mpanza: Well, personally, I have moved away from this.

KGC: Oh, you don’t use this anymore?

Mpanza: I personally don’t use it.

KGC: But the church uses it?

Mpanza: Yes, the church uses it, but I’ve advised the intellectuals not to use this, because you find so many errors. You see, this is an old thing.

KGC: I know.

Mpanza: Yes, but the one I am talking about, the Zulu version that I am talking about is the new version.

{KGC continues to explain Nazirite versus Nazarene}

KGC: That’s why when I talk about the church, I use *umNazaretha*, *ubuNazaretha*, *amaNazaretha*. I prefer to use Zulu because I know that the church went through a couple of name changes. When it first registered in the seventies, it was registered as Nazarite Baptist Church and now it’s Nazareth Baptist Church.

Mpanza: In fact, I’ve always had a view to that, to say Nazareth Baptist Church, does not make any sense.

KGC: Yeah, it doesn’t, because it has nothing to do with Nazareth, the place. If anything it could be Nazarene...

Mpanza: Nazarene Church.

KGC: In a way, but I think it should just be Nazaretha, because as a scholar you know that when you are playing with translation, you are making meaning. And in the same way that Nazorean {NRSV, Mt 2:23} is an extension of an older tradition and giving it new something, I see *ubuNazaretha* as again being rooted in older traditions, Old Testament traditions, Zulu traditions. And I see *ubuNazaretha* as a new thing. It should stand on its own. It shouldn’t be translated, because, I think, if you translate it to Nazareth or Nazirite, it’s not the full meaning.

[...]

Mpanza: Fortunately, we have got those 613 laws and we are now looking at those laws which are relevant to us, because even the Jews are saying there are laws which are no longer followed.

KGC: In the Torah? In Deuteronomy? Or Leviticus?

Mpanza: No, 613 in the five books of the Torah.

KGC: Oh, scattered throughout. I see.

Mpanza: So, they have collected them and said there is 613. But if you look at those individual laws, there are those who say, now, those are no longer applicable because of

this and this. These are the laws which are only applicable to the Jews. Those are the laws which are applicable here and there. And, of course, there are laws which would not be applicable to us even if they are only Torah. Because, for example, this slaughtering [of “clean” animals] is no longer there with the Jews. Of course, it should not be there, because they no longer have the covenant. I don’t think that the Jews can follow the rules as they were during Moses, because everything was attached to the covenant. But now the Jews do not have any covenant.

KGC: Who has it now?

Mpanza: We have the covenant. Yes, Isaiah Shembe does have the covenant, but the only problem with us at present, what I have done, I have moved out, even from Ebuhleni. And I’m starting my own... I will say denomination. I had a lot of problems there. Because what is happening now, you see, this Shembe family are distorting the whole thing. They are not now looking at Shembe as a faith. They are just interested in Shembe as a Shembe fief. They are not interested in studying Shembe as a religion.

KGC: So, are they saying they are more interested in the commercial aspects?

Mpanza: Yes, the cultural aspects and the fact that Shembe is a big church—“If I am the leader, then I will be rich,” and all that type of thing.

KGC: Okay, commodification.

Mpanza: Yes. I’m just so frustrated about that. So, I have said, I am still under Shembe as a leadership of Shembe, but I am moving out of the organization. Because, in that organization, doing whatever you do, there is just nothing. So, I have [...] scholars. We are waking now on these issues as Shembe scholars. That’s what I am busy doing now.

KGC: And what about Ekuphakameni? Have you visited there?

Mpanza: No, I cannot visit Ekuphakameni, because I never belonged to Ekuphakameni. I always belonged to the section, to the A. K. section. But I communicate with the Shembe people of Ekuphakameni.

KGC: What do you know about that group? Is it different?

Mpanza: There’s only one person in the group who is intelligent. That is X—. Otherwise, the whole lot, they are just useless. They are just like the Ebuhleni people. But X— is quite intelligent. So, to me, of course, when it comes to leadership, that young boy is far more intelligent than our leader. Vukile is far more intelligent than Vimbeni.

KGC: I haven’t been able to get close to Vimbeni obviously.

Mpanza: You cannot.

KGC: But Vukile seems more available.

Mpanza: Ya, he’s available yes, but unfortunately, I do not think—I think intelligence is quite natural. I don’t think really that he has got a calling. But I know why. They are the family who are very, very intelligent, especially his father. Londa was a damn genius. But I don’t think that he chose to be a leader because there was any calling. I stayed with him. I know him. I don’t want to say bad things about him, but I never believed that he had a calling. But I respected his intelligence. For example, Londa was far more intelligent than Amos, but Amos had a calling. That’s why the whole church went to Amos, in spite of the fact that Londa was far more intelligent than Amos. And the *amaNazaretha* knew that the person who was the leader, the successor was Amos. And so, I’ve got a great respect of that boy where his father’s intelligence is concerned, but I still do not believe that he was meant to be leader of that church. But, of course, things may change.

[...]

KGC: They do things differently on the Ekuphakameni side.

Mpanza: Yes, of course. I mean, in as far as following the tenets of the church, to me Ekuphakameni are closer to the church, the original way of Isaiah. But the only difference that I have with X— is theological. My approach is completely different. I'm saying that because there was a stage where X— felt that I must join them, but I said, "No." When I looked at him, I said, "No." When you differ with a person theologically or ideologically, then it's quite different. Because with X—, what is happening, they start looking at other religions, like Indian religions, and then they start saying, "Shembe is God. There are many gods." You see? That's why I quarreled with X—.

I said, "No, I know that I have not studied these Indian religions so much, but I differ with you if whatever you say about Shembe, you tell me about other religions. Because we have got one religion and our religion is based on the Bible and we have got one God and that God is Jehovah. And to me, there are only four religions that I am aware of that are practicing that and I am not going to move away from that: the Jews, the Christians, the Muslims, and the *amaNazaretha*. So, you see, every time, if we have to explain Shembe, you must have that in mind, that there is God Jehovah and God Jehovah does not have two Gods.

In fact, at times, I even quarreled with the way other Christians described Jesus Christ. To me, if someone says that Jesus Christ is God, I do not have a problem with that if that is being used. I don't know if I would say [it], allegorically or figuratively. But if you say Jesus is God in the sense that Jesus is equal to God, then, I've got a problem. Because then immediately you will see that my whole theology will be confused. And that's why I say we must maintain.

You see, I was saying, in as far as logic is concerned, I am so much impressed by Islam. Because Islam is very clear as to the level of their prophets vis-à-vis God Jehovah. And I do not see why I should fight to say Shembe is God. Because if Shembe is God, the Holy Spirit Shembe has the powers of God, but empowered by God. But now, you will find that the *amaNazaretha* are fighting to say Shembe is God. And I know where the problem lies, because Christians are saying Jesus is God. And the *amaNazaretha*, in order to not feel inferior to the Christians, then they will fight to say Shembe is God. And now, the whole thing ends up, us fighting who is more godly than the other, between Jesus Christ and Shembe. And I always maintain that I do not agree with this Christian theology of God, but I am not going to argue it. But what I am supposed to do is to clarify the point in as far as Shembe is concerned, because that is my religion. That immediately you say Shembe is God, you are confusing Shembe's theology. Because Shembe has written everything down. You read this book; there is nowhere that Shembe has ever even indicated that he is God.

KGC: If anything, he presents himself as a servant of God.

Mpanza: Yes, he presents himself as a servant of God. And why should we not follow his writings? But *amaNazaretha* want to present Shembe as God. And they are doing that because Christians are presenting Jesus as God. And that is this fight of religion. If we don't say that Shembe is God, people will always feel that our religion is inferior.

KGC: So, let me ask you, which temple are you going to now? Are you going to a temple now?

Mpanza: Temple?

KGC: Because you said you distanced yourself from the Ebuhleni group.

Mpanza: I've got a temple here in Pinetown.

KGC: Is it connected with Ebuhleni?

Mpanza: It is connected to Ebuhleni.

KGC: You are the reverend there?

Mpanza: Yes, I am a reverend there. It's connected to Ebuhleni, but I don't go to Ebuhleni. There is a lot of confusion there at Ebuhleni. I don't go to Ebuhleni organization, but I still regard myself as a person who is falling under the leadership of Vimbeni. But there is a lot of confusion, internal problems.

KGC: And I wanted to ask you, since we are talking about Ebuhleni and Ekuphakameni, what about this idea that... I know that the Ekuphakameni group, they fast much more often than the Ebuhleni group. They fast on Sabbath.

Mpanza: They fast?

KGC: It's a full fast. And they fast on the pilgrimage to Nhlankakazi as well.

Mpanza: It's very possible that they are doing that. It's quite very possible. You see, Ebuhleni has become too loose and it is because of the leadership of Vimbeni that it did become so loose. And, of course, it is easy to control a small group than to control a big group like Ebuhleni. So, at Ekuphakameni, they are closer to the original practices than Ebuhleni. Ebuhleni, they are doing so many things. That is also what frustrated me. But, of course, Ekuphakameni, they are a very small group. And Ebuhleni is a very big group.

But here, I am trying to teach them. But here, we are concentrating on the development of Shembe. My approach is quite academic, because I've got a feeling that, in fact, I'm arguing it even through radio that they are feeling that some are saying that I'm St. Paul, because I seem to discard so many things. And I'm saying, if Shembe believes that *ubuNazaretha* must spread throughout the world, then you cannot make our customs as a way of life of the Nazarite, because we are Zulus. You cannot force a Xhosa or a Sotho or a white person or an Indian that when he or she joins us, he must practice our custom. And I am saying, let us look at those ways which do not discriminate and Shembe, and we don't have to squabble about that, because Shembe gave us the way. He said, "Our laws are the Laws of Moses. And if we say our laws are the Laws of Moses, there is no Xhosa, no Sotho who would say, "What is that?" Because the Laws of Moses are in the Bible. So, we will not be talking about new things if we talk about the laws in the Bible. But if you talk about our Zulu laws... so now, "If you go to church, you must wear *ibeshu*. If you go to church, you must do this and this and this." No, but wearing *ibeshu*, it might be good for the Zulus, but the Xhosas do not wear *ibeshu*. So, we must be flexible when it comes to such things. I do not say we must discard it, but you must not enforce it.

KGC: So, putting more of an emphasis on the laws, the rules, and the theology and not the paraphernalia or the cultural elements?

Mpanza: Yes.

KGC: You see the church—you'd like to see the church go in different directions?

Mpanza: Yes.

KGC: Tell me more about that. How do you see, how would you like to see the future of the church?

Mpanza: You see, firstly, my first phase, is to change the thinking of the members of the church first. To understand that the intention of Isaiah Shembe was for this church to spread like Christianity, like Islam. And therefore the first thing that we have to do is

develop the theology of the church, because it has become very clear, we develop the theology of the church, but then we discarded those practices, which will make the church not spread throughout.

You see, for example, what has caused Incarta to fall, as opposed to the ANC, it's because Incarta became too much cultural. And because it became too much cultural, it did not attract other provinces. It remained in KwaZulu. And the same thing will apply to the *ubuNazaretha*. If Nazaretha remain cultural, Zulu culture, then it cannot spread. Shembe's theology is a wonderful thing. But now, because we stick on the cultural part of it, it cannot spread.

I remember, I was called to address the tourists in Pietermaritzberg in the campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. And I addressed the tourists about Shembe. And after having said everything, one Canadian woman stood up and said, "Yes, I understand everything about Shembe and I accept that Shembe is a prophet of God. But me, as a white woman, how do I fit in the Shembe Church. Because Shembe Church is a cultural thing. How do I fit as a white lady?" And she was correct. She cannot fit as it is. She cannot fit.

But I have—if God can really give me power, I've got all the thinking, but the only thing that I do not have is money, but I've got all the thing as to how I can do it. Because I've got a feeling that if the theology of Shembe is very clear, is written and I go to America and I sell it to Black Americans, African-Americans and they understand it, it is very easy from there that it can spread throughout Africa. And it is very easy. In fact, for Shembe, Shembe believed that *ubuNazaretha*... J. G. Shembe said that even Russians will be *amaNazaretha*, you see? And I was so surprised for J. G. Shembe, just at that time, when he was saying that even the Russians will be *amaNazaretha* and the Shembe stories will be written in all languages.

KGC: Starting now with English.

Mpanza: Yes, because for example, what I want to do, I want to go through the book and give a better translation of it. Now, quite fortunately, Bongani Methethwa...

KGC: You knew him?

Mpanza: Yes. He was a musician. So, you can see all the Shembe Church using notes. So, in that way, it would be very easy for the songs to be sung by all people.

KGC: In different languages?

Mpanza: Yes.

KGC: So, you could see it happening in different languages?

Mpanza: Yes. I want to see it happening in different languages. So, that testament, it is in Zulu, but they have translated everything into English. It's just a matter of combining.

[...]

Mpanza: My work as a magistrate, I'm going to stop at the end of March.

KGC: Seriously?

Mpanza: Ya, and I want to concentrate on the church.

KGC: How long have you been a magistrate?

Mpanza: For many years. In fact, I started as a magistrate in 1985. But now I want to concentrate on the church.

KGC: And can I ask you something? I'm also interested in your personal history too a little bit. Were you born into the church or did you convert?

Mpanza: No, I was born in the church. In fact, my mother was an adopted child of Isaiah Shembe.

KGC: So, your family has been a member more or less since the beginning?

Mpanza: My mother was adopted by Isaiah Shembe. She was an orphan at the age of eleven.

KGC: Okay. So, can you tell me some stories that she might have told you about those days? I'd be interested to hear those.

Mpanza: Oh, yes. There are so many stories. My mother did not regard Shembe as just ordinary. My mother regarded Shembe as God. In fact, my mother did not even believe that Shembe can die. She was staying with him and she just regarded Shembe as God.

KGC: And what was it like? What was the atmosphere like those early days at Ekuphakameni?

Mpanza: She grew up at Ekuphakameni and she was always with Shembe. And she told me so many miracles about Shembe. Of course, for unlettered people, there's nothing wrong in saying Shembe is God. You see? But if you are learned and then you develop a theology that Shembe is God, then that's where my problem is. It's different for a person who is unlearned who is expressing his sentiments or feelings about Shembe, what Shembe has done to him, the miracles of Shembe. But I am a scholar and I look at things differently. I cannot say Shembe is God. Because if I say Shembe is God to the people, then no one will accept that.

KGC: I see.

Mpanza: And Shembe, in any event, is not God. He has never said he is God.

KGC: When they refer to him as *iNkosi*...

Mpanza: Yes, he can be referred to as *iNkosi* and all that.

KGC: *Unkulunkulu*?

Mpanza: *Unkulunkulu* is God. That's where my problem is. As an unlearned person, if you say that Shembe is *Unkulunkulu*, that might not mean anything wrong, but as a theologian, I can't say that.

KGC: What's the distinction between *Unkulunkulu* and—?

Mpanza: *Unkulunkulu* means God.

KGC: And *iNkosi*?

Mpanza: *iNkosi* means king.

KGC: And what's lord?

Mpanza: Lord is also *iNkosi*. In Zulu, lord and king are interpreted as *iNkosi*.

KGC: I see. And you are correct in that because most Christians, I think, refer to Jesus, for example, as Lord Jesus. Not Jesus as God. So, it's more like *iNkosi* Shembe.

[...]

Mpanza: I want to develop the field of study, which I can call Shembeology. I'm not a scholar in religion. I'm only a lawyer. I'm not a scholar in religion.

KGC: You said you published some books on Shembe.

Mpanza: Yes.

KGC: How many have you published and are any in English?

Mpanza: For example, you know that book by Vilakazi and Mthethwa? The third person is me.

KGC: Okay.

[...]

Mpanza: And I have written another book in Zulu which is [...].
 KGC: Did you read the work of Oosthuizen, *The Theology of a South African Messiah*?
 Mpanza: Well, in fact, Oosthuizen was my closest friend. Oosthuizen and Robert Papine. I used to go with Oosthuizen to [...] where I used to deliver a paper on Shembe. Oh yes, I have worked very closely with Oosthuizen.
 KGC: So, is his work accurate?
 Mpanza: No, it was not.
 KGC: It wasn't accurate?
 Mpanza: Not at all, but at a later stage, he learned. At the time when he was writing, he did not have Nazirite scholar[ship]. But at a later stage, yes [...] But definitely, by the time he died, he had a different understanding of Shembeism than what he had written about.²²⁸

Almost a month had passed between my first and second interviews with Mthembeni Mpanza. During this time, M. V. Shembe passed away and was succeeded by M. D., the 3rd Living God at Ebuhleni. We started the interview with a few questions about this turn of events:

KGC: It's very strange that I am leaving just as this is happening, a whole other set of considerations. Do you think some of the people on the Ebuhleni side who are vying for leadership, do you think they are going to make more splinter groups now?
 Mpanza: Oh, yes.
 KGC: Definitely?
 Mpanza: Definitely.
 KGC: So, you think there will be even more?
 Mpanza: Definitely.
 KGC: When did you start your faction?
 Mpanza: I did it in September last year... it's the New Nazareth Baptist Church.
 KGC: Okay, you started your own church as well?
 Mpanza: Ya, because I had a lot of problems with that, but I was having a very clear understanding from the side of the leader, because of what actually happened. In fact, those people wanted to excommunicate me.
 KGC: Ya, I heard you had some trouble. We talked about that a little bit, because you are bringing in some of the academic considerations.
 Mpanza: Yes.
 KGC: They didn't want to hear that. So, you started your own church? Where is that church located?
 Mpanza: It's located here in Pinetown.
 KGC: Is it a temple?
 Mpanza: It's a temple. But I've got a following outside the temple.
 KGC: How many people do you think are in your following?
 Mpanza: It's very difficult to say, because they come on the Sabbath Day and they are many. But, especially because of the death of [Vimbeni] Shembe, there are too many

²²⁸ Interview with researcher, Pinetown, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 22, 2011.

people, because they are confused now. When I explain this, I explain, at first, they were very confused, because it had never happened before.

KGC: What had never happened before?

Mpanza: That a person who is not of the Shembe family started a group. Because, my theology, ever since, has been that Shembe was a prophet. And, being a prophet, the Nazarite is not necessarily a denomination; it is a faith. It is a religion. And, as a religion, there is nothing wrong in there being different denominations, but with an understanding that they are falling under Shembe as a prophet, just like Mohamed. Because, to me, Shembe is just like Mohamed, Shembe is just like Jesus Christ. He is the head of a religion [...] [Ebuhleni] is not about ideological. It's just a split because a person wants to leave because the church is big.

KGC: It's economic?

Mpanza: Yeah, it's economic, yes, but mine is not like that. Mine is ideological. In fact, for me, to study the church—you cannot believe it—it was J. G. Shembe. I've never said this to you because I felt that it was just too much for you to understand it or even to believe it. But I'm just saying it today. In 2006, we were visited by a woman, by a young woman, a lady. Let me put it in that way. But a Nazarite woman. But, as time went on, we realized that, in fact, we are not dealing with a human being, we are dealing with an angel. But that person would come just like an ordinary person.

When she first came to my wife, my wife [...]. And then she came to my wife. She introduced herself as a sister of mine. She said, "I am the sister of Mthembeni." Then my wife called me to inform me that, "There is a lady here. She says she is your sister. Do you know her?" And I said, "No, I don't know her." And then they started asking other families, whether they know this woman. And they all happened not to know her. Then, she disappeared. Now and again, she started visiting these people. She started visiting them and whenever she was visiting them, they would phone me.

But some few days later, it became clear that this was not an ordinary person. Because what happened was, when she entered, then the light will simply just switch off. Everything will just switch off. And then she would say that we must now have the candles. But, later, what had startled them. It was just my wife and her sister. It was found that she was found just inside the house without having knocked at the door, without having opened that gate as we had just entered. You could not just enter in that gate, but she was found inside the door. And they just don't understand how does it happen that this woman is found right inside the house without entering the gate.

KGC: The house itself?

Mpanza: Not this house. But later, it became very clear that they were just dealing with a... you could call it an angel, you could call it—but a supernatural person. It became clear that they were dealing with a supernatural person. And we started communicating with my wife. She was telling me all these things that were coming.

[...]

Mpanza: In 1992, the late A. K. Shembe called me into his house. In fact, he sent people to call me. I was a magistrate in Newcastle. Then, I came to Ebuhleni. Then, he called me to his house. And when I was in his house, he took me to his bedroom and then he said, "Are these things properly arranged?" And I said, "No." And then he took me to another room. I found that things were not properly arranged. And then he asked, "Are these things properly arranged?" And I said, "No." Then, he took me to another room and

asked the same question. Then, for the last question, he came to the dining room and he said, "I know that you are confused. You don't know what I am talking about. I'm not talking about this room. I'm not talking about this house. I'm talking about the church. What I called you for is that the fall and the rise of this church, God will require it from you and from no one else but you alone." And then I left. In fact, I was with my brother, the elder brother who is a minister. Then, we decided not to tell people what he had said.

But in 2003, when A. K. had passed away, it was now Vimbeni Shembe. That was when on the mountain, the priest came to me. I was also together with my brother and he said, "I have been sent to you. While I was sleeping on the mountain, I saw someone coming to me. In fact, this person called me. I didn't know whether it was Isaiah Shembe or who, but it was a voice. And this voice said, "Go to this Mpanza boy and ask him if he still remembers what A. K. Shembe said to him." So, this man came to me in the morning to tell me this. And then, I was startled because I knew that, I avowed with my brother that we must not tell any person. But this man forced me to divulge to him what was said by A. K. to him. And then I explained to him that, "No. This is in fact what happened." And he said, "Is it what happened?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "But why did you not tell Vimbeni?" And I said, "No, I did not think I should tell him and I didn't know how I would tell him this, because I did not know what it meant, because A. K. Shembe simply said, "The rise and the fall this church, God will ask from you."

KGC: A. K. Shembe said that to you?

Mpanza: Yes. This was in 1992. And now, this person was now coming in 2003. And then he said he was going to tell Vimbeni Shembe about this. But apparently, he did not tell M. V. Shembe. But, to me, it appeared that M. V. did not like what was being said, because this priest came to me and said, "I've told Vimbeni Shembe about this. And Vimbeni Shembe said that this church will never fall." And the way that it was said, I felt that, "No, he was not accepting what was said by his father." But, from there, I don't know whether it was Vimbeni Shembe or this priest who started telling other... then, they started fighting with me. But when they fought with me from 2003, I was just being attacked or even excommunicated, M. V. Shembe will bring me back and all that type of thing.

But, then, in January 2010, last year, this angel came. So, the angel came to this house and said, "I am sent by J. G. Shembe. J. G. Shembe says that you must leave Ebuhleni, because if you do not leave Ebuhleni, these people will treat you to such an extent that, by the time you die, you will no longer be a Nazarite. You might find yourself even drinking liquor or you can even find yourself committing suicide. And, apart from that, these people want to kill you." So, she says, "You must leave Ebuhleni." And then he started enumerating bad things that were happening at Ebuhleni. She then said, "He said he wants you to build the Church of Jehovah for him. Build for me the Church of Jehovah." And then she said, "You must not worry about how you are going to lead it, because he is the one who is going to be the leader of that church." This was said to me on the 4th of January, 2010.

Then I said, "But, how am I going to do that, because all these other churches are being led by the Shembe people." Of course, I am related to Shembe, because my mother was an adopted child of Isaiah Shembe. But, of course, I am Mpanza. And then I said, "But no, that is very difficult for me to do, because who is going to follow me if I start with this thing?" Because, even this angelic thing, people do not understand it.

But then, this angel started performing miracles, because we had a temple. And in that temple, she was the one now who was blessing water, blessing Vaseline for us, this angel. And when she was blessing this water and everything, I was taking these things to the church, then so many miracles occurred. Then, it became something well-known around in the church that if you go to this church and if you are prayed for in that church that is being headed by Mpanza.

Then, eventually, I found that now people were thinking that something, maybe something miraculous there was with me. And I said to him that, “No, in actual fact, it’s not me. This water which you are using, this Vaseline which you are using, is not being blessed by me. I never blessed any water. But it is blessed by an angel.” And then people flowed to this temple.

And, as they flow to the temple, then the priest then started converting and saying that, now, I must be excommunicated, because I am claiming that there is an angel and people are flowing to my church. Now, this was in May. I could not even go to the meeting in [...], because some people were telling me that people were planning to take you or to excommunicate you. Then, in July, they were afraid of excommunicating me or even of having any meeting with me, but it was just talk.

Then, after July, then the angel said that, “No, you know what? If these people excommunicate you—and they are going to excommunicate you, it will be very difficult for you to start this church which Shembe had ordered you to do. And you will be starting the church at a weaker position if you start the church after you have been excommunicated. So, you must start the church now, before you are excommunicated.” So, on the 21st of August, 2010, then fourteen priests came to my temple with an intention of taking me out and replacing me with another priest. But, fortunately, the congregation was behind me, so they failed, physically. They just could not. They were just chased away.

And when they were chased away, then they wanted now to excommunicate me in October, when there is a meeting in October. Then the angel came and said, “No, before you are excommunicated, you must start the church. Because if you start the church after you have been excommunicated, then you are going to be in a weaker position.” That’s how, then, I started the church, now, on the 30th of September, before October. Then, on the 30th of September, when I had already known that they were going to excommunicate me in October. And it was not for the first time that I was being excommunicated. Maybe it would be the third time that I was being excommunicated, but Shembe would be on my side.

So, that’s how then I just announced that, “Now, I am leaving the church. I am starting my own church, but I will still be under Shembe, but not under the organization of Ebuhleni. So, I started my own church. But, when I started my own church, in September, these people who were under me all, almost seventy percent left me, because they felt that they were with me because I was under Shembe, but, now, if I say that I was just starting my own church, then they could not understand it.

But, in two months, they all came back, because, after two months, they were realizing that I was preaching the same thing that I was preaching before I was excommunicated. And I still had the same powers. Then, they were forced to acknowledge that, “No, the person who is teaching the word of God, he is preaching the

word of Isaiah Shembe, the person who is teaching us all about *uShembe* is this person we are leaving. And these angelic powers...”

KGC: Does she still come?

Mpanza: Oh yeah, everyday.

KGC: Everyday, here?

Mpanza: Ya.

KGC: Did she come already today?

Mpanza: She has not come today.

KGC: But she just comes unannounced?

Mpanza: Ya, she comes unannounced. She can come even in the evening.

KGC: And she just appears in the house or you let her in?

Mpanza: She comes just from herself... being upstairs.

KGC: You'll just find her?

Mpanza: Ya, we have gotten used to it. We don't even ask how she came to be. Ya, because when she comes, you will find that she is just inside. If you can find us talking with her, you will never realize that it's not a human being to such an extent that even some of the things that we buy, she will go with us to the shop. Even these sofas, they were, in fact, selected by her. So, she can come to the shop, buy things with you, talk to other people, but these people will not realize that they are not talking to an ordinary person. As long as she knows that these people do not know that we have got an angel, then she comes to the shop, to Durban. She will talk to Indians, getting some clothes, getting everything. She comes everywhere.

KGC: And do you think she has been sent by God for your protection?

Mpanza: Definitely, she has been sent by God because, as I say, most of the things which are religious are being taught by her. Well, of course, even before her, I was a [...] person. I was writing books. But after I met her, I knew deeper things about God than I had before. Because now, she is the one, for example, who started telling me, “Now, go and study the hymns of Isaiah Shembe. Go and study the liturgies of Isaiah Shembe. Shembe has taught you about a God, Jehovah. So, the start of this church is about God, Jehovah. She knows the Bible and she knows everything. When she is reading the Bible...

[...]

Mpanza: The *ubuNazaretha* that is presently presented to the people, it's not the *ubuNazaretha* that was preached by the prophet. And the instruction that I got was that now I must teach the people the real *ubuNazaretha* as it was taught by God, by Shembe who was sent by God. Because, what was happening now was, firstly, these Shembe people were regarding this church, not just as a church, but as chieftainship. And they think that they must be the leaders because of the house, irrespective of whether they were ever involved in ministry. That is the first major problem which is causing this, which Shembe is so much against. And, secondly, they have mixed this thing so much with the tradition to such an extent that you'll find that there are diviners, all these people saying that, “No, because we are traditional.” There are some things which the Bible does not accept, but then they say it's traditional. Now, my argument was that, “No. Yes, we can follow traditional things, but if traditional things are repugnant to the Laws of God, then, we must reject that.” [...] We cannot accept them simply because they are

traditional. If God says, “A Nazarite does not drink liquor,” I can’t just drink liquor saying that because my ancestors drank liquor, I therefore must drink liquor.

KGC: So, it’s not a question of being a Zulu traditionalist? It’s a question of being *umNazaretha*?

Mpanza: Yes, that’s my argument. And I was saying, “No, *ubuNazaretha* has got nothing to do...” In fact, that was the argument I put forth a long time ago, because I was a person who fought for the separation of *ubuNazaretha* from Christianity. And during the interfaith conference, it was my argument. The African religions were arguing, African religious leaders, they were arguing that *ubuNazaretha* falls under African religions. I said, “No, it doesn’t fall under African religions. *ubuNazaretha* is something that is purely different. And even in it’s origin, it has got nothing to do with African religion. Because, in *ubuNazaretha*, there is no such word like a “Nazirite” in our culture. A Nazirite is a word which comes from the Hebrew origin. And that was always my argument. So, even now, I argue that we cannot just say simply because in Zulu we drink liquor and, therefore, I must drink liquor when I’m a Nazarite. Because people were smoking *dagga* [marijuana] or even smoking, then I must smoke. Or, I must allow people to smoke and say, “I am smoking on behalf of my ancestors.”

KGC: And, also, part of Zulu tradition, when there were wars... they would go to war and kill. And, obviously, the call of Shembe is nonviolent. Even if you look at the staffs – they are spears that have been blunted. So, the message is that, “We’re not warriors anymore. We’re spiritual warriors.”

Mpanza: Yes, it’s a spiritual war. So, that was my preaching. They said, “No, you are becoming a person who is [...]” But I said, “No, I’m just following the Bible. Shembe taught us about the God of the Bible. Shembe taught us about Jehovah. And I’m just following. And I know what a Nazarite is. I don’t have to compromise.” So, we cannot simply say that because we are Zulus that we must follow the Zulu things which are repugnant to the Laws of God. We have to follow the Laws of God. Jehovah comes first. I was saying, “No, even if I’m not of the Shembe family, I’ve got a right to if I’ve got a calling. I have to follow it.” But most of the things, I’m being helped by the angel.

[...]

KGC: What do you think about the new leader on the Ebuhleni side, M. D.?

Mpanza: Well, he is educated. He is an intelligent person. But whether he will succeed or not succeed, it will depend whether this was a calling or just something which was somehow manipulated.

KGC: And how old is he now?

Mpanza: He is young. He is 49-years-old. So, in as far as bringing up the religion, I think, M. D. is a good candidate.

[...]

Mpanza: I do not know whether M. D. will follow my thinking about *ubuNazaretha*. Because, according to the prophecy, at the end, people, you might find that in three, four years, my church is bigger than all these sections.

KGC: That’s according to the angel’s prophecy?

Mpanza: Even before the coming of the angel.

KGC: Oh, with A. K.?

Mpanza: Even apart from Amos.

KGC: So, which prophecy?

Mpanza: There were many people who came to tell me that I was meant to build the Church of Isaiah Shembe.

KGC: Okay, many different people.

Mpanza: But, with Amos, it was not a prophecy. It was something which was said by the leader of the church. And what is more about the angel, is that the angel is not coming through a revelation. It's just a manifestation. And the angel is here. But, what is likely to happen now is that people, the majority of people in my church know that the person who is well-versed in everything about the church is me. The only problem is because I am not Shembe by surname.

But then, there are two things that are likely to happen, which is likely to make my church bigger than the two other churches. Firstly, it's because of this angel. Because the angel is capable of doing anything miraculous, which other churches cannot do. And I always think that the reason why the angel was brought, was to cover that. Because, without an angel, I would never make it. So, that's the first thing that I think is helping me.

For example, I remember that, at one stage, there was a person who came who said he wanted to have his wife. He did not have children. He wanted to have a child, a boy. The angel came after twelve and then when the angel came after twelve, she told us that we must phone this boy to tell him that she is sent by Shembe to see that the child is on the way to his home. He must wait for the child. Then, because there are so many people who wanted to come, we said, "No, we don't know who that boy is, who that man is. And then, she took the cell phone and then she phones herself. And when there was a ringing, she gave it to my wife to talk. She said if I talk, that man will not understand. Then she gave it to my wife to talk. And then I said, "I am being sent by an angel to say that your child is on the way." And the man was so confused. And that child was born in May 2010. And there are so many miracles.

So, I am saying, firstly, because of miracles and, secondly, my teaching to all people, even to the Christians, is far above all. No one can match me when it comes to the teaching of Jehovah. When I talk about Shembe, when I talk about God, even Christians who have been undermining *ubuNazaretha* wake up.

And, I am assisted by my own knowledge, but, more than anything, I'm assisted by an angel, because an angel comes with things which people were not aware of. She is able to explain things from the Bible, even from Shembe which people were not aware of. So, we come with new things, but which are supported by the Bible. And, therefore, if I am exposed, I can only be crippled by funds. But if I will not have a problem with funds and I am exposed to preaching. I definitely know that no one can match us, because I am being assisted by an angel. And, even in terms of knowledge, I know things which many people do not know, because of this angel and who is living with me. So, what I was saying is that I can be very happy.

I've got a dream that, one day, you may find that I am sending my people to you so that they are trained about *ubuNazaretha*. Because my aim is that the people who must be the leaders, must be people who are trained. So, I want that, one day, to send people overseas to be trained about *ubuNazaretha*. Even, myself, I want to go overseas to learn more about such things so that I share *ubuNazaretha* with people.

Because, to me, Christianity is like *ubuNazaretha*. It's just that people are not aware of it. To me, actually, I am saying that the Christians are as wrong as the Nazarites.

There is a saying by the late [...]: “The problem with many Christians is that they are trained to understand the opposite of what they read in their own book.” And then the other scholar, the Christian scholar, said, “I’ve never seen the people who are as religious as *amaNazaretha*, but I’ve also never seen the people who do not understand their religion like *amaNazaretha*.” So, I am saying, both *amaNazaretha* and the Christians don’t seem to understand their own religion, because, to me, when the Christians explain about Jesus Christ, it looks like, to me, they don’t see... they are not very clear about the relationship between Jesus Christ and Jehovah. So, *amaNazaretha* end up calling Jehovah, or calling Shembe, God. And, to me, the whole thing is wrong.

The place of Jehovah must not be interfered with as long as we are the biblical people. As long as we use the Bible, the place of Jehovah must not be interfered. So, whether there is Jesus Christ, there is Shembe, there is Moses, there is Mohamed—Jehovah must just be there. And we must all understand that we are the creation of Jehovah. Jesus cannot be the creator. Shembe cannot be the creator. Because Jehovah said clearly in His laws that, “Don’t worship any other person other than myself. I am, and I am alone.” And then, Jesus Christ, Shembe, Mohamed, they are the intermediaries.²²⁹

4. Vukile Shembe

Raised by non-biological parents, Vukile Shembe’s true identity as the son of Londa K. Shembe and heir to Ekuphakameni was only revealed to him in late-adolescence. Three days later, he assumed his position as the Living God at his great-grandfather Isaiah Shembe’s original holy city. Generally dressed in resplendent robes and wearing shoes, these markers set Vukile Shembe apart from his parishioners and are indeed privileges reserved for the Living God. I was both touched and enriched by the over five hours of interview time so graciously granted to me, of particular interest in a field so dominated by the Ebuhleni hermeneutic. As I learned during a focus group I later conducted with younger male members of Ekuphakameni who I had interviewed earlier, what has served as research for me also allowed these same lads, who turned out to be members of Vukile Shembe’s secret service, a chance to size me up and send along their recommendation. Having passed their sincerity test, I was then granted this one-on-one time with Vukile Shembe.²³⁰

KGC: If you don’t mind, I would like to just start with a personal question and then maybe get into some of the themes that I sent through email. At a personal level, and even outside the boundaries of this study, I’m just curious as to what your life is like. I mean, you are such a unique figure in the whole world. You are the Living God at

²²⁹ Interview with researcher, Pinetown, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, April 13, 2011.

²³⁰ There was a surreal moment prior to recording when Vukile Shembe mentioned to me that he had read some of my poems online on the now defunct www.gandhar.net. He mentioned that he particularly enjoyed, “When East Becomes West,” that was published in the volume *Kolkata Dreams* (2009a).

Ekuphakameni. So, if you could give me just a slice of what your life is like from day-to-day, I would just be so honoured to hear that from you.

Vukile Shembe: Even though I wouldn't so much as call myself the Living God, even though I inherited the title of a person who [...], but my life basically... from the start of the day? My day starts at four, basically, because there is a prayer that we are supposed to partake in, individually, and then, however long it lasts, then you try it within those hours between four and nine to find some sleep and then you wake up again and, at nine o'clock, you have to be ready for another prayer session.

It is the official law that by nine o'clock, everything—you are supposed to have woken up, sorted out your things, [...] You have to clean the house and make sure that you are ready for that prayer session. It's a morning prayer. It's about asking for the day's enlightenment and guidance through all commitments of the day. It's very important, because it sort of launches a person's life in relation to what will happen in a day. The nine o'clock, it came about as an instruction from my great-grandfather, because he said during his period of life that the time at which his soul will leave the body, we should write that down and, at that time, they should ring a bell in the house of the tabernacle and it will be prayer time. And wherever he will be, when we pray, at that time, he will listen to us. And everything we ask of him, he will deliver it to us. So, that's one of the most crucial prayer sessions in the daily cycle of a person who is a Nazarite.

Then, after that, when I'm here... after that, I go outside and I attend to people. And wherever else I am, I make it a point that after nine o'clock, I have breakfast. I don't have breakfast before nine o'clock. It's only after nine o'clock, because I have this thing of believing that it makes me focus. You know, once I start eating, that dedication, that commitment [dissipates]. I'm trying to deal with that because, most of the time, I find myself not eating because I am trying to find that space within me to actually feel that I am closer to what I want to say to God first. I don't find that space once I've eaten, so often I end up not eating a lot. So after that, it's just a matter of seeing people, consulting, talking to them about whatever problems they have. For as long as I still have somebody who wants to talk to me, at the time.

There are personal engagements, but normally I make it a point that it's after I have seen people who want to see me. It doesn't always happen that way. You find that you have... maybe a meeting with, say, some of the government officials. Because I have been trying to get people to assist us with the rehabilitation of some of the mission stations. And you find that appointments are early in the morning, so you have to accommodate them, because they don't affiliate to this religion. So, you have to confine yourself to whatever the time they give you.

And then, six o'clock, I have to make it a point that I'm back. And there is a bit of meditation that has to happen before six o'clock, because six o'clock is also the same as nine o'clock. Because [Isaiah Shembe] said that at the time at which his body will be put down into the grave and make that a prayer time. When we ring the bell in the house of the tabernacle, he will listen to our prayers. So, there has to be—I'll call it—a period of meditation before that time. Just to make sure that you try to draw yourself out or whatever that has been happening on that day and try to... just try to bring yourself into—I don't know how to put this but... throughout the day, there are things that people tell you about... their problems and the things that you come across throughout the day. Six o'clock is crucial also to find a position, when you have put those things down in

your mind, and actually be in a position that, when six o'clock comes, you are able to speak to God about them.

KGC: So, to put the day at rest?

Vukile Shembe: Yes. And then there is eight o'clock. Eight o'clock is a period of prayer, I would say, for the Nazarite religion. It's particularly set for that. Any challenges that we are facing at the time, the ones that we may be aware of and there are other ones maybe that are still coming that only God knows. We also make that eight o'clock allocation for them. It was established by an instruction from my grandfather. He said, "Eight o'clock should be the time when you should pray for all their problems that Ekuphakameni is faced with. Of course, that goes to people as well, because they are as much a part of the religion as everything else—the symbols and everything. And it goes on to twelve o'clock.

Twelve o'clock is another prayer. I don't know if a lot of people have an instruction to keep that prayer time, but I, personally, have a commitment to make it a point that twelve o'clock—I actually don't sleep until after twelve. And then I sleep as soon as after that prayer. And then, it's waiting for four o'clock.

KGC: So, you try to sleep a little bit?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: After four o'clock?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: Okay, so they're at nine, six, eight, twelve, four?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: So, five times in a regular day.

Vukile Shembe: The day begins in the afternoon, like in the Jewish cycle. The day begins in the afternoon at six. But there is no proper way of implementing that in an average day's set-up... and the way the world is. But you see that only on Friday, because our Sabbath begins at six o'clock or at sunset. And then it ends the following day at six o'clock. It's like it's an end of one day and the beginning of another.

KGC: I see.

Vukile Shembe: So, basically, my life revolves around those sessions. Most of the time, nine o'clock, I attend to the people wherever I am. And I find a bit of time, because I have some work engagements I also partake in.

Because it came about as a wish, on my part, to encourage people to be independent. And I started looking at myself and saying, "If I'm going to keep preaching, this Gospel to people that they should—that it is a necessity that they should be independent and work for themselves. It should start with me. They should see this happening through me and then maybe they will be encouraged to actually see that it's possible to start something on your own and actually get it to happen in the end.

But I always make it a point that I avoid things that could interfere with my spiritual focus. I always try to step back from such things, because I learnt at some point that business can be so absorbing. It consumes your time like it's a religion on its own. So, you have to find balance. In fact, we have to always prioritize your main engagement, your main relationship with God. Whatever business engagement doesn't fit into that set-up, just leave it out.

KGC: What kind of business do you involve yourself in?

Vukile Shembe: I'm not directly involved, but I do a bit of construction. There was a company I formed a couple of years back, because another reason why I had to get myself involved in business... I was trying to run away from this notion that people are—because, I started getting involved with the church when I was eighteen years. I was trying to avoid this notion that people could end up looking at my association with the church—because there are offerings and all that. People start thinking that you are trying to enrich yourself, that you are here for that purpose... you are here because they are supporting you and whatever else. So, you end up wondering if they are still viewing you as a person who is giving them a message from God or as a person who is just making a living out of them.

KGC: I see.

Vukile Shembe: So, I wanted to run away from that notion.

KGC: So, it's important for you that you make your living in the business world?

Vukile Shembe: I've been approached by a number of people asking me to use the church membership to support their businesses, in many ways. And they have always promised to give something in return to the church. But I have always tried to avoid that. I always try to avoid that unless it has real value for the members of the church. But other things, I have always tried to avoid... because I remember there was a time when I was approached by Vodacom and... I can't remember the exact nature of the deal, but it was such that, it was to the effect that they will contribute about ten million [rands], but looking at the deal, I couldn't see real value, you know, something that was going to develop the members of the church to the direction that I believe that God wants them to advance towards. So, I had to turn it down. Because with whatever proposal that a person often put to me, I always look at the nature of development. That is what I want it to bring to the nature of church members. Because I'm aware that God doesn't approve of handouts. You know, when you are going to sit down get somebody working elsewhere, and just giving you money. It's something that He doesn't want, because it doesn't teach any person anything.

KGC: And that's in the Sabbath prayer too, that you must work.

Vukile Shembe: Yes, you must work.

KGC: You must not beg.

Vukile Shembe: In fact, there is a teaching in the Morning Prayer that after the Morning Prayer, you should go and do some work, every day. There shouldn't be any day that you are going to wake up and do nothing for all the six days... except only for the Sabbath.

KGC: I was going to ask you that too. How does your Sabbath day differ from the more regular days of the week?

Vukile Shembe: I advise people that from Friday, before sunset, you should start a process of withdrawing yourself from your general engagements, just to prepare yourself and plead with God to make way for you to be part of the Sabbath Day. So, sunset, you should be prepared spiritually and physically. There shouldn't be any other thing that you are still thinking of. But it takes a while. I know that mental engagements take a while to withdraw oneself from. You know, I was trying to make an emphasis in relation to that.

Try, maybe from twelve o'clock, try to scale down on things that your mind is engaged on and try to start thinking about the things of God. Try, maybe, to read the Sabbath Prayer. Try to read the hymns. Try to put your mind on that path that now it's about to be the Sabbath Day.

And then from sunset, fire is prohibited in our houses and the homes of people who are Nazarites. So, before sunset, everything that relates to fire has to be out. Cooking, everything.

KGC: Electricity?

Vukile Shembe: Well, electricity, there's been an area of uncertainty, because I remember that even back then, for lighting purposes, it's kept on.

KGC: I see.

Vukile Shembe: And also, before sunset, you are supposed to have washed your body with cold water, full body wash. Because on the following day, you are not supposed to wash your entire body. You are not supposed to have your water, go over your head. You are supposed to just wipe your body, just to stay clean. For married people, sex is prohibited.

The following day, we don't eat hot stuff, anything hot, you are not supposed to eat. We can't... even after sunset, the food that was prepared for Sabbath Day, we can't reheat it. We can't warm it up. You have to eat it as it is.

KGC: But you can eat on the Sabbath?

Vukile Shembe: Yes, you can eat after the afternoon service, sunset.

KGC: But during the sundown to sunset it's fasting?

Vukile Shembe: No, no. Friday, you can eat, Friday afternoon. Yes, sunset Friday afternoon to night you can eat. But from morning until after the Sabbath service, you are not supposed to eat. From as soon as you wake up until the end of the second Sabbath service.

[....]

KGC: And what about fasting?

Vukile Shembe: There is a little bit of uncertainty. What I do is, I choose not to eat.

KGC: The whole time?

Vukile Shembe: Yes, the whole time, because most of the time, I am just preparing for the following day and the service and everything, but it's not an easy thing to proscribe for people.

KGC: Sure, yes.

Vukile Shembe: It's even hard for them to do it on Saturday. Some people find it hard, Saturday morning. If you tell them not to eat, it's even a problem. There was one woman who used to stay here. She was quite old. She had been a convert. She converted when I was already here. And I would have this edge. It came from within that I shouldn't eat, you know, for all that period. And she was sick this one time. I went to her. It was Saturday afternoon. When I got there, one other thing I realized is that she hadn't eaten. So, I asked her why she hasn't eaten.

She started telling me that she would have a tendency that she would sweep the yard every morning. She started telling me that one night she was sleeping and she dreamt that she was sweeping around the yard. And there came a person who was dressed in white and told her that you are not supposed to eat at all on Saturday. Once the Sabbath Day has started, you are not supposed to eat. But it's one thing that a person in my position—you'd rather let a person know about in that nature. It comes from within.

Because there is that other thing also of people complaining. You know, you are telling them something and you feel as if you are placing a heavy burden on them. It's tough already that they are eating cold meals on Saturday [night]. It's tough that they

have to be here. And, moreover, you are telling them not to eat at all. So, you'd rather allow them to find it within them to do that.

Because I know that once you grow closer to a certain level of spiritual consciousness, you start having those things revealed to you, like that woman. Because that's another part as well. You would rather not have everything told to someone by yourself. But, whatever you say, there is a level of spiritual consciousness that they are brought into by God himself. Some of these things, they play no role to a person who hasn't been brought to that level. They just listen to you and start complaining. That's how a Saturday goes.

I'm trying to think if there is anything else. {pause} You are not supposed to go to town. You can't go to town and buy things. You are not supposed to do your own things. Let me just put it like that. There is nothing of your own purpose that you are supposed to engage in. In fact, in your home, you are not supposed to have visitors who are just coming to visit you. Anything that the Sabbath Day find within your yard, is supposed to be something that you are going to take to God in that temple station that you worship in. Anything. Especially human beings. They have to be, so to speak, part of the Nazarite faith. You can't have somebody over who is just going to sit around and not take part in the Sabbath Prayer and the worship ceremony.

KGC: I see. And is there something special that you do—because I noticed, you give a lengthy sermon... about three hours, three-and-a-half hours on the Sabbath in the afternoon. Is there something special you do to prepare for that?

Vukile Shembe: Yes, the instruction that came from my father was that before—it's that preparation. It's like fasting and trying to bring yourself to a space that God will give you the message and it's constantly praying, even though sometimes you don't have to be on your knees. You keep it within you that God please give me that word that you want to communicate with your people on this day. So, it's constantly that, so that it doesn't end up being what you want to tell them and just be what God wants to tell them through you. So, it's just that mainly—but at twelve o'clock, I make it a point that I'm down on my knees praying for that word to come.

KGC: Oh, for the next day.

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: I see. That's what you do with your midnight prayer.

Vukile Shembe: Okay, so from morning, after nine... because there are stories that need to be told in a specific way. I'm just trying to bring them, to remind myself of them, try to remember the actual events as they were, right through to one o'clock. And preparing the hymns that will be necessary for the ceremony.

KGC: Right. And that, of course, will depend on what time of the year it is and what types of events you are trying to recall.

Vukile Shembe: But most of it, I remember there was a time when we were, the initial days when I came here, I used to worry myself a lot trying to prepare, check for the verses in the Bible and everything. But I started wondering if what I am doing is right. Because I started feeling like maybe I need to—because there is a message of God, I know, that wants to be communicated to these people. Maybe I need to make room for that. Just allow enough space for God to inculcate that in my thinking, in my spirit, such that only to find later on that my father had said it, that what he proscribed for every person was going to, like, in charge of the service.

He said the day before, you have to constantly ask God to give you the message that was communicated with his people, because you don't want that to end up being entangled with your desires and your struggles and the things that you know about people and all that. So that's the preparation that happens. Of course, there gets to be some biblical verses that need to be prepared for that particular message, because normally I would know sometimes even before I sleep, because sometimes it just floods in.

I remember that in January, I had to sit up until maybe three o'clock in the morning, just writing these things down, because when you start, you just want to keep writing, writing, writing... sometimes different subjects, different sermons. You would have the spirit guide you up until a certain point the message of that particular day has ended and there is something else that is coming. And you keep writing, writing. I acquired a lot of notebooks that I've kept. You know, sometimes you just write notes, sometimes I write the entire message as it comes. You know, right through until the final word. Sometimes, you know, I would not sleep after four. Starting maybe after eight. Just writing. Twelve o'clock, I pray. After twelve, I keep on writing, I keep on writing on and on.

KGC: And you've written some of your own hymns too, if I'm correct?

Vukile Shembe: Yes, there is a small hymn book.

[...]

KGC: If I could ask you maybe just one last more personal, casual question, before we get into some of the stuff that is more related to my study, one thing I was also curious about—and I would be remiss if I didn't take the chance to ask you—and, again, it's more of a personal curiosity... I'm just wondering what it was like for you to grow up. Obviously, there was a huge trauma when you were very young, in the sense of your father being assassinated...

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: ... and then from there, then, being the inheritor and the church being held in trust for you up until eighteen. If you could just talk to me maybe a little bit about those young years before you actually came to Ekuphakameni...

Vukile Shembe: My young years were just average young boys' years, because I didn't yet know even my surname. I didn't know that my surname is Shembe. The surname I knew was of the family where I grew up. When I was four, my father took me to a certain family in the northern Zululands. That's where I grew up. That's the family I knew as my family.

Out here people say things, but I paid it no mind. I started there. I was just an ordinary boy growing up there until I enrolled in university. When I was eighteen, when the news of the calling and the responsibility came, I was doing my first year. It was in July. I was eighteen at the time, so it was a very confusing thing to have happened, because, first of all, there had to be a lot of information that I had not known, in fact, about my family life and who my real father was... and still trying to process those things and at the same time having to meet the responsibility that I had to take care of.

KGC: So, this was only brought forth to you at eighteen?

Vukile Shembe: At eighteen, seventeen.

KGC: Okay.

Vukile Shembe: My birthday is on the seventeenth of August. So, it was a few days before that.

KGC: Sorry, so the same day that you learned you came here?

Vukile Shembe: No, I learned, I think it was three days before, something like that.

KGC: Okay, I see, so very quickly.

Vukile Shembe: Very quickly.

KGC: You had to process a lot of information?

Vukile Shembe: Yes. And I just had a situation that I'd just been introduced to. But years before that were just ordinary years. I used to be a cattle herder. We used to do a lot of timber farming. So, most of our days then were just around that: farming, cattle herding, and doing whatever house chores that we were supposed to do as boys. Going to school. Ya, just that.

[...]

KGC: So, [A. K.] created a lot of poison?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: And it was injected into those relationships?

Vukile Shembe: Yes, yes. And he was doing this in assistance with some of the church pastors who did not like my grandfather. [J. G.] was a man of high authority. He was very strict, so people didn't like that, because they saw it as their dignity and honour being challenged, because some of them were great pastors. So, they ended up having that kind of fallout. So, they ended up turning to his brother and thinking, "Maybe if he was in place, things wouldn't be like this."

KGC: Because he was easier to let things go?

Vukile Shembe: He was easier. The only thing he spoke about, "As long as you're going to pay." As easy as that.

KGC: And you see it now. I've spent time in the Ebuhleni group. You can see the evolution of that.

Vukile Shembe: And the main thing that the prophet had prophesied these things. There's a point where he wanted to kill Amos.

KGC: Who?

Vukile Shembe: The prophet.

KGC: Isaiah?

Vukile Shembe: Yes. He was very angry with him.

KGC: Before he left?

Vukile Shembe: Before he left. Initially, it was a couple of years before he left. [A. K.] did something very terrible. And then [Isaiah] got very angry with him.

KGC: Do you know what it was?

Vukile Shembe: {sighs}

KGC: I mean, if you can't say...

Vukile Shembe: Yes, yes...

KGC: ... you don't have to say.

Vukile Shembe: But it was something very terrible. It would be, in my position, [...] to speak about it.

[...]

Vukile Shembe: So, [Isaiah] came very close to killing [A. K.]. He said, "This child is a curse. Just let me kill him. I'm his father. I have the right to kill him." And then his brother said, "No, what is the world going to say?"

KGC: Whose brother?

Vukile Shembe: J. G.

KGC: Oh, Isaiah's other son.

Vukile Shembe: Yes. [J. G. said,] "What is the world going to say? What are people going to say when Shembe has killed his own child? And what will become of this whole thing that God has sent you to do?" And then [Isaiah] turned to [J. G.] and said, "Look, you are saying I shouldn't kill him. This is not a human being. But you will see it when I'm gone."

KGC: It's heartbreaking.

Vukile Shembe: Yes. There is a name he gave him, [...], means, "the one who destroys everything that is being built." "Destroyer of everything that is built." And he did exactly that.

KGC: And where does that leave you? This Ekuphakameni group was without a leader for so long and then, all of a sudden, you were put into this position. Now, can I ask, do you have other brothers? Are you the eldest?

Vukile Shembe: I have other brothers.

KGC: Are you the eldest or in the middle?

Vukile Shembe: I have one older brother.

KGC: And so, why were you chosen?

Vukile Shembe: My birth was... I don't know how to explain. When my mother was pregnant, there was one lady... in fact, even before I was conceived, my father [Londa K.] had a vision. He saw a group of Shembe people fighting against one another. And then, he heard a voice saying, "Do you wonder why these people are fighting? Do you wonder what they are fighting over?" He said, "Yes." And then the voice said, "They are fighting about you, because you are pregnant." And then he says, "I asked the person who was talking, 'How can I be pregnant? I am a man?'" He said, "No, you are pregnant." The voice said, "You are pregnant. Adam got pregnant and gave birth to Eve. And so you are pregnant." So, some of these people do not want this child for the blessing that he's going to bring to the world. They are a dark force section of the family. So, they are fighting about that... that this child shouldn't be born. So, he spoke that. He spoke about that in one of his services.

And then he says, after a while, to the man's section of the congregation, he says, "Now, that this has been said, does any one of you know what the tradition is if there is a heavenly child that is coming? What are we supposed to do?" And then one of the men said, "He is welcome with gifts, just like it happened in Jesus' time. That those three Magis came to him to offer him gifts to welcome him." [Londa K.] said, "Well, if you feel that it should be done, I'm in agreement with you." So, they did that.

And then, when my mother fell pregnant, there was a woman who was in charge of the maidens' regiment of the congregation. I don't know what had initiated this, but my father just called her. This woman was telling me, "Your father was calling me one day and then he asked me what is this thing I wanted to tell him." She says, "I was very bewildered because I have seen a vision." She says, "I was sleeping and I saw come in about three men. And they said to me, 'We are from the [...] tribe.'"

It's a tribe, certain division of the Ngcobo, the greater Ngcobo tribe. They are divided into various divisions. Each one has a sitting chief. So, my mother is related to the Ngcobo people.

And then, this woman says, “These three men mentioned my mother by name and said, ‘So and so is pregnant. We came to bring *iNkosi*. So and so is pregnant.’” So, he related this to my father. And my father just chased it off, just like that.

And then, after a while, there was a ceremony that my father just initiated out of the blue. He said, “The heavenly child is here now. We want one confirmation. We want confirmation of the star, because when Jesus was born there was a confirmation of a star. So, we want confirmation.” So, they started circling the property at Ekuphakameni. From morning. It started at four o’clock. And at about nine o’clock in the morning, they saw a star. It was in the East. And they said, “It’s enough. Let’s stop. We found confirmation.

So, he made an offering of I don’t know how many cattle to thank God for it. And then, when I was born, he gave me a name, a certain name. And then came his father [J. G.]. [Londa] says he saw a vision. And I was in a vision with him. He says he saw me approaching while he was talking to his father. And then, his father asked him, “Do you know the name of this child?” He called me by the name he had given me. He said, “No, that’s not his name. That is not how his name is pronounced.” And then, he said another one of my names, so it became my two names.

When I was born, [after] three weeks, when he heard that I was born, he told his mother, because he was still alive, at the time, told them to bring me him straight to him. He was in one of the temple mission stations in northern Zululand. They brought me to him. He said they should lay a grass mat and then put me there. He invited some of his... it was an evangelist... and I don’t know who else. He told them that, “This is *iNkosi*, the future *iNkosi*. I’m showing you now so there won’t be any confusion, because in my time there was a lot of confusion, so I want to tell you now, so that you know even when I’m not there. You will be witnesses.” This is my father, “He is the one who is going to lead us tomorrow.” I’m saying this just so you know there is that. So, that’s how it happened.

And he says there was a time when he invited all of us, his children, to come to him. He wanted to teach us to pray, how to pray. And then, when we came to him, the rest of his children sat down. I refused. I just refused. And when he asked me why am I not sitting down, I pointed at his chair. I said I wanted to sit there. And he said, “Why?” He said I didn’t answer. He just said I wanted to sit there. He kept on saying that. So, he had it written down, fortunately, because he went through a lot of hardship when he came to his position, because my grandfather had not written it down... merely mentioned it to certain people he trusted.

KGC: That your father was to be the successor?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: But he also came, I read in one of the books, that Londa came because of a dream. He was not really in the church, at the time, but after the death of your grandfather, then he was called.

Vukile Shembe: Yes, he was called. He left the church after the death of his father. Because my grandfather became sick for a long period, for a long time. So, during that time, a lot of upheavals, there were a lot of factions that were happening in the church.

KGC: This is in the seventies?

Vukile Shembe: Yes. There were a lot of factions that happened. Unrest and people getting ex-communicated, expelled from the church. Dark forces were at play.

KGC: And even a lot of uncertainty about the future vision of the church.

Vukile Shembe: Yes, but certain people knew what they wanted to do with the whole confusion that was taking place.

KGC: They thought they could take advantage of the network that was already in place?

Vukile Shembe: Yes. So, my father distanced himself from everything. He was just thinking because he had finished his law degree, he was just going to find work and work elsewhere, because it seems as if this thing, this Shembe thing, is now coming to an end. Aside from all the promises, aside from all that was said, it's just coming to an end.

So he just told himself, "I'm going to go look for a job, be a lawyer, and just focus on that. So until that dream came—and it starts with him looking for a property somewhere. [Londa] says, "I saw a vision. I was riding a bicycle, looking for a house that I was going to buy once I get a job." He says, "That's the main thing that was on my mind until I came to a certain place where I got this feeling that my father was in there. So, I went into that property looking for him and there was a man who was cutting flowers. He told me that, 'Hey, go to the next property. That's where you'll find him.'" So, he went there. He found him sitting with certain people, but next to him was a person who was dressed in white who had covered his head. It seemed like a man, but dressed like a woman. [Londa] said, "I wanted to look at the person's face, but each time I tried, he would look away. So, I ended up realizing that this is a heavenly being. This is not a human being, so I must keep trying to find his face because maybe I'm going to die." He says that's what was happening in his mind in that dream.

So, until his father invited him, he said he should come close. And then [J. G.] stood up and said he should put his right foot against his left foot, just like that—stand on his foot. And then he started talking for a long time. For a long time, he could hear clearly what he was saying, but he kept on talking.

Firstly, before that happened, [Londa] says, he was excited and said to his father, "Our father, you are alive. We had missed you." And he says, "I had this thing when I saw him in a vision that I would ask him to bless me." So, he says, "Even in that vision, I asked him to bless me. He said to me now, 'I blessed you with all the blessings that there are. There is no other blessing that I did not bless you with. So, I don't need to bless you again. All the blessings, I gave to you.'" And then, he did that thing again, "All the blessings I gave to you." And then he did that thing to ask him to put his foot against his foot, just like that. He said he woke up his whole body from his feet right up. It was very hard.

And then he saw another vision again where he saw hands, two hands pulling him. He could see that they had heard, just like his father. So, he kept on pulling, pulling him. He woke up. One thing that came to him was that it was his father calling him, like pulling him into the spiritual world.

The latest testimony of his appointment, it reached me some years after I came to Ekuphakameni. I saw a vision. I was sitting in the verandah of his house. Just sitting alone. And then, I saw my grandfather [J. G.] coming. I wanted to move from the chair, kneel down. But I couldn't move from that chair. I tried moving, but it was as if something was holding me to the chair. And then, he didn't say anything. He passed to the side, to the corner of the house. I started developing a sense of guilt, wondering what I had done. Why is he not talking to me? He passed and then he came back. He opened the door. The door is right next to where I was seated. He entered the house, without saying a word—my father's house. Then, he came out with my father. They just stood

there next to me. I was feeling more pressure now. It's my father and my grandfather. And I'm still sitting on that chair. I wanted to move from it, but I couldn't. So, eventually... they didn't say anything. While I was sitting there, my grandfather just entered... my father just behind him. He just entered into him and disappeared. And it was just my father alone. After that, it was as if my chair had moved from the wall, because I had sat against the wall. It was as if it had moved forward. And then my father just entered here {points at torso}.

KGC: Into you?

Vukile Shembe: Into me. And I woke up again. My whole body was hot. It was as if something was burning.

KGC: Painful?

Vukile Shembe: No, it wasn't. It was just too hot. And I was sweating. There was my own testimony about this whole thing, regarding my father and the succession and everything. Often and again, he would come and say things. Because, initially, when I first came here, I was a bit confused about this whole thing until the first vision I saw.

I dreamt that I was walking from school. There is a high school that I used to attend. And then I saw a black car approaching. When you are kids, you are always told of black cars that could do damage and harm to you. So, I started running.

There was this man who was in this car, was dressed in a black suit, white shirt, and a black tie... wearing a hat. I couldn't identify the man. I just wanted to run away. So, I kept on running. Running through the bushes. But he kept on calling. He kept on calling. I could hear his voice. I could hear that his voice would follow me and reach wherever I was. So, I kept on running through the bushes until I came to—oh, the way he called. He called my name and kept on saying, "My son." Kept on saying that and saying after that, "My son."

Then I came to a certain place. There was the man who brought me up and the person I grew up knowing as my mother and wanted to report to them that there is a man chasing me. But when I came to them and I turned back, I saw that this man was approaching. They seemed to know the man. They were comfortable. They were not frightened or anything. I just started getting confused. Then, this man kept on approaching. Came to me and said—called me by my name, "My son," after that. And then he took out of his pocket a twenty rand note. He placed it before me. And then, he went away. And then, I woke up. It only makes sense when I woke up that who was this man. After that, I had a vision. It was as if I was playing...

KGC: And it was your father?

Vukile Shembe: Yes, it was my father. I was playing with some of my brothers. It was as if—we're still very young, playing in the yard, just chasing after each other. And then, suddenly, there was a strong wind started. And then, we became afraid and we started running. But then I thought, "Why am I running?" And I couldn't run any further. It was as if something had held me just like that. And they ran and left me, my other brothers.

And then with this thing, there just came this cloud. It descended as if from the sky. And it parked somewhere in the middle, at that height. I became so afraid, because I didn't understand what was going on. And then a voice spoke. It said, "I am Jehovah, the God of your Fathers. Don't stop praying." And I woke up, after that. The way I felt, it was a mix of fear and excitement at the same time.

Because, during all that period, I had been asking for a sign, a certain sign that I'm here [in Ekuphakameni] because God had given the order. Because there was a confusion. I was very young. I was eighteen.

And then after some months, almost the same thing happened. I dreamt I was in school again. It was about to be prayer time. Normally, when we are in school, we would have that prayer moment. We would go outside, stand in lines, and then a teacher would come and lead us in prayer. While we were waiting for that, it was as if there is some thunder happening. And as soon as it did that, we knelt down all of us, our heads face down. And then this voice spoke again, "I am Jehovah, God of your Fathers." At that time, it said, "Ask what you want me to do for you."

There was something that was bothering me, at the time, a lot. Certain things that would keep happening to you and you don't understand why they happen like that. And the only thing that came to my mind, at the time, was that thing. And then I asked for it.

And that very morning, I realized that that was the last thing that ever happened, last day they ever happened. It was the last moment it ever happened. After that, it never happened again. It ended immediately.

So, gradually, after that, the same voice started to move into my—it was as if he was speaking from within. It was stronger than just a thought. It was as if I could actually identify with the voice within me. And such has been the nature of it up to today.

KGC: It continues?

Vukile Shembe: Yes, it continues. It was not now happening in the sense of a vision. It would happen, but mostly it would be... for instance, my grandfather would come. I remember there was this woman who was sick, who came here. He was possessed by spirits. She would run away. They had to tie her. They had to chain her. So, when that happened... oh, they brought her to church one Saturday. I couldn't say a thing to her.

KGC: She was just raving?

Vukile Shembe: She even refused to come to the table. They tried to bring her to me, but they just couldn't. And then, I went back and I slept on Saturday night.

At night, I had a vision. Somebody was saying to me, "Take a bucket of water. Place it in a corner of your house and light a candle. And then speak. Put a hand in that bucket and then say, "God, please remove this disease in this woman." I did exactly that and she was healed. Her father became a member, but I think he couldn't find his place among the religion, because it's one thing to convert because you had seen something and it's another to convert, because you have this thing that's within you: pure love of God.

KGC: So, how do you see your future? Do you have a particular mission or missions in mind for the future and your leadership here?

Vukile Shembe: I could have my dreams, things that I have set as vision, but I always wonder if whatever I could be thinking at that time is in consensus with the voice that I say is within me. Until it says something, I can't really know, subject to the future, what will really happen.

KGC: I see. So, you have displaced whatever you may have—

Vukile Shembe: Yes, because I had a lot of things I had put down in my mind saying, "This I want to happen in this way," but none of those things materialized when they come from my mind, but I noticed that, little things that come from what this voice says, they happen.

KGC: And this voice is in here {pointing at torso}?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: Because you keep pointing there, so I am just asking.

Vukile Shembe: I'm just saying, because it speaks as if it speaks from here {pointing at torso}.

KGC: From your heart?

Vukile Shembe: Yes. From somewhere around this part {pointing at torso}.

[...]

Vukile Shembe: You know, there is one small thing that perhaps I should mention. I remember that you asked me a question about if there's anything I wanted to add on to what I had said. It's just the direction of the world. I'm worried about the direction of the world. To me, it's as if the entire world is descending into the picture of hell as had been spoken of in the Bible.

KGC: In Revelation?

Vukile Shembe: Yes. It's as if the whole world is just descending into that. It does look like there will be this massive destruction that will wipe people off the face of the Earth. It's as if the entire world will convert into that kind of place. I remember there was a time when I saw a vision and it worried me a lot. And I shared it with the people in one of my services, one of my sermons. And my worry is that I don't even think there is one of them who took note of what I said. There is a broach, something I use to fasten my robes.

KGC: Yes, I noticed.

Vukile Shembe: There is one that looks like a butterfly. It was designed as a butterfly. I saw something coming from the sky. It was as if it's coming from somewhere in the sky, approaching Earth. And it looked like that thing. I started wondering as I was looking at it as to what is my broach doing up there. But it kept on getting bigger and bigger and bigger until I started seeing that it's a human being with wings.

He came down. It was as if he was standing somewhere. I couldn't tell where I was standing, but, from where I was, I could see that something was happening. He came down and stood above a certain city like Durban. It was a big city. He had a bow and an arrow. He put his arrow on his bow. He pulled. He took aim. And he released his arrow. Where it hit, it was as if an atomic bomb... everything just scattered side to side. There was fire. People were running in all directions, crying. And he went to another city as well. Did the same thing. I saw this happening three times. Three cities. And then I woke up, because there was just too much chaos. The whole world was just stuck, full of smoke.

KGC: And it's quite scary when you think about it because I'm sure you've heard the news about Japan.

Vukile Shembe: I was shocked, because I was speaking about the same thing on Saturday in my sermon. And I came back, they brought me a newspaper. The front page had something like that. It took my attention and I was very shocked, because I spoke about something like that in my sermon.

KGC: You spoke about your vision?

Vukile Shembe: No, I was speaking about my general feeling about the direction of the world. And I really was expressing my worry as to... it's like, people are not paying attention. They are not worried about the things that are happening.

KGC: And it's more and more frequent.

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: It seems.

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: And large-scale.

Vukile Shembe: And the one thing that's causing people to relax is that there is always a person who comes and explains how this thing happened. You know, like, it's just, "One of those incidents. People shouldn't worry." [...] They become very practical about these things. And it's "a natural disaster." It happens this way and the other. And it worries me. It worries me a lot.

The wave that hit Japan—my mother can be my witness. Since last year, I've been having a constant dream about a wave, but it was coming to where I was, as if I was in a room somewhere. And then there would be this massive wave that would come. Maybe it takes four weeks, a month, but a few weeks, and then this news comes back. Over and over and over.

I dreamt of it when I was at Nhlankakazi, this January. It was as if I was driving in a car. I came to a place where this wave had come, and major disaster. Boats were scattered. When I saw the thing, it got me thinking the same thing.

I'm not saying that what I was seeing in that dream had to do with that, but every time it happened, it gave me this fear that the world is descending into a certain place. It's not as if there will be an annihilation of all humanity by way of an asteroid that will hit the Earth or whatever, but the world will become a very disastrous place. It will be as good as—we are living in hell as it is happening. That's my main worry. I always pray to God for that. I know His patience is very great.

I remember, at some point some time back, I was coming from Cape Town and I was in a cab. I remember the gentleman who was driving me. I don't know how it got to that, but we started talking about the same thing. And, I think, it took his interest. All these things I was saying, it took his interest. And he started wondering about God's nature, that we are at the mercy of certain forces, that why can't God help us out of these things. Because it does seem like we are powerless against these things. And then, I started saying something—I didn't say anything to him, at that time. I wondered about the same thing to, because, I said, "If God can cause such calamity, it requires too much power. Can't He use the same power to make our hearts heed his call or anything?"

KGC: Or to hold the ocean back like your great-grandfather?²³¹

Vukile Shembe: Yes. Now, later on, there's a friend of mine—we had this tendency of saying, "Life is unfair. Life is unfair." And it just came to me that often when you say life is unfair is when you are focusing, you are seeing the last part. It's either you were not there when the whole thing started up to that point. You are just seeing the final point, the final part. Often, when things like that happen, they start somewhere and people don't pay attention.

And there is always a call. God placed something within us all. You always know when you are stepping towards the wrong. There is a voice that will always tell you, "You are getting lost." And there will be another voice that tells you from a friend, from somebody else who will say, "No, relax. This is the world. Just be comfortable. Nothing wrong is going to happen." And these things keep building up on top of each other until,

²³¹ in reference to *amaNazaretha* oral tradition

finally, something like this happens. Unfortunately, people suffer—not only just one person.

In Israel, it happened. When you read the Bible, because of certain few people, because certain evil people are living among a huge crowd of people, they get to suffer as well. You know, it's unfortunate that the way the laws of nature or the way God does these things, but it starts somewhere. There is no one who just wakes up and they don't have a chance. However small, but God will give you a chance. And, however small, it's equal to your chance in life.

So, it happens unfortunately, but we always bleed with God, because there is a part where it says His love is greater than that of a woman loving her child. And that is the greatest love by far which we know on Earth. There is no greater love than that of a woman loving her child. But God's love is beyond that, which is why I always have this faith that in spite of the things that happen in the world, there is still a chance for humanity.

We see these things, because we don't know where they are coming from and where they are going. We think it's just the end. Aside from what is happening, the world is descending to the place that I feel it's descending to, but, I think, there is a chance.

God is still waiting for us to actually do something, to actually pay attention, because when you read throughout the Scriptures, there is nothing as important in the history of the relationship between a man and God as His word. He just wants people to listen to His word. You can do any other thing, but if you listen to His word, He is impressed. I don't know what is so special about it, because even when you look at it, there is nothing that works to His advantage or His absolute benefit. You look at God's advices, God's laws, mainly they are there to protect us from the harm that we could do to ourselves and to our fellow human beings, to nature, and all. It's just like that, but I still have hope.

I still have hope that it's not all lost even though I can see—whether people believe that there are dark forces, but I believe that there is something that is untoward that's gaining an upper hand. Because these things keep happening now. You know, accidents in the roads are happening.

You know, I was thinking last night about the nature of the offerings that people do at church. I know there is a young man who approached me one day and spoke to me about a spirit that causes him to be suspicious of the offerings and question the offerings. I felt very sorry. I couldn't give him any answer. I just encouraged him to pray about it, ask for assistance.

Because that also is the greatest thing, much more than an answer I can give to a person. God's answer is not made up of words that I can give to a person sometimes. It's something that dawns from within and then you know that this is the right thing to do. It came to me last night as I was thinking about the case of this young man. And I started travelling in my mind, wondering why did God introduce these things?

To have something that you value so much, if it's not God, there is a way it's going to hurt you. Money is one thing that, you know, it's almost in the forefront of the major disasters in the world. The harm that gets to visit people individually, the stresses of the world, as much as it does help, but most of the time you find a person committing suicide. Nowadays, it's often due to money or lack.

KGC: I've seen that back home.

Vukile Shembe: So, I think, the reason why God introduced these things was to teach us not to draw attachment to a certain thing that we created, because money is man's creation. We created money. So, anything, if not properly managed, if the relationship of which is not properly managed, if we become too attached to anything that we created as human beings, there will be harm. There will be harm that you are going to cause to one another, cause to ourselves.

KGC: I think that the nuclear reactor that's been severed is a good example of that.

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: We all know it's not a safe source of power, even though they say it's safe, just like people might say alcohol is safe, it's okay. And then, look what happens. Everybody is suffering from twenty times more radiation than is correct.

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: So, that's very scary to me as well.

Vukile Shembe: So, I think, what God wanted us to learn is to lose this attachment to the main things that have a way of getting a man's attention. Money is just one of those things. I think, maybe, there was supposed to have been a law that it shouldn't be money only per se. But there are certain things that on a certain day—for instance, a day like a Sabbath, we should lose attachment to... just try to pull ourselves away from... and still find out if we can still see life away from them. Because if you have this one thing that you can't see, possibility of life away from, and it's not God, sooner or later, harm is coming. So, that's just one thing that I wanted to highlight, because it came to my mind.

I believe that God is still waiting. There wouldn't be such effort as this, because, when my father came, he said, "The Gates of Heaven had been closed. Heaven had said, 'Enough. We extended the hand. People did what they did. It's enough.' And then I went and begged and asked for one more try, just one more try." Well, such is the nature of God's patience.

Once in a while, God does reveal a section of His being, of his nature to human beings [...] If there's still a section of people elsewhere or here who still see and need to detach themselves from very important things and commitments that they are supposed to be engaged in, in pursuit of certain knowledge about God. Because that's selfless. God always encourages selflessness. Wherever there is an act of selflessness, that is there. It pleases Him. Because we are all here as extensions of God's hand.

There are things that he cannot provide to certain people; he placed it with you to perhaps sit with that. When a certain person needs love, that's provided for them. They don't always have to go and pray insistently for it. We are, in a way, necessary to each other for various reasons that are supposed to grow not from a perspective that I will get something from it... which are supposed to grow from the perspective that, "I am a brother. You are my brother. I am your brother. We need each other, not necessarily so we can have answers and whatever, but just out of that."

There is that debate about being spiritual and being religious. It's a good thing to be spiritual. It's a very good thing, because it acknowledges God. I've seen a lot of people do wonderful things, being spiritual. But, congregating is necessary, because it encourages the spirit of togetherness, which is necessary in the world.

Churches have gone away from encouraging the culture of people helping one another in order to survive. There is a point back to which God will always refer us—that we cannot survive as individuals. We need each other.

I was talking to the congregation saying, “We all want children to get an education, but not all of us will afford that. There are certain people who have more than others. Other have just a little to take their children up to so far. But, just imagine a situation whereby if we can pull together these resources we have for the purpose of making sure that each and every child gets an education; it could happen. It can happen much more than allowing another person that you congregate with to pull their own direction with heavy burden, when you have more than enough... and discouraging the culture of greed, because there are still evident things that it has caused, not only to individuals, but to the entire world.

KGC: Something even like apartheid, it’s more economic, really, than racial, in a way.

Vukile Shembe: People wanting more. I was touched by one bushman leader. There is a plant that they used to use as a herb for something, so now it ended up being taken by pharmaceutical companies and using it for something.

KGC: I think, that’s an appetite suppressant, that one.

Vukile Shembe: Yes. So, they had a claim for it. They won the case and got some funds. And then, someone went to them and asked them, “Do you think you’ve got enough for your intellectual property?” He said something very pious and very moving. He said, “Look, when we started this thing, we wanted acknowledgement and we wanted to get something from it. We didn’t want to get everything. Beyond this point, it would be greed. We know we can push it up to that far, but it starts speaking against the very spirit of being a bushman. Because with the means that we got, we’ll be able to live. And if we use them right, we will be able to achieve the things we want to achieve.”²³²

In this next section from our March 20, 2011 interview, the reader will note how, having facilitated more one-sided dialogue from Vukile Shembe during the previous session, I take a more active speaking role in our second interview to help suss out theoretical concepts related to this study including naziritism, hybridity, liminality, resistance and persistence:

KGC: Now, another topic I wanted to talk about. You know, a lot of the scholars who are studying *amaNazaretha*, they discuss the church or the people in the church itself as a kind of “resistance movement.” Do you have any thoughts about that? Resistance specifically to colonialism and neocolonialism?

Vukile Shembe: There is an element of that, but I don’t want to think that that was the ultimate purpose of the entire beginning of the faith. I think there was a more profound reason that’s not related to just resisting Western dominance. But there are elements of—it became a very vital instrument of resisting Western dominance in terms of religion and in terms of our way of life.

KGC: Could you discuss some of the dynamics at play in that? Maybe you could talk about some of the aspects that fall under the category of resistance?

Vukile Shembe: Well, I will call it a lousy subject, for some reason. When the missionaries came to Africa, one of their central teachings was that practices like polygamy were obscene and prohibited if a person is a believer. But later on, when

²³² Interview with researcher, Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 14, 2011.

Shembe came, he endorsed that. He said, “There is nothing polygamy does to violate a person’s faith in God,” which was part of the African way of life. Polygamy is largely accepted in Africa and practiced throughout almost the entire continent. And it was seen, in my view, the proposition that polygamy was obscene and prohibited if the person is a believer, it had very little to do with it being obscene in terms of if a person is a believer. It was one of the things that were imposed to shift that African peoples’ way of life and impose Western life dominance. So, it’s basic things like those that often and again come up in Shembe’s teachings that stood as a way of resisting western dominance.

KGC: Part of the thing I’m working with now are ideas of resistance and ideas of persistence. There’s a recent scholar... he’s part of the church, the Ebuhleni side. His name is Nkosinathi Sithole. You will probably encounter his work. He pointed out to me—and this is one of the arguments in his thesis. He pointed out to me something very interesting, in the sense, that to talk about... okay, his example was that some scholars had labelled the dance forms, the sacred dance, as a type of resistance and they’ve also talked about the hymns as a way of resistance. And his argument is that the sacred dance was there all along in the Zulu way of life prior to colonialism, prior to Shembe. But the hymns, they specifically talk about enemies in some of the hymns. And that’s a new result since the colonial encounter. And he pointed out something that you have to be careful about as a scholar—this is a very new idea, so allow me to formulate it—is that, when you are looking at something that was a tradition, that was already in place, basically—and so with the dancing or with polygamy—you are looking at just preserving a way of life. And to label the preservations of traditions, precolonial traditions as a type of resistance, keeps colonialism in the centre and as the point of reference when, in fact, it’s just a struggle to persist as opposed to resist. Whereas, the hymns are more directly aimed at the enemies, some of them. Is that clear?

Vukile Shembe: No, the part about hymns being directed... there is somewhere where you mentioned enemies. I am losing you there.

KGC: Let me try to find it. There is one hymn specifically where it talks about the enemies of Jehovah.

Vukile Shembe: No, I remember that one. What exactly were you saying about it?

KGC: I’m just saying that here, even though in the particular hymn that’s discussing enemies, it might be rather ambiguous as to who the enemy is. There are different enemies, obviously. There is the Western dominance – the colonial powers. There are black mission contemporaries who were going with the Western way of worship as opposed to the traditional ways of worship, the African ways of worship. That could be seen as another enemy of Isaiah Shembe.

Vukile Shembe: Well, basically, anything that was opposed to the African way of life, which embodies, includes the African way of worship, I think, falls under the same umbrella – the enemies of Jehovah, because there is a belief that is with us that our way of life was God designed. So, anything that wants to interfere with that, it falls under the same umbrella.

KGC: Be it Western or Zulu practice?

Vukile Shembe: Yes, any kind. Because there are Zulu practices that also, if you look at them, they have a way of interfering with the original African way of life and way of worship.

KGC: Okay. Such as?

Vukile Shembe: Such as *sangomas*. It is largely prohibited. And also using *muti*, which is largely prohibited, because we are supposed to have dependence on God strictly. Him and nothing else.

KGC: And not medicines, not sorcery.

Vukile Shembe: But over time, these things have evolved into being taken as part of our way of life.

KGC: I found this passage now. It's 24, here.

Vukile Shembe: {recites in English} "You saved the Nazaretha from their enemies, because your mercy endures forever."

KGC: So, there has been a lot of speculation about who the enemies could be.

Vukile Shembe: So, the enemies, you know, under the same umbrella, everything that interferes with our God-designed way of life, which incorporates our way of worship, the way we relate to one another – man to man – and the way we relate to nature, it falls under the same.

KGC: I understand. So, the colonial impetus to just raid resources... that would be a type of behaviour perpetrated by enemies?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: For example, the reckless disregard of nature for profit?

Vukile Shembe: And just individual enemies. Anything that seeks to divert your loyalty to that teaching.

KGC: So, people who are propogating alcohol and drugs and all these things?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: We talked about the practices in detail last time, so I can just extrapolate from there in terms of this question. This is sort of a hypothesis or a theory that I am developing right now, in terms of, if you are looking at something, if you are looking at a religion that's, in a way—because we can't deny that the Bible is at work here, even if it's not the primary work. But, in a way, if you look at the religion as being somehow, not entirely a product or by-product of the colonial encounter, when you are looking at a religion like that, an indigenous religion, I think it's important to break-up the activities if you are going to start speaking about resistance... about which ones might be persistence or preservation. Is that clear?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: Is that something you would agree with or disagree with or something you could expand upon?

Vukile Shembe: In terms of the Bible being... you said it's an instrument?

KGC: I'm just saying, in terms of taking... for example, you had described polygamy as a type of resistance to colonialism. And I could see, from the colonial perspective, they could say, "Okay, they are *resisting* our domination." But my argument is that this idea of polygamy was there all along. So, it's not a situation that, "Hey, we're consciously engaging in polygamy to resist you." But, in fact, it's the opposite, "We want to *continue* our way of life."

Vukile Shembe: If you look at it that way, there is nothing Shembe introduced per se to sort of resist Western dominance as something that was introduced purely by him, for primarily that purpose. Most of his work and his teachings were around preservation of what was already there and reminding people where we came from, because most of these things have been lost in the course of time. That's what he said. He said, "There is

nothing new.” He just came to teach. These things happened there. They are just getting lost through the course of time.

KGC: And then, from a more social perspective, beyond the call to live life according to the divine rules and the divine decree, from a social perspective, from what I understand, for example, Ekuphakameni also became a safe haven for a lot of the dispossessed in the sense of... a lot of the early members were women as far as I read...

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: ... who were fleeing the homestead economy, who were fleeing abuse, and, ironically, who were abandoned after their husbands were converting to Christianity and then had to, kind of, you know, they couldn't keep the second, third, and fourth wives anymore. So, then these women were homeless basically. That's what I'd read.

Vukile Shembe: That is true. Because, there is an understanding—I don't know if I'm making a correct reference. There is an understanding that *ubuNazaretha* revolves around three categories of rules. It revolves around culture and culture being understood as a permanent law of God, God-designed law, which has three sectors of rules. The first sector is the set of rules that manages the relationship between human beings and God. And the second sector is that which manages the relationship between a human being and their fellow countrymen. This is where these responsibilities... whether you mention Ekuphakameni being a haven for people who were displaced and who had not relatives and that lost their husbands because of mostly their conversion to the faith of *ubuNazaretha*. The responsibility, because of that same set of rules, is established to say, “This is how you related to a human being who has converted to the faith.” You don't just convert them and leave them like that. You have to see to it that they are well taken care of. It becomes your responsibility. You know, it's part of these three set of rules. Set of rules number two.

KGC: And what's the third one?

Vukile Shembe: The third one would be human beings towards nature.

KGC: Is there a common thread that runs through all three?

Vukile Shembe: Yes, they are bound together. You can't keep one and exclude the other.

KGC: So, ultimately, your relations with other humans and nature, it's connected to your relationship with God?

Vukile Shembe: Yes. You can't say you are being obedient to God if, on one hand, you are violating a second set of rules that speaks about how you relate to your brother, to your sister, to your neighbour, and also to nature.

[...]

KGC: The next topic I wanted to discuss is the notion of hybridity. More and more these days, in religious studies, we talk about religious hybridity. And that could be at a personal level, someone who... in Africa, for example, you have people who attend a Protestant Church, like a straight Protestant Church, but then they go home and slaughter a cow under their tribal tradition.

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: That's a type of hybridity. So, if we look at it in terms of *ubuNazaretha*, I mean, already we can see there's a hybridity of Zulu traditions with biblical traditions, Judaic.

Vukile Shembe: To an extent, Christianity.

KGC: And to an extent, Christianity, because Shembe is the Holy Spirit in that framework.

Vukile Shembe: And also, the crucifixes you find around the church, which is the main symbol of Christianity. When I started looking at that, I had a serious problem about it until I started accepting it from a point of view that if Shembe accepted it... and there is my loyalty subject to my understanding about our use of the crucifix [...] my loyalty to Shembe.

KGC: And is that the main religious symbol in the church. Is there another one that's used?

Vukile Shembe: It's not necessarily the main, but it's part of our symbols, but it's quite common. We can't ignore it.

KGC: And, otherwise, it's really just the images of the family line. That would be the main symbols you see as well—the images of you, the images of your father, of your grandfather, etc. Because, apart from that, I haven't noticed much either myself beyond the crucifixes and the photos.

Vukile Shembe: But I was of the view that a flower was supposed to have been incorporated into the list of symbols.

KGC: A particular flower?

Vukile Shembe: Yes, a particular flower, which is the one through which the Spirit of God entered Isaiah's mother. It's a very important part of the history of this religion. There is a culture which has been continued for years, I think, African tradition that a flower of any kind is not supposed to be found within the premises, let alone the house, because it represented a death.

KGC: Flowers?

Vukile Shembe: Yes, so I started questioning the idea behind that practice, that if the Spirit of God, the one that we believe we follow introduced itself and entered Isaiah's mother through a flower, then why do we despise against flowers? And then, they started asserting the flower as something special.

KGC: It's interesting that you mention this example. I didn't know it had that connotation in the African tradition.

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: Because then, when you are looking at the interplay of Zulu traditions—and some of them were abandoned in the church and some of them were kept, the ones that didn't coincide with God's desire...

Vukile Shembe: Yes, over time there has been a mix of things.

KGC: Then, you see how the religion itself becomes a product of the things you accepted from Nguni traditions and the things you rejected, the things you accepted from the Judeo-Christian tradition, the things that were rejected from the Old Testament, and as we were talking about from the New Testament. Again, some things are embraced and some things are rejected, so it becomes a kind of process of revision, in a way.

And, from an outside perspective—I don't see it this way— but, from an outside perspective, it can be seen as contradictory: “How can you be doing these Zulu practices, but then saying that part of you is also respectful of Jesus and all these things?” It's not my view, but that's, say, a “Western mission” view perhaps.

Whereas, from my perspective as a scholar, I don't see a contradiction necessarily, especially when you are talking about polygamy, when you are talking about animal sacrifice. I mean, which Jews today are doing ritual slaughtering according to the

Old Testament? It's actually—this religion [*Ibandla lamaNazaretha*] is actually closer to Old Testament Judaism than modern day Judaism, which I find fascinating.

Vukile Shembe: I wonder why this happened. I wonder why this modern day deviation from what used to be Judaism and what it is today.

KGC: I think it's just modernity. It's the impositions of modernity.

[...]

KGC: Can I ask, are you yourself married?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: Do you have one wife or more than one wife?

Vukile Shembe: One wife, so far.

KGC: So, you are thinking about marrying again possibly?

Vukile Shembe: It's not a question of thought. It's something that's an imperative, a law.

KGC: That you must be married?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: But you have the option of whether it's going to be monogamous or polygamous?

Vukile Shembe: No, I don't have that option.

KGC: Oh, you don't? It should be polygamous?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: There should be more than one?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: Is there a certain number as a goal, or not really?

Vukile Shembe: Not really.

KGC: You have to listen to God on that I suppose?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: Okay, and how long have you been married?

Vukile Shembe: It's been a while. But the officiation part hasn't happened. It has just been the payment of lobola and the fulfilment of other conditions which satisfy the marital status requirement.

[...]

KGC: The last question is: off the top of your head, are there any hymns in the hymnal of Isaiah and Galilee that you frequently go to to seek inspiration, to seek guidance?

Vukile Shembe: There are no particular ones. This thing works like a cycle. I would find that there is hymn that is consciously in my consciousness, such that I would often and again go back to it and sing it time and again, but... because these days, it's Hymn 195.

KGC: This is the one in your mind at the moment?

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: But it changes?

Vukile Shembe: It changes. {recites} "I love it through hearing about it./That land which is to come./I shall be set free when I see it./Oh, my heart."

KGC: I can see why this is on your mind based on our conversation last time, because you were worried about the world.

Vukile Shembe: Yes.

KGC: And this is a much more hopeful version of the future.

Vukile Shembe: {continues reciting} I like the last part. It just takes my spirit.

KGC: The shadow of my refuge?

Vukile Shembe: No, the last verse {recites}. “The first trumpet has been sounded./I am now waiting for the second one.”

KGC: And what do you take from this? How do you interpret that?

Vukile Shembe: It’s exhilarating. It makes me feel like I am living in a moment where I’m constantly waiting for that second trumpet. You know, a part where you are in the middle of your journey, where you don’t want to turn back, where you just want to forge ahead. That’s what it brings to me.²³³

²³³ Interview with researcher, Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 20, 2011.

APPENDIX 3: FIGURES



Figure 1: Nkosinathi Sithole at Khulani Temple
(Hlathikulu, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 18, 2010)



Figure 2: Chilean Bobo Shanti Rasta
(Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress, Bull Bay, Jamaica, July 17, 2011)



Figure 3: K. Gandhar Chakravarty atop Mount Nhlankakazi
(KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 13, 2011, Photo: Nkosinathi Sithole)



Figure 4: Reggae Musician Kiddus I and K. Gandhar Chakravarty
(Kingston, Jamaica, July 30, 2011)



Figure 5: “The Beast,” Office (and Clothesline) on Wheels
(Mount Nhangakazi, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 11, 2011)



Figure 6: Hitchhiking in the Blue Mountains
(Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, May 5, 2011)



Figure 7: Gerald O. West, K. Gandhar Chakravarty, Roderick Hewitt
(University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzberg Campus, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, October 2010)



Figure 8: “JAH RAS TAFARI!” Ritual Ganja Smoking from a *Chalice*
(Clarendon, Jamaica, July 24, 2011)



Figure 9: Male *amaNazaretha* Carrying Ceremonial Staffs
(Ebuhleni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 8, 2011)



Figure 10: “Baldhead” Howellites Celebrating a Binghi, Leonard Howell Symposium
(University of the West Indies, Mona, Kingston, Jamaica, June 18, 2011)



Figure 11: School of Vision Rasta with “Living Crown” of Dreadlocks
(Blue Mountains, Saint Andrew, Jamaica, May 9, 2010)



Figure 12: *amaNazaretha* Bride and Groom with *Isicholo* and *Umqhele* Headpieces
(Zwelisha, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 22, 2010)



Figure 13: *umNazaretha* with Knotted Locks
(eMakhosini Temple, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 13, 2011)



Figure 14: *umNazaretha* Wearing a Personalized *umqhele* (Fur Crown)
(Estcourt, KwaZulu-Natal, November 27, 2010)



Figure 15: *amaNazaretha* Women during Sabbath Service
(eMakhosini, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 13, 2010)



Figure 16: *amaNazaretha* Virgin Maidens during Sabbath Service
(Enhlanhleni Temple, Edendale, KwaZulu-Natal, November 20, 2010)



Figure 17: *amaNazaretha* Virgin Maidens Performing Sacred Dance
(Ebuheni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 23, 2011)



Figure 18: Rastaman Preparing a Mixture of Ganja and *Grabba*
(Ocho Rios, Jamaica, August 14, 2011)



Figure 19: Rastafari Youths with Ganja Crop
(Unidentified, Jamaica 2011)



Figure 20: *umNazaretha* Female Leader (*Umkhokheli*) Ministering Ritual Cleansing (Bhekumesiya, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 10, 2011)



Figure 21: Church Building at Ekuphakameni
(Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 12, 2011)



Figure 22: Entrance to Ekuphakameni Temple
(Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 26, 2011)



Figure 23: Government Representative Attending *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* Sabbath Service (Estcourt Temple, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 27, 2010)



Figure 24: House for the Spirit of Shembe and Seated Congregants
(Enhlanhleni Temple, Edendale, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 20, 2010)



Figure 25: *amaNazaretha* Men Displaying *ibeshu* and Muddy Feet
(Mount Nhlankakazi, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 12, 2011)



Figure 26: Variations in Attire among *amaNazaretha* Women
(Khulani Temple, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 18, 2010)



Figure 27: Three *amaNazaretha* Women with Prayer Wreaths and Stones
(KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 9, 2011)



Figure 28: *amaNazaretha* Women Placing Prayer Wreaths and Stones
(KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 9, 2011)



Figure 29: *amaNazaretha* Pilgrims Arriving at Homis
(KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 19, 2011)



Figure 30: Arrival at Mount Nhlankazi
(KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 11, 2011)



Figure 31: *amaNazaretha* Pilgrims Climbing atop Mount Nhlankazi
(KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 13, 2011)



Figure 32: The View atop Mount Nhlankazi: “Heaven on Earth”
(KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 13, 2011)



Figure 33: Loudspeakers and Pilgrims atop Mount Nhangakazi
(KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 13, 2011)



Figure 34: Campsite at the Foot of Mount Nhlankakazi
(KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 13, 2011)



Figure 35: Zulu Men Dance Group
(Ebhuhleni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 23, 2011)



Figure 36: Zulu Men Dance Group Arm and Ankle Adornments
(eMakhosini Temple, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 13, 2010)



Figure 37: Zulu Men Dance Group Member Wearing Beaded Necklaces and Photos of Shembe (iKhayaletu Temple, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 5, 2010)



Figure 38: Zulu Men Dance Group Leg-lift and Heel Stomp
(iKhayaletu Temple, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 5, 2010)



Figure 39: Zulu Women Dance Group
(Ebhuhleni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 23, 2011)



Figure 40: *amaNazaretha* Virgin Maidens of Marriagable Age Dancing
(Ebhuleni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 23, 2011)



Figure 41: *isiKotshi* Dance Group
(Ebhuhleni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 23, 2011)



Figure 42: Mature *isiKotshi* Dancer
(Ebhuhleni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 23, 2011)



Figure 43: *isiKotshi* Initiates Dancing among Older Boys
(iKhayaletu Temple, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 5, 2010)



Figure 44: Personal Prayers and Requests to Vukile Shembe inside Church Building at Ekuphakameni (Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 19, 2011)



Figure 45: Residences (back) and School (front) at Mount Zion Hill Temple (Blue Mountains, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, April 22, 2011)



Figure 46: Staircase Leading the Way to Mount Zion Hill Temple
(Blue Mountains, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, April 22, 2011)



Figure 47: A Mural of Haile Selassie I
(Mount Zion Hill Temple, Blue Mountains, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, April 22, 2011)



Figure 48: Main Gate to Mount Zion Hill Temple
(Blue Mountains, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, April 22, 2011)



Figure 49: Rastafari Lounging at the School
(Mount Zion Hill Temple, Blue Mountains, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, April 22, 2011)



Figure 50: School of Vision Banner (detail)
(Mount Zion Hill Temple, Blue Mountains, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, April 22, 2011)



Figure 51: School of Vision Rasta Tending the Sabbath Fire in the Town Square
(Papine, Kingston, Jamaica, April 24, 2011)



Figure 52: Flag Bearers, School of Vision Sabbath Service
(Papine, Kingston, Jamaica, April 24, 2011)



Figure 53: School of Vision Rasta Reciting Biblical Passages during Sabbath Service (Papine, Kingston, Jamaica, April 24, 2011)



Figure 54: Nyabingi Drumming and Chanting during School of Vision Sabbath Service (Papine, Kingston, Jamaica, April 24, 2011)



Figure 55: Members of School of Vision Nyabingi Drumming and Chanting at Mount Edge Guest House (Blue Mountains, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, April 25, 2011)



Figure 56: Ruins of the Main House at Pinnacle
(Sligoville, Saint Catherine Parish, Jamaica, June 16, 2011)



Figure 57: Modern-day Tabernacle at Pinnacle
(Sligoville, Saint Catherine Parish, Jamaica, June 16, 2011)



Figure 58: Howellites Reciting Prayers at the “Leonard Howell Symposium”
(University of West Indies, Mona, Kingston, Jamaica, June 18, 2011)



Figure 59: Bobo Shanti Rastafari Clad in Ceremonial Robes, Praising JAH Rastafari (Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress, Bull Bay, Jamaica, July 17, 2011)



Figure 60: Bobo Shanti Rastafari Hand Washing Clothing
(Bull Bay, Jamaica, July 17, 2011)



Figure 61: An Example of Architecture at Bobo Hill
(Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress, Bull Bay, Jamaica, July 17, 2011)



Figure 62: Flag Poles at Bobo Hill
(Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress, Bull Bay, Jamaica, July 17, 2011)



Figure 63: A Placard on a Building at Bobo Hill
(Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress, Bull Bay, Jamaica, July 17, 2011)



Figure 64: A Residence at the Rastafari Community in Scotts Pass
(Clarendon, Jamaica, July 23, 2011)



Figure 65: Inside the Tabernacle at Scotts Pass
(Clarendon, Jamaica, July 23, 2011)



Figure 66: A Painting at Scotts Pass Depicting Marcus Garvey, Mortimo Planno, Nelson Mandela, Mohandas K. Gandhi, and Malcolm X (Scotts Pass, Clarendon, Jamaica, July 23, 2011)



Figure 67: Rastafari Brethren Partaking in Ritual Ganja Smoking
(Scotts Pass, Clarendon, Jamaica, July 24, 2011)



Figure 68: Mutabaruka Farming his Backyard
(Murdoch Spring, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, June 21, 2011)



Figure 69: Mutabaruka Speaking, Left: Michael Barnett
(University of the West Indies, Mona, Kingston, Jamaica, June 30, 2011)



Figure 70: Dermott Fagan Giving Sermon
(Papine, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, April 23, 2011)

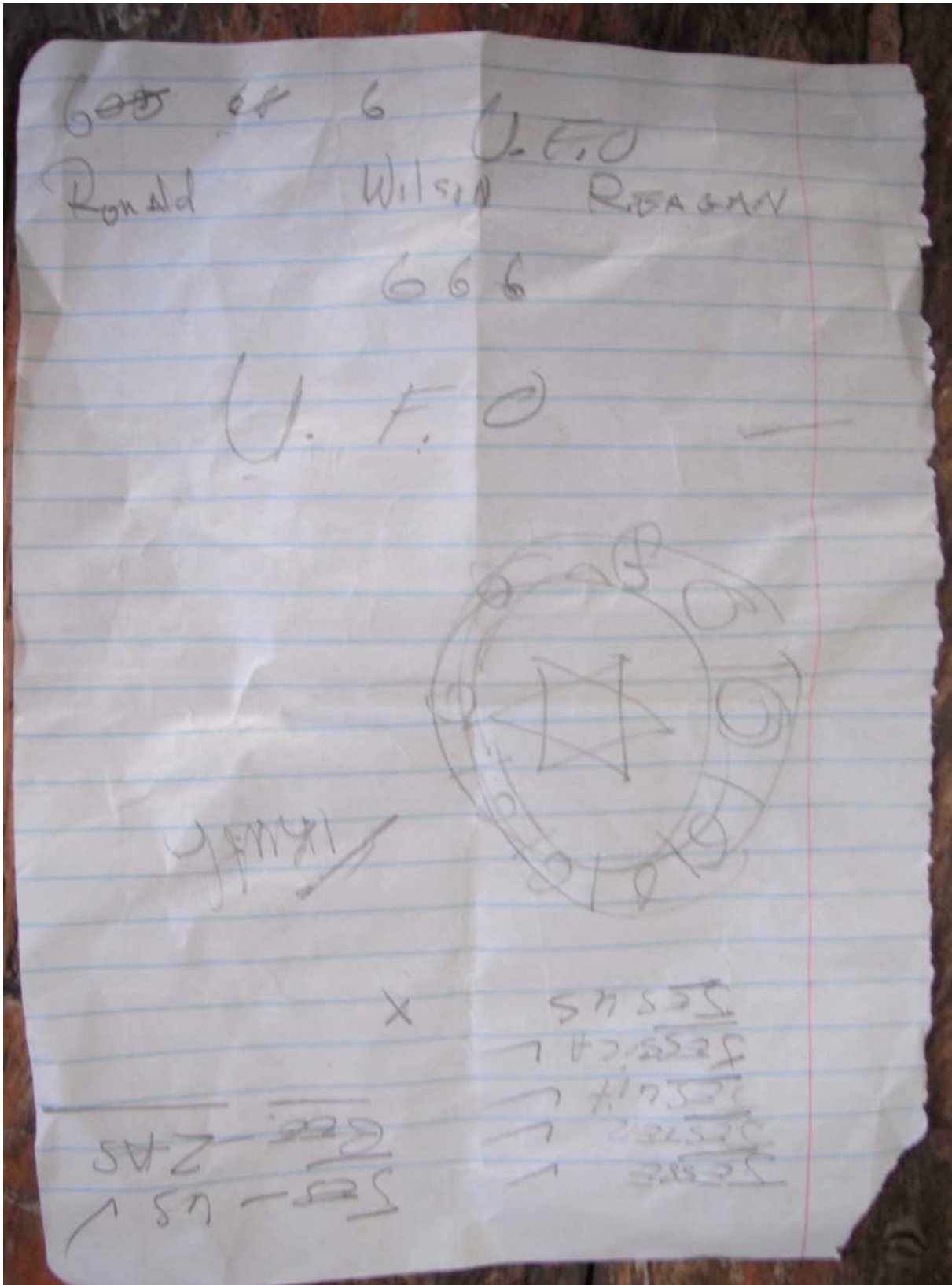


Figure 71: Notes by Dermott Fagan
(Zion Hill Temple Mountain, The Blue Mountains, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, April 22, 2011)



Figure 72: Dermott Fagan and School of Vision Rasta, Sabbath Service (Papine, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, May 7, 2011)



Figure 73: Vukile Shembe and *umNazaretha*
(Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 12, 2011)

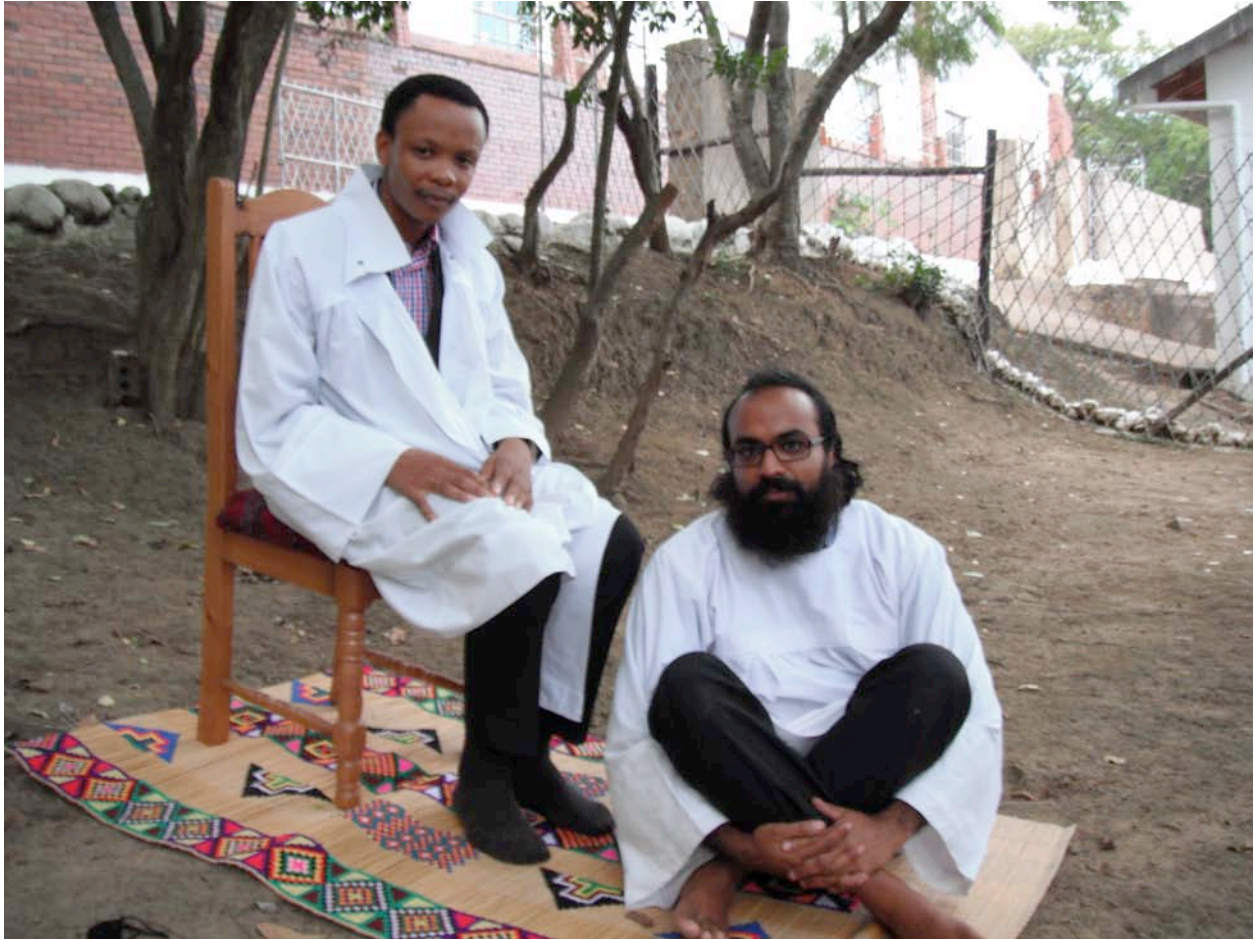


Figure 74: Vukile Shembe and K. Gandhar Chakravarty
(Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 20, 2011)



Figure 75: *amaNazaretha* Vendors
(eMakhosini Temple, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, November 14, 2010)



Figure 76: Corn Growing at Ekuphakameni
(Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 9, 2011)



Figure 77: A Goat Grazing at Ekuphakameni
(Ekuphakameni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, March 9, 2011)



Figure 78: *umNazaretha* Vaseline Vendor
(iKhayaletu Temple, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 5, 2010)



Figure 79: *umNazaretha* Leader Blessing Vaseline on Sabbath Day
(Ebhuhleni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, January 29, 2011)



Figure 80: An Empty Coca-Cola Bottle and *izimbomu* Perched on a Traditional Zulu Drum
(Zwelisha, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, December 22, 2010)



Figure 81: Rasta Selling Various Fermented Homemade Beverages (e.g. Roots Wine, Noni Punch) at a Binghi (Scott's Pass, Clarendon, Jamaica, July 25, 2011)



Figure 82: Nell Robinson and Jaunel McKenzie Wearing Mutamba Fashions
(Caribbean Fashion Week, Kingston, Jamaica, June 11, 2011)



Figure 83: More Designs by Mutamba
(Caribbean Fashion Week, Kingston, Jamaica, June 11, 2011)



Figure 84: *Itribution* Box
(Scotts Pass, Clarendon, Jamaica, July 26, 2011)