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**Identity and Environmental Harmony as practised by Table Mountain
Doctors: A Struggle over Land and African Healing Systems.**

by

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Abstract

Mountain Doctors who refer to themselves as Rastas, Khoi and San, Sakmanne and other names wear mostly brown hessian sacks. They walk barefoot and grow their hair long as an indication of their African pride. Resident in the entirety of South Africa, they are most visible in the Western Cape where my study was located. Their brown hessian sack earned them “the Sackcloth people” label, a term that comes from Rastafarianism. They are African healers who harvest different herbs from natural spaces all over the country and beyond and sell them in city centres like Cape Town, George, Stellenbosch and many other areas the study interacted with. The study tracked the Sackcloth people’s philosophy and way of life, including healing methods and their relationship with the environment – through participant observation and in-depth interviews with members of the community. The sample consisted of mostly young men between the age of 18 and 30 and a smaller pool of women and men who were over 40 years old.

This study of Mountain Doctors had to explore the previous work of anthropologists and other social scientists on identity and culture, juxtaposing it with the Mountain Doctors’ projection of *ubuntu*, a social discourse that has also been theorised by social scientists. *Ubuntu* and *I-n-I*, a pluralistic understanding of the self, are discussed comparatively as grounded philosophies that Mountain Doctors pull from to construct their particular African identity. The Mountain Doctors’ notion of self as a version of the African ontology of *ubuntu*, includes resistance to modernism. Thus, from Benedict Anderson’s ‘imagined communities’ (1983), to caution on ‘culture as invented’ as argued by South African anthropologists (for example, Robert Thornton 1988) on the one hand; and on another hand the articulations of *ubuntu* by Mogobe Ramose (2005) and others, to how Mountain Doctors invent their cultural identity through *ubuntu* – my study provides a rich tapestry of etic and emic views on African identity. As my fieldwork shows, there is a tendency to restore ‘the right to have identities’ as a snowballing of creolisation that is in constant flux in search for essentialisation, even if temporary and era-specific. This means that Mountain Doctors pull from different indigenous groups to construct their identity.

This study demonstrates how the ideological aspects of making sense of identity influence the existential and cosmological view of life with specific reference to the Mountain Doctors. In an attempt to make sense of lived experiences the Mountain Doctors and I shared a crisis of ‘appropriate’ theorising. This crisis occurred in part because notions of resilience were intricately enmeshed with existential issues for both the researcher and researched, and I found myself wedged between potential representation of a power imbalance between researcher and participants. This is a situation of a researcher doing a study where the community has a strong opinion about my background in the context of resilience which is part of the identity ideology of the community. This ‘acute mutual judgement’ was further exacerbated by doing fieldwork during the Covid-19 pandemic where there was a blur between ‘participation’ and ‘observation’ in a general environment of fear over health, government regulations relating to travel, as well as general despair for regaining control over socio-economic life.

Assuming a mixed methodology approach, a combination of ethnography, grounded theory, engaged heritage institutions and archives, and ‘thick descriptive’ approaches were used. While

these methods were useful, there are challenges that come with using only western approaches to explore sometimes contradictory African contexts. Decolonial methods, rooted in African thought are important for remedying this challenge. The study makes an original contribution to methodology by exploring *ukuthunywa* methodology, an approach found in African households and which the Mountain Doctors used to teach me their way of life in similar ways to how they teach each other. *Ukuthunywa* also helped ease some research challenges. This approach strips the researcher of their ‘elevated status’ and centers power in the hands of the participants. *Ukuthunywa* draws from *ubuntu* and requires that the researcher be in-service to the participants. *Ukuthunywa* experiences sent me on an unanticipated journey to disrupt and dismantle the representation of groups like the Mountain Doctors, western ontology and epistemology itself.

In addition to wrestling with constructions of the Mountains Doctors’ identity/ies and resilience in the thesis, I further explore their aesthetics, focusing on the significance of long, hair and hessian sack. The symbolism of their aesthetic varies from biblical, colonial and neoliberal resistance and influence and a desire to revitalise and reconnect with lost African practices. The discussion also extended to exploring the revitalisation of Khoi and San languages as dying indigenous African languages. Their symbolism and worldview incorporate their view of land as more than just a resource. For the Mountain Doctors land is a sacred reference point that anchors humanity materially and spiritually. The neoliberal valuation of land as a resource is perceived/interpreted as harmful to ecology and African spirituality. Their focus on African spiritual understandings of land challenges the proposed first African Amazon development in Cape Town. The development rubs up against a colonial wound, as the development is set to be erected around the Two Rivers Urban Park, the first site of colonialism in 1652. Mountain Doctors’ integration of symbolism, spirituality and resilience extends to the manner in which they guard flora and fauna for purposes of healing humans and repairing the environment as a source of healing.

Much of the Mountain Doctors’ knowledge is scrutinised or overlooked by people, institutions and by a colonial history that sees the contributions and experiences of indigenous people as inferior. This study tables afresh the questions of who has a right to theorise, create and share knowledge. It does this by showing important knowledge embedded in African rituals and beliefs, some even offer Mountain Doctors solutions to modern day struggles like poverty, unemployment and general deprivations of resources and opportunities.

In essence, this thesis wrestles with the complexities of identities, like how Mountain Doctors project their identity and meaning around being an 'African', 'Khoi' and 'San'. It also looks at how they construct resistance identities around critiquing of western hegemony, colonialism, capitalism and modernity. Through grounded theorisation the thesis acknowledges the social actor consciousness and critique of the world around them while critically examining the basis of the identities that they project as deserving recognition with conviction.

The target audience for this research is scholars, students and communities interested in indigenous knowledge and decoloniality.

Keywords: Mountain Doctors, Sackcloth, Rastafarian, Khoi and San, ancestors, African healing systems, environment, *ubuntu*, identity, Ethnography, *ukuthunywa* methodology

Iqoqa

Translated by: Samukele MaDuma-Mbatha

Indlela yom-Afrika aqonda ngayo indalo emzungezile (African cosmology) ixhumene ngokujulile nemvelo, ngokomoya kanye nabanye abantu. Izizwe eziningi ukuziqonda uqobo lwazo zilumbanisa nendlela eziqonda ngayo indalo ezizungezile. Le ndlela emikhakhamithathu yokucwaninga ngokuziqonda, nendalo nezindlela zokwelapha kweZinyanga Zasentabeni (Mountain Doctors) iwuhambo oluthinta ulwazi ngezizwe, ukuxoxisana, nokuxhumana nezindawo zokulondoloza ifagugu kanjalo nezinqolobane zokugcina imilando yesizwe eseCape Town. Izinyanga Zasentabeni (Mountain Doctors) kwelase Ningizimu Afrika zalahlekelwa kakhulu ngenxa yokuqonelwa yizizwe eziphuma emazweni asentshonalanga. Izinyanga Zasentabeni (Mountain Doctors) zivuselela futhi zihlawumbisele ngemikhuba yezizwe zamaKhoi nabaThwa njengokuyiyona ndlela yokuzigcina ziphila emhlabeni ononya wongxiwankulu kanjalo nokuxhumana kangcono nawokhokho bazo. Kunobunye obulumbanayo nothando lwemvelo, obukuhlanganisa nezwe lokomoya nokubekezela okuba kubantu bomdabu emhlabeni jikelele. Indlela ababuka ngayo izinkolelo nemikhuba yempilo ihamba iba nezindawo ezifanayo, njengoba ucwaningo lukhombisa ngokuqhathanisa ikhambi elibizwa nge *rapé* lasemfundeni ye- Amazon nalelo kuleli esithi *undlela zimhlophe* (impande yamaphupho) okuyikhambi lase Afrika. Kokubili lokhu kuyelapha ngendlela efanayo futhi kukulethela amaphupho nokuboniswa. Ngezinye izikhathi lokho kubamunye kusho ukuthi kuba nokufana okuba semakhambini nemidanti asetshenziselwa yona. Naphezu kokucoboshiswa kwezindlela zokuphila zezizwe zamaKhoi nabaThwa ezedlule kukho, ukuxhumanisa nezinye izizwe zomdabu zasemazweni akude njengaba Huni Kuin base Amazon, kuyazisiza izizukulwane zama Khoi nabaThwa neZinyanga Zasentabeni (Mountain Doctors) ukuba ziwuthole umkhondo wolwazi lwamanye amasiko nemikhuba eseyalahleka.

Lokhu futhi kuyavela ekuthini zixhumana kanjani Izinyanga Zasentabeni (Mountain Doctors) nezizwe zabeNguni futhi nangezinkolelo zabo ngendalo njengendlela yokuzihlanganisa kabusha nenkolo yezizwe zamaKhoi nabaThwa. Izinyanga Zasentabeni (Mountain Doctors) zikholwa wukuthi imikhuba eminingi yezenkolo namasiko ezizwe zabeNguni zona zakuthola kubo abathwa namaKhoi ngesikhathi zifika ukuzozinza ezingxenyeni eziseNingizimu yezwekazi lase Afrika. Lokhu kwenzeka emuva kwamakhulu ngamakhulu eminyaka yofuduko ikakhulu ukusuka enyakatho kanjalo nase ntshonalanga ye Afrika. Ngokuhlangana kwazo nezizwe zabeNguni, bathola kabusha iziphiwo zolwazi okhokho bazo phambilini ababazinikeze abeNguni. Zihlangana nobuzona uqobo (I-n-I), nokubamunye kulokho kuzazi ngokuhlanganyela nabanye, lokho Izinyanga Zasentabeni ezikwethekela kwabaqhuba ngosikompilo lobuRastafari. Le ndlela yokuzazi uqobo ayehlukile kweyokuzazi komuntu wase Afrika qobo lwakhe nendlela yokuphila endaweni emzungezile (African Ontology), njengoba lokho kuvezwa *ubuntu*. Ukuxhumana nobuwena uqobo (I-n-I) kuyazisiza Izinyanga Zasentabeni ukuba zelapheke ekubeni ngabantu abacindezelweyo ngoba ukuxhumana noqobo lwazo kudinga ukuzithola ingqikithi yazo uqobo eyiqiniso, ngesikhathi zihlangana noMvelinqangi, nemvelo, nomphakathi, namadlozi, njalonzalo. Empeleni uMogobe Ramose uthi lezi zinto ezeyamile enye kwenye ziyimithelela yangaphandle esemqoka kumuntu uqobo ngokwenzululwazi yobuntu.

Uhambo oluya ekuzitholeni uqobo nasekuxhumaneni nenkolelo yama Africa ngendalo (African cosmology) luhlangabezana nezinsalela eziningi njengoba Izinyanga Zasentabeni

zishikiliwa wukushabalala kwe *Khoekhoegwabs* (okusho izilimi zamaKhoi nabaThwa), umhlaba, imvunulo yomdabu nokuningi abakwephucwa zifikanamthwalo zobukoloni. Zembatha amasaka njengendlela yokuzihlenga kulokho kulahlekelwa, lokho kuzixhumanisa ngezindlela ezahlukenene nomhlaba abaphila kuwo, nobuhle bosiko lwempilo yazo kanye negugu loqobo lwazo. Lolu hambo olubucayi lwenza zizithole zingqubuzana nezinhlobo zombuso njengabomkhakha wezemvelo, amaphoyisa, uhulumeni nabanikazi bomhlaba abazimele ababona ukuhlwaya kwazo ezikudingayo kungukwaphula umthetho. Umlando wobukoloni uyaziphinda, futhi zizibona zixoshwa emhlabeni wazo, ngokufanayo ncamashi nokwenzeka kokhokho bazo bexoshwa, bebulawa futhi benziwa izigqila ngenxa nje yomhlaba wabo.

Kulo msebenzi wocwaningo ngeZinyanga Zasentabeni eWestern Cape kukhethwe iqhinga lokucwaninga elixubile lapho ngisebenzise indidiyela i-Ethnography (okusho umkhakha wezamasiko nemikhuba yezizwe zomdabu ucwaningo oluyindlela yokuhlalisana nabo), yi-Grounded Theory (okusho ingqikithi yento eyesekeleke eminingwaneni eqokelelwe ngokuhlelekile yahlaziywa) kanjalo nangokuxoxelwa (Narrative approach). Nakuba lezi zindlela bezinosizo, lolu cwaningo nokho luyaziveza ezinye zezingqinamba ezihambisana nokusebenzisa kuphela amasu asentshonalanga ukubhekisisa izindikimba ngezimo zama Afrika ezibuye ziphikisane ngezinye izikhathi. Lo msebenzi wocwaningo ubhekane nale nselele ngokulandela indlela okuthiwa *ukuthunywa* etholakala emizini yama Afrika futhi Izinyanga Zasentabeni eziyisebenzisile ukungifundisa indlela yazo yokuphila. Le ndlela iyasusa kumcwaningi ukuthi wazi kangakanani futhi njengakwezomkhakha wolwazi ngesiko nenkolo yezizwe (Ethnography), umcwaningi ufunda ngalabo ababambe iqhaza ngokuvele abe nguye, kuphele ngeswayi. Ngaphezu kwalokho, kucacile ukuthi ucwaningo ngama Afrika luyaqhubeka nakho ukuxhaphaza abantu, lapho abantu kuvamise ukuba babonwe njengezinto zokwenza ucwaningo noma njengokuthi abasibo abantu ngokuphelele. Lokhu sekuholele ekubeni izifundiswa ezingasalawulwa wobukoloni, kumbandakanya nami, zithimule ngobudlova bendlela yokucwaninga yasentshonalanga, nokuhlubula ukuba ngum-Afrika kumuntu, eyembathiswe elokuthi yi- *ethics* (ngokwabo okusho indlela efanele yokwenza ucwaningo). Ukuqhuba umsebenzi wocwaningo ngolwazi lwendabuko lwama Afrika ngesikhathi kudlange ubhubhane lwe Covid 19, kuyembule izinqe ingcindezelo yezindlela eziyizisekelo zokwenza ucwaningo. Lokhu sekungithuma ukuba ngiqale uhambo obelungalindelekile lokuphazamisa nokubhidliza indlela okuchazwa ngayo amaqembu abantu njengeZinyanga Zasentabeni (Mountain Doctors), western ontology (okusho indlela yasentshonalanga yokuqonda ngempilo nendawo ekuzungezile), kanye nayo qobo i-epistemology (okusho ulwazi olutholakala ngophenyo ukuze kube nesiqiniseko ngokuphelela nokuba semthethweni kwalo).

Amagama amqoka: Izinyanga Zasentabeni, isaka (Sackcloth), Rastafarian, amaKhoi nabaThwa, amadlozi, indlela zokwelapha zomdabu, emvelo, ubuntu, ubuwena, *Ethnography*, *ukuthunywa* methodology

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List of Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ATR	African Traditional Religion
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
EA	environmental authorisation
GKKITC	Goringhaicona Khoi Khoi Indigenous Traditional Council
GRA	<i>Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners</i>
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LGBTQI+	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex people collectively
LLPT	Liesbeek Leisure Properties Trust
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act
NLSA	National Library of South Africa
NP	National Party
OCA	Observatory Civic Association
PHA	Philippi Horticultural Area
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SANParks	South African National Parks
TRUP	Two Rivers Urban Park
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDF	United Democratic Front
UFS	University of the Free State

Glossary

abaMbo/ Mbo: refers to a West African ethnic culture which Southern African cultural groups like the amaZulu, amaXhosa, vhaVenda and Mozambique's Tsonga people and many others are descendants of.

aboxan: Khoekhoe name for ancestors.

amadlozi: Spirits of ancestors (plural). Prefix *i* represents singular/ one or a specific ancestor's spirit, *idlozi*.

amathwasa: African traditional healer or shaman apprentices (plural) or *ithwasa* (singular). *Thwasa* or *ukuthwasa* (verb): the act of going through spiritual training for healers.

assegai: small, light spear

déjà vu: A French word meaning the feeling that one has already lived through a present moment, feeling, event or experience.

eBuhleni: Inanda Shembe Village where the July and September gatherings take place each year.

ekuPhakaminkehlieni: Inanda Shembe Village where the July and September gatherings take place each year.

fanakalo: A combination of African and European languages developed when Africans and Europeans first came into contact with each other; mainly popularised in Southern African mines.

Huri ǀoaxa: Khoekhoe name for Table Mountain.

hybridisation: Two or more cultural groups coming together to create a new shared cultural identity.

impepho: African herb/plant burnt when awakening/communicating with the ancestors. The scientific name is *Helichrysum*.

I-n-I: Interconnected Rastafarian understandings of the self, which can also include how the self exists in relation to ecology, God, people around them or their identity.

inkehli: A traditional Zulu hat usually worn by married women.

izithakazelo: Surnames or praise callings. An African oral tradition that documents family origins, history, and relatives. Often found in Nguni cultural groups.

Jah: Rastafarian notion of God.

Kai Bia: Khoekhoe language word meaning; Head Chief/ King.

Kanna: Natural anti-depressant or "bushman ecstasy". The scientific name is *Sceletium tortuosum*. It is also referred to as Channa or its Afrikaans name, *Kougoed*.

kasi-taal: Similar to *Fanakalo*. It is an Afrikaans word which translates to "township language". It is also a kind of creolisation of languages popularised in South African townships.

Khoekhoe: Dialects of Nama, Dama and Hailom spoken in Namibia, as well as South African Nama, plus the varieties once spoken by the early Cape herders (the Khoi, Khoikhoi or Khoehoen), including divisions of the Cape Khoi, the Griqua, Korana and Gonaqua.

Khoekhoegowab: Khoi/Khoe languages, *gowab* means speech or language. The term is commonly found in Namibian dialects.

manyano: The Methodist Women's Prayer and Service Union; a predominantly Black structure which uses religion and motherly solidarity to address social issues. They are most identifiable by their red coats and white hats.

Mlomomnandi: Sweet Root herb. Direct translation is "sweet or nice mouth", it is a sweet herb with a bitter aftertaste and it has many functions, including the belief that it can turn the user into a persuasive sweet-talker.

Mount Nhlangakazi: Sacred Shembe site where the annual January pilgrimage takes place.

Mvelinqangi: God in Zulu, also means Creator or the first to appear.

Nama: Khoi language with Namibian origins.

Nomkhubulwane: Purity and fertility goddess and believed to be daughter of God/*Mvelinqangi*.

Ntu: refers to a West African ethnic culture which Southern African cultural groups like amaZulu, amaXhosa, vhaVenda and Mozambique's Tshonga peoples and many others are descendants of. It is also a suffix in words like *muntu* (person), *abantu* (people) or *ubuntu* (humanism) and it generally means humanity, with slight variation to the meaning depending on the prefix.

okra: Akani word meaning life or being, soul or essence in a person.

Planting: Rastafarians and Mountain Doctors refer to funerals as plantings because they believe when we pass away, our bodies are "planted" (not buried) back into the ground to complete the cycle of life.

rapé: Or *hapé*, a brown powder/ snuff made from ground herbs and tobacco, commonly used by South American Amazonian cultural groups like the Huni Kuin, who also have close links with the Mountain Doctors and Khoi and San in the Western Cape of South Africa.

Sangoma: traditional healer or diviner or shaman (singular). *Izangoma* (plural).

tsotsi: A South African slang word mainly used in Black communities like townships, it means gangster or criminal.

Tixo or Thixo: God in Xhosa; the word gets its origins from Khoi and San languages.

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

umsamo: signifies unity between the material world and the world of the spirit. *Umsamo* also means centre/core; it is the place where many Africans believe God and the ancestors reside. It is the space that people use to communicate with cosmic forces.

undlela zimhlophe: dream root, scientific name; *Silene capensis*. Mostly used in Xhosa and Zulu cultural practices.

!Xhoba: Khoekhoe name for hoodia.

Verstehen: A German term which means empathy. It forms part of Max Weber's Classical Sociology theorising.

vuvuzela: a long plastic replica of the kudu-horn. It makes a loud elephant trumpet-like sound and is often used by fans at soccer games, but was/is originally used in African cultural religious ceremonies or churches.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction



Figure 1.1: Map of Western Cape Province, South Africa, where the fieldwork was done (Smile904, 2022). The study was conducted in different towns, some of which include Cape Town, Paarl, Wellington, Stellenbosch, Langebaan, Saldanha Bay, George and surrounding smaller towns.

Longing towards the past and looking back to old cultural practices for solutions to modern-day challenges is something many Black South Africans often do, despite the history of African cultures often being viewed as inferior. No group understands this better than an emerging group who refer to themselves by various names, ranging from Rastas, Khoi and San, Sackcloth people, Sakmanne and Shakoor to Mountain Doctors. Many Coloured and Black youth in the Western Cape leave their families and modern lives and opt to periodically or permanently live out in nature, integrating with society mostly to sell medicinal herbs in and around the city centres, suburbs and townships.

This research uses racial categories that many identify with, but it is aware of the problematic nature of these socially constructed categories, often used as justification for division and oppression. The research is therefore mindful in using these labels. It uses these racial labels in ways that reflect what participants identify with; it avoids using racist categorisations that have historically been imposed on people or that are derogatory, especially in South Africa. However, some of the older historical records and books used do use some of these harmful labels; and care has been taken to extract the necessary information without reproducing or perpetuating hurtful stereotypes or labels. Further discussions on identity will be explored in detail in the literature review, highlighting the challenges and contradictions in identity, which is often fluid, constantly changing, and sometimes seemingly conflicting in nature.

The study also explores the Sackcloth people's origins and their links to Khoi, San and Rastafarian identities. This study will explore the intersection of identity, socio-economic survival and orientation to healing. As the title suggests, it will look into how a group sustains its identity within a sea of different ways of pursuit of livelihoods and healing schemes. While healing methodologies are the core focus of the study, the manner in which these are rooted in a way of life that is projected as different will be explored – hence the related issues of identity and land will be the focus of this study.

This research adopts a mixed methods approach, using ethnography and grounded theory in its exploration of the Mountain Doctors. These methods are used to explore the Sackcloth people's identity; how it links with land and their indigenous knowledge and spirituality. It also explores healing practices as identity and their conflict with modern Western structures.

1.1.1 Background on Mountain Doctors

Mountain Doctors can easily be spotted in and around the Cape Town city centre and are also scattered in different parts of the Northern and Southern suburbs. They wear brown hessian material as a symbol of their rejection of material wealth. The cloth also symbolises their complete devotion to and unity with nature. They view themselves as godly people, are strictly vegetarian and many reject the use of alcohol. This community is made up mostly of youth who have 'escaped' from modern life due to their struggles in finding employment or educational opportunities. They also run from the poverty and crime they face in the communities they come from, as well as the drug influence. Some of the members of this emerging Mountain Doctors community are young professionals who gave up their lives and growing careers due to the stresses and conflict linked to manoeuvring modern-day spaces, especially as people of colour (Collins, 2016).

Mountain Doctors temporarily or permanently live on mountains or in caves spread out all over the Western Cape. Those who permanently live in nature, live almost entirely off the land, and sell medicines and herbs that grow organically for income. Most of these medicines are sold in city centres and more densely-populated towns (Hunter, 2016). Most of the medicine sold in Cape Town comes from Table Mountain and from as far afield as the Eastern Cape and Northern Cape.

The medicine is sold very cheaply because the main objective is not profit, it is healing. The medicine typically includes wild ginger and garlic, red carrots, buchu, weed (marijuana), African potato and many other medicinal tree roots, bark, leaves and even rocks and fungi.

The Sackcloth people have a lot in common with the Huni Kuin people from the Brazilian Amazon and have close ties with them, as the thesis will later show in detail. Both groups rely heavily on nature for medicine and attach cosmic forces to nature or to the medicine itself. For the Huni Kuin, for one to be truly healed, one must take a holistic approach and consult a healer before taking the medicine; the healer guides the ill through the process so that the spirit can work through the medicine. Often the spirit has a message it wants to communicate to the sick individual, and this can be done through the medicine (Milano, 2022: 6). The Mountain Doctors share similar beliefs and often encourage the clients buying medicine from them not to focus just on the physical illness or pain they feel. They encourage their clients to address the source of their pain by mitigating their stress levels, mending social relations, finding spiritual peace through connecting with ancestors.

Another thing these two groups have in common is their struggles for land. The Huni Kuin people have lived in the Amazon for thousands of years, but now their homes are under threat, and they clash constantly with timber industries that cut down valuable trees and destroy the forest ecosystem. Their water is also polluted with rubbish and heavy metals, and this has resulted in illnesses and deaths (La Casa de la Madre, 2016). For the Mountain Doctors, their land struggles are more about restrictions and limitations from certain spaces like Table Mountain and other natural spaces which are “reserved” for tourism or conservation¹. They are seen as threatening both, while the Mountain Doctors argue that tourists pollute these areas and the conservation knowledge they possess is worth exploring and integrating with other strategies. The Sackcloth people claim that their aim is to preserve, protect and learn from the environment. Environmental laws bar them from doing so. In both the Mountain Doctors and Huni Kuin cases, the neoliberal agenda trumps the needs of the local groups. Their other struggle with land is historical and colonial in nature; like many other South Africans, the Khoi and San, which the Mountain Doctors are descendants of, were displaced off their land by Dutch and British colonialists.

¹ National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) 107 of 1998, later amended to Act 46 of 2003, is a government framework put in place to protect the environment from pollution and general degradation. All developments, economic and social activities must comply with NEMA. It is also usually invoked when new mines or mass development projects are being proposed by different stakeholders including corporates, government and communities. One of the reasons stated for the Act is the protection of nature and ecology to preserve its spiritual and cultural significance (NEMA, 2004: 8). But these actors (African healers, diverse cultural practitioners and African communities who rely on nature for physical, social, and spiritual uses) are not usually considered in determining best practice for both using and protecting culturally significant land.

1.1.2 Rationale Behind Research

My first real encounter with this group was in 2015, after moving to Cape Town for nine months, after being unemployed for almost a year. It was the first time in my life that I did not have medical aid and was facing many other new socio-economic challenges my working class mother had managed to shield me from during my upbringing. I worked at a research company that only paid 2500 ZAR (139 USD) a month, while the hours were long and I often left the office late at night. The stress of work and money problems eventually took its toll on me; I began to fall sick frequently. Not being able to afford a doctor and never having enough time to spend hours at the clinic, I often used home remedies that I got from books and Google. When I inevitably got sick with the flu for two weeks, I found a doctor whose consultation fees were relatively low and whose follow-ups were free. She gave me medicine, but I was still sick. When I came back for a follow-up, I was worse than I had been before and she wanted to hospitalise me, but I had no money and the thought of a public hospital scared me because they are often under resourced and poorly run, leading to malpractice.

I told my colleagues what was happening, and one colleague who had injured her foot a few weeks before and was not happy with the effects Western medicine had on her body had eventually approached the Mountain Doctors. When she went back to her medical doctor for check-ups, her doctor was surprised at how quickly she was recovering. She advised me to approach the Mountain Doctors. Scared and confused, I first started by just walking around asking them questions about who they were, if they lived on the streets, and why I should trust their medicine. I did this for two days. Then I eventually told them about my symptoms. They told me I was not sick, that my soul was experiencing conflict, that I had a lot of things on my mind and that all these feelings I was having were manifesting themselves in my body in a negative way. They told me they would give me medicine to help repair my physical body, but they told me I would continue to fall sick every few weeks if I did not deal with what was happening inside. They gave me three different herbs and told me how to prepare them and when I should take them. The herbs made me feel worse, and for about two days I was vomiting and sweating a lot. My colleague advised that this was normal, and that I should continue taking the herbs.

By the fourth day, I was feeling more like myself again and I could feel myself getting stronger the longer I took the medicine. I never did finish the herbs as I was instructed to, because I hated the taste. But the Mountain Doctors' words stuck with me, and I started to look for better jobs more aggressively. I went to many interviews and got a slightly better job paying 5000 ZAR (278 USD) per month, but which was still not enough on which to survive. Eventually I left Cape Town about three months after joining the new company because I realised the Mountain Doctors' words were true and the slight salary increase had not changed much. While I never again got as sick as during my first three months in Cape Town, I did find myself getting minor illnesses more frequently than I usually do. The Mountain Doctors were later also able to help my then three-year-old nephew, who had sores all over his body, almost since birth. I managed to get him herbs during a work trip to Cape Town in May 2017. His parents had exhausted every option and nothing

worked. His parents were worried because doctors were beginning to prescribe stronger and more invasive medicine to deal with the issue. I showed the Mountain Doctors a picture of my nephew and shared some of his medical history. They gave me medicine that he should drink and other herbs he had to bath in, and his mother says the sores were gone in less than two weeks, and they never returned.

My interest in this group was piqued after these experiences. I realised they had a lot to offer in terms of knowledge, spirituality and life experience. I promised myself I would work with them and learn from them one day. My research was sparked by my personal experience and the need to understand the body of knowledge behind the healing I saw. It is personal in a sense because I have become more interested in African Indigenous Knowledge in my adult life. I have a mother with an African spiritual calling, and I grew up in a traditional family. Certain aspects of African cultural systems have always been a part of my life, though I often fought them and looked down on them when I was younger. I wanted to grow personally in understanding spirituality during this research process; but more importantly, I want to add to the missing or undervalued body of knowledge around healing and build onto anthropological discussions around identity. This research also hopes to add to the greater discussion around decolonisation and the importance of drawing from African histories, sciences, arts, traditions, et cetera, as a way of restoring the integrity of African identities and healing from current and past oppression. But also, importantly, the research hopes to help build some of the foundations needed if Africans are to start drawing more from African solutions to address developmental challenges around health, environmental degradation, education, poverty, and a whole host of other issues. For many people of colour, these challenges and oppression stem from South Africa's racist colonial and apartheid history.

1.1.3 Brief South African history

The arrival of Dutch settler, Jan van Riebeeck, in South Africa in 1652, is one of the significant moments that marked the start of conflict between Africans and European settlers. This conflict was mostly around land, but also included racial and cultural tensions, slavery, and many other social ills. The land between the Black and Liesbeek River, depicted in Figure 1.2 and 1.3 below, also known as Two Rivers, marks one of the first areas to have conflict over land. It is considered to have been the first land to officially be colonised. Historically and today, this land had important ecological, social and spiritual meaning for the Khoi and San. The battle between the Dutch and Khoi and San over this land disrupted the social fibre significantly and fragmented the Khoi and San (Schietecatte & Hart, 2015: 2). This battle added even more significance to the land as many of the bones of the ancestors who died during this battle still lay in this land. The area where ancestors are buried often carries a lot of symbolic meaning for many Africans and they become important for communicating and connecting with them. The conflict over the Two Rivers land would be the first of many battles and tensions over land that would characterise South African history and social life from that moment to the present day. The British and Dutch settlers battled over land, often displacing the indigenous groups the land belonged to.



Figure 1.2: Excerpt from 1880 - 1900 map series (Chief Directorate: Surveys and Mapping) which depicts most of the early farms before major subdivision, but also the Liesbeek and Black Rivers before canalisation. (Schietecatte & Hart, 2015: 11).

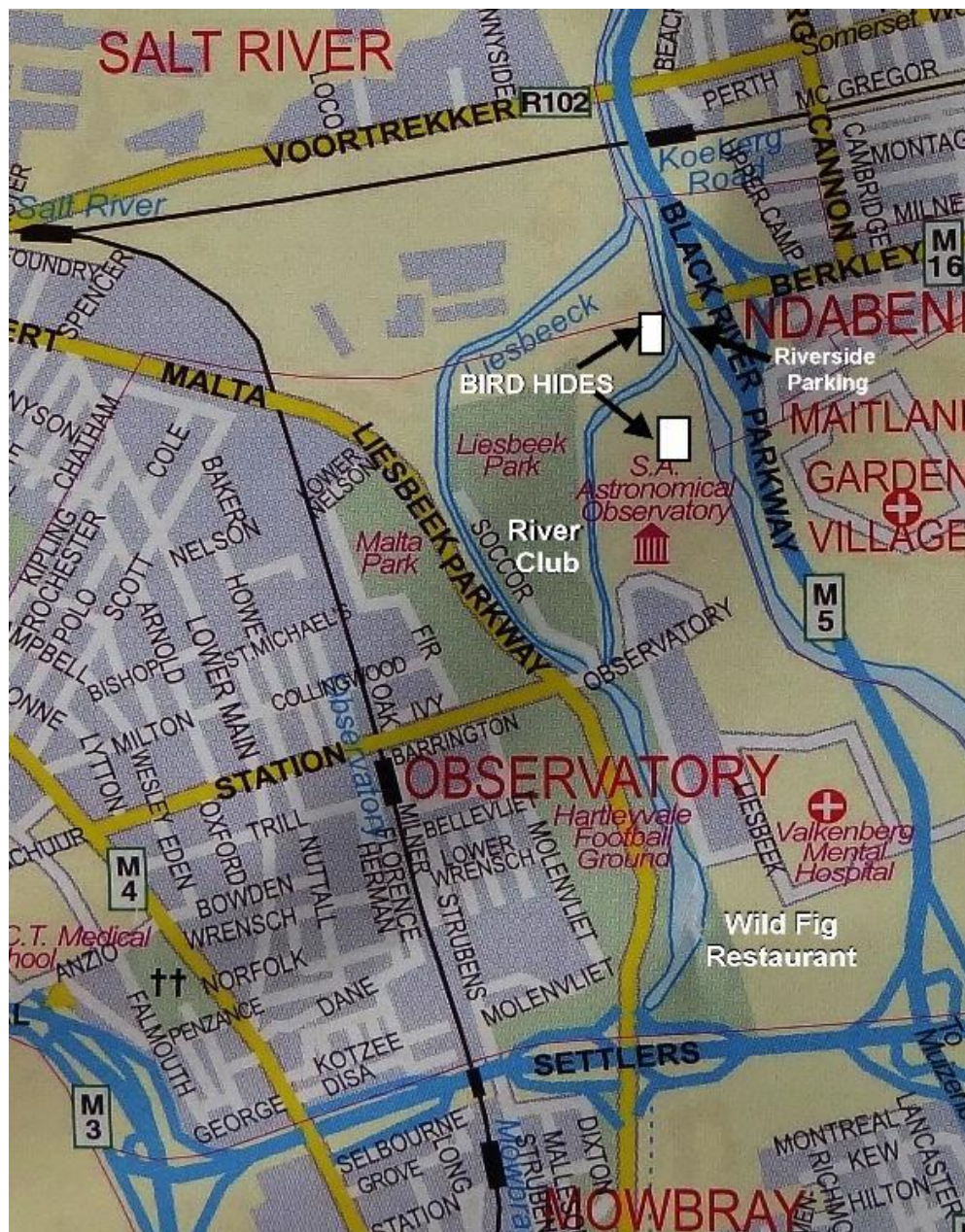


Figure 1.3: Modern- day Two Rivers Urban Park map (Cape Bird Club, 2022).

Another very significant conflict over land in South Africa was in 1913. It took place towards the end of the Scramble for Africa, which happened between 1860 and 1914. During the scramble, European control of the African continent went up from 10% to 90% (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2021: 5 & 9). The 1913 South African Natives Land Act was introduced by British colonialists. The Act led to the dispossession of land for indigenous groups. It created poverty and socioeconomic challenges still faced today by Black South Africans and many people of colour. The Act allowed indigenous groups to own only 7% of the land in South Africa, and later it was adjusted to 13% (South African Government, 2013; Modise & Mtshiselwa, 2013: 1). The loss of land also meant people lost parts of their spiritual connection to their ancestors and their cultural

religious practices. Africans believe their land belongs to their ancestors and create close connections between the two. Land is also important for rituals, healing practices, social unity and connecting with the ancestors (Coplan, 2003: 978).

A series of key colonial and apartheid historic events lead to people of colour being disconnected with their land. The Free State province had been a Boer republic before 1910 when it became an independent self-governing union which still had ties to the British Crown (Sithole, 2000: 63). When South Africa became a union, it included the unification of Boer-dominated independent provinces like the Cape, Orange Free State, Transvaal, and present-day Namibia was also part of the union. The unification between the British and the Boers led to more land loss for many people of colour who had already been disenfranchised by battles over land with both the Dutch and British settlers. Later the significant blow of the 1913 Land Act and other smaller policies that followed, once again threatened their access to land.

The emergence of apartheid in 1948 led to even more land grabs, and many racist British colonial practices were formalised and legalised by the now Afrikaner National Party (NP) government through its introduction of apartheid. The main premise of apartheid was the idea that White people were superior, and people of colour were inferior. People of colour were classified in order of importance, with Black people being considered the most inferior. Many Acts and policies were developed to enforce this ideology. People of colour had inferior schools and education. African languages were marginalised. Certain areas, beaches and institutions were declared “Whites only” and were inaccessible to Black people. Segregationist Orange Free State rules were spread all over the country when apartheid started. Apartheid was a revival of the old Free State rules on a mass scale, Black people were not allowed to live on farms or own land in “White areas”. There was a move towards total segregation, where the goal was to give Bantu Homelands full independence. The idea was for Black people to be attached to specific homelands, even if they had never lived in any homeland before. Homelands like the Transkei, Venda, Ciskei and Bophuthatswana were eventually given full independence under the 1970 Bantu Homeland Citizen Act (Sithole, 2000: 64).

The later tenants of apartheid focused on policy and law development as a response to people’s reaction when they had lost their land and been oppressed in different ways. Many took to mass action and protest. These efforts were blocked by the banning of gatherings. Certain groups were banned out of fear of a revolution; groups like the African National Congress (ANC), Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), Black Consciousness Movement and many others were outlawed. The Group Areas Act of 1950 formalised large-scale forced removals which took place until the 1980s. Diverse communities like District Six in Cape Town, which had been able to thrive despite the centuries of oppression, were once again in a precarious place. The District Six area, largely made up of people of colour, was declared a White area in 1966 (SAHA, 2010). People lost their homes and other important social support systems they had built up. Many got pushed into poverty.

There were many other apartheid repressions, but one worth noting for the significance of this research was the repression that added to the loss of cultural identity and severed Africans from their spirituality and religious practice. This was the Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1957. With people disconnected from their land, it was difficult for people to practise their rituals in nature. Things like bodies of water, mountains and certain herbs are important for healing and for religious practices that Africans believe connect them to their ancestors, God and the cosmological realm. Land grabs and the Witchcraft Suppression Act added multiple layers of difficulty, limiting people from accessing even their cultural religious practices and ideologies. The Act restricted the following;

- (a) imputes to any other person the causing, by supernatural means, of any disease in or injury or damage to any person or thing, or who names or indicates any other person as a wizard;
- (b) in circumstances indicating that he professes or pretends to use any supernatural power, witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment or conjuration, imputes the cause of death of, injury or grief to, disease in, damage to or disappearance of any person or thing to any other person;
- (c) employs or solicits any witchdoctor, witch-finder or any other person to name or indicate any person as a wizard;
- (d) professes a knowledge of witchcraft, or the use of charms, and advises any person how to bewitch, injure or damage any person or thing, or supplies any person with any pretended means of witchcraft;
- (e) on the advice of any witchdoctor, witch-finder or other person or on the ground of any pretended knowledge of witchcraft, uses or causes to be put into operation any means or process which, in accordance with such advice or his own belief, is calculated to injure or damage any person or thing;
- (f) for gain pretends to exercise or use any supernatural power, witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment or conjuration, or undertakes to tell fortunes, or pretends from his skill in or knowledge of any occult science to discover where and in what manner anything supposed to have been stolen or lost may be found,

Even though African cultural religious practices are no longer outlawed, this and the colonial missionary influence still impact people's perceptions on African spirituality. Often it is still viewed as witchcraft or with a lot of scrutiny. Many of the cultural religious practices and ideas many Africans identified with were labelled witchcraft under this Act. Rituals, use of herbs, and attempts to communicate with ancestors were seen as contravening this Witchcraft Suppression Act. Healers like *izangoma* (shamans) and *izinyanga* (herbalists) were dubbed witches and if they or anyone engaged in what the apartheid government perceived to be witchcraft, and they could face imprisonment or heavy fines. The Witchcraft Suppression Act 3 of 1957 stated that anyone guilty of these actions could be imprisoned for 2 to 20 years depending on the offence. They could also be fined 200 ZAR (12 USD) to 500 ZAR (29 USD), the equivalent of roughly 11 000 ZAR (643 USD) to 29 500 ZAR (1600 USD) by today's standards. While this Act formalised the

exclusion of African cultural religion, the fear and suppression of these ideas was not new. From the arrival of Christian missionaries before the official colonisation of Africa during the Scramble for Africa, the goal was to erode African spirituality and replace it with Christianity. There was a long history of missionisation which even included manipulation and violence when scripture and preaching had failed (Shange, 2013: 44).

The history of violence, cultural erasure and land loss has seen a lot of African cultural practices lost or replaced with Western ones. Africans have a long history of revitalising and recreating lost cultural practices, not just as a reaction to Western imperialism, but also as a way of celebrating their cultural identity and creating new ways of life. Just like any other culture/s, African culture and the way it evolves also exists as a continuation that is not purely a response to colonialism. The Shembe church is one historical example of how cultural religious groups revitalise and continue African ideology. Church leader and founder Isiah Shembe Africanised Christian practices African people related to, while also encouraging them to honour their ancestors and African spiritual practices centred around healing, social and family unity, ecological protection and many other practices. The formation of the Shembe church created a hybrid culture which allowed those who embrace it to better navigate the westernising society without feeling like they were losing their own culture (Shange, 2013: 16). The Mountain Doctors' revitalisation of African practices has a lot of similarities with the way the Shembe Church emerged in the 1900s. Some of the main tenets both groups value are self-acceptance, ecological protection, and the importance of ancestors.

This discussion will also be had in relation to Rastafarianism as an important revitalisation movement in the emancipation of Black struggles and as an important tool Mountain Doctors use to come closer to their lost Khoi and San identity. Rastafarianism started in Ethiopia in 1930; although today it is more prominent in the Caribbean, mainly Jamaica. It emerged with the coronation of King Hailé Selassié I, emperor of Ethiopia between 1930 and 1974. He is considered an important symbol of liberation especially given that Ethiopia was never colonised. He is also celebrated by Africans and those in the diaspora for his modernisation efforts and role in the creating of Pan-Africanist liberation and unifying structures, and the then Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union) in 1963. He is also a god-like figure to Rastafarians who believe he was a descendant of biblical figures, King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. As a result, Rastas believe he was not just a king or liberation leader, he is also an important divine figure (Mavro, 2018).

1.2 Chapters breakdown

The literature review tackles two main topics: identity and the self. The discussion on identity takes a historical look at precolonial historical migration of the Nguni and how it changed and shaped the collective identity of the group and subcultures that emerged over time. This historical analysis is significant because it shows a brief snapshot into the social life between the then Nguni settlers and Khoi and San people in Southern Africa. This early interaction is significant because

the Khoi and San form an important part of the Mountain Doctor's understanding of their cultural identity as descendants of the group. This history is also important because it shows important illustrations of cultural hybridisation. Similar discussions were had in relation to the evolution of Khoi and San identity and creolised Coloured identity, thus illustrating the fluidity of identity and how it is affected by history, time, and interactions with other cultural identities.

The foundational and comparative discussion on the Nguni and the Khoi and San is also important because of the belief that many Khoi and San practices, land, and spirituality were shared with the Nguni as they gradually migrated to South Africa, coming mainly from the North and the West. Now that a lot of Khoi and San practices and people have faced genocide from Western colonialists, groups like the Mountain Doctors turn back to the Nguni who once received knowledge, resources and guidance from their Khoi and San ancestors. While Nguni cultural groups have also experienced Western erasure in many ways, they were able to maintain and protect a lot of their language, culture, knowledge, spirituality, and even some of their land. These are all things that most Khoi and San people lost entirely in South Africa or have very small traces of them still in existence. The connections that the Nguni were able to protect, place them in a better place to revive their ancestral and cultural practices and mainstream the knowledge they were able to hide or preserve. The Mountain Doctors, some of whom are also of Nguni origins, return to the Nguni to recreate a similar knowledge and cultural sharing process that their ancestors once established. As a result, even their knowledge on plant medicine is intricately tied to things that are considered part of Nguni practices, from the names they use for certain herbs when their Khoi, San or Afrikaans name is unknown to various cultural religious beliefs.

Much of the discussion on identity also focuses a lot on the self as an element that cannot be separated from the collective identity. Often the collective identity and the self present more like two sides of the same coin. The discussion on the self also explores an African understanding of God, and how ancestors fit into it in relation to the interconnection between individuals, communities, and cosmology. The self is believed to be inextricably tied to God, ecology, culture, ancestors and various elements of the social and spiritual world. This interconnection also forms an important part of African identity and the African philosophy of *ubuntu*. A comparative discussion will also be undertaken between the self and its interconnection with *Jah*, *uMvelinqangi* and *uNomkhubulwane*. Rastafarianism is important to discuss as a cultural identity that makes up part of the pluralistic understanding the Mountain Doctors have of themselves and religious practices. The discussion on constructing the self from an *ubuntu* lens links the two overarching themes together, especially because African *ubuntu* understandings of the self are interconnected with the collective cultural identity that shapes the self and are shaped by the self.

The methodology chapter highlights the exploratory nature of this research, which observes and documents the Sackcloth people's healing practices and cultural identity. The research explores how the Sackcloth people think and live their lives while focusing on their perceptions of healing. The objective is not to decide if these ideas are true or not true. The notion of truth is socially constructed and based on the cultural subjectivity of the people who believe in that truth. The

research presents what the Sackcloth people believe to be their truth when it comes to cultural identity, land struggles and healing practices (Cassidy, 1995: 22). The research does this by using a combination of ethnographic methods and grounded theory. The chapter also explores the complexities of doing this kind of study using Western methods. The historical conflict between African and Western thought can cause tension and misalignment when trying to explore African experiences using Western approaches. The chapter remedies this dilemma by proposing *ukuthunywa* methodology, an African practice based on knowledge being a shared and active co-creation. Beyond the theoretical methodological discussions, the methodology chapter focuses on fieldwork experiences, how the Covid-19 pandemic impacted the study, how challenges were tackled, as well as failures and successes. It provides a brief look at the participants who formed part of the study and the different locations visited all over the Western Cape in South Africa. Additionally, it discusses decolonial research methods used and theorises around these approaches, based mainly on the fieldwork experiences.

A general historical overview of land struggles in South Africa has already been discussed. The opening data analysis section goes a little further by looking specifically at Khoi and San land struggles. The most significant ones for this research are the Cape and Namaqualand which is a region between Namibia and South Africa. The historical discussion will also look at Damaraland, which later became part of Namibia. When mapping out the historical land struggles, Chapter Five shows similarities to the contemporary land issues by drawing on the Amazon development. Amazon, its developer; Liesbeek Leisure Property Trust (LLPT) and the City of Cape Town have been accused of failing to do proper consultations, thereby disregarding ecological and heritage significance. These accusations come from various state and private environmental bodies, different Khoi and San groups and the Observatory Civic Association. This case study is significant because the proposed development is on the first land to be colonised (Two Rivers) in South Africa. This case echoes a lot of the repression of colonial history because of the location of the site and the forced removals and gentrification that were planned for the area.

This chapter also looks at the significance of land in the African context, which is seen as more than just a resource or commodity. Land even has important links to language; for example, the construction of *Nama* and other *Khoekhoegowab* is based so much on land and nature, the sounds you find and the feelings they evoke, these are used in language. Land also finds its way into praise callings, an important African form of poetry, historical recording and communication with the ancestors. Land is also important for healing, not just because the plant medicine comes from it, but also because of the belief that ancestors and spiritual beings reside in or are connected to different parts of ecology, thus showing that land is also an important part of African and Mountain Doctor identity. The juxtaposition of historical and contemporary land discussions in this chapter will lay the foundation for the discussions of the more symbolic, abstract and cultural significance of land. The discussions on land as identity will be addressed in more detail in the chapters that follow on Khoi and San revitalisation and healing practices.

Chapter Six looks at Rastafarianism as a vehicle to reclaiming Khoi and San practices. Many participants will say they found Rastafarianism first and it led them to their journey to reclaim their Khoi and San heritage through their Mountain Doctor journey. Historical and ideological discussions on Rastafarianism are presented, while showing how they both connect with and reject Christianity. All of these complexities work towards the construction of the Mountain Doctors' pluralistic identity and their revolutionary revivalist practices. Their revivalist practices play out in deeper cultural and abstract ways, which are discussed throughout the thesis in various ways. This chapter, however, focuses chiefly on the more aesthetic revivalist practices and their reasons for adopting or reviving these. Many of these have a combination of empowering and painful and oppressive history or origins. This discussion starts with the significance of the sackcloth. There are a lot of different perceptions on why the sackcloth is important. Some cite the story of Jacob in the Bible who wore a sackcloth to grieve the loss of one of his sons. Others track its importance to slavery, where enslaved people, especially Khoi and San, looked at the sackcloth as a symbol of liberation. Others mention the environmental importance, that it causes less harm to the environment because it is usually made out of animal hair or organic fibres from tree bark or plants, making the production of the garments and disposal of them less harmful to the environment. This section will explore the many perceived origins of the sackcloth and different understandings of why it is significant to the Mountain Doctor journey.

The chapter then goes on to explore the reasons why Mountain Doctors walk barefoot. Like the sackcloth, there are many reasons for this, from biblical to ecological and many others. Many cited the importance of connection to the natural environment. They are connected to the earth through their feet. Others highlight that they are stripping themselves of material and economic burdens brought on by capitalism. Others also looked at it as an important cultural practice, mentioning that their Khoi and San ancestors could even climb mountains barefoot. The longer they train their feet to navigate different challenges, it makes them stronger while drawing them closer to the environment. This is discussed comparatively to the Shembe Church members who also do not wear shoes, especially at temple gatherings, during the sabbath, rituals or when they are in Shembe holy sites; including Mount Nhlankakazi, ekuPhakameni and eBuhleni, which are considered "Shembe Meccas" and are located in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). The final aesthetic aspect that contributes to Mountain Doctor identity is hair. The growing of the hair, like the sackcloth, has different importance and people have different understandings of the origins of this practice. For some it is almost like Black consciousness, where they grow their hair to challenge Western perceptions that look at African hair as ugly. Instead, they focus on self-acceptance and one of the ways they demonstrate this self-acceptance is through growing their hair. Others grow their hair because they believe that culturally hair had a lot of importance and could mean many things, ranging from symbolism of a clan to social status, et cetera. Still others also draw from the Bible and speak of Samson's story, highlighting that just like Samson, hair is an important symbol of strength.

The revitalising of Mountain Doctors does not only extend to the aesthetic, it also includes revitalising Khoi and San languages that are at risk of extinction. Chapter Six ends with a

discussion on language as an important form of identity and discusses case studies and Mountain Doctor experiences on the dangers of erasing a group's language. The research then moves on to discuss the ways they are revitalising Khoi and San languages. In keeping with earlier discussions, it will show how Rastafarianism is an important vehicle to reclaim and mainstream *Khoekhoegowab* (Khoi languages). The discussion on language as an identity looked at the depth of African languages which are more than just a means of communicating; they invoke links to land, nature and diverse knowledge systems. This discussion is had in relation to *izithakazelo*, praise callings linked to family and clan names. These are prominent in Nguni cultural groups but are mirrored in different ways in the Mountain Doctor language revivalism efforts. Given that Khoi and San language is rich in history, land and ecological links, the chapter ends with a mention of the risk of further *Khoekhoegowab* extinction, which would not only threaten social ties, but also knowledge and connection to land.

Many Mountain Doctors do not see the journey into this way of life as an active decision they made. Most will say they did not decide to do it; they were called into it by elders in their family or community who identified them as having the gift of healing and encouraged them to explore it. Others refer to dreams and visions they had becoming stronger and stronger. Often similar explanations are given to how they learn about the herbs, especially some herbs which are not commonly known or used or mixed together. They will have seen them in a vision or dream. Chapter Seven deals with different discussions on healing and rituals, including exploring dreams as ways of knowing. This is especially important in the construction of African spiritual knowledge and healing practices. This conversation will also be had comparatively with Khoi and San storytelling which is another useful method used to share various knowledge on land, healing, sustainability and ethics. This section will also discuss rituals. For many, rituals are important, because they perform them together and they bring them closer to God, the environment and ancestors. Many rituals are carried out in nature and certain sacred places are more important than others for specific reasons.

Chapter Seven will also entail a deep case study analysis on four herbs that the mountain doctors use. The intention is to represent the herbs in the manner they see them. They are more than just medicine; they carry important spiritual essence, as well as ecological significance. The Mountain Doctors observe the varying importance in different ways. A discussion on *rapé* or *hapé* will be had, as well as a comparative discussion on *undlela zimhlophe* (dream root) in a section that narrates my own experience with *rapé*. And while discussing the experiences and lives of women Mountain Doctors, the chapter discusses Sceletium or Kanna, which Sister G introduced me to. This herb is often referred to as Herbal or African Ecstasy. The conversation on Kanna will also be compared with the popular Western Cape super-herb, Buchu. The discussions on herbs and rituals will pull from medical anthropological discussions, drawing from Cassidy and Ngubane's discussions. The chapter will discuss different cultures' ritualistic healing practices and belief systems. Globally the thesis draws from the Huni Kuin, and from the Nguni locally, where Ngubane's writing will be particularly important. This section will further discuss how spirituality

is used in the healing practices and the belief that God and ancestors play an important role in ritualistic healing.

Chapter Seven will also address the differences in experiences of women Mountain Doctors. The lives of women Mountain Doctors will be looked at, both as healers and as women, looking at how they differ to those of men. Women and their male partners spoke of women having to leave the journey in order to raise their children, and not always being seen as equals by male Mountain Doctors. When asking some male Mountain Doctors why they think a lot of women do not follow this path, they would often reply; “This is a man’s work, women can’t handle it”. When talking to Sister G she disputes this and says that in the African context, women are the main custodians of ritualistic healing and spiritual connections to the ancestors. The research will discuss these in relation to the way society genders work and even social roles. Many other interesting discussions came up, including dealing with hygiene challenges during the menstrual cycle of female Mountain Doctors.

The challenges that Mountain Doctors face are not only experienced by women. Mountain Doctors navigate challenges from within their community as healers; dangers and difficulties linked to the healing practice. They risk injuries and even death to become healers. Many have to sacrifice studying and other work that might bring in more money. They also face social and interpersonal challenges as the work requires them to travel long distances, sometimes only on foot, to perform rituals or forage herbs. Some of these challenges straddle external issues created by outside groups and institutions and internal community challenges linked to Mountain Doctor ideologies. Some challenges are linked to larger social issues as some suggest they cannot generate additional income because modern-day Western spaces do not allow them to work in sackcloth or their traditional garb. Others dispute this and suggest that the Sackcloth Movement requires total devotion to the ideology, which might be difficult or impossible to do while working in a different industry. This is one of the challenges that is perhaps created both by internal cultural ideologies and external social rules and status quo.

Chapter Seven will end by discussing the external challenges perpetuated largely by Western society and fear and rejection of people of colour and African cultural religious practices. Here the study will discuss some of the Mountain Doctors’ own reflections on their perceptions of how society treats them. There is an extreme bipolarity, where some are very excited to see and engage Mountain Doctors. We have even had moments where restaurant owners or employees gave us free food because they call Mountain Doctors holy and see their presence in their establishment as blessings. The other extreme is the ill-treatment where we were harassed by police or environmental bodies or barred entry from shops. Mountain Doctors also share horrifying stories of being caught and beaten by White farmers, sometimes with the help of the police. Some say they had seen farmers and landowners shoot and kill their friends, yet their deaths never get investigated. Many of these challenges are associated with colonial and apartheid history, which has left people disconnected from the environment, which is either privatised, too far or inaccessible to those who need it for survival and rituals.

The final and concluding chapter, Chapter Eight, sums up sackclothness as harmony with ecology and its interconnection with community, spirituality and the self. It shows the shared resistance and resilience indigenous people have across the globe, connected by similar beliefs and histories of oppression. Linked to this is their desire for individual and collective healing, which nature provides in different ways. This chapter also highlights the pragmatic implications of the research and makes suggestions on what future research should explore. Much of the past research done on Mountain Doctors is often done on those in Cape Town or the Western Cape as a whole, as this study also did. But one of the interesting discoveries made is that Mountain Doctors are also spread out in different parts of the country, including the Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, and Free State being provinces with more prominent Mountain Doctor presence. Some participants even made mention of smaller Mountain Doctor groups in KwaZulu-Natal. Important decolonial research can emerge from studies done on the other groups in different provinces. It is important to explore comparative studies between Mountain Doctor groups in different provinces, while also unpacking if the existence of all these groups stems from a desire to revitalise Khoi and San culture or if it also includes the revitalisation of different cultural groups that are more prominent in the respective provinces, for example, Xhosa cultural traditions in the Eastern Cape. Mountain Doctors also suggested the existence of their presence in Namibia. Similarly to the comparative research that needs to be done across South Africa, exploration and tracking is important in Namibia if this group has a presence in other parts of the continent, and there needs to be an investigation into the differences and similarities between these groups which may exist beyond the Namibian and South African borders.

The concluding chapter also makes recommendations around how groups like Mountain Doctors should be recognised in post-apartheid South Africa. It suggests that greater acceptance and observation of cultural protections is needed for groups like Mountain Doctors, who have been marginalised historically and continue to be marginalised. It suggests that this act is important for affirming Mountain Doctor identity, for the protection of their individual and collective rights and for social cohesion. The recognition of diverse groups like Mountain Doctors moves us away from the harmful separatist history of slavery, colonialism and apartheid, and that there are important lessons to be learned from this group, especially when it comes to navigating contemporary social challenges like poverty, made worse by inaccessible healthcare systems - something which Mountain Doctors actively try to create solutions for, while navigating their own socio-economic challenges and struggles to access land. It is also important to highlight the Mountain Doctors' deep connection to ecology in the various ways they use it for survival while protecting it and its spiritual connection. The connection is also in how they construct important cultural identity like language and names around ecology. This is important also for addressing the local and global ecological degradation. It is also suggested that the importance they place on ecology and sustainability are not only important as climate change mitigation but can also start to address issues around poverty. The Mountain Doctors' encouragement of sustainability can lead to more equitable distribution of resources and a reduction in wasteful consumption.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the meaning of identity and how identities come to be formed. It will also further elaborate on the contradictions that may arise in identities, as a way of trying to make sense of the Mountain Doctors. Discussions on identity are very important Anthropological discussions, especially when looking at a country like South Africa, with its diversity and its long history of migration, exclusion, and oppression. The relationship between self and group identity, as well as the social identity that creates a group must be analysed, especially for a study such as this one, where Mountain Doctors have pluralistic identities which encourage different practices and ideals. One of these important identities is Rastafarianism, which has a deep focus on the self, more specifically how the individual exists in relation to other people, God and ecology. The Rastafarians refer to this understanding of the self as *I-n-I*. The spelling and pronunciations can vary and include *ini*, *I&I*, *I-n-I*, *Ihi yahnih Ihi* or *I and I*. For the purposes of this work, The thesis will make use of *I-n-I*. Mountain Doctors present the opportunity to conceptually ponder upon the ubiquitous yet unique elements of an identity that claims to transcend geography. They pull from a range of identities which have a certain oneness about them.

One must consider the self in discussions on identity and consider the sometimes-complex interconnectedness between the two themes, which make them challenging to separate. In the context of some African thought, and the Rastafarian discussion in particular, the self and their identity almost become two sides of the same coin. While making the distinctions might be difficult, the distinction is still very important. To help make sense of the Rasta understanding of self, this research will pull from *ubuntu* discussions which mimic similar Rastafarian sentiments, where the self and collective identity are intertwined. In the discussions of the self, the study will pull from African Philosophers like Mogobe Ramose, Ghanaian theorist, Kwame Gyekye and Kenyan Philosopher, Dismas A. Masolo, all of whom write on African conceptualisation of the self. Their discussions will be juxtaposed with those of *I-n-I*, the Rastafarian understanding of the self, as well as *ubuntu*. Conceptions of God are also important in deeper explorations of *I-n-I*. The Rastafarian ideal of God living within the self, and God and/or the self within nature, will also be discussed. But before getting into the interconnected nature of God, ecology and self, some time is spent discussing identity as an important construct that both influences and is influenced by the self. To highlight the important interconnectedness between the self and identities, pulling from the works of Symbolic Interactionist theorists, Peter Burke and Sheldon Stryker (2009).

Often, cultural identities by extension are seen as carrying some kind of undisputable essence or absolute truth. With gender for example, society prescribes an identity or identities based on the sex that people are assigned at birth. Individuals embrace these identities, which end up shaping the individual's sense of self and how they navigate the world. The same is often done for race, culture, nationality and other identities; society prescribes identities and norms on different groups

and individuals based on perceptive absolutism. These could be constructs like skin colour, hair texture, features and body structure, geography, language, history and even shared ideologies like nationalism and religion. In the case of South Africa, much of the colonial and apartheid system used these categorisations to justify discrimination and repressive laws. These ideals still find meaning even today and are used on the micro, meso and macro levels. They inform how individuals go about the world, extending to even the running of institutions. Anthropologists and Sociologists have been critical of the contradictions, highlighting the problematic nature of suggesting that socially constructed identities like gender, race, religion, and culture carry some kind of absolute truth. They highlight the fluid and sometimes contradicting nature of identities. Take race for example: constructs around Whiteness have changed a great deal over the years; in early 20th century America, Italians for example were not perceived as White; this slowly changed over time. Locally, the idea of a Zulu nation in the form that it exists today came to be through centuries of migration, conquest, and diplomacy and even today, this cultural identity and its practices are constantly changing. There are even contradicting ideologies and practices, which at times become sources of conflict. One example is perhaps the highly patriarchal cultural ideals in Zulu culture. For the most part, women are limited from being leaders in society because this is seen as a role reserved only for men. The contradiction is that when it comes to guidance of the ancestral realm and the process of appeasing ancestors, this role is often played by women. Traditionally and in modern society in some respects, this is arguably one of the most important roles in Zulu culture and it is mostly played by *izangoma*, most of whom are women (Podolecka, 2016: 147). With patriarchy and the respect of men being such an important part of Zulu culture, one would imagine that one of the most crucial parts of Zulu culture would be led and guided by men.

One of the case studies that will be used to understand how shared or cultural identity emerges, is the rise of the Zulu nation. Zulu culture is a useful case study because of the similarities it has with the Sackcloth people, especially when it comes to beliefs and understandings of traditional healing practices and the importance both groups place on ancestors. Zulu culture also makes for an interesting comparative case study, especially in the analysis section, because even a look at the Sackcloth movement shows many things in common with the rise of Zulu cultural identity. Just like the Sackcloth movement, Zulu cultural identity gained prominence through what seemed to be political and social circumstances. There is no innate or essential practice, characteristic or ideal that unifies Zulus or that makes the group unique. As this discussion will show, this cultural identity was formulated through a series of historical events and significant moments. The discussion will highlight these events and show how they united otherwise divided groups, with different cultural identities under one united Zulu identity. This process also took place over a long period of time, during which perceptions and understandings of what it means to be Zulu kept changing and shifting; this is still the case even today.

Just like the Zulu identity, the Sackcloth movement brings together different groups with different cultural and ethnic identities under a shared unified Sackcloth identity. The Sackcloth movement brings Black and Coloured youth together and anyone seeking to reject the pressures put on them

by modern-day society, from poverty to drug and alcohol abuse, lack of educational and employment opportunities, crime, and so forth. They provide a “way out” for those who seek it. Similarly, the Zulus were unified by colonialism, loss of land, oppression along racial lines and many other challenges that colonial rule brought with it. There were many other factors and identities that brought the Zulu nation together as a united shared cultural identity. These might include geographical location, local politics, cultural religious practice, shared history, similarities in certain beliefs and language affinities. But this section will also spend some time showing how colonialism at times played a role in the emergence of the Zulu identity and the ways in which it shifted and transformed over time. This serves as an important case study showing the fluidity of cultural identity. It is also an important illustration on how hybrid identities are constructed. Discussions on hybridity will be contrasted with creolisation which is also important to understand the many intersecting identities of the Mountain Doctors and the history that might have shaped them. Benedict Anderson’s (1983) theorising on imagined communities propounds a useful start to a discussion on identities, where he suggests that identity is a collective process of constructing and imagining commonalities that bind groups and individuals together in different societal contexts.

2.2 Conceptualising cultural identity: An analytical exploration by Social Scientists

There are many definitions of what culture is; one definition focuses on how culture is a tool that facilitates different interactions, interactions between individuals or groups, interactions with the environment and social structures. People create “activities” to facilitate these interactions with society and societal systems (Eagleton, 2000: 7). There is an interdependence between the individual and the group, where the individual depends on the group that socialises the individual and teaches the individual how to function (Malinowski, 1939: 939 & 941). Over time, these ways of interacting and the activities that guide them might become common practices and become institutionalised into norms and laws. The definitions around culture are abstract and complex, because even when we look at the definition above, culture comprises the interactions; it is also the social structures that people interact with; it is the activities that people use to guide the interaction and it is the process of institutionalising these activities into common practices and laws, and finally, culture also entails the laws themselves and the way people engage with them. Another definition of culture focuses more on expressions and sees culture as an important way for ethnic groups to express themselves within and outside of their ethnic identity. Culture becomes a way of expressing the group’s language, their ideologies, beliefs, and actions. It is also a way for the group to express their goals and aspirations (Stoffberg, 1982: 1).

Culture is often referred to as society, community, nation. These words are sometimes used interchangeably with culture to refer to a shared situation or a recognisable group of people. (Thornton, 1988: 19). Anthropologist Franz Boas (1940) discusses culture by highlighting the relativism of it. According to Boas, this makes it difficult to compare cultures, and no culture is better than the next. Boas further adds that culture is important because it is what we use to

understand and classify differences; sometimes even the differences are based on cultural perspectives, and it is not always the case that these perceived differences have an innate “objective” existence outside of the cultural interpretation of them. Boas has this discussion in relation to how race is understood at times as a fixed concept in certain groups. He adds that the point is less about whether or not these differences exist, as there might be biological evidence to either support or dispel the existence of certain racial differences. What is more important is that cultural groups lean more on their cultural understandings on things like race and this informs how they interact with each other or people with differences like race (Boas, 2015). Boas also discussed culture in relation to language and language construction. Language is viewed as both being influenced by culture, while also influencing culture. Language becomes important because it is often the tool used to share cultural ideals with external cultural groups so that they can better relate to the next cultural group or even adopt some of the values they most relate with.

Language forms the important symbols needed to communicate or create social organisation between the individual and group within a cultural group (Malinowski, 1939: 938-939). Boas suggests ethnology is the best way to understand culture and language, it has elements of ethnography which is important for studying cultural groups. Deeper discussions on ethnography will be had in the methodology chapters. Boas’s ethnology transcends understandings of culture that are sometimes rooted in race, biology or bloodline understandings of cultural groups. He reminds us that culture is essentially knowledge and ideas which can be dispersed and spread in different ways, in different contexts. Therefore, he concludes that culture can exist beyond the bloodline in which it might have started, as the ideas spread, and different cultural groups engage with them (Boas, 2015). In a way this is evident even in the Mountain Doctors, because of the racial fluidity of Coloured people who predominantly make up the group. Issues of race are not important in the formation of the Mountain Doctor cultural identity. The group consists of a kind of racial bipolarity, where there are members who have dark skin and coiled, thick hair - some of these people consider themselves Coloured, others consider themselves Black. On the opposite scale, there are those who have very light skin, straight and silky hair which they struggle to mould into dreadlocks. Some of them identify as Coloured but have a racial ambiguity that often has them confused for White, especially by those who are outside the Mountain Doctor identity. This cultural identity is still active in Mountain Doctors who actively live this life, it is not affected or interrupted by the racial diversity or fluidity.

People create meaningful connections through which they construct their individual and shared identity. They formulate this identity through their imagination. It is through this imagination that people formulate new identities or are socialised into existing ones (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007: 590). Anderson discusses this process of imagination in relation to nations, nation building or nationalism. He calls the communities “imagined communities”; collectively they contribute to the construction of this imagination. They imagine the construction of the nation, which Anderson says is constructed out of smaller identities or connections people build amongst each other. These can vary from religion, where many Middle Eastern states, for example, build their “nationness” around their Islamic faith. Anderson further adds that nationalism is an expression of a radically

changed form of consciousness. Some nations are born from conflict and violence as the old consciousness becomes contested, displaced or forgotten (Anderson, 2006: xiv). South Africa is one such example.

South African nationalism has changed through different moments in history. Under colonial rule, the nation's identity might have been created around the strength and power of the British empire. Then there was the emergence of Afrikaner rule, an identity which might have shifted to represent the perceived purity embedded in Afrikaner nationalism. Today one might argue South African "nationness" is largely constructed around the victory of defeating apartheid. Anderson also suggests that World War II and every successful revolution defines itself in nation terms. This would include South Africa's resistance against apartheid, and for the Afrikaner nationalists, this would have also included their own victory against British colonial rule in 1948 when the National Party first took over complete leadership in South Africa. Globally and locally, South Africa is also often seen as an important example of reconciliation where the belief is that the nation successfully figured out how to unify the victims and perpetrators of the crimes of apartheid through processes like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Mamdani, 2002: 33). Of course, both historically and today, nationalism is not built around a single identity; some may be more prominent than others, but the smaller identities people imagine are also important for creating identities.

Nationalism is imagined around large cultural systems that precede the nation. These cultural systems either come together in the imagining of the new nation, or at times they are used to work against the formation of a nation (Anderson, 2006: 12). The collective imagination/ identity in a nation usually creates solidarity and comradeship even in the face of differences, inequality or exploitation; it is this unity that makes citizens open to enlist in wars and risk their lives when nations are under threat. This discussion serves to illustrate how even notions of nations can grow and change through time (Anderson, 2006: 7). Anderson suggests that with modern-day society, nation identity is one thing we all have in common, whether we accept or reject that nation, and this is almost the first invented identity according to which people are classified, and in many formal and institutional processes this identity is considered most important. It binds wider communities together even when they have little or nothing in common, purely because they come from the same state. Unlike other identities that are formulated around gender or religion or race and ethnicity, the imagining of "nationness" does not really require similarities, even though these similarities might exist (Anderson, 2006: 6). In less diverse countries like Japan, for example, racial and ethnic similarities might play a more important role in how people collectively construct Japanese identity. Anderson further compares nations to cultural artefacts. Just like artefacts, to best understand the complexity of nations and their identity, one must understand their history, what makes them change over time and why, what makes them significant and how attachment around them is created (Anderson, 2006: 4 & 143). It is this kind of exploration the literature review will do with Mountain Doctors and comparable groups like the Afrikaner imagination, as discussed by Herman Giliomee (1987), and the Zulu nation, in trying to understand the ways they imagined their communities.

Not all discussions on identity focus on the collective external world like Anderson's imagined communities does. Some scholars and disciplines focus more on the role of the individual. These approaches seem to be geared slightly more towards individual formulations of identity. Discussions from Burke and Stryker (2009) pull from social influences, especially in their discussion of how the organisational external world influences and shapes the self. Their approaches often appear more in psychology and disciplines that attempt to understand personalities as a form of identity. But as Anderson's imagined communities theorisation adds, people often have multiple identities, and a central theme throughout this research will be to understand shared or cultural identity. This will be done especially in relation to the identities that make up the Sackcloth people and their way of life. While Burke and Stryker's theorising is important and helps to give a diverse perspective on identities, Anthropological discussions are more fitting to help us understand shared or cultural identities. Culture is one of the ways in which individuals and groups find common expression to identify with or link them together to relatable shared meaning and values. To understand how people's shared identities are drawn from culture, we must make sense of what culture is.

At times people argue that culture or nations are unique and must therefore be protected to "preserve" the culture or society. Contemporary South African Anthropologist, Robert Thornton (1988: 19) argues that these ideas do not add to valuable discourse on culture, society or nations which people shape their identity from. Instead, these ideas on cultural identity are often used to repress or justify violence of governments that oppress "outsiders" under the pretence of protecting the "unique" group or their cultural identity. In the case of South Africa, the oppressed are not "outsiders", they are usually the indigenous groups that make up the majority of the population. Anyone who does not accept the uniqueness of said culture is seen as an "enemy", even if they belong to that cultural group. An example could be South Africa's own apartheid history. In South Africa's case, it was the Dutch Reformed Church that emphasised White Afrikaners' purported uniqueness and encouraged racial segregation (Corrado, 2013: 3). In 1857, the church gave in to White lobbying and approved a call to have worship separated along racial lines (Corrado, 2013: 7). These and many other ideologies and practices coming from the church would later influence the drafting and implementation of apartheid in South Africa by apartheid architect, Hendrik Verwoerd.

Verwoerd was a Psychology and Sociology scholar and politician; much of what informed his apartheid policy was religious discourse that saw White people as superior and Black people as inferior. The church presented Afrikaner culture as unique and important enough to defend, and these ideas were adopted by the state and most White South Africans. They were then institutionalised through the introduction of apartheid. We see similar religious and state collusion in today's apartheid Israel state, where the state has formalised the oppression of Palestinians from religious sentiments that sees Israelis view themselves as "God's chosen people" and the land as their "promised land" (Kaiser, 1981: 305). The biggest threat or enemy is anyone who disputes this narrative; Palestinians who were there before them are also a threat because they stand in the way of accessing their "promised land". Even people who are part of the "unique" cultural group

are seen as enemies if they threaten or question the culture. Therefore, White anti-apartheid activists like Denis Goldberg and Bram Fischer were still imprisoned for their alliances with the liberation struggle and communist involvements, which were seen as a threat to the White cultural identity (South African History Online, 2021a).

A lot of culture and shared cultural identity in South Africa is constructed around race because of the country's colonial and apartheid history. Hlumelo Biko (2019) sees this as a threat to the Pan African notions of a united and liberated Africa. He further cautions that South Africa's identity forms seems to shift with the tides of the dominate economic or political group. During apartheid and in a lot of ways today, the collective identity of South Africa revolved around Western dominance. More recently, in the political arena, the dominance of former President Jacob Zuma led to the emergence of a strong and sometimes dangerous Zulu nationalism. This Zulu nationalism has played a part in the frequent xenophobic attacks and Afrophobia in South Africa. Biko further sees this tendency to have strong identity affirmations as a threat even to the exploration of different indigenous knowledge systems and African sciences in education and in addressing South Africa's historic and contemporary challenges. This is because the dominant identities formulated around race, ethnicity, religion and many others, start to create a pull towards homogeny and sameness, and this pull undermines other identities that do not "adequately fit" into the dominant identity or their agenda (Biko, 2019: 155 & 157).

Cultural identity is complex because it means different things to different groups and individuals. Culture also includes, but is not limited to knowledge, beliefs, language, morals, customs, and laws (Thornton, 1988: 22). For some, cultural identity is based on geography and land or things like religion, while others might not place as much importance on these things; they might not put a lot of importance on the customs, moral ideals and religious practices performed by their ancestors or community. This does not make that person any less part of a certain culture. If a Zulu person who identifies as Zulu does not practise or believe in religious or cultural ideals around ancestral honouring, it does not mean that this person suddenly stops being Zulu - they might just place more importance on other Zulu cultural determinants like language or origin. Through a process of interacting with the external world, we identify which identities are more important to us through our own internal reasoning, but also through socialisation and external influence (Thornton, 1988: 22). Maybe the reason the Zulu people who identify mostly with their origins and language do so is because their family or community place more importance on these two things, but because their cultural identity is always shifting and changing, as time goes on, they might start to place more importance on religious ancestral rituals, their "Zulu-ness" does not suddenly become stronger because there is no unique Zulu essence. It just means a shift has taken place in the value they place on the various aspects of socially constructed Zulu identity. The shift could be for several personal and collective reasons.

We have started to see a shift for example in Black South Africans moving towards reclaiming Afrocentric religious and cultural practices (*Dancing for God*, Weinberg, 2001). Filmmaker, photographer and researcher, Paul Weinberg (2001), has worked on many cultural and religious

identity groups in South Africa, including Zulus, Khoi San, the Shembe church and many others. Weinberg suggests that through his work and engagement with Black South Africans, he has seen a shift in the way they engage with their cultural and religious practices. He attributes this in part to the failure of the post-apartheid dream which promised that democracy would bring with it wealth, opportunities and access to resources and institutions. When people started to see this failure, they started to search for solutions to their struggles elsewhere. People often turn to spiritual answers to make sense of the contradictions and struggles, and so the move towards reclaiming lost or undervalued practices of African Traditional Religion start to emerge. Weinberg makes this analysis specifically in relation to the growth and rise of African Indigenous Churches like the Shembe church. People feel comfortable with this church because it encourages them to reclaim their African identities as a way of dealing with modern-day challenges like unemployment and poverty (Shange, 2013: 109).

When it helps people get through life and navigate challenges, Thornton (1988: 24) sees culture and the identity people draw from it as an important resource, with similar functions to physical resources like energy and food, the only difference is that culture does not finish or “get used up” in the way that resources do. But just like resources, culture acts as an important tool to help people survive and to socialise them. Like resources, just because culture is available, this does not mean that everyone has equal or fair access to it; it gets unevenly redistributed just like physical resources do. This is evident in the unequal access to education many South Africans experience, particularly if we are to define knowledge as an important cultural identity, and education and the schooling system is an important way to access this knowledge. While the reality also remains that not everyone has access to education or school, then it is clear to see how not everyone can access culture and the tools for survival that it brings. Even though culture does not “finish” like resources do, just like with resources, it can change or evolve over time; for example, apartheid-built policies that intentionally excluded people of colour from accessing cultural resources like education. Cultural identity shifts and changes as people, their environment and their needs change (Thornton, 1988: 25). Today, there has been a shift - the exclusion of people is less about policy and more about socio-economic struggles and exclusions.

Discussions around identity in South Africa became of significant importance at the end of apartheid, as South Africans tried to create a new shared identity as a way of unifying a once divided country. Discussions around shared identity are contested, especially in Anthropological discourse and the social sciences, and the only consensus is that there is no consensus. Hybridism and cross-culturalism are the only common feature in South African identity/identities (Chapman, 1998: 86). Other theorists move away from analysing the collective when theorising or making sense of notions of identity. Peter Burke and Sheldon Stryker are such theorists. Their discussion on identity draws from philosopher and sociologist George Herbert Mead’s theorising of the self (Burke & Stryker, 2009: 657).

Mead (1972: 135) states that the self is different from the physiological body; the self is not there at birth, rather it is developed through social experiences. The self is shaped through an external

process also made up of other individuals. Language becomes an important tool in the process and in the shaping of the self because this is how they process, and other individuals communicate meaning to the self. Language is used to communicate coded and socially constructed information to the self around how they should go about navigating life. This communication comes from what Mead refers to as the process, which can be said to be social institutions that shape people's experiences. The communication also comes from the people themselves and individuals that make up different groups. Through this process of sharing, interpreting and receiving coded and social constructed communication called symbolic interactionism, the individual constructs a self and reaches some level of self-awareness or self-consciousness (Mead, 1972: 137). Mead's discussion of the self and how the self is constructed is focused on the individual, while also being mindful of the impact social structures in society can have on the individual. Mead saw social interaction happening on two levels: the first is the organisational, external to the self. Here, social interactions happen externally from the self, but they deeply impact the self. The second level of social interaction takes place in "the self's" internal subjective mind or consciousness, here the self interprets and responds to the situations and organisational life they find themselves in (Burke & Stryker, 2009: 657).

Peter and Stryker build on Mead's discussion of the self when they theorise on identity. They create two strands in their discussion on identity theory. The first strand looks at the relationship between social structures and identities. The reference to social structures is diverse; they can be large structures like the economy, intermediate like schools, or small like family. The first strand is more evident in Stryker's work on identity theory, while the second strand can be seen more clearly in Burke's contribution on identity theory. The second strand focuses on the internal subjective processes within the mind of a human being or the self. Burke's research posits that if identities are linked to structural positions, then it must be in the verification process that identities constitute and create the self, develop it, stabilise it and even change it. Though the two strands have slightly different approaches, Burke and Stryker both admit that the external and internal processes are linked and do not exist in isolation from each other (Burke & Stryker, 2009: 657). Burke and Stryker believe one of the biggest challenges faced by identity theorists and in need of further research and analysis, is the possibility of individuals/ the self having multiple identities, especially in modern-day society. They state that identity theorists have a responsibility to make sense of the multiple identities that might exist in an individual or the self. Theorists must make sense of the conflict that might exist in the identities of either the self or the collective and also make sense of when the multiple identities are cohesive or complementary and what makes them that way (Burke & Stryker, 2009: 659). There are other theorists that write more from an African scholarly standpoint. These will be discussed in more detail much later in this chapter because they are closer to the social actor interpretations.

2.2.1 Practical examples of the elasticity of identity: A Southern African case study

People often do not consider their cultural identity and its origins beyond referring to themselves as their given or chosen identity, for example Zulu or Xhosa, et cetera. But these categorisations of these identities did not always exist in the form that they do today. Patterns of migration, interactions with other cultural groups, wars, and events like colonialism are what shaped them into what they are today in terms of nationality, language, history, food, religion and many other cultural identifiers they might use to characterise themselves. The migration patterns that eventually led to South African cultural identities like Xhosa and Zulus will be my main case study for this discussion on how cultural identities change and shift over time. This discussion is an important case study for this research because it is just one historical example that illustrates one of the core themes being explored by the research, namely, definitions and formations of identity. It is also important for this study because it illustrates the early interactions between the now Nguni groups and the Khoi and San, whom many of the Mountain Doctors are descendants of. It is also important because the pluralism of Mountain Doctor identity includes different ethnic groups, including various Nguni groups, particularly amaXhosa. Greater understanding of Nguni origins, culture, how it was shaped by Khoi and San culture and how it shapes the revitalisation of this culture today is an important foundation to consider.

Cultural groups like the Zulu, Xhosa and even Venda are believed to have been direct descendants from AbaMbo, also known as Mumbo, Zimba, Ntu, Agona or Agoni (Krige, 1965: 1 & 3). Their references and earliest recorded geographical position differ a little from historical record to record. The first Western records or interactions are said to have been with the Portuguese in the late 15th or early 16th century. They were recorded as having been from up North, in the western parts of Africa (Krige, 1965: 1; Rangeley, 1966: 62). Their exact territory is debatable. Magma Fuze (1922 & 1986: 1 & 10) suggests that those known as Nguni today came from around the Suez Canal and eventually migrated West. The map below depicts the demarcated western Akan region where Nguni people are most likely to have migrated to from the North. Krige's discussion on the migration of Nguni people is based on the account of Portuguese philosopher, Damião de Góis. Others generalise or suggest the entire West African region circled in red on the map (Figure 2.1) depicts the location of precolonial African groups. Fuze further adds that Black people were spread out across the northern parts of Africa. According to Fuze's account, they started to move all over the continent. But he makes reference to two specific groups, the Ntungwa, who he says gradually moved west over time, and the Nguni, who migrated southwards (Fuze, 1986: 1). They are believed to have fallen under the mega-ethnic group, Akan. By the end of the 16th century, the Portuguese records show the AbaMbo had moved southward and were dispersed around Lake Chilwa, which is located in Southeast Africa². They are also said to have occupied areas in and around Mount Kenya for some time, this area is close to the horn of Africa (Werner, 1931: 31). Other regions

² Care was taken to avoid making reference to specific regions/ countries by name because this discussion is focused around the precolonial era before modern day borders. Groups would have had different ways of demarcating land and regions.

they were likely to have occupied in their centuries-long migration are those in the more southern regions, including migrating to the Zambezi River which runs from central to southern Africa. Some finally continued their migration, settling and dispersing in the most Southern regions. Over time, through their interaction with Khoi and San and other groups encountered during their migration patterns, they created new hybrid identities (Werner, 1931: 31). The abaMbo formulated new identities like those of present-day Zulu, Xhosa and many other groupings.

This history is contested because there is a lack of consensus on certain specific details, including things like regions and timelines. Even in Krige's (1965: 2) discussion of the history, she briefly raises the issue of language and what appear to be brief encounters with different African regions as the Portuguese explored the world. Krige raises that some of the interpreters sent by Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama were not fluent in languages spoken by the different abaMbo groups they encountered, while others only knew words here and there. The Portuguese explorer Martin Affonso is said to have been the most fluent in the languages but is also said to have learnt them in a short time; however, Krige does not mention how long the period was, which brings his fluency into question. He might have been more fluent than the other interpreters but was arguably not fluent if the belief is that he mastered African languages spoken at the time in a short time. Many of the records are based on these interpretations which might explain the inconsistencies or even the scepticism of how accurate these records were. This is one of the many challenges of earlier ethnography and Anthropology and this will be discussed in more detail later. With that said, the speculative history is important for tracking events and origin. It is also done out of necessity because there are few African records available because of colonial erasure of African history and experiences.

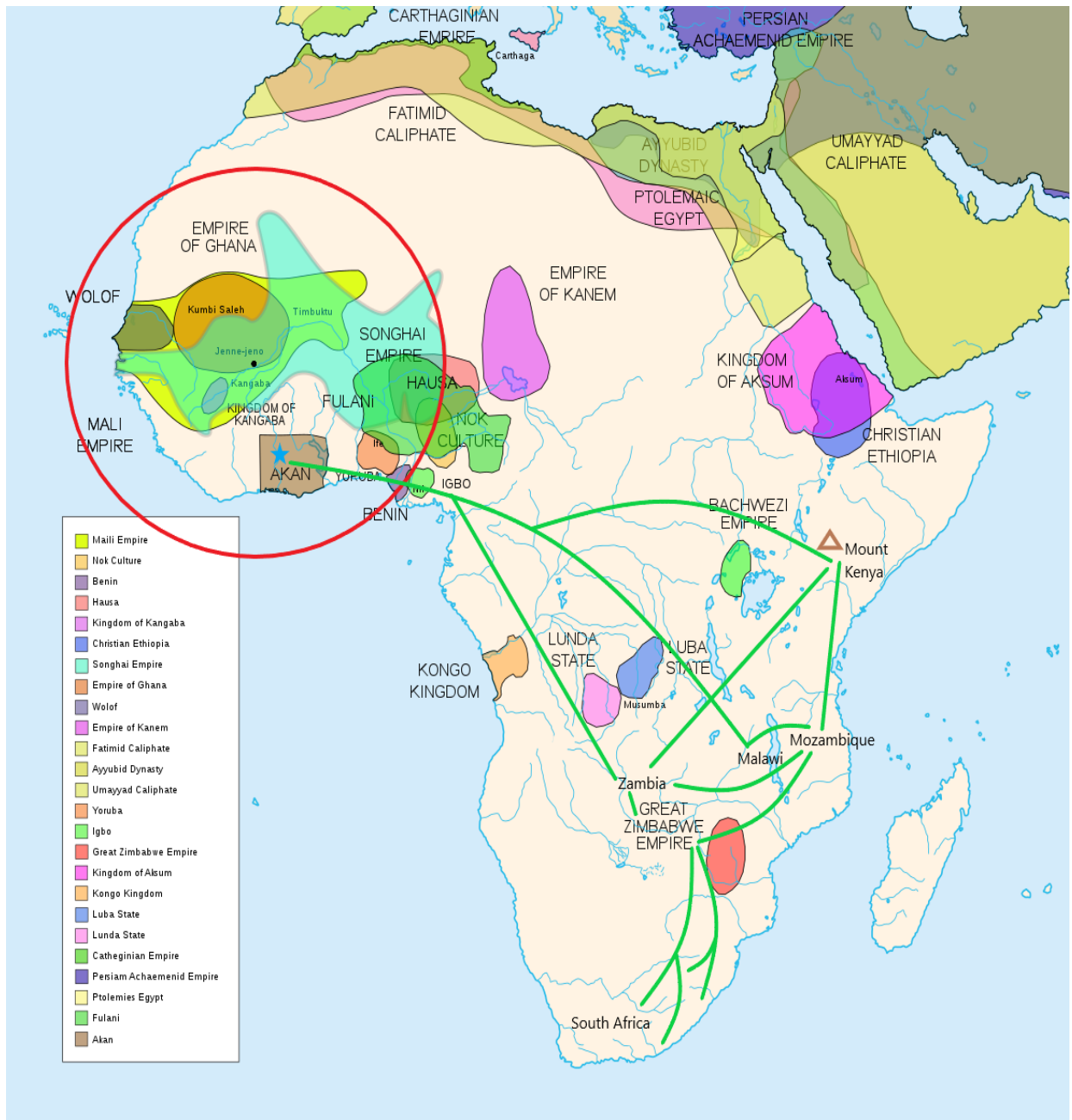


Figure 2.1: A map of precolonial African "states" or Kingdoms. The green lines are illustrations of the migration movements of the abaMbo who came from Akan groups. Map sourced from Hall (2018: 7) and edited for the purposes of this discussion

Some of the historical discussions make the migration come across as if it was almost one linear downward move. It is unlikely that the abaMbo left north and/or west Africa, and all moved eastward and finally southward. Even as they settled in the southern regions, they are likely to have occupied certain regions and then dispersed in different directions again over time (Jeffreys, 1966: 159). A lot of the literature discussing the migration mainly discusses the southern regions and the general southward migration, but Alice Werner (1931) also mentions the East. So, it is not

clear if from moving from west Africa to the south, a smaller group broke off and migrated to the east, or if they went straight to the east without settling in the south first. It is also likely that many broke away to different regions all over the continent before the more well-documented settlement in the southward regions took place. One can argue that over time, due to various circumstances, the south-bound migrating groups might have eventually also left the areas they settled in to move back northwards or even back west, while the more documented group proceeded east and then eventually south. It is also likely that some of these migrations were not these monumental moves as they are recorded in history books. They may have been people just living, which requires some mobility and flexibility. To them, their migrations might not have been migrations because land and territory was demarcated in different ways; they might still have been moving around in regions that were still considered their territory. They may have been moving to areas that were communally owned or “vacant” because tenure and ownership worked differently in that context to how it does today, and not everything had to be owned or be a possession. All of this would have allowed for more flexibility. To track these elements or events over long periods like the West did, would make these patterns look like movements or migrations over centuries, even if these moves might have been more miniscule within shorter time periods.

Even with the migrations that are better recorded, and where there is more consensus, it is unlikely that when the migrations would “start” or be recorded again, that it would be the same cultural or ethnic group/s or their direct descendants that would be migrating again. It is more likely that people settled and integrated with groups they found in the new locations, creating new hybrid cultures, especially because these migration patterns happened over decades and centuries. There would have been trade, diplomacy, marriage and even conflict, all of which would have played a part in shifting the identities of the newcomers and the cultural groups they encountered in the regions they settled in. New identities might even have been formulated over time. When migration patterns happen again, because of the integration and the possible interconnectedness that might have been formed, the abaMbo might then have been leaving with loved ones they found in the region and with whom they had created alliances, families and friendships. The same circle would continue even as they settled in the next new region or migrated back to regions they might have settled in before. The 1855 settlement of the abaNgoni³ in the region around modern-day Malawi shows this. The Ngoni are believed to have come from the Zulu, while other historians suggest they came from amaSwati. Regardless, what is clear is that they came from the South (Thompson, 1981: 6). If they are descendants from the amaZulu, amaSwati or both, then they would also be connected to the abaMbo who amaZulu and amaSwati once came from. Their Zulu and Swati ancestors may have settled in this region a few centuries earlier, coming from west Africa or the East, depending on their ancestors’ movement patterns. Some of their ancestors might have settled in present-day Malawi forever, creating new identities they might no longer be familiar with as they migrated back to the area centuries later. Similarly, other ancestors who the Ngoni directly

³ Directly translates to ‘those without sin or those that are pure and without fault’. Later referred to as Nguni, but the Malawian group still use the Ngoni label.

come from would have migrated south, constructing new identities, ideals, and belief systems as they went and as they interacted with other group identities.

It is also unlikely that the migration was an activity that would start and stop and start again. While accurate recording and historical accuracy is important, some of the records that record specific dates in documenting these events give the impression that no one left the regions before or after those recorded moments. They suggest that no other newcomers came to those regions in the build-up towards what might arguably be the bigger moves that historians, explorers and anthropologists were documenting. It is also important to note that the Portuguese records were the first European recordings. One can argue there were/ are other earlier recordings by Africans themselves. The recordings, whether African or not, are not an indication that those moments would have been the first migrations or explorations of other regions beyond those occupied by respective ethnic or cultural groups. Other earlier migrations might have taken place but might not have necessarily been recorded or stored. This is in part why scholars like Fuze avoid attempting to pinpoint specific areas. He writes about a migration from north to west and south (Fuze, 1986). Migration records might also exist that are coded and documented in ways we cannot decode or understand today, or they might have been lost over time as African oral tradition lost its dominance.

Another critique of some of these historical accounts is that almost all the ones engaged with the hypothesis that the main reason these migration patterns took place amongst the abaMbo would have been because of war or some kind of conflict (Krige, 1965). It is unlikely that the main reason would have always been war, especially given how long and drawn out the period was. It gives the impression that all Africans did was to fight and engage in wars or conflict for centuries, and that groups would eventually flee to a new location to avoid the conflict in their homes. While war may have been a factor, the reason for the migration would have differed greatly from family to family or community to community. The reasons would have also changed with the changing tides of historical events; they could have also been informed by environmental changes like possible droughts if the area had not received rain and people could not farm, or if water sources like rivers and lakes dried up. People would have been forced to leave their homes and seek better opportunities and territories. Diplomacy and creating alliances with neighbouring groups would have also resulted in migration movements. The diplomacy might have been bound by things like marriage, military alliances, trade, and the exchange of ideas, arguably through the creation of structures like schools, even though they might not have existed in the manner they exist in today. Religious identity would have been another important tool that creates diplomacy with neighbouring regions, where one group could have learned religious practices from another. It could also have been a dual exchange of religious and other values, practices, and cultural beliefs between two or more groups in neighbouring regions. These and many other reasons are likely to have been the cause of the migration, it is even more likely that it would not be just one reason that caused the abaMbo to move around. It is possibly a variety of reasons that would have led them to slowly move southwards over time. There, the groups would eventually evolve into Xhosa, Zulu, Venda or whatever more recent cultural identity they now identify with.

The large Zulu nation in the form it exists in today is a relatively new idea, one formulated by warrior and emperor King Shaka Zulu in 1816 after the death of his father King Senzangakhona who was a chief of a much smaller Zulu clan (Ngubane, 1986: 8). King Shaka had a dream to unite various clans as one nation; he did this in a variety of ways, the most commonly documented is through a shift in war tactics. He instilled discipline in his warriors and taught them how to fight in close contact, using lighter and easier to use weapons to what was traditionally used at the time. He shifted from long spears warriors would throw at each other from a distance during battles. He introduced lighter, smaller *assegai*/ spears which were easier to carry and run with, and which required Zulu warriors to come into close contact with their enemies. This blindsided much of the opposition, who were not prepared for this way of fighting and lacked the proper training to defend themselves (Ngubane, 1986: 11). For Shaka Zulu, the uniting of the nation was important because it would make them stronger against the dual colonial threat; namely the Boers and the British (Sithole, 2000: 47). This was a dual threat that was faced not just by Zulu people in Zululand, but by various African cultural groups who all came up with different strategies throughout history to resist the looming colonial threat.

While the military strategy was one of the main ways of uniting the clans, there was also diplomacy. Shaka tried to advise clans to join the Zulu nation so that a stronger force could be created against the threat of the British and Dutch settlers. He also united the clans by other cultural means; he created uniformity in the language, religious practices, and various other family practices so that people could be unified under these and other identities. In formulating these identities, he borrowed what he believed worked from the different clans and did away with what he believed did not serve an important function. For example, King Shaka did away with circumcision and initiation rites of passage and rituals for young boys turning into men. This was a practice widely done by the Nguni and is still performed today mainly by Xhosa and Ndebele men. Circumcision is no longer practised by Zulu men, at least not for collective cultural practices. King Shaka believed young men to be more useful tools for the formulation of his Zulu nation. He shifted the focus from initiation rituals that encourage young men to engage in sexual activities or finding a wife after they had undergone the circumcision-related initiation rituals. He saw this as a distraction from his agenda geared towards military combat (Stapleton, 2009: 75). When it came to languages, the Zulus and other clans had long since adopted some of the Khoi and San language, mainly the clicks and even though the Khoi and San did not end up forming a part of King Shaka's nation-building, he retained much of the Khoi and San's language and cultural practices that had already been adopted by the Zulu (Ngubane, 1986: 7).

Even though King Shaka's rule was short, as he was assassinated by his half-brothers in 1928, he was still able to achieve his goal. Many smaller clans continued to join the Zulu nation after his death because of the recognition of their strength and for protection from the rising colonial threats. Smaller and conquered groups were integrated with the conquerors. Other small groups fragmented even further and were absorbed into other, bigger clans. One such example is the Hlubi who split to become part of the Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho (Sithole, 2000: 44). It is also not uncommon for people to still refer to themselves using these old clan names, coming from the chief who would

have historically led them. Their “Zuluness” becomes more of an “official categorisation” or they relate to it mostly in language terms. Many of those who straddle this kind of dual culture believe their smaller clans were never conquered, therefore there was never a process where their chiefs had to relinquish power or where they had to give up certain clan ideologies to take on those of the Zulu conqueror. They still maintain much of their smaller chiefdoms’ independence and even have their own land. The Zulu unification project is seen as more of an important historical and contemporary process, mainly for political reasons. Others challenge this diplomatic retelling of history and highlight Shaka’s thirst for power as having led to the Zulu ruling over most of KwaZulu-Natal (Sithole, 2000: 59-60).

This discussion is important because it also serves as an important comparative case study to make sense of the Mountain Doctors as a similar unification project to that of the Zulu. The Mountain Doctors see their movement as important for solidarity against neo colonial threats that push harmful capitalist practices that threaten ecology, perpetuate racial injustice and ignore historic land loss and efforts people make today to reclaim their ancestral land. The Sackcloth movement is also led by a desire to better understand their sometimes-lost ancestry, a need to serve and heal their communities spiritually, socially and physiologically. Like the Zulu, the movement also encourages diverse participation of groups and individuals reclaiming the Khoi and San identity, those who identify as Coloured or “mixed race” and even Nguni groups. The Zulu kingdom was also united by opposition to various colonial battles and the general colonial threat. The shared victories of battles that the Zulu won, like the Battle of Isandlwana of 1879 against the British, helped to further cement the Zulu nation (Ntuli, 2019: 53), while losses and the shared oppression also had the same effect. Battles like the Battle at Ncome River in 1834, where they were defeated by the Boers, made the Zulu and smaller clans who were still joining realise they had to unite against a bigger common enemy (Ngubane, 1986: 30).

2.2.2 Constructing cultural identity: Hybridisation and Creolisation in Southern Africa

Before this, the more “fixed” Zulu cultural identity we see today did not exist. Instead, there were smaller clans who might have had some similarities with each other in terms of geography, language and religious practices. The overarching categorisation would have been under Nguni, but they would not have necessarily organised themselves around this classification, but rather more around their smaller clan identities (Wright, 2009: 36). However, this is not to say there was no interaction or trading of ideas, practices and even diplomatic organising of clans through marriage, and many other interactions. The Xhosa, for example, are believed to have had the most in common with the Khoi and San because the Ntu or abaMbo who settled in different parts of Southern Africa were closer to the Khoi and San and took the opportunity to learn from them and integrate with them. Fuze (1986: 5) also uses religion to make a case for the close integration between Khoi and San groups and the Xhosa. The Xhosa borrow their word for God, *Tixo*, from Khoi and San languages. Within Khoi and San cultures, the word was also linked to the mantis, a significant animal to the group. Over time, the word *Tixo* in Khoi and San cultural groups and the

Xhosa came to be associated more and more with God. Beyond the cultural religious similarities, Fuze believes the physiological similarities between the Khoi and San and the Nguni that Xhosa people come from, are worth noting. He highlights the similarities in terms of skin colour and hair. He adds that there are similarities in origins; similarities that would have existed long before the continuous migration of the Nguni (Fuze, 1986: 6).

The Xhosa are even believed to have gotten their names from the Khoi and San, with “sa”, the suffix of the word, being a shortened form of the word San. Just like in Zulu and various Nguni cultures, they use *ntu* or *bantu* to refer to people, but also to refer to an overarching cultural identity. ‘San’ is the same, in that it means ‘people’ and refers to the San as a cultural identity. The *Xo* in *Khoekhoegowab* means angry or passionate, so *Xosa* means both, the passionate or angry people and the passionate Sans because of their close integration and connectedness with Khoi and San cultural identities (Laband, 2020). This integration in some ways almost made them a subculture of the San, hence the name Xhosa. And even though Xhosa was derived from Khoi and San, over time, the Khoi and San started to assimilate more towards Xhosa culture (Ross, 1980: 260). This could have been for several reasons, similarly to the emergence and unification of Zulu cultural identity. There might have been a need to unite against common enemies, be it the settlers or arguably the rising Zulu nation that threatened smaller segregated clans with war and territorial conquest. It might have also been because of the violence and erasure towards Khoi and San culture identity and people, where they were not even seen as people and were hunted for sport by the colonial settlers. The assimilation could have been self-preservation; an effort to find ways to survive without fully turning their backs on their identity (Parkinson, 2016a). It could have been a natural hybridisation of the culture or cultures, where the Khoi and San also were influenced by certain practices from this Nguni or Ntu group that settled next to them.

Homi Bhabha’s (2000: 355) theorising on identity suggests that hybridity is bound to take place when two or more cultural identities come together or are near each other. He discusses the third space; this is where different cultural identities come together as equals that carry different strengths and weaknesses and construct a new or hybrid shared identity (Bhabha, 1994: 36). Bhabha refers to the third space as a sort of in-between space. One could argue that is what Xhosa became for the Khoi and Ntu. We can view it as both the third space where the process of engagement and combining of the cultures happens, or we can view it has the hybrid identity that emerges as the “product/outcome” from the third space. These two processes happen almost simultaneously because cultural groups do not stop engaging with each other, even if it is not always on an equal footing, as Bhabha theorises, and because there is no finality to the “new identity” or hybridity because cultural identity is always shifting and is never fixed (Wright, 2009: 35). As time goes on, the Xhosa might find themselves entering the third space with the Zulu or even Western structures which shape many aspects of social life and even how the Xhosa might engage with their own identity in relation to the history of Western imperialism.

Creolisation is not very different from hybridisation; the two have a lot in common and generally emerge when two or more cultural groups come together. There would have been moments in

South African history where hybridisation and creolisation would have been taking place simultaneously. Even in contemporary society, both hybridisation and creolisation are constantly active and shaping social life, while also changing conceptually in how people define and understand the terms and the active processes themselves. Edouard Glissant (1999: 63) and Stuart Hall (2015: 19) suggest one of the differences between hybridisation and creolisation is that creolisation is mainly rooted in colonial oppression and dehumanisation that the indigenous community experiences coming from the settlers, slavery traders or colonisers. They suggest that creolisation, when compared to hybridisation, is marked by restricted agency of the dominated. Their agency is stripped in many ways, but Hall and Glissant highlight the limited yet forced movement the creolised experience, which is categorised by violent forced transportation, and the deportation of people usually for the purposes of the slave trade (Erasmus, 2011: 637 & 640).

The definition and process of creolisation differs across different contexts and has also meant different things in different periods of history. For example, 'creole' was once used to mean Europeans who were either born in the colonies or had spent most of their lives there. There were moments it was used as a derogatory term, especially towards Europeans who assimilated too much to the native culture in the colonies. The suggestion was they were no longer "proper" French or English because they behaved like the Africans, spoke their language and embraced some of their cultural practices. Over time there was a shift, and the word 'creole' started to mean Africans or enslaved people who were born in the islands where Africans were being taken as part of the slave trade. Africans who were born in Africa and were moved to the islands under slavery were still considered Africans, while those who were born in the islands and became native to the islands became creole (Hall, 2015: 14). The term changed meaning again over time and it started to mean mixed-race people of European and African descent or of Indian and European descent, often in the colonies where slavery was growing. Creolisation started to mean more than just mixed-race people, and it started to mean any cultural or social mixing of different cultures, but mainly European and African or Indian culture, including language, music, art, food and many other social practices. Creolisation has changed a lot in meaning through time and in some ways still carries all these differing and sometimes contradictory meanings. This is because it is more of a process rather than a fixed idea. One of the ways we see this is through one of its more common definitions, that creolisation is a mixing of languages. One of the early understandings of creole was the mixing of African languages and European language; mainly French or English, but in some instances Portuguese and others (Hall, 2015: 13 & 15).

The creolisation of language in South Africa is seen in the emergence of *Fanakalo* and *Kasi-taal*. *Fanakalo* was developed early on in the encounters between Africans and Europeans. It was used as a common language to bridge the language barrier. The most common languages in *Fanakalo* are English and/or Afrikaans, mixed with Zulu and/or various other African languages. Over time the language became the language of the mines, and it became the main way to connect between people from vastly different backgrounds. It created a common language between workers and the language evolved as people from different parts of the continent came to South African mines and contributed to the construction of the language. It helped to connect diverse Mozambican,

Zimbabwean and Malawian miners to South African miners and the European mine owners. In some instances, *Fanakalo* even had traces of Portuguese, depending on which Europeans owned the mines or who the miners frequently engaged with (SAHO, 2021b). *Fanakalo*, like other creole languages coming mostly out of the colonies, was and in some ways still is seen as a type of broken English and is often ridiculed or seen to be for uneducated people (Hall, 2015: 14). *Fanakalo* also has similarities to more popularly known *Kasi-taal*; one might argue that *Fanakalo* influenced the emergence of *Kasi-taal*.

Kasi-taal originates from townships which were created for Black migrant labour from different parts of rural South Africa and neighbouring African countries like Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Mozambique, Botswana and eSwatini. The workers came to work in mines, on farms and in different parts of the city. They were restricted from living in the city and instead lived on the outskirts, called townships or *Kasi*. These townships became a melting pot of different languages and cultures which were mixed to create a multicultural and new type of social life; part of this was the creation of *Kasi-taal*, which would also make communication across the many diverse language groups more uniform and easier. This merging of cultures was not always received well in the highly segregated South Africa created by the colonial and apartheid government, which did not just separate people along racial lines, but also along ethnic lines. The English lived in provinces like KwaZulu-Natal while the Afrikaners lived in the Free State, the Xhosa lived in the Eastern Cape, while the Sotho lived in the Northern Cape, and so forth. This means the *Kasi-taal* would differ from context to context; in places like the Western Cape, the *Kasi-taal* might be more likely to be mainly made up of a combination of Afrikaans, English and Xhosa, while provinces like Gauteng are a melting pot of diverse groups who mainly moved to the province to be migrant labour in mines during colonialism. In places like Gauteng, the *Kasi-taal* might be a combination of Sotho, Zulu Xhosa, English and Afrikaans, while still being influenced by non-South African languages like Shona coming from Zimbabwean workers and so on. The defiant manner in which *Kasi-taal* brought together the language and cultural plurality of South Africa and indeed the continent was frowned upon. It was rejected in similar ways to how creole languages in the colonies were seen as not being “proper” or were seen purely as broken French or English, rather than a sophisticated and important process and language production. Those who spoke *Kasi-taal* were seen as uneducated and an element of criminality was attached to its use, where it was at times referred to as *Tsotsi-taal*. *Tsotsi* means a scammer or criminal (Makalela, 2014: 669).

Zimitri Erasmus (2011: 637) suggests creolisation in South Africa started in the Cape because of its slavery history. It was during the 17th to 19th century history of slavery that Khoi and San communities were enslaved. Enslaved people from different parts of Africa, the Indian Ocean Islands and Asia were also brought to the Cape. During this period, the concept of ‘Coloured’ people started to emerge; just like the creole definition, Coloureds are mixed-race people. South African concepts of Coloured differ from creole because it encompasses more than just people of African and European or Indian and European mixed-race descent. In South Africa it included mixing of different non-European racial groups, and various Asian and African mixed-race groups are considered Coloured. Even though Coloureds are a diverse mix of different racial groups, those

of European descent were more valued especially during slavery. People were referred to as Coloured even during this period, but it was not until apartheid that 'Coloured' as a racial group was formalised by the state, which classified any who seemed racially ambiguous as Coloured, even if they were not (Erasmus, 2011: 638). The mixed-race or coloured classification is a contentious one. It is a concept that is very controversial, as it suggests there are "pure races" somewhere else, and that "mixed race" people are a mix of these "pure races". Some people who identify or are identified as coloured appropriate it and wear it proudly, while others reject it vehemently.

One of the languages that unites Coloureds outside of *Kasi-taal*, is Afrikaans. Today in South Africa, Afrikaans is known primarily as a White language spoken by Dutch descendants, but this was not always the case. Like *Kasi-taal*, Afrikaans started as a creole language belonging mostly to diverse enslaved groups (Willemse, 2018: 115). Afrikaans was commonly spoken by enslaved people, and it was a combination of Dutch and mainly Khoi and San languages, as well as smaller elements of other African and Asian languages spoken by the predominant enslaved groups brought to the Cape. Like *Kasi-taal* in the townships and *Fanakalo* in the mines, Afrikaans was a common language enslaved people used to understand each other and the Dutch. Different ethnic and cultural groups would bring in small influences of their own native languages to create this creolised language. For a long time, Afrikaans was referred to as 'kitchen Dutch' mostly because it was used by enslaved people who mainly worked in the fields and kitchens of Dutch homes and plantations (Gqola, 2010: 28). It was also called Kitchen Dutch in a derogatory way, as it was seen as less sophisticated than 'real' Dutch. It was only in the late 18th century that the language came to be known as Afrikaans. This is when a group of emancipated and escaped slaves came together and migrated from the Cape to Namaqualand (Kinahan, 2017: 303). This group was diverse and consisted of different Khoi and San groups, Coloured people, Nguni people, Malagasy/Madagascans and Indonesian people, to name a few. This group started to refer to themselves as Orlam Afrikaners, in part to mark the new African collective identity they were actively creating through language, history and culture. They also derived this name from the Afrikaner chieftom. Oude Ram Afrikaner would be the first to lead the group in the early 18th century and Jan Jonker Afrikaner would be the sixth and last leader during this era. The chieftom of the group would only be revitalised again in the mid-20th century (Barnabas & Miya, 2019: 90). Jan Jonker Afrikaner led the group as chief between 1863 and 1889. The Orlam Afrikaners ceased to exist after the death of their leader in 1889 and as German occupation characterised by violent brutality and genocide started to rise in Namaqualand (Barnabas & Miya, 2019: 90 & 92; Klíma, 2014: 9 & 11).



Figure 2.2: Portrait of Jan Jonker Afrikaner (National Library of South Africa - NLSA, 1876).

It was not until the late 19th century that Afrikaans slowly turned into a White cultural identity, mainly replacing the Dutch settler way of life. It is not clear why White Afrikaner nationalism emerged, but there is some speculation based on the historical events happening at the time (Giliomee, 1987: 38). The rise of Afrikaner nationalism happened across various lines and was a long process of transition in itself. Many Dutch settlers spoke and understood Afrikaans but were unwilling to adopt Afrikaner language because they saw it as inferior because it was closely related to enslaved creoles and indigenous groups. Two of the main motivations that drove the Dutch

settlers to adopt this creole language and later cultural identity were religion and the colonial tension and conflict between the Cape Dutch and British. The threat of British expansion and the fear that they would lose land, power and control pushed the Dutch to create an Afrikaner nationalism. This nationalism would see them label themselves as an indigenous group and present the British expansion as a human rights violation and threat to their land, sovereignty and nationalism. In 1875 the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (GRA) (Society of Real Afrikaners) was established by the cultural leaders, and they actively championed Afrikaner interests, while encouraging the sceptical Dutch settlers of the benefits of adopting Afrikaner language, history, and later certain cultural practices (Giliomee, 1987: 46). Part of this process included white-washing the language to reduce the heavy African and Asian influence on the language, bringing it closer to Dutch, while maintaining smaller Orlam Afrikaner influences.

The adoption of Orlam Afrikaner culture was significant because it already had Dutch influence, especially in the construction of the language. This made it easier for the Dutch settlers to claim the language and identity as their own. The group was also made up of many Coloureds whose presence was as a result of Dutch men having relationships with or raping enslaved and free indigenous women, and women brought to the Cape from Asia, islands in the Indian Ocean and different parts of the African continent. The prominent Dutch ancestry in the Orlam culture was significant in also legitimising the Dutch reclassifying themselves as the “Real Afrikaners” and thus erasing the strong creole influence in Afrikaner language and culture. Their successful ability to reclassify themselves as Afrikaners and therefore indigenous groups was one of the many things that pushed the British empire to relinquish power, which they slowly started to do throughout the early 19th century (Giliomee, 1987: 38; Webb & Kriel, 2000: 21). The Dutch were able to reimagine their community using language as a start. Claims to common ancestry and therefore history of the Orlam Afrikaner group were also used. And just as Anderson’s (1983) theorisation shows, a new nation was born, built first on language, biology, and history, and arguably later on religion and conquest.

The second push that led the Dutch to reclassify themselves Afrikaners was religion: the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) wanted to have an Afrikaans Bible as an official Southern African language. Though this suggestion was first disputed in 1875 when it was first raised, the GRA showed this to be in the interest of Afrikaner nationalism. Eventually the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) and many others started to accept the idea. One of the biggest challenges was that although Afrikaans was spoken and understood by many, it was seldom written, especially not in “formal” ways that would require mass consumption like the Bible. Its creole nature also meant there was a certain level of fluidity and constant construction and reconstruction to the language (Kriel, 2010: 403-404). A process of standardisation had to take place; Afrikaans grammar rules and books were established, dictionaries were written, and the language slowly started to be rolled out in schools, was adopted by the state. And even though it was the need for a Bible that led to this process, it was not until 1933 that an Afrikaans Bible was published, and a Hymn Book was released sometime after, in 1944. By 1948 the White Afrikaner population had gained political control and used Afrikaner nationalism and DRC religious doctrine which saw them as pure and

superior (Webb & Kriel, 2000: 21) The shift from Afrikaner cultural identity being constructed by people of colour as an emancipatory tool to recover from slavery and colonial oppression, to it becoming Afrikaner nationalism belonging to Dutch settlers who perpetuated the oppression the Orlam Afrikaners experienced, is another illustration of how creolisation is a process, one that is constantly changing and being reconstructed. Over time, Afrikaans, initially a symbol of positive creolisation or hybridisation, went from being a sort of empowerment and restoration for people of colour, to being the oppressive nationalism upon which apartheid was built. This transition undid the pluralism and multiculturalism Afrikaans was constructed around and represented a new culture based on colonial conquest, purism and White supremacy.

As time went on and with the rise of apartheid, the construction of Coloured identity created tension as “racially ambiguous” people were separated from their families and communities or forced to identify as a different racial or cultural group. The story and life of Sandra Laing sparked a lot of debate on race in South Africa and globally. Her story was depicted in a 2008 Hollywood movie called *Skin* and countless documentaries and media coverage have tracked Laing at different stages of her life. Sandra Laing was born in 1955 to a White Afrikaner family, but her hair was coiled and dark and her skin tanned, and she was barred from attending the same schools as her older brother. She was forced to live apart from her family when she was classified as Coloured. After a long, drawn-out court battle, she was reclassified as White based on her parents being White. Laing finally found more acceptance in Black and Coloured communities and accepted this identity and married a Black man, which alienated her further from her White Afrikaner community. She reclassified herself as Black so that she would not be separated from her own children (Dargis, 2009). The story of Laing is just a more popularly known illustration of the kinds of challenges Coloured people faced during apartheid and even today. Many of the Mountain Doctors face similar challenges and use their construction of the Sackcloth Movement as a way of strengthening and reclaiming their identity in ways that empower them. When detailing the construction of “Colouredness” in South Africa, Mohamed Adhikari (2005: 1) says;

The Coloured people are descended largely from Cape enslaved people, the indigenous Khoisan population and other people of African and Asian origin who had been assimilated to Cape colonial society by the late nineteenth century. Being also partly descended from European settlers, Coloureds are popularly regarded as being of ‘mixed race’...

Coloured identity is diverse and pluralistic, while the apartheid purist outlook led to many being forced to pick and choose an almost singular identity when it came to matters of race, culture and ethnicity. One of the many erasures were names. White people and institutions refused to acknowledge their African and pluralistic identities which had intersected with various Asian cultures. The Coloured identity was manufactured during apartheid by Pieter Willem Botha, who was appointed as Minister of Coloured Affairs by then-NP leader and president, Hendrik Verwoerd. But this identity and what many of the Mountain Doctors see as an apartheid design used to erase their pluralistic African and Asian identity, did not exist in the apartheid government vacuum. It was a colonial legacy which the apartheid government adopted and institutionalised. Coloured people’s forced classification under the Population Registration Act of 1950 made it

easier for the apartheid government to enforce segregation laws which limited their freedom of movement, rights to vote, access to education, and so forth (Adhikari, 2005: 3).

The new laws tried to dissolve and “remove” racial fluidity and replace it with more standardised racial categories like Coloured, Black, Indian or White (Gqola, 2010: 24). Those who refused to assimilate were punished in different ways, one of the most violent ways. Many of the Mountain Doctors encountered reject the Coloured identity and see it as a “divide and rule” classification strategy adopted by the apartheid government so that they could more easily enforce their repressive laws and policies. The rejection of the Coloured identity was perhaps most prominent in the 1970s, inspired by the rise of Black consciousness which encouraged oneness and unity amongst all oppressed groups, and adopting the label Black not as a racial classification, but rather as a representation of shared pain and oppression and an attempt to restore their self-worth (Biko, 2004: 110). This focus on unity and shared oppression was reinforced by the emergence of the United Democratic Front (UDF) which reached across to unify diverse individuals and groups against apartheid. The UDF united different races, political groups, religions, age groups and civil society as a whole, and further promoted the interrogation of the division created by the ‘Coloured’ categorisation (Adhikari, 2005: 4).

Even though the Coloured identity was violently constructed, it offered people of Khoi, Asian or mixed-race backgrounds an alternative from the harshness of slavery and the inhumanity of being seen as no better than animals. These are ideas that stemmed from Christianity (Gqola, 2010: 31). Those who were seen as non-being were sometimes even hunted, killed and masqueraded⁴ for cruel sport or entertainment. Many people changed their names to more Western names or were given more Western names by their slave owners or employers. Many would take their employers’ last names. During apartheid, even things like names, hair and skin colour would have an impact on the racial classification of people, as well as more trivial things like a person’s sports, dress code, preferred beer or alcohol, among others (Kirkby, 2022: 221). Some would change their names and even hobbies if it meant it would result in “better racial classification”, less oppression and more access to rights. The changing of names disrupted other aspects of cultural identity. People could no longer trace their ancestry. African names and particularly surnames also have important cultural and historical significance which is often evident in *izithakazelo* or praise callings. Praise callings and African names in general often detail a number of things about an individual or family. The poetic, song-like calling details a person’s ancestors and their lives, the struggles and personal victories. It also details the connectedness to other surnames or clans, and marks the evolution of that family or greater clan/cultural group. Even issues of land come up in praise calls and names at times as they detail where people once lived and their migrations patterns, if any. African names can also symbolise things like when the individual was born. This is often

⁴ Sarah Baartman is one such example. She was a Khoi woman who was kidnapped, taken to Europe and was exhibited in circuses and similar settings. She was known as the “Hottentot Venus” because of her curves and shape of her body. She was fetishized and ridiculed for how she looked. She was owned by an animal trainer in Europe and eventually died under mysterious circumstances in 1815, but her exhibition still continued. Her remains were not repatriated and buried until 2002. (Gqola, 2010: 61 & Parkinson, 2016b).

done when the person is born during a significant moment in time in the history of a specific culture. Praise callings are passed down from generation to generation and are always being added onto or altered as new discoveries are made, as new historical moments are formed by the living. When people changed their names, they lost all this important knowledge and identity (Mhlambi, 2016: 111).

2.3 Ubuntu and African understandings of the self

... it is Wiredu's view that we are born humans, but we become persons. The implications of this basic sociality of personhood defy the boundaries of metaphysics, epistemology, or even ethics in the restrictive Kantian sense. It proposes far-reaching dimensions for a communalistic view of the world in which the project of becoming a person is always incomplete (Masolo, 2010: 13).

Masolo (2010) in *Self and Community in a Changing World* projects *ubuntu's* ontological discussion on Africanist notion of the self or personhood. The self has a moral obligation to the community, and this is the only way humanness can be achieved: through serving the community (Ogude, 2019: 3). By improving humanness, the individual improves themselves and comes closer to personhood. In turn, the community also has a moral role to play in nurturing and shaping the individual, through the same *ubuntu* ideals that promote respect, love and caring. John Bhengu (1996: 3) and Nkonko Kamwangamalu (1999: 24-25), both define *ubuntu* as a communalist philosophy that shows the interdependence between individuals and their communities. Bhengu adds that people exist in a social cluster and cannot exist by themselves; even once the individual dies, they still live in the community in spirit (*idlozi*). The concept of *ubuntu* is multifaceted and represents the core African ontology, which prioritises respect for all people, cultures, ancestors, and the ecology. Many of these ideals can be seen within the perpetually emerging identity of Sackcloth people.

Norms and practices in many African cultures are placed to reinforce the principle of respect and are often performed in groups to further promote unity (Somè, 1997: 23). This is not only emphasised between living people, but between people and spiritual continuity. One of the important symbols of *ubuntu* is *umsamo*, which signifies unity between the material world and the world of the spirit. *Umsamo* also means centre/core; it is the place where many Africans believe God and the ancestors reside. It is the space that people use to communicate with cosmic forces (Berglund, 1976: 102). This is why *ubuntu* is important for this discussion on the self and identity, it is an important lens to use to make sense of the interconnectedness. The same will be true for other discussions as the thesis unfolds. *Ubuntu* theorising will be used to explain the interlinkages between ritualistic healing, spirituality and ecology or land, identity and language. *Ubuntu* sees these and other elements of social life as existing in an interwoven web (Ramose, 2005: 35). While these discussions must be understood in their “singular” sense, it is equally important to understand how these systems or ideals connect with each other. *Ubuntu* is also an important approach because the Mountain Doctors also construct much of their identity through it. This is evident in the holistic healing practices, their connection to and respect of ecology and land and many other things. Many

writers that have examined *ubuntu* project it as a unifying force going even beyond just those who are alive at present. Through doing this, it presents the self as more than just a “living” being as is often the case in Western ontological discussions of the self. The self also becomes *idlozi*, which just like the community or “living” individual, has a moral obligation to humanity (Masolo, 2019: 48). In many ways *amadlozi* are seen as living, and people seek their assistance when navigating various traditional or modern challenges or to show gratitude when *amadlozi* have been generous, brought good health and prosperity. The ancestors help to connect the self and the community to God, the universe, cosmology and the spiritual realm. All of these play an important role in Africanist understandings of the world and social life (Majola, 2019: 26).

For South African philosopher, Mogobe Ramose (2005: 56), personhood in African thought is about “completeness” or “wholeness”. He argues the community is given primacy in discussions on self. The individual can only come to know themselves and reach full personhood through engaging with their community. Similarly, anthropologist Francis Nyamnjoh (2017: 256) states that;

Gods are humans and humans are gods. Spirits assume human forms, and humans can transform themselves into spirits, animals and plants. Sometimes a creature combines multiple forms of being – half-human and half-animal or half-plant, half-god, half-ghost, half-spirit, half-male or half-female, etc. – and assumes the consciousness akin to each form. It is a universe of agency ad infinitum, one in which structures exist only to the extent they can be humbled by the agency of those who make structures possible. Agency is not a birthmark or permanence, but something to be discovered, cultivated, nurtured, activated and reactivated to different degrees of potency through relationships with others, things and humans alike.

Ramose’s and Nyamnjoh’s analysis are based on the main *ubuntu* tenet that says, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, loosely translated to “I am because we are” or “I am because you are” (Ramose, 2005: 88). Similarly, for Gyekye (1997: 35-37) no one is an isolated individual, one’s uniqueness is secondary, what is primary is that one is an individual within a bigger group made up of other individuals. According to Gyekye, social roles and structures control and show the way an individual should relate and fit into society and how the society should receive and treat the individual. While there are similarities between Ramose’s and Gyekye’s theorising of the self, Ramose cautions homogenising African thought. He does this by highlighting the difference between his and Gyekye’s discussion (Ramose, 2005: 57). For Gyekye, one of the central things for personhood is what the Akan call *okra*. *Okra* is life or the essence of an individual, it is their innermost part of themselves or their souls (Wingo, 2006). This is a far more individualistic conception of the self, one that does not show as prominently in Ramose’s or Masolo’s discussions. This innate self, core or *okra* is not shaped by the external community. It just exists within the person. *Okra* gives the self more autonomy, and while their interconnectedness to the community is important, they are not solely shaped by it, meaning their core is actively engaging with what to accept and what to reject or challenge from the external world.

2.3.1 Rastafarian understanding of the self

Rastafarian understandings of self are not far removed from those discussed above, but because Ramose advises us to avoid generalisations, a brief discussion on Rastafarian notions of the self is important, showing the similarities and differences. The Rastafarian discussion on the self is also important to have because Rasta identity is one of the pluralistic identities the Mountain Doctors pull from in understanding their own personhood. It is also one of the identities they look to when constructing their hybridised cultural identity which intersects with Khoi and San identity, Asian identity, in some cases Nguni identity, and even the contested Coloured identity. Rastafarians construct their collective identity and their sense of self around the term *I-n-I*. “I” refers to the individual or “me” (Jackson, 1980: 30). Rastafarianism was an important way of restoring the individual and collective identity as Black people started to receive their emancipation from a long history of oppression through mainly slavery and colonialism. It allowed them to emphasise the repressed, exploited and often ignored Black self. *I-n-I* changes the narrative and shows the emancipated Black self as important both in the self’s individuality and in relation to the collective identity that unites them with their community (Stanley, 2002: 85). Thus, the Rastafarian version of *ubuntu* identity is decidedly resilient. Some of the emancipated are even said to have added the “I” in their names as an important representation of their freedom. For example, Frank becomes Frank-I, Peter becomes Peter-I, and so on. The “I” is so important that even other words of importance become modelled around it, ancient becomes *I-cient*, divine becomes *I-vine*, Ethiopia becomes *I-thiopia*, and so on (Jackson, 1980: 30; Hill, 2003: 6).

I-n-I in relation to personhood and identity carries many different meanings. It can mean “me” within “me”, which carries notions of the self like those of the Akan’s *okra*. This notion entails that the self has an important core shaping their life or individuality. *I-n-I* can also mean the external collective; when referring to a group, Rastas will not say “we” or “they”, they will say *I-n-I* to reflect the interconnected plurality of the group (Jackson, 1980: 30). And like *ubuntu*, *I-n-I* can also mean how the individual relates to or interacts with the community and vice versa. It can mean “me within you” (another individual or group/collective). It can also mean “you (collective or individual) within me”. This understanding, like that of *ubuntu*, shows our interconnectedness and interdependency, and not only regarding human relationships. It also extends to ecology, meaning *I-n-I* can be me/us/you in relation to the land as a source of survival or even an identity, or me/us/you in relation to herbs when it comes to the Mountain Doctors’ healing practices.

When it comes to spirituality, *I-n-I* can also refer to the God within me/us/you or even ecology and the land. Ecology and land are also believed to be living or have beings or spirits within them. This explanation can further extend to understandings of how the ancestors also relate to the interconnection of the self, ecology, God and the community (Stanley, 2002: 104). In Zulu cosmology for example, some parts of ecology are associated with important spirits, ancestors or gods. For instance, *uNomkhubulwane*, the fertility goddess who is considered important for growing the community or family, is also associated with rain, water and even plantation. *uNomkhubulwane* is believed to be the daughter of *Mvelinqangi*, the Zulu understanding of God.

She is believed to bring growth and fertility to the land and women (Scorgie, 2002: 57). AmaZulu make sacrifices in her honour and call on her in times of drought which affect plantation and food security. *I-n-I* in this case can be interpreted as *uNomkhubulwane* within water/ plantation and vice versa, especially because while she gives to nature, she is also believed to draw her strength from nature as well as from young virgin girls. She is said to be the mother of the virgin girls (Ngalwa, 2004). *I-n-I* can also mean *uNomkhubulwane* within the women or young girls when it is used to refer to the God within “me” or “us” as a collective.

The notion of God within people is often used again to show commonality and interconnectedness. But in this sense, more importantly, Rastafarians use “God within me/us” to show the innate goodness they believe people carry. Rastafarianism becomes an important vessel to help Rastas access the goodness they believe they all innately have. And just like Masolo’s discussion, the self becomes about morality and ends up becoming an incomplete project even for Rastas, as the self is always striving to serve their community and better themselves. This becomes of greatest importance when they believe that they have “lost their way”, when they are surrounded by or engaging in crime, when poverty has stripped them of their humanity. As already mentioned, it is for this and many other reasons that Coloured and Black youth join the Mountain Doctors’ movement. Rastafarianism becomes an important bridge that helps them access lost Khoi and San traditions and practices. They believe the Khoi and San traditions will liberate them from the social ills they escape. This brings Mountain Doctors closer to constructing an identity they can relate to better and embrace. It brings them closer to the precepted innate goodness/ “God-ness” (*I-n-I*) Rastafarians believe people carry. *I-n-I* is the expression of Rastafarian consciousness that creates ease and harmony between the inner and outer person (Stanley, 2002: 8). As already discussed through *ubuntu* discourse, this harmony extends beyond just the person or people. It includes cosmology and important spiritual figures like ancestors, and extends to ecology and many other aspects of social life. There is also a level of sameness and equity echoed in the idea of *ubuntu* and *I-n-I*, where Rastas express they use *I-n-I* instead of “me” or “you” to show “I am not better than you and you are not more favoured than me. We are equal because there is you within me and me within you.” In addition, they believe they are bound together in the eyes of *Jah* (also sometimes pronounced *Yah*) which is a shortened word for Jehovah, the name of God in the English translated Old Testament Bible (Stanley, 2002: 85; Mavro, 2018).

2.3.2 Critiquing ubuntu as an identity philosophy

While discussions on *ubuntu* are important in understanding the construction of identity in Africa and how the self is shaped by it, some believe this philosophy is not without its flaws. For Matolino and Kwindigwi (2013: 202), the successful application of *ubuntu* can only be done in small, tight-knit and monocultural communities. Small communities often hate or dislike outside influence because it threatens their social order. Matolino and Kwindigwi (2013: 202) then go on to add, “...to be committed to the values of *ubuntu* is to be committed to the exclusion of other values.” They argue that the idea cannot be applied to South Africa, which is diverse and multicultural. Too

often culture is seen as primordialistic; as an unchanging, ancient and natural phenomenon, meaning it cannot be changed to fit our changing society. Many traditionalists who cling onto *ubuntu* ideals try to protect its “authenticity” (Bayar, 2009: 1639). Those who bring about any form of change are seen as not only a threat to the ideals, but also to the people or cultural group that hold those ideas. Similar sentiments also exist in race, which just like culture, is often presented as natural and unchanging despite it being socially constructed. The same is true for cultural identities, such as those of the Zulus. The history of how the Zulu people came to be does not stem from some “pure” or “natural” Zulu essence (Thornton, 1988: 19). The culture emerged from a mixing of different ideals and uniting of different cultural groups both through conquest and diplomacy, as has been discussed above.

The distrust of foreigners/outsideers is also evident in Harriet Ngubane’s exploration of Zulu culture, in the Nyuswa Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal in the 1960s. The Zulu believe that illness suffered by an individual or the family or community could be as a result of someone coming into contact with a foreigner’s essence (Ngubane, 1977: 30). A foreigner’s essence was said to have the potential to be dangerous because they might have bad intentions. Their actions may also be because of their lack of knowledge of Zulu culture; they could do something to accidentally disrupt the harmony. Ngubane makes the distinction that this would not be consistent with witchcraft because the intention would not have been to cause harm, but that the harm would be caused nonetheless (Ngubane, 1977: 31). Foreigners were therefore required to stay under quarantine for up to three months with the person they were visiting or knew in the community. This time was said to help cleanse the foreigner of any conflicting/clashing essence they might have. During this time, the community would also observe the person’s behaviour and whether they could assimilate and whether or not they were dangerous (Foulks, 1982: 1726).

Another critique of *ubuntu* is the notion that it is the only African theory/ philosophy. Matolino and Kwindigwi (2013: 201) believe other African values that both supported and challenged *ubuntu* must have existed; this is because it is the nature of people to interpret life in different ways. The other values must have been eroded at some point in history. The challenge is that the existence of a singular philosophy to explain cultural life in sub-Saharan Africa fosters a dangerous kind of conformity that rejects difference or any kind of challenging of the status quo (Matolino & Kwindigwi, 2013: 201).

The challenge with these scholars and their critique of *ubuntu* is, unlike Ramose and Masolo, they have very reductionist views of *ubuntu*. These critiques by scholars like Matolino and Kwindigwi are only in the mode of existentialism and not in the mode of an epistemic analytical frame, such as what Ramose and Masolo are projecting. Ramose and Masolo show that *ubuntu* is more than just an existential frame. It is also a theoretical frame because Ramose and Masolo show it as an important way of thinking about social relationships. There is an element that progresses from that, where *ubuntu* is shown to be social, because even the social actors project it that way. They also show that it is even more than just social, it is also spiritual because it encompasses much more.

Ramose and Masolo illustrate that *ubuntu* is an epistemological frame of interpretation and an existential and social philosophy.

2.4 Placing “Sackcloth-ness” in identity discourse

In many ways, groups like the Sackcloth people and the Shembe Church when it started have similarities to anarchist ideologies. This is an analyst view based on how both groups questioned or still questions ruling the modern-day state and create their own social structures, operating in the margins of mainstream society. They even constructed their own ideas around leadership, sometimes selecting their own leaders. David Graeber (2006: 123) would argue the anarchism here is less about political identity and is more about social organisation and communities supporting each other. Similarly, the Sackcloth people follow a similar anarchist ideology and are generally associated with the rejection of the state, which they associate with the colonial oppression that dispossessed them from their land and cultural identity and plunged them into poverty. Outside of its harmful colonial origins, the modern African state in many capitalist countries often continues to side with neoliberal agendas that put profit and the needs of the elite first, at the expense of the poor or marginalised. Many Mountain Doctors and anarchist groups believe the solution to the chaos created by neoliberalism is to dismantle and work outside the structures that encourage individualistic, profit-driven projects (Graeber, 2006: 123).

In his discussion on social change and the communist revolution, Marx and Engels (1848) stressed the importance of eliminating state power. Marx believes the change must take place on the political and social level. The proletariat must first take state power. Once state power has been taken, the foundation of capitalism, which rests on private property, must be eliminated. Thereafter, state power itself must then be dismantled (Orum, 1983: 24; Marx, Fowkes & Mandel, 1992: 29). The ANC government at some point used to be the revolutionary voice of the nation, fighting the proletariat struggle, but today the government has failed to address pressing issues like land, education, race, gender and inequality. Marxists might argue that this is because South Africa maintained the corrupt state structure that serves the rich, thus carrying a lot of the imagined community conception of the old oppressive state into the post-apartheid democratic society. The manner in which the Shembe Church (during its formation) and the Sackcloth people have rejected the neoliberal status quo has created a communalism and unity which is lacking in post-apartheid South Africa. This kind of anarchist organising is taking shape in various ways across the world; groups like Mexico’s Zapatistas reject neoliberalism and the state, something which they have in common with the Mountain Doctors. But because anarchism happens in a democratic way where people continuously make collective decisions, anarchism has different shapes and faces in different societies, depending on the community’s needs and goals. The Zapatistas have used force and violence to get some of their objectives across, while the Mountain Doctors reject the use of violence (Vidal, 2018). Many anarchist communities around the world have created a global network of information-sharing to create a sense of oneness and unity, even while their struggles and methods differ (Graeber, 2006).

While the Sackcloth people's and various African movement have histories of resistance and have faced with many challenges even today, it is important to note that their identity does not revolve around resistance only. This is a common misinterpretation when making sense of Black history and culture; that it only exists in relation to resisting the oppression they experience at the hands of the West, or that their history and cultural traditions exist as a reaction to Western society or the emergence of slavery and colonialism (Wright, 2004: 26). While the resistance cannot be ignored, the research hopes to explore what the shared identity of the Sackcloth people's movement is beyond just resistance, framing it as an emancipatory political identity resembling anarchist ideology. For the Mountain Doctors, this emancipatory political identity comprises different ideologies and practices. It includes the beliefs in sustainability and love for ecology which they even connect with through religion and spirituality. They believe that ecology needs to be protected, not just because it is important for our survival, but also because people and nature are equal. This is evident in the Rasta understanding of the self and how, as discussed above, the self and ecology are both equal and connected, and the belief that nature has important powers that they link to the cosmological realm, God and ancestors.

This emancipatory political identity also uses traditional revivalism as a material survivalism tool. Ecology is also important in this material survivalism, because it is through knowledge of nature that they can turn to herbs to revive their Khoi and San cultural traditions and heal new and old illnesses. By doing this, they create a localised, cheaper, sustainable, holistic and more equitable healthcare system their communities can also claim as their own. Their emancipatory political identity is cyclical and interconnected, not just in its Mountain Doctor practices, but also in the pluralistic way they relate to other cultures in constructing their own Sackcloth identity. They pull from Nguni traditions in their cultural revivalism attempts, they see this as important because much of Khoi and San practices have been eroded almost to extinction through history. They also draw from Nguni cultural identity, especially when it comes to rituals and healing practices, because they believe that upon the arrival of Nguni groups, Khoi and San people taught them many important cultural, spiritual and ecological considerations. While this knowledge might have changed over time and hybridised with other Nguni practices, they believe it is the closest they will get to reviving lost Khoi and San cultural traditions. As already discussed, the Mountain Doctors also construct a lot of their own identity around another emancipatory political group, Rastafarianism, which was constructed by enslaved creolised groups who also saw their liberation rooted in reclaiming threatened African practices (Price, 2009: x & 21). Similar, to the Mountain Doctors, Rastas have anarchist tenets, challenging the repressive state. One of the ways they do this is through revitalising even illegal cultural practices like marijuana use, which is an important cultural practice that provides healing and allows them to get into trances, connect and communicate with the ancestors (Russo, 2013: 40).

The mutual support, oneness and unity found in many anarchist communities and networks around the world can be found as guiding principles amongst the Sackcloth people. In my previous personal engagements with the Sackcloth people (as outlined above, in citing my interest in them), they attach *ubuntu* to their healing practices, way of life, and sense of unity they feel. It is for this

reason that while the idea of *ubuntu* is contested, it is still used as a conceptual social logic to make sense of the group. They also use *ubuntu* in different ideas and practices of their emancipatory political identity. Adopting *ubuntu* in this study also allows me to be open-minded about how grounded theorisation can influence already existing theory.

2.5 Conclusion

Often in communitarian African understandings of the self, there is belief that the self lacks autonomy. Liberalism critiques highlight the lack of individuality, which they see as a vulnerability that can lead to possible individual human rights violations. Simply put, liberalism refers to an idea which favours or supports the individual freedom and individual human rights above all else. Liberalists believe that people have the right to pursue their own goals. These goals need not be for the greater good of the society or community. This is evident in Western systems like capitalism which place individuality and profit first. The individual, in other words, is welcome to partake in activities that purely satisfy their own individual ends. States that are governed by liberalist ideas integrate into their legal systems and principles the importance of placing individual human rights first (Kymlicka, 1989: 23). This liberal critique is important to consider especially for understanding some of Africa's challenges, like those which indeed revolve around people's difficulties in accessing important human rights like education, food security or adequate racial or cultural recognition. The notion that *ubuntu* contradicts individual human rights is a fallacy, given that one of the main premises of *ubuntu* is the collective taking care of the individual and ensuring that the dignity and personhood remain intact, regardless of the person's perceived worth or values. (Sithole, 2009: 10). This is in contrast to capitalist society, which often uses poverty and people's bad actions as an excuse to strip them of certain rights and, by extension, their humanity.

It is also important to recognise the complexities that this chapter has tried to unpack in relation to analysing the intersections between the self and shared identity and the subtle differences between the two. Both the similarities and differences come from the African philosophy of *ubuntu* which has been discussed here. But in some ways, one can argue that the colonial history of oppression blurred the lines even further. This is because colonialism and its present legacy have a history of using the differences between African identities to create conflict and divide and conquer. The discussion between self and identity is also an important foundation for understanding the Mountain Doctors and the pluralist identities stemming from Rastafarian, Khoi, San and many other identities. This discussion lays an important foundation even for understanding other crucial discussions that will follow, like why Mountain Doctors construct their identity around things like land and ecology. It is also an important prelude to making sense of healing practices and rituals and why they tend to take on communitarian approaches, for instance. The Mountain Doctors believe the healing must be a collective process that considers the history, ecology, family and so forth, even when only attempting the healing of the individual.

The various markers of identity, like the circumstantial migrations, hybridity, language, ecology and spirituality, are important elements that have been discussed in this chapter. Identity is

constituted by these kinds of markers, and they are applicable in the lifespan of what we might refer to as a group, in this case the Mountain Doctors. There is a pendulum between the social and theoretical elements of *ubuntu* or identity. There are those epistemic existentialist dimensions of *ubuntu*, that constitute the identity that is so important for the social actor, the Mountain Doctors. They are resilient not only because they perceive their distinctiveness, in the form of their history, language and so on. They are also resilient because they see a potential oneness with everything ranging from ecology, forms of spirituality, other indigenous groups and oneness in terms of their conceptualisation of humanity, rooted in *ubuntu* and *I-n-I*. This is their distinctive factor existentially. All of this is recognised by the other writers discussed in this chapter; they see a potential in the discourse of *ubuntu*, as an explanation of social relationships and identities.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research on indigenous groups like the Mountain Doctors can be complex, especially when one of the main views of such a group is a rejection of aspects of modern-day society. Ideologically, the irony of using Western modern-day tools, systems and strategies was a constant challenge as I tried to work with a deeply decolonial, African indigenous group that rejects those systems. At times this contradiction caused challenges during the fieldwork and even the writing and conceptualising of different parts of the research. On more practical levels, seemingly basic things like communication can pose big challenges. This is just one of the reasons why it was important for the study to be a qualitative one rooted in approaches like grounded theory and ethnography. These methods helped in navigating the practical and ideological challenges. Of course, not all those challenges can be addressed by these approaches. These challenges will continue to exist until there are strong African methodologies that can stand alone; or can be the main methods in a study supported by approaches like grounded theory and ethnography. The agility and flexibility of grounded theory and ethnography allowed me to consider other approaches that were put forward at times by the participants. Not only did these approaches help with better navigation of logistical challenges like communication, they also gave a level of depth that would have been impossible to achieve using interviews or observations alone without the intensive integration into the social life of participants.

This chapter will discuss the fieldwork experiences, what entry into the field looked like and how the study snowballed and developed. It will also introduce the many research participants who were interviewed. Many of the challenges that will be addressed are also those caused by conducting research during the Covid-19 pandemic. The chapter illustrates how I attempted to resolve some of these challenges. Finally, as the chapter draws to an end, it addresses the ethical considerations made in this research and how they impacted the fieldwork.

3.2 Plotting the research plan

This research is qualitative exploratory research which set out to observe and document the Sackcloth people's healing practices and cultural identity. The research explored how the Sackcloth people think and live their lives while focusing on their perceptions of healing. The objective is not to decide if these ideas are true or not true. The notion of truth is socially constructed and based on the cultural subjectivity of the people who believe in that truth. The research presents what the Sackcloth people believe to be their truth when it comes to cultural identity and healing (Cassidy, 1995: 22). The research uses grounded theory, which derives theories from patterns and themes the research makes from observations in the field. Qualitative methods like ethnography, grounded theory and narrative research were adopted because of the

nature of the study. This research approach allowed me to answer these questions around identity, healing, and cosmology. This is because this approach elicits the engagement and logic of the socio-cultural realm being explored. Before going into the field, the research design looked quite different to what actually unfolded. Some of the initial plans set out to answer questions relating to the Sackcloth people's identity and history by focusing on the responses of the leaders of the Sackcloth movement. The information from the elders and leaders of the group was going to be collated through in-depth one-on-one interviews. The discussions with the youth (over 18) were planned as focus group discussions. The research also hoped to use life histories to answer themes around history, land and identity. The research had hoped to conduct eight life histories to document the experiences of the Sackcloth people, the things that led them to the movement, and their past lives prior to the Sackcloth people's movement.

The research had set out to answer questions on healing practices and rituals through responses from the clients and Mountain Doctor leaders. Outsiders' perceptions of the Sackcloth people were going to be answered by the general public, where I planned to get responses from business owners, street vendors and workers in the area. The plan was to document responses from passers-by, shoppers, tourists, et cetera. These responses were going to be quick and short and rely on brief, 'soundbite-like' responses. Participants were going to be picked randomly. A similar strategy was going to be adopted for the clients; I planned to interview clients as they buy medicine from the Mountain Doctors' stands in the city. The idea was to ask them quick questions like how long they have been using the medicine, why they use it, and so forth. This plan was developed around what would have been a minimum of three field visits over a year. As the discussion will show, many obstacles emerged, pushing me to not only revisit the fieldwork plans, but also much of the research designs or the ideas I had around how the design would be carried out or who the main actors would be.

3.3 Entering the field

The fieldwork began soon after the conclusion of the proposal and ethical clearance in May 2021. The fieldwork continued right through to the end of 2022. This process was filled with various events and activities, two visits to the Western Cape, archival explorations in libraries, museums and important natural and heritage sites. Learning Khoekhoe during this period was also an important part of the fieldwork journey. The fieldwork process started in the middle of 2021, through to early 2023. My first arrival in Western Cape took place as the country was being moved from Level 2 to Level 4 lockdown⁵. This was due to the Covid-19 "third wave" which saw a drastic

⁵ Lockdown levels were set from 1 to 5 based on the risk of Covid-19. The levels were considered an alert system during the National State of Disaster. Level 1 was the lowest level, with minimal restrictions like mask wearing, social distancing and sanitising hands. Level 5 was the highest and was enforced when the threat of Covid-19 was high. Level 4 & 5 meant schools shut down; while commerce came to a standstill apart from a few industries considered essential services. Essential services included healthcare, industries linked to food services and production (restaurants were excluded from this category), hygiene services and a small handful of other industries (Government of South Africa, 2023).

rise in infections and deaths. This was because of the prevalence of the more dangerous and contagious Delta variant. The announcement made on 27 June 2021, meant reorganising the research plans. I arrived just days before the announcement. The restrictions that came with the announcement caused some disruptions to the research. My plan had been to start by contacting the Mountain Doctors in and around the city. I drove around to different locations where Mountain Doctors often set up and sell medicine. They could not be found in those locations. It was unclear at the time if this was because of the floods that took place all over the Western Cape on the first two weeks of my first fieldwork trip. The other possibility was the increased lockdown rules which placed tougher restrictions on certain social and economic activities in order to slow the spread of Covid-19. The other possibility was also the taxi wars that were going on in Cape Town at the time. This conflict meant most taxi routes were brought to a halt. In some areas, even buses were affected, either because they were not permitted to enter the area by taxi drivers and owners, or because the few buses in the area did not have the capacity to transport all the commuters. This was in part because of the demand that suddenly shifted to buses, and because public transportation systems were not allowed to carry passengers at full capacity due to lockdown social distancing regulations. The absence of Mountain Doctors in the city centres was most likely a combination of these things, making it difficult for them to access the city centres and different parts of Cape Town.

These challenges significantly delayed my first contact with the Mountain Doctors. Beyond struggling to find the Mountain Doctors in their usual spots, town as a whole was unusually quiet during my first three to four weeks in Cape Town. Even when I would go in search of them on comparatively warmer days when there had not been any rain, I would still find a very calm and quiet Central Business District (CBD). There were minimal cars on the road, few street vendors in the markets and sidewalks and some businesses were even closed or shop owners were either moving shop or closing down. My solution to dealing with this was to reach out to Bradley van Sitters. He has been an important strategic informant since 2019 and provided me with ethical consent to work with the Mountain Doctors. Unfortunately, he was unavailable to meet in the first two weeks I was in the field. This was in part due to a schedule clash; he had been expecting me since late May, but due to some administrative and finance office delays from the University of the Free State (UFS), I only made it into the field end of June.

The increased lockdown restrictions also negatively impacted my agility and ability to be flexible with my fieldwork plans. The plan was to visit Iziko Museums for exhibitions linked to my research and engage curators and museum staff. The University of Cape Town (UCT) library which I had also hoped to visit to access some materials and possible archival information, also added stricter restrictions to the public trying to access the library. These activities were postponed for later, when lockdown restrictions would be more relaxed, but unfortunately the UCT and University of the Western Cape libraries remained closed to the public even towards the end of my fieldwork when lockdown restrictions were far more flexible. The UFS librarians who were assisting me informed that this had been the case since March 2020 when South Africa first announced its lockdown. Even as lockdown levels were relaxed when the rate of Covid-19

infections slowed, these institutions remained closed to the general public and visiting scholars like me. This was an unanticipated challenge when coming into the field. The concern coming in was that I might not find as much information as needed at UCT's library after the African Studies Library was affected in the April 2021 wildfires. Accessing Iziko Museums was also a challenge. I tried to visit Slave Lodge, one of the Iziko Museums, which had a series of opening hours listed on their website. They were opening and closing at two-hour intervals and closing for the same amount of time and then opening again. I believe these irregular opening and closing hours had something to do with how the museum was handling the national lockdown. A few attempts were made to visit different Iziko Museums, but always found them closed.

I was finally able to visit Iziko Museum, the Social History Library, National Library South Africa and !Khwa ttu Nature Reserve and Museum during a second fieldtrip in late 2022. Unfortunately, UCT still denied me access upon arrival, despite having reached out to some of their departments beforehand. The UFS library had made a scholar introduction letter for UCT's library. Their reason for denying me entry was still Covid-19, despite the National State of Disaster having been lifted in April 2022 and no Covid-19 safety measures being followed on campus and in the library anymore. This caused some challenges as many of the Iziko Museum staff who assisted me informed me that many of the materials they believed would assist me were on long-term loan in UCT's library and other departments. Funding challenges got in the way and the museums trip ended up taking place late in 2022, although the plan was to do it early in the year. When funding finally became available from UFS's Humanities faculty, the money was still not enough, and I had run out of time. This meant more rethinking and reconstructing of the archive visit process. There were activities that could be done digitally before re-entering the field for this process. This helped because it freed me up to only focus on things that could not be done online. The archival fieldtrip did not have delays similar to the one in the beginning. This is because of working more with institutions and Covid-19 restrictions had been lifted. There were more participants to reach out to after having met many Mountain Doctors in 2021. I reached out to all the institutions I worked with weeks before entering the field and made prior appointments in cases where it was required. Even though the trip was based mainly on library and museum visits, I was able to have more brief interactions with some of the Mountain Doctors I had met in 2021.

The first few weeks in 2021's fieldwork were slow and fraught with many delays. The recovery plan included setting up a first meeting with Bradley, who would later connect me with Mountain Doctors from Kalk Bay. They would be the group I ended up spending most of my time with during the fieldwork. I also had discussions with Bradley on his experiences as a Mountain Doctor in the beginning of the fieldwork. I also happened to stumble upon an unfolding issue that I pursued in the first week following my arrival. It ended up being an important case study even though its link to the research seemed weak at first because it does not affect the Mountain Doctors exclusively. It is a battle over land, as retail giant Amazon was making plans to build its African headquarters in Two Rivers. Some Khoi and San groups were challenging this development, on the grounds that this area is an important cultural heritage site (AJ+, 2021). Even though I had some background knowledge on this story and the environmental and civil society concerns, I had

no idea that this matter was one that is close to the Mountain Doctors' hearts. This is because many Mountain Doctors identify as Khoi and San, and link much of their Sackcloth way of life to the traditions and history of Khoi and San groups. The story had randomly appeared on my Facebook feed a few days before leaving for Cape Town. It was surprising to see Bradley in the news insert covering how Amazon was threatening an important heritage site and water source. The story was covered by AJ+, an online news and current events channel run by Al Jazeera Media Network. I had saved the video as an important resource to return to during the fieldwork when there is a need to find more people to interview or issues to address.

The plan was still to meet various groups of Mountain Doctors first and have informal discussions and participant observations before diving into interviews and discussions. However, I realised early on that this plan was not going to work, and that I needed to be more flexible. The needed to be fast, in case lockdown restrictions were tightened even further was also a constant concern. Through this coverage and the people interviewed in it, it was possible to reach out to important leaders and activists challenging this development in the first two weeks in Cape Town. I made contact on Facebook and LinkedIn with Tauriq Jenkins, Chair at AIXARRA Restorative Justice Forum in the University of Cape Town's Centre for African Studies. I also reached out to Dr Naomi Roux on Twitter (now known as X), senior lecturer in the School of Architecture, Planning and Geomatics, and Prof. Leslie London, HOD of Public Health Medicine and chairperson of the Observatory Civic Association. Dr Roux and Prof. London are both from UCT. A virtual discussion was arranged with Jenkins, London and Roux, mostly organised by Dr Roux. These strategic informants oppose the Amazon development for environmental and cultural heritage reasons. I also looked online for other sources covering this story and was able to uncover additional important players whom were contacted, unfortunately not all with success.

Strategic informant interviews showed the most promise in the beginning, even though I initially thought they would be the most challenging to secure, and had planned them for towards the end of the research process. But working around people's schedules was challenging, even with the strategic informant interviews being more successful earlier on. The interview with Chief Khoebaha Melvin Arendse was one of the biggest breaks that helped get the process going during the first week. Chief Khoebaha is head of the Kei Korana, a subcultural Khoi group, and availed himself to talk to me. He is part of an alliance with Nguni groups, who he says are often excluded from land discussions or issues related to "Coloured" identity in the Western Cape. He believes there is more strength in focusing on the shared ideas, ancestry and practices rather than the differences that divide. He argues that this is how precolonial social life functioned, and they have created an alliance to mimic this. The alliance is called Ubiqua-San Kingdom and Kei Korana Transfrontier. I was able to locate and then contact Chief Khoebaha also through the AJ+ video and his own profile on Facebook. We had our meeting in their offices in Eerste Rivier. When interviewing Chief Khoebaha, I ended up meeting Prince Liefie Leisa, one of the leaders representing the Ubiqua-San Kingdom in the Ubiqua-San Kingdom and Kei Korana Transfrontier. He refused to be interviewed, often jokingly calling himself the behind-the-scenes man. He would

become a valuable gatekeeper throughout the fieldwork process when it came to finding people he thought would be important to interview.

I also made contact with groups who are in support of the development, including the city's mayor at the time, Dan Plato, Chief !Garu Zenzile Khoisan, leader of the Gorinhaiqua Cultural Council, and the developers, River Club. Chief Zenzile Khoisan is also the leader of the collective that is supporting the development. They refer to themselves as the First Nations Collective. Chief Khoisan's number was acquired through a mutual professional contact I had worked with earlier in the year. They facilitated an introduction, told Chief Khoisan who I was and what my research was about and got his consent to share his number. Many attempts were made to reach out to Chief Khoisan, but he never responded to any of my messages or calls. There is a paper Chief Khoisan wrote, titled; "Navigating a minefield to assert agency". The paper is a response to the Amazon development, and had planned to interview him about the piece and their support of the Amazon development. The paper can still be used as an important tool in the analysis when discussing this case study and issues around land affecting the Mountain Doctors.

Mayor Plato's office did not answer my emails for a long time. Many follow-up calls also went unanswered. On one occasion when a call was finally answered, the person on the other end refused to grant an interview with any of their representatives and stated I should read media articles to get the details. I mentioned that the media articles are overly edited, and my research would still benefit from an interview with someone from the City of Cape Town. They then added that the development is not the city's and therefore the city cannot speak about issues relating to the development. I questioned this by adding that the city has a responsibility to the people, especially if people are questioning the actions of the private sector. I also mentioned that the private sector cannot act without the city overseeing certain processes, especially those linked to environment and heritage. These are the main concerns interest groups have when it comes to the proposed development. The Mayor's office then added that I should rather email my questions, although I told them I would rather an interview even if it is only as short as 30 minutes. I added that this is mainly because this is a research interview and not a media one which might only seek brief talking points. I added I need detailed responses and much of what I would ask would be follow up questions based on the responses the city representative gives. A written interview makes this impossible and draws the communication out longer than necessary. I was finally given another city official's details. Our email correspondence was a lot like the phone call, the city basically avoided answering any questions, he tried to direct me to other people, including Chief Khoisan. Finally, he sent me a press release which was already available online, the city had sent out to the media a few months earlier. In addition, he said I should contact the developers, The developers also ignored emails and Facebook inboxes. In the end, I did not get any comments from those who were in support of the development. A lot of follow-ups were done, but could not spend too much time on this issue because it is just a case study, albeit a very important one, but there are other layers of the research that needed to be explored. I shifted my attention to those especially as the weeks passed and the fieldwork started to become more active. I continued to periodically reach out to the developers until mid/late 2022, but never received any feedback.

3.4 Data collection and participants

This section will provide a brief overview of the participants interviewed. It will also briefly discuss events or moments that led up to the interviews or how participants were met. This is just a snapshot of the fieldwork process. Many other observations and more detailed discussions of the interviews and the context within which they took place will be discussed in more detail in different parts of the methodology and analysis. This section's focus is on introducing the people interviewed, so it does not deal in detail with many other observations, rituals or experiences from the fieldwork. Many of these will be addressed in more detail in different parts of the analysis. During this research process I travelled all over the Western Cape conducting snowball interviews. Many of these had been in part arranged by other participants met or interviewed earlier on during the fieldwork. Existing participants would introduce or connect me to new participants and the sample would grow bigger and bigger. Often, I would tell the previous participants either about the kind of information or individuals I was interested in interviewing, or the kinds of experiences I was looking to observe or participate in, and they would direct me accordingly (Noy, 2008: 330). I would also often enquire from them who they would suggest I should talk to and the experiences they thought I would benefit from. This is how the snowball sampling happened throughout the fieldwork.

3.4.1 Following the Proposed Two Rivers Development

The first interviews done were those relating to the Amazon development. The plan was to follow events and resistance such as this one based on interviews and observations involving the main participants, the Mountain Doctors. When I struggled to reach them in the beginning, I had to rethink the strategy. It felt like working backwards, because media coverage on the story articulates how certain Khoi and San groups felt about the development, but there is no mention of the Mountain Doctors. Following this story was also a risk from a research point of view, because even though Mountain Doctors are often referred to as Khoi, it was unclear what the link was. I took the risk nonetheless, because it was an important land issue in Cape Town, and because it was mainly being challenged by environmental groups who were concerned that the developers were proposing to fill the Two Rivers and redirect the water in order to make way for new buildings.

There are also concerns that the area is a wetland and an important heritage site. Other interest groups include Muslim, Coloured, White and Black community members in and around Observatory, Woodstock and surrounding areas. These are mainly lower middle-class and middle-class communities. Some of the Mountain Doctors live or sell their herbs in these areas. Based on these intersections, the Mountain Doctors form part of the affected communities and expressed their general concern about the environment. This seemed to be an important case study worth following up. Seeing Bradley in a lot of the media coverage also confirmed that, because he was once a Mountain Doctor and this is an identity he still holds close to him, even though he no longer wears the sackcloth. One of the first things that stuck out in these early interviews with chiefs and

leaders opposing the Amazon development, was how many of the participants used “decolonial” names. Many would reject their Afrikaans or English names and replace them with traditional Khoi and San names, as is the case with Chief Khoebaha. The Mountain Doctors were more likely to change their names to Rasta names, something which is discussed in Chapter 5, although in some cases, they also reclaimed Khoi and San names. These are some of the participants from exploring the Amazon development story.

Chief Khoebaha Melvin Arendse: Kei Korana Transfrontier leader, a group which forms part of the Ubiqua-San Kingdom and Kei Korana Transfrontier alliance. This is an alliance which is a combination of Nguni groups and Khoi and San groups in the Western Cape. They tackle issues around land, heritage and the lack of formal recognition of Khoi and San leaders and chiefs in South Africa. Chief Khoebaha challenged the Two Rivers development because it affects both Khoi and Nguni heritage. He mentions that areas like Ndabeni and Maitland, which the river borders, are important areas of collective history between amaXhosa, abaThembu, amaMpondo and amaFengu. They settled in Ndabeni and Maitland and created alliances with the Khoi and San. Chief Khoebaha mentions that his family comes from these alliances, which were often strengthened through marriage, trade, and so forth. The protection of both his Khoi and Nguni ancestry are important for him and he sees this development as a threat to that history and heritage. There were also concerns about the quality of jobs people of colour would get during and post construction and the feeling that this was not a strong poverty eradication plan on the side of the elected city officials.

Prince Liefie Leisa: one of the leaders representing the Ubiqua-San Kingdom. Even though I did not interview him, he became an important gatekeeper during the research. He linked me up with other important participants who helped me explore the other dimensions to my research, those that deal mainly with identity and healing practices.

Prince Abrie Hector: leadership of the Ubiqua in the Cederberg. This interview was organised by Prince Liefie just after my first introduction to him. This was supposed to be a continuation of the land issues in relation to the Two Rivers development. While we touched on the topic, the discussion took an interesting detour to discussions around identity and the superficial making of Coloured identity. Prince Hector felt this was mainly constructed to remove Coloured people from their Khoi and San ancestry. He believes this still oppresses them today, under the new predominantly Black democratic government. This is because Coloureds are often not seen as forming part of South African indigenous groups. The result is that Coloured, Khoi and San communities get left out of important discourse on transformation, land and resource distribution. We discussed many other things, but the underlying theme to most of our discussion was issues around identity. He explored how identity can be used either to oppress or empower, and how it affects even the small decisions we make as we go through life.



Figure 3.1: Prince Hector and Prince Liefie at the alliance offices in Eersterivier (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

Dr Naomi Roux: Senior Lecturer in the School of Architecture, Planning and Geomatics at the University of Cape Town. She did her undergraduate studies at Rhodes University, where she majored in Fine Arts, then did her Master's in Heritage Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her PhD was acquired in the United Kingdom in History of Art. The main focus of her study was on heritage, public memory and transformation in Gqeberha, South Africa. Her research interests involve the connection between heritage, urban space and urban land, and the tension between heritage, development and transformation. It is because of this that her interest in this development was piqued, and the urban and spatial injustice she believes it will create or add on to in the city. Her role in the resistance to the development is as a researcher and activist. The interview with Dr Roux was done virtually.

Prof. Leslie London: HOD of Public Health Medicine and chairperson of the Observatory Civic Association (OCA). While there is some intersection between his profession in Public Health and concerns over the kinds of public health challenges the proposed development will create if environmental conservation is ignored, Prof London's main interest is as a resident in Observatory and as a member of OCA. There were also discussions on the kinds of jobs people would get, especially in light of the labour rights violations Amazon has made in America. Most of the people

the Amazon development issue was discussed with believed that Amazon's labour violations would be worse in a predominantly Black developing African country like South Africa. The interview with Prof. London was done virtually.

Tauriq Jenkins: Chair at AIXARRA Restorative Justice Forum at the University of Cape Town's Centre for African Studies. He is also a High Commissioner of the Goringhaicona Khoi Khoi Indigenous Traditional Council (GKKITC) and a member of OCA. His resistance to the development is mainly based on heritage concerns as the Two Rivers land represents the first site in the Cape to be colonised. Jenkins believes the land has importance amongst the Khoi and San because it is here that the first battles for land were fought between the settlers and the Khoi and San. He also sees it as an important burial site which should be turned into a protected area both for its cultural and environmental significance. The interview with Jenkins was done virtually.

3.4.2 Meeting the Mountain Doctors

My first interaction with Mountain Doctors was in the beginning of my third week in Cape Town when the Two Rivers development interviews has been finalised. I had got into the habit of driving around to different spots in town where I knew Mountain Doctors could easily be found. I would park and walk around a specific area, asking the street vendors about them. Every few days I would spend a few hours doing this, driving to different locations. One morning when I was doing this, I came across three Mountain Doctors. I asked them if they knew Levi and if he was around. They said yes and said they would show me where he is. Before they did, I asked them some questions very informally about who they were and why they joined the Sackcloth movement. I met these Mountain Doctors in the CBD, just off Darling Street, close to the bus and train station and not too far from where Levi's stand usually is. Their names are Napthali, Zebulon and Simon. Even though they are young and in their twenties and early thirties, they tell me they have been Mountain Doctors for 10 years or more. They tell me that the Sackcloth movement is a calling from their ancient people, the Khoi and San, and that their calling came through visions and dreams. They also tell me their work is a type of escape from bad things in society and bad things they have done; it is a type of repentance. Formal interviews were avoided that day because the goal was to focus on observations which would even inform the kinds of discussions the interviews would be based on. Even from our informal discussions I was confused by many of their responses, but I took brief notes, which did not make sense at the time. The notes made more sense after some time when I had been in the field for a longer period and I understood the meaning of certain phrases and the lingo. I bought some herbs from them and they took me to Levi's stall. Soon after meeting Levi, I was also able to meet many other Mountain Doctors through his help and I snowball sampled many of the other participants.

Levi: is considered an elder in the Sackcloth Movement even though he is only in his late thirties. This is because he has been a part of the formation for a long time. I think he has even lost count, he tells me it was since he was a child. He is also considered an elder because he mentored many of the younger Mountain Doctors, including some of the ones that brought me to him and many

others met during the fieldwork. He mentored some of the Mowbray, Saldanha Bay, Kalk Bay, Paarl and many other Mountain Doctors. I also know Levi in a more personal capacity. We met in 2015 and he helped me and various family members with some health challenges we were faced with at the time. We kept in touch until 2019, after which we lost contact. In 2017 when I was considering PhD and reading towards a proposal, I visited Levi, to ask permission to conduct my research on the Mountain Doctors. He welcomed the news. I often made time to visit his stall when I was in Cape Town for work and I would buy medicine. When we met during my fieldwork, he was no longer in the sackcloth, but he still identifies as being a part of the sackcloth movement.



Figure 3.2: Levi at his herbal store in the Cape Town CBD market on Darling Street (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

Bradley van Sitters: assists with lecturing beginners in *Khoekhoegowab*. The Mountain Doctors also sometimes refer to it as *Nama* or *Khoekhoe*, using the words interchangeably even though there is a small distinction between them. The course is offered at UCT. Bradley was a part of the team that worked on the development of this course, a joint initiative between UCT's Centre for African Studies and Khoi and San groups. Bradley travelled all over Western Cape, parts of the Northern Cape and Namibia learning more about different Khoi and San languages, but also

documenting other important aspects of Khoi and San culture and history that are either lost or not readily available. This work took place over years. Bradley originally joined this intervention as a Gorachouqua Tribe representative, led by *Kai Bia* (Head Chief/ King) Hennie van Wyk. The Gorachouqua Tribe was interested in the process so that they could also gain and share useful cultural knowledge. Bradley's role started as a Gorachouqua research liaison, where he was both assisting with the research and with bringing these two structures together. When he was no longer a Gorachouqua representative, he continued to work with UCT because his interest in the discourse had grown. He also finally got an opportunity to study towards his Master's degree and is currently registered as a Master's candidate. Like Levi, Bradley is considered an elder and has mentored many Mountain Doctors. Bradley is in his late 40s and many of the Mountain Doctors refer to Bradley when they talked about the first Mountain Doctors they met or knew. Even though he no longer wears the sackcloth, many would say Bradley wore the sackcloth longer than most. When he wears traditional attire, he mostly wears traditional Khoi and San attire in the form of animal skin. Many of the Mountain Doctors also do this alternation or combination of the sackcloth and animal skin, especially during rituals.

Arthur (Judah) Martin: also a Mountain Doctor who no longer wears the sackcloth. Arthur is in his late 60s and is one of the oldest Mountain Doctors interviewed. We met him through Bradley and would spend a lot of time with him and Bradley during my fieldwork. Arthur lives in West Lake and runs a mostly self-funded soup kitchen. Most of his funders are short-term funders or donors or individuals from different communities who help in whatever way they can. Arthur is from West Lake and in addition to his soup kitchen, he partners with surfers to teach the children from the community to surf at Fish Hoek Beach once a week. He sees this work as an important part of his Sackcloth work because he says the Sackcloth is about being in service to the community and offering healing, which he believes his soup kitchen and surfing partnership do. He also still works with herbs and ritualistic healing.



Figure 3.3: Bradley in animal skin and Arthur (standing) in a combination of modern clothes, sackcloth and animal skin. Picture taken during a rapé ritual at Elephant's Eye (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

Monty: also a Mountain Doctor who has transitioned into modern-day clothes. During rituals he often wears animal skins. Monty also goes by the name Tony and when he introduces himself, he adds; “My slave name is Timothy Maasdorp”, after which he goes into a long discussion either about the importance of names or language or the general erasure of Khoi and San identity by the colonial and apartheid governments. He lives in part of the Philippi Horticultural Area (PHA) which they call The Compound. Monty lives there with his family; the land is shared by a small yet growing community of fewer than 10 families who survive on subsistence farming. Many different indigenous herbs and plants also grow in the area. The then-owners allowed tenants to occupy a small piece of the land over 30 years ago. Over time, more and more people started to move to the area, occupying a bigger piece of land; the result is that the land is now contested and there is uncertainty over who owns the land. Monty believes some of the White owners fled the country and abandoned their land in this area when they thought South Africa might go into civil war just before the transition into democracy. Rasta, Coloured and Khoi and San communities occupied this land and promoted environmental protection by surviving mainly off the land and even using sustainable material like wood to build their homes. Some developers want the

community off the land, there is also constant conflict with the local government for a number of reasons, one being that they create their own electricity connections and link them from some of the main lines to their homes. This and the land occupation are just some of the many ways this community creates civil disobedience against a modern capitalist system. This system only offers goods, services and recognition to those who can pay for them and who conform to the neoliberal agenda.



Figure 3.4: Monty showing me around The Compound (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

!Kora: !Kora is his “decolonial” name, his birth name is Brian Damonse. We met through Prince Liefie. We met at his shop in Stellenbosch, which is called CBD Consultants. His business is a lot more formalised than many of the other Mountain Doctors’, but he tells me it comes from years of experience and challenges. His collection of herbs is also a lot more diverse. !Kora was in sackcloth in his youth and has also mentored many of those that came after him. He and many other Mountain Doctors would say that when they stop wearing the sackcloth, it does not mean they are no longer part of the sackcloth movement or Mountain Doctors. This is an identity they carry for life regardless of what they look like, and they continue to practise the lessons long after they have removed the sackcloth. A return to wearing the sackcloth is not something they are opposed to, especially when they are having difficulties or feel like they are being called back into wearing the sackcloth by a higher power. !Kora is also the Chairperson of the subcommittee on Registration, Accreditation and Education of Traditional Healer Practitioners of South Africa.



Figure 3.5: !Kora in his Stellenbosch Shop (Shange, 2021).

3.4.3 Meeting the Kalk Bay Mountain Doctors

It was clear after meeting Bradley, Arthur and the Mountain Doctors mentioned above that another difficulty in making initial contact with the Mountain Doctors was based on the fact that not all wear the sackcloth. The earlier assumption was that they all do. On some occasions, I passed Rastas or people not in sackcloth who were selling medicine on the street, who might have been Mountain Doctors who are no longer in sack, or at the very least, might have known how I could contact Mountain Doctors. Mountain Doctors are not allowed to wear modern-day clothes when they have fully immersed themselves in the Sackcloth journey. Very few of them wear the sackcloth for the rest of their lives. After a few years, usually anything from two to seven years, although in some cases only after decades, they will finally remove the sackcloth. Those who remove the sackcloth either never go back to wearing it, or wear it again for shorter periods of times (a few months to a couple of years at the most) when they face hardship or want to remember certain lessons or during important rituals. However, there is no rule or structure to this - it is all based on interpersonal decisions and guidance from other Mountain Doctors. Some told me they wore sackcloth for two years, stopped when they thought they were ready and had learnt the lessons, then lived out of sackcloth for a long time and then returned and wore the sackcloth for longer the second time

around. This was either because they felt they removed the sackcloth prematurely the first time, or because they believed they had even more lessons they were being guided to learn by their ancestors or community. Not knowing this context of how people come in and out of sackcloth when entering the field delayed my first contact. The early assumption was that they could all be easily identified by the sackcloth and ignored or did not consider other signs or ways to facilitate first contact.

The Kalk Bay Mountain Doctors are the first group I actively interacted with that were in full sackcloth. I met the Kalk Bay Mountain Doctors both through Levi and Bradley. They are a big group, but the main people engaged were Gad-Namibia, Chief Kingsley, Gad-fire and Dimitri. Others come in and out of the group for shorter periods; for instance Diamond, young Levi who was a new Mountain Doctor, and Terswin from Paarl, who works with this group when he visits Cape Town. Mountain Doctors create strong and compassionate networks with other Mountain Doctors all over the Western Cape. Depending on the nature of their connection, they teach each other different things about the trade, exchange herbs and offer each other general personal and social support. Some of the Mountain Doctors who came in and out of this group, I had hoped to interview later on, but that was not possible with everyone because of scheduling issues that developed. These are the Kalk Bay Mountain Doctors I met and some of their networks:

Gad-Namibia: Gad-Namibia is referred to as Gad-Nambia because of his birth month. The name Gad represents November in Rasta culture, and a discussion on names will be dealt with in more detail later. He is also from Namibia, hence, Gad-Namibia. He is also often called Ancient because of his deep wisdom and knowledge of sackclothness and because he is an elder who has taught many of the younger Mountain Doctors. Ancient is another term that the Mountain Doctors also typically use to refer to elders or mentors, even when the mentors are young. They are still referred to as ancient/elder because the wisdom and knowledge they have would typically only be expected from a much older person. He snuck into South Africa in the 90s and started living life as a Mountain Doctor. He dreams about going back to Namibia to visit his family but fears he would not be able to get back into South Africa if he did. He has missed out on the loss and burial of his parents and other important family members because of this. His brother lived in Cape Town for a long time, but eventually moved to Tanzania and Gad-Namibia misses him a lot. They had a difficult relationship because the brother never understood Gad-Namibia's journey. There was a brief period of a few years when Ancient was not in sack and he said he did this to make his brother happy. Even though he misses his brother, he says his brother's move allowed him to reclaim his Sackcloth identity and be true to himself. He often tells stories about Namibia and tells us often that one of the reasons he came to South Africa is because while people of colour are treated badly in South Africa, he feels it is worse in Namibia in some regards. He worries that in Namibia there is not as much activism and political discourse on past and current oppressions, which in some ways makes the situation worse because people are silent or silenced and their oppression is normalised. Ancient is considered one of the first (in recent years) to have revitalised this movement in Cape Town. Many I spoke to argue that the Sackcloth movement has had many rises and falls throughout history, but the more recent rises especially in the city centre in Cape Town

are thanks to people like Ancient, Bradley and Jesus, someone fondly referred to by this name by the Mountain Doctors because he looks like the Biblical Jesus is thought to have looked.

Chief Kingsley: is a chief within the Gorachouqua Tribe, led by *Kai Bia* Hennie van Wyk. Chief Kingsley is also one of the Mountain Doctors passionate about reviving *Nama*. He lives in Muizenberg. During the fieldwork, when we would come across children, he would often gather them around, teach them easy *Nama* songs, teach them how to count in the language and give them a brief history on the language. He also raps in a combination of different African languages, as well as English and Afrikaans, and creates public art alongside the Mitchells Plain community and famous graffiti artist, Mak1one.

Gad-fire: Gad lives in Kalk Bay with his partner. He is in his mid-20s and has always been intrigued by the Sackcloth Movement and became friends with Gad-Namibia who started teaching him about the culture. The movement became a safe space for him when he lost his job which was linked to his artisan studies, because he tested positive during a random drug test for using weed. He was almost done with his studies but was suspended. As he was planning to re-enrol in 2020 and complete his practicals, the lockdown was announced, and he decided to instead continue exploring the Sackcloth journey. His partner, who works in the corporate environment and is studying Human Resources on the side, supports his journey but worries about him because the work is dangerous. She worries about him especially because he does not inform her on his movements as often as she would like. Gad was very helpful during the fieldwork and he introduced me to most of the other Mountain Doctor networks encountered throughout the research. Even though he was not interviewed due to running out of time towards the end of the fieldwork and he was not feeling well the week the interview was scheduled, I still learnt a lot from him and he offered a lot of much-needed support.



Figure 3.6: Gad-fire and Chief Kingsley (Shange, 2021, Cape Point).

Dimitri Collins: moves around a lot and mostly works from Paarl and Mowbray, at times also with Levi in the CBD, but mainly with the Kalk Bay Mountain Doctors. He is from Lavender Hill, but his partner lives in Paarl, so he splits his time between the two areas. His partner was also a Mountain Doctor for a while but left when she fell pregnant and had to find formal work. Unfortunately, scheduling issues made it difficult to interview Dimitri's partner especially because he only mentioned late in my fieldwork that his partner had been part of the Sackcloth Movement. Dimitri is only in his mid-20s but is considered an elder in the movement because of how long he has been a part of it. He says he cannot remember how long he has been a Mountain Doctor because his interest started when he was in high school. He eventually dropped out of high school because of how challenging it was to get an education. He mentions having to walk hours to school, constantly being in trouble because he could not afford proper shoes and did not have the full uniform. He felt isolated in school and always had conflict with why he was being punished for things outside of his control. He mentions the Sackcloth Movement offered him the support and

nurturing he should have gotten from school. Dimitri was interesting because he is both a youth and an “elder/ ancient” in the movement. Initially he was identified as someone important to do a life history on, and interviews were done with his sister and mother earlier on in the fieldwork.



Figure 3.7: Dimitri Collins (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

Angelique Collins: is Dimitri’s older sister. They are very close, and both live with their mother in Lavender Hill. Angelique tells me she did not understand Dimitri’s path in the beginning, but he has taught her a lot about the Sackcloth Movement. She says she looks up to him and his journey and also wishes she had the courage to follow the same path. She jokingly calls herself a Mountain Doctor, although she says she might not wear the sackcloth or follow the same way of life on a day-to-day basis. Nonetheless, she agrees with the movement’s core beliefs which she views as the revitalising of African practices and ideologies.

Florida Collins: is Dimitri’s mother. She is the main caregiver for Dimitri’s and Angelique’s children. She also adds that she did not believe in Dimitri’s path in the beginning. Despite the difficulties, she wanted him to stay in school and make a better life for himself. She says she now supports his journey and decisions. But says she still worries about him because there are a lot of financial struggles that she has to come up with solutions for, especially when it comes to raising his children. Some of her other worries are about if the path Dimitri has chosen clashes with

Christianity or not, but tells me she learns a lot from Dimitri. They spend long nights debating religious topics and the path Dimitri has chosen. He helps her see the intersection between Christianity and Rastafarianism, which puts her a little more at ease. Religion is very important to her. She turns to Christianity for comfort. She says she asks God for forgiveness because she believes her struggles with alcoholism when she was younger have caused disruptions to her family and she does not have a close relationship with her eldest son as a result. Alcohol became an important escape for her because she had been in an abusive relationship. She says her children raised each other because of all these challenges and because she worked far away and only came home on weekends. She says even though she sent money home, she knows it was not enough and her kids often had to come up with solutions to financial challenges themselves. She feels they needed a mother and wishes she had had the opportunity to raise them.

Terswin: was 22 years old when we met in Paarl. We met through Dimitri who mentors him. Most of our visits to Paarl were to trade herbs or look for herbs like Buchu in different nature areas. We made many trips to Paarl and frequently met other Paarl Mountain Doctors and Rastas. It was difficult to conduct interviews especially because of the early lockdown curfew at the time. Different Mountain Doctors came and went during our Paarl visits, but Terswin was relatively constant. One day after a late lunch and when a lead for trading herbs had not materialised, there was time before we had to make our way back to Cape Town. I asked Terswin for an interview and he agreed. Terswin joined the movement when he lost his sister, who passed away in 2020. When the interview was done in August 2021, he had only been a Mountain Doctor for 7 months. He says his sister was his friend, his support, his provider. When she passed away, he struggled for a long time and the Sackcloth Movement helped fill the void and gave him the support and guidance he missed getting from his sister. A lot of Mountain Doctors pass through Paarl, usually for herbs like buchu. Paarl is famously known for its easily accessible buchu and buchu factories that extract the sap from the plant to create a dense, clear liquid. He is able to engage with other Mountain Doctors as they pass Paarl. He also often goes to Cape Town to get the solidarity and mentoring he needs from the Kalk Bay and other Mountain Doctors. He says even though he has found a lot of comfort in the Sackcloth Movement, the journey is still very lonely. There is guidance from the Rastas, but there are subtle differences in their paths, and they are not always able to provide the support he needs. He gets some support from an elder who used to be in sackcloth, but even this support is limited because the elder no longer does this kind of work full-time. It is uncommon for Mountain Doctors to go through their experiences alone, partly because of how difficult it is. They create networks of support for each other and move around in groups of as little as three and as big as ten or even more when you consider other groups that form part of a certain network but are not part of their day-to-day community.



Figure 3.8: Terswin from Paarl (Shange, 2021, Paarl)

3.4.4 Travelling to George and Papa P's funeral

Soon after meeting the Kalk Bay Mountain Doctors, I expressed my wish for them to be the main group I spend time with during the fieldwork. They were excited to work together but mentioned they were planning a trip to Pacaltsdorp, George, for a funeral. They called the funeral a “planting”. They believe when we pass on, our bodies are “planted” back into the ground to complete the cycle of life. The planting was for Paulen Alaart, who everyone called Papa P because they saw him as a father figure in the community, despite being so young. Papa P was in his late 20s when he passed away. He was an environmentalist, activist and community leader. He ran many programmes and civil disobedience campaigns, including land grabs for small-scale farming and space for people to gather socially. He also sold herbs and encouraged the community to use indigenous medicine when faced with different health challenges. He also rescued horses that

farmers or horse racers abandoned when they were old, injured or sick. He taught children in the community how to rehabilitate the horses and how to ride them when they had recovered.



Video 3.1: Mountain Doctors, Khoi and San traditional leaders and Rastas sing and wave Ethiopian inspired Lion of Judah Rastafarian flags, singing and celebrating the life of Papa P (Shange, 2021, George) (Click on on [UFS Figshare link here](#) to watch video)

Papa P worked a lot with the Mountain Doctors and identified as a Rasta, so his planting made for an interesting observation for this reason. But it was also a way to maintain contact with the Mountain Doctors, after struggling for weeks to find a group that would be the main participants. I was also informed there would be many Mountain Doctors at the planting, which would also give me an opportunity to conduct interviews. Unfortunately, It was not possible to do a lot of interviews because this was in some ways my first ethnographic entry into the field. Listening and making observations felt more important than conducting interviews. If I had rushed to conduct interviews, they might have ended up not being strong because I would not have gotten to know the participants well enough, and I might not have asked the right questions. The week we spent in George was also very busy, from the long drive from Cape Town, to long drives to nature reserves to pick herbs like African potatoes and wild carrot that are more commonly found in this area. Most of the Mountain Doctors met in George, I met during the planting ceremony, and it did not feel like the right time to approach them for an interview. So, I used the trip mainly for integrating with the Mountain Doctors, getting to know them personally and gaining their trust. But on our last night in George, Honorable Mihlali was interviewed. He kept asking a lot of questions about my study and was teasing me about being a quiet researcher who does not bother people with questions.



Figure 3.9: A lot of the children in the community wore these tribute t-shirts during Papa P's funeral (Shange, 2021, George).

Honourable Mihlali: from George. We met at the planting. He seems to identify more with the Rasta aspect of his culture. It was the interview with him that made me realise I was looking at the different cultural identities that the Mountain Doctors practise in ways that are too structured and segregated. At times I would ask them questions like, “Do you consider yourself a Mountain Doctor or a Rastafarian, or what is the difference between the two?” These kinds of questions puzzled many. There is much more of a fluidity and intersection between the cultures and how they apply them to their lives. Honourable Mihlali is also a master bread maker and when we cooked food in the fire, he kneaded the bread for a very long time and explained that even cooking is an important ritual. You have to touch and connect with the ingredients and where have come from. Honourable Mihlali is also a media professional, interestingly straddling the ancient culture and the modern world, and working in the social media space, videography, photography and marketing.



Figure 3.10: Dinner in George prepared by Dimitri and Honourable Mhlali. The food was prepared outside in the fire. We always did this when we were together. We would use some of the old herbs and other wood to create the fire. The ash from the old herbs gave the bread and things we cooked directly in the fire great flavour. The soup in this image was prepared in a three-leg cast iron pot and herbs like wild garlic were used in the preparation (Shange, 2021).

3.4.5 Meeting the Saldanha Bay Mountain Doctors

The Kalk Bay Mountain Doctors frequently talked about a man they call Jesus in Saldanha Bay. They call him Jesus because he has mentored more Mountain Doctors than most people and they call his mentees his disciples. They often fondly say they call him Jesus because he looks like what they imagine the real Jesus looked like and not the European version we see in modern-day depictions. We finally travelled to Saldanha Bay to meet him and his disciples and spent the day with them in town.

Jesus: Jesus's other name is Samuel Malouw. He was in his late 60s when we met. He sadly passed away a few months after our interview. He had been a Mountain Doctor most of his life and said he could not even remember how old he was when he decided to wear the sackcloth. When asked if he would ever stop wearing the sackcloth because of his age, he said no. He added he was used to it and worried that if he stopped, modern-day clothes might feel uncomfortable to him. He told me he does less of the hikes and long walks looking for herbs because he realises he is an old man. But he has taught his disciples well, so they know the herbs, and when they have picked them, they share them with him so he can also sell them and make an income. He does go looking for herbs with them when the journeys are less arduous.



Figure 3.11: Jesus in town where he sells his herbs (Shange, 2021, Saldanha Bay).

Francois West: is one of Jesus's many mentees. He is 22 and joined the Sackcloth Movement when he was 19. He says a vision inspired him to join the movement, he kept having dreams of himself wearing the sackcloth. He believes these dreams were a calling for him to join the movement. He wants to still be in the movement for a very long time but says he does not see himself being as dedicated as Jesus. He believes that there are lessons he was brought to the movement to learn and once he has learnt all of them, he sees himself reintegrating into modern-day life.



Figure 3.12: Francois West, one of Jesus's disciples in Saldanha Bay (Shange, 2021).

Carlton Julies: is 27 and no longer wears the sackcloth, but he previously wore it for seven years. He tells me that he also introduced his girlfriend to the movement, and she was also in the sackcloth for a while. They still consider themselves Sackcloth people even though they are no longer wearing the sackcloth. Carlton is also one of Jesus's disciples.



Figure 3.13: Carlton Julies is in the foreground of the image, wearing the green jersey. He poses with Jesus and some of his disciples and the Kalk Bay Mountain Doctors. They are making the claw of the lion of Judah. The lion of Judah is a very important symbol in the Rasta culture and is often depicted in the green, yellow and red Rasta flag (Shange, 2021, Saldanha Bay).

3.4.6 Mowbray Mountain Doctors

I met the Mowbray Mountain Doctors during my last week of the first fieldwork trip, although there were efforts with the Kalk Bay Mountain Doctors to integrate with the Mowbray group sooner. But after a very slow start to the fieldwork, when things picked up, it became harder to keep up, so this process kept being pushed back. Observations were made where they worked and lived, interviews were conducted, went on hikes for herbs and visited a Rasta community in Hout Bay where most of them stay, all in a very short period. Some of the Mountain Doctors met in Mowbray are from George, and they have close ties with the Mowbray Mountain Doctors and are good friends with each other; they also often exchange herbs. The George Mountain Doctors came to Cape Town to pick wild garlic in this case, but they had been struggling to get to some of the areas. When we met, I offered to go with them, and we planned the trip. On the day of the wild garlic trip, there was a huge storm which made the hike impossible. Determined not to leave Cape Town without the garlic, we drove around to other areas which had less rainfall, where they knew

they were likely to find the garlic. When we found the area, we realised it was private property, so they asked me not to join because I would slow them down should they have to run from the owners, police or employees. I dropped them off and they called me in the evening when they were ready. They instructed me to keep my car lights off when I got to the spot where I had dropped them off in the morning. When we met in the evening, we discussed how the hike for garlic went, and they told me it was very successful, but they were almost caught. They were lucky because the grass was very long, and the brown sack allowed them to camouflage themselves. I asked them what they thought would have happened if they had been caught and what had happened in the past when they were caught. They told me one or all the following would have happened had they been caught: They told me the herbs would be taken away and disposed of because a lot of the time the landowners do not know these herbs are there or know what they do. They might have been shot at if they tried to run, which is why hiding was the best option when they were almost caught. But they also add they were lucky because the grass was long, they would have had to run if it was not. They also say the police would have been called and they would have been arrested and given R2000 fines each or they would have been beaten by either the landowners, their employees or the police.



Figure 3.14: Mowbray and Kalk Bay Mountain Doctors: (from left to right) Joseph Scott, a friend who was visiting, Gad-Mowbray, Simon, Gad-fire, Dimitri, Terswin and Napthali-George (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

Daniel: is 22. He was one of the Mountain Doctors who went on the garlic hike. His name is associated with the month of October, his birth month. He had been in sackcloth for a year or two, but told me he had been dealing with herbs for seven to eight years. He believes his sackcloth journey started almost eight years ago as a teenager because the sackcloth journey is not only about wearing the sackcloth; he says it is more than the sack. It is a belief system which he has held for longer than the two years he has been wearing the sackcloth. His name and his month are also associated with being the judge or the backbone of the community and he believes he exhibits these qualities. He is one of the many Mountain Doctors who, while he values his Rasta name, also feels a closeness to the name his parents gave him. He says his parents loved the name Gorshwin, so he must love it too, and it still forms part of an identity he cannot reject or run from.



Figure 3.15: Simon and Daniel (holding the pipe) (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

Napthali-George: also came with us on the wild garlic hike. The name his parents gave him is Reuben. Coincidentally the name Reuben is also in the 12 Tribes of Israel, which are significant to Rasta identity. The name Reuben represents the month of April. Reuben still changed his name to Napthali because it represents the month of January, and he was born in January. He also has a

fondness for the name Reuben because it came from his parents and because he feels knowingly or unknowingly, they connected him to the Rastafarian way of life when they gave him a name linked to Rasta beliefs; a way of life which he now holds dear. He says he felt a need to explore Rastafarian culture, because growing up, Rastas around him assumed his parents named him after the Reuben tribe. When he started questioning, he learned he was Naphthali not Reuben. Naphthali is from George and we had crossed paths during Papa P's planting. He was one of the people I was supposed to interview before leaving, but my schedule got too busy and I ended up leaving without doing many interviews. When I asked him why he does not wear sackcloth like everyone else, he told me he used to, and he planned on doing it again soon. But he also added that the movement is about more than just the sackcloth, even though the sack has important symbolism. He added that he will always identify as sackcloth, even when he is not dressed in the sackcloth.

Gad-Mowbray: also came with us on the wild garlic hike. Gad-Mowbray lives in Hout Bay with his partner and their child. His community is almost a Rasta utopia. It is on land he says the Rastas occupied a long time ago; some have been living there for decades. He mentions challenges with the municipality who he says wants to gentrify their neighbourhood. The municipality is telling the Rastas that they have illegally occupied this land even though they have never been threatened in the past. He is originally from Retreat in Cape Town but moved to Hout Bay when he started his own family. He says he has been in the Sackcloth Movement a long time, but came to it through Rastafarianism. I get these kinds of answers a lot because the Mountain Doctors do not make a big distinction between Rastafarianism and the Sackcloth. He tells me a neighbour used to teach him the Rastafarian ways and he identified as Rasta at an early age. The sackcloth journey became an almost obvious transition because of the similarities between Rastafarianism and the Sackcloth movement.

Simon: is 29 and is originally from Saldanha Bay. He says his ambition in life is to heal the nation and that is what informs the kind of work he does. He tells me he moves around a lot, there is no single place he considers a home because the work of finding herbs and bringing them to more densely populated areas requires that he move a lot. When we met, he told me he had just come from being in the Eastern Cape, mainly in Mthatha, but that he moved around a lot in the Eastern Cape as well. Wherever the work takes him, that is where he goes, and he can spend, weeks, months or years in and out of the area.

Joseph: is from Mitchells Plain and he is 29 years old. He says he has been a Mountain Doctor for over 10 years, since roughly 2012, but it started off gradually. He first started learning about the herbs. Then, after some time he learned the benefit of not wearing shoes when you do this kind of work. He believes being barefoot connects him to the environment and gives him a better understanding of the herbs. So, for years he walked barefoot before even wearing the sackcloth. He only finally started dressing in full sackcloth around 2019.

3.4.7 Womanist⁶ Mountain Doctors

Sister G: is one of the few female Mountain Doctors interviewed. We met through Chief Kingsley. She lives in Mitchells Plain and has moved around a lot. We met her in Mitchells Plain where we spent the day together while she taught me more about the Sackcloth Movement. We experimented a little with graffiti and later on when schools were out, the children in the area joined us, and we played, sang and had a really fun day. She is a mother of four, although her children are all grown up now. My discussion with her was long. She lived as a Mountain Doctor for almost 20 years and told me she tried to raise her children in this culture and went as far as rejecting school because of its Western nature. She insists her children are educated and she taught them more than what most learn in school, stating that they have a deep knowledge and appreciation of the natural environment, and of plant medicine. She adds that she taught them to read and write, she taught them history and everything she believes they needed to know. When asking her about the masculinity in the culture, she says it is not because the life is too difficult, and women can't handle it as many male Mountain Doctors might say. She says the reasons differ for many women, but most female Mountain Doctors leave the movement when they become mothers, as they often have to consider formal work in order to raise their children and they are not allowed to come to work wearing sackcloth. This creates a challenge for many and they are forced to leave the movement. This was the main reason for her as well. Even though she considers herself having been part of this movement for the last 20 years, she was only in sackcloth for four years. She stopped wearing sackcloth soon after she had her first child because she had to focus on motherhood.

⁶ Womanist means Black women or women of colour; a phrase often used in feminist discourse to highlight the difference in experiences and challenges Black women face compared to Black men or the different complexities Black women/ women of colour face compared to White women. It also highlights that while White women and Black men also make up marginalised groups, sometimes the repression that Black women experience comes from these groups (Walker 1983, xi).



Figure 3.16: Mak1one in the background, Chief Kingsley and Sister G (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

Rosinna Shoshole: is Jesus's wife. My interview with her was very short because she is very shy. At first, I thought she was uncomfortable with being interviewed, but she insisted she wanted to continue. She asked me to excuse her shyness. Her answers were very brief. We had also run out of time by the time I was interviewing her, so it was not always easy to probe because of this. We met while dropping Jesus off at home, we came in just to greet. Then it came up in conversation that she was also a Mountain Doctor when she was young. I asked her for a quick interview. Jesus introduced her to this way of life. She only stopped when she had a child because the herb trade was unstable, and she needed less risky formal work. She tells me even though she no longer wears

the sackcloth, or picks herbs to sell, she still believes in a lot of the cultural ideas and practices of the Mountain Doctors. She respects the natural environment, does not eat meat, and believes in tapping into indigenous knowledge when it comes to navigating the challenges of modern-day life.



Figure 3.17: Rosinna at her house in Hopeland (Shange, 2021, Saldanha Bay)

3.5 Challenges in the field and some solutions

There are many challenges that were encountered during fieldwork and the research process. This section will unpack just some of the major challenges experienced during fieldwork and how they were managed. One of the major obstacles which was already discussed briefly was doing

fieldwork during the Covid-19 pandemic. This came with a lot of complications, from the anxiety over potentially getting Covid-19 and what this would mean for a study that had already experienced multiple delays. What would this mean for the existing research strategies, especially considering so many others had to be dropped or adjusted? Would further changes weaken or dilute the study? Would they put me too far away from my original goals, thus making the research unsuccessful? Of course, there was worry about my general health if infected with the virus. But even these fears were in relation to the research because PhD study consumes you and makes you think of even important things like health and wellbeing as secondary to the goal of the research. I worried if I got sick, how long and severe would my symptoms be? Would I be able to continue with other parts of the research while waiting to recover? Would I be able to successfully do certain things virtually? What would it mean for my study if I was sick for a long time, considering the amount of money and time that had already been used towards the fieldwork? Where/how could I find more resources to conduct the work if I got sick for a long time and had to extend the fieldwork? These were some of the more personal fears and challenges in relation to my experience doing ethnographic fieldwork during a global pandemic.

There were certain big research milestones that made me less anxious about this worst-case scenario. One of them was when I was starting to spend more and more time with the Kalk Bay Mountain Doctors and I was learning a great deal from them. I would reassure myself to say, even if big setbacks arise and I do not leave with what I came for, I would still be leaving with enough because there was so much learning. Some of the experiences exceeded my expectations and those experience could potentially make up for what was “missing”. Some of the other challenges were external and also had a negative impact on the study and the goals set out. Some of these complications were directly or indirectly related to the Covid-19 lockdown and restrictions. Others were general challenges that would have been experienced beyond the lockdown. These included things like difficulties multitasking during the fieldwork process and how sometimes this negatively impacted my ability to do more rigorous documenting. But before getting into these details, it is important to discuss some of the Covid-19 related challenges and some of the successes and failures in dealing with them.

3.5.1 Conducting fieldwork during the Covid-19 pandemic

In the first month of fieldwork, which was the month of July 2021, lockdown curfews presented some challenges. Different lockdown levels carried different curfew hours, where all the people who were non-essential workers were expected to be indoors by a certain time. Even as my research was starting to show some promise in later weeks during the month of July, it was difficult to keep the momentum. This is because activities that could have been done in a day had to be broken up over two or more days because of curfew. It was not always easy to get people to avail themselves for a second or third day to continue the research. Most of those I made these arrangements with, I struggled to arrange another meeting with later on. The curfew hours under lockdown Level 4 were very early. No-one was allowed outside after 21:00. I would often try to

ask participants if I could meet them as early as 7:00 or 8:00 and get to observe them all day, do a few visits to important cultural sites if possible and eventually do the interviews. The early meeting proposal was a challenge because even though some were still working from home or unemployed, they had to prioritise work or ad hoc labour and/or social and family responsibilities. There were some cases where people did not understand why the request was for the whole day because they were more familiar with researchers who spend a short time with participants for a quick discussion or survey. I would have to try and explain as simply as possible what ethnography is and why I had picked this approach over quick interviews or questions. Others were happy to do interviews but not with the idea of me just lingering around. Those who would agree to the full ethnographic encounter, even if it was just for the day, would be surprised to see the day drawing to a close while we were not finished with all the plans set out for the day.

Because I knew even before I encountered this challenge that follow-up interviews/ engagements are usually difficult to set, I would try to prioritise certain things. The idea was still to let the exploration be guided by the participant, based on what they believed to be the most important thing for me to learn. Striking a balance between what the research needs and where the participants were steering it was not always easy. But in most cases, I benefited from taking a step back, retrospectively, I realise if I controlled the process more, more would have been lost than what was gained. One example where I had to balance the activities planned by the participant and the needs of the study was my first meeting with Bradley and Arthur. We had driven around the neighbourhood, and they were showing me important sites, herbs and just some important life stories relating to their journey as Mountain Doctors and Rastas. When the day was drawing to a close and we had to drive to one more place, I had to say to them that I was very excited to see the place, but enquired if they would mind if we did the formal interview in the car first. I was worried about letting both go without at least doing an interview on one of them. Setting follow-ups with two people would be harder than just setting a follow up for one. Seeing Bradley in the beginning was a struggle and it was not clear if this would be the only encounter together. There were many other encounters after the first meeting, but they were always very busy. At times they involved other people, so interviews would not have been possible during those moments. In a way it helped to make my main priority for the day known, which was to interview one or both of them. We had to bargain and negotiate to strike a balance that worked best.

Bradley advised we could do the interview at the last place we were going to, just so I had an idea of it, and we would skip the tour to make time for the interview. The benefit of allowing your participants to lead the research, is that agreeing to this compromise is how I met Monty, who lives at The Compound we were going to. Monty later also became a very important participant who would be involved in rituals witnessed. He would later give me a tour of The Compound which I visited many times during the research, sometimes just to do participant observation. The decision to still drive to another location was a difficult one to make because of the worry over making curfew. The Compound was far and I still needed to consider the time it would take to drop Bradley and Arthur off at their homes and drive back to the city where I was staying. The plan had been to do the interviews in the car and then conclude the day. But had I not listened to Bradley's advice,

the whole Compound experience would have been lost. All the other times I met Monty after this first encounter were busy rituals or experiences where I was so busy documenting or participating or doing both, it might not have occurred to me to ask him to visit him at The Compound first to just “hang out” and observe and only later do interviews. I would not have known the rich experiences to be learned from The Compound visits. This was the experience with many participants I did not meet within the context of the research. It was very difficult to either pull them or myself away in order to conduct interviews or get acquainted with them so that we could plan some research activities around their experiences.

It was also hard to know if I would meet people again under less busy circumstances, Papa P’s planting is another example of this. I was able to meet some participants later during the fieldwork, while with others, I just had to live with not doing interviews on them or more detailed participant observations. On the day I met Bradley for the first time and many other nights during my fieldwork, I would make it back to my place after curfew, trying to avoid the police as I rushed to my place. Even after the country was dropped to Level 3 at the end of July after a month of Level 4, curfew was only adjusted by an hour to 22:00. This was still too early for me, and I still often found myself making it home long after 22:00. What was often better was if I managed to arrange to sleep over at the participants homes, but this was usually based on my relationship and closeness with the particular participant because I did not want to impose or be too invasive. Staying with participants for a night or longer at times was also often determined by things like distance and the activities. If the activity was big and we had to perform it somewhere far like Paarl or George, then a sleepover might be arranged to ensure enough time. This was just one of the ways I tried to navigate the tough lockdown restrictions versus the massive needs of the study. At many other times, I did not have this option at my disposal, especially before making contact with the main participants, the Kalk Bay Mountain Doctors. Then I would either have to leave sooner than I would like if there was some kind of ritual or activity going on. Or, if I thought the delay was not a big one, I would push to stay until they finish, but I would mostly end up on the road outside of the curfew restrictions.

3.5.2 Dropping research goals and restructuring fieldwork plans

One of the main research goals was to conduct life histories on Mountain Doctors to track their journey and discuss events that might have led them to this path. The life histories goal posed many challenges when I got to the field. This was mainly because of the time constraints and financial challenges. The life histories were supposed to be a deep exploration of around eight Mountain Doctor youth. Life histories were going to be used to answer themes around history, land and identity. Roughly eight life histories were going to be done to document the experiences of the Sackcloth people, the things that led them to the movement, and their past and life before the Sackcloth movement. Each person’s life history was going to be researched from multiple viewpoints. The first would have been the individual’s own experience, which might be followed by how community members, friends, parents, religious or community leaders and others viewed

the same events or experiences narrated by the Mountain Doctors. Case study analysis might also be an effective way to contrast the observation and participant feedback when constructing life histories. If there were similarities between my findings and past events, or if past events impacted the participants' experiences, then the case studies would have added an additional layer of analysis (Babbie, 2010: 308). Life histories were important because they provide the research with the opportunity to look at a single event/ moment/ individual or life experiences from multiple levels and different perspectives to get to the plurality of it.

This process can become time-consuming. When I first plotted my flexible fieldwork strategy, I had planned to spend two or more months working on nothing but life histories. The plan was that I would enter the field for a month to conduct pilot fieldwork which would help inform what the important experiences to explore during the main fieldwork would be. The pilot fieldwork would consist of observations only. It would allow me the opportunity to start introducing myself to possible participants and establish some trust. This would help me get into the main fieldwork with relative ease when I returned a second time and would also help me avoid many of the challenges I experienced, especially in the beginning of the fieldwork. The pilot fieldwork would also be a helpful tool with considerations of what needs to be addressed in the literature review, what the interviews should look like, and the kind of things I should probe, while also helping to test if the literature used for the proposal was accurate, reliable and up to date. Possible life history participants would have been identified during the pilot fieldwork. The pilot would have been important preparation which would ensure the success or failure of the life histories goal. I would leave the field at the end of the pilot and use the time that would come next to plot a flexible research strategy and review whether the goals I made in the proposal would be achievable, while making any necessary changes before making the main entry into the field a few months later.

The next proposed step in my pre-Covid-19 research plan, was the main entry into the field. Depending on how the study went, this would have lasted for a period of anything from three to six to nine months. During this time, I would be making observations, conducting interviews, asking more questions and probing. I would also be travelling and doing the full ethnographic process, immersing myself fully into the Sackcloth movement. In reality, I was forced to just jump into this step of the research. Again, during this process I would have still had the life histories in mind. I would be documenting details on which communities the life history participants were from. I would be documenting important moments and experiences that shaped them when they were youngsters, who the important actors in their lives were, and how they could be reached. I would be documenting all of this to work as both a travel itinerary and a research strategy. It would help me decide who I needed to speak to in each community, and how much time I would need to spend in each area depending on the number of interviews that would have to be done. The plan was also to determine the most cost-effective way to move from community to community so that I would not have to come back multiple times to the same community to interview different family members of different participants, etc. Once I had this relatively detailed plan, I would leave the field again. Then I would spend the next few months or weeks making calls to people and sending introductory emails or social media messages if possible. I would suggest dates I would be in the

area and arrange meetings. Then the plan was to enter the field again one last time, to focus only on the life history follow-up interviews with family members, friends, teachers, etc. While the research still largely followed the timelines above, the research plans, structure and activities differed from what was initially envisioned.

With all of the disruption lockdown created, achieving the life history goal in the way originally planned would not be possible. I had planned to spend anything from ten to twelve months in the field, over a period of a year or slightly longer. In reality I only went to the field twice, for a little over four months, over a period spanning slightly longer than a year. In between the two field trips, I focused mainly on writing the literature review and methodology and learning *Khoekhoe*. I also spent a lot of time applying for funding to allow me to reach as many of the research goals I had originally planned. Unfortunately, I was only able to secure a small grant, which also came late in 2022. This meant that many research goals and hopes to explore more Mountain Doctor groups in different provinces had to be cut, and that only the most important things, like archival visits, were prioritised. The first trip was long and is the main component discussed in the methodology. Though I tried to make the second shorter trip a month or two long, funding constraints made it difficult to do this. It ended up only being a little longer than a week. My second fieldwork trip ended up mostly focusing on important archives in and around Cape Town and only a few participant interactions and observations. Even if I had been able to pull off the desired longer trip, life histories would still not have been possible without the crucial pilot study which also had to be eliminated due to funding issues and various research delays.

When I first joined the field, as I was identifying possible life history participants, I slowly started to realise how difficult it would be to achieve the life history goal while also exploring the other main research goals, given the previously discussed challenges and limitations. In some ways I had already started this process and I had managed to interview Dimitri's sister and mother. I had also planned to interview his girlfriend. Moreover, I identified someone in Cape Town who would make a good life history participant, and as I was interviewing them, they told me they grew up in Saldanha Bay. Had circumstances been different, we would have visited Saldanha Bay a few weeks earlier. Finances and time limitations would not allow me to revisit Saldanha Bay a second or third time during the short research period, especially not to only conduct a few interviews. Also, because most of the Mountain Doctors move around a lot, I realised I would be travelling all over the country just tracing the life history of one person. There are a lot of commonalities in the places they grew up in, places like Paarl, Beaufort West, George, Mthatha, Coffee Bay and others, and it would not be possible for me to track these commonalities while in the field and juggling other things. It was important that I leave the field and analyse and plan and go back in again, but this was not possible as I had already lost a lot of time.

Another reason that led me to drop the life history goal, was my ethical obligation to do no harm and to drop any probe that might unintentionally cause harm. A lot of the people who I would approach about doing a deeper study on their lives expressed discomfort in me doing this. Some left their communities to join the Mountain Doctors because they were running from being forced

into gangs or from abusive families. Some expressed that their families never understood their decision to become Mountain Doctors and there was still a lot of tension between them and their loved ones. My presence and questions would add onto that. Even Dimitri's family, who have learned to accept his choice, told me there was a lot of conflict when he first introduced this practice to them. I also realised that Dimitri's school life was harsh and revisiting that would not be easy for him even though he had said he did not mind. Dimitri also dropped out of school very young, a little over 10 years ago, and the likelihood that the same teachers were still at the school and would remember him was slim. The long drive and exploration which might lead to repeated visits did not seem worth it because funds were also low. Even though I dropped the life history goal, I do not think the interviews done with Dimitri's mother and sister are useless. They did provide some valuable insight about how they as outsiders relate to Mountain Doctors. They also talked about the dangers of the work, but more from a position of fearing for his life as his family members. They also provided an important feminine perspective, showing that it is often the important women in Mountain Doctors' lives that allow them to perform this kind of work. The women find ways to fill in for a lot of the Mountain Doctors' family and social responsibilities while they are away for long periods, or when the harvests do not bring in enough money. These and other reflections and experiences they shared would be useful in the data analysis and in various themes I will address.

3.5.3 Research through observations: recording and documenting challenges

Learning through observations and participation presented some challenges. Everything seemed important and I was eager to absorb and document as much of it as possible. This was not always possible during observations, not without splitting my attention. This can be perceived as rude and sometimes made me miss what was happening in the present moment and I frantically tried to take notes, pictures or videos. There were many moments where a conversation seemed important, but I would not know how to even begin summarising it or taking notes on it. This was usually during moments when I was doing participant observations rather than interviews. This was because a lot of Mountain Doctor cultural practices were so unfamiliar. This coupled with the lingo and Rastafarian-like way of speaking meant I missed a lot, or could not even begin to articulate my confusion so I could get clarity. It took some time to learn the lingo and how the words change meaning in different contexts. Like how *I-n-I* can mean the self or individual, you or the person being spoken to, and it can mean the general community or more likely other Rastas or like-minded groups. Once I had learned that the context the word is being used in, is sometimes more important than the word itself, then documenting general discussions or observations became far easier.

Documenting from memory was also easier rather than trying to multitask as other important things unfolded. But I had to be actively listening rather than listening passively in order to understand these complexities. I would be listening while also considering how some of the words were used in different conversations and considering how the usage is different in that moment, often being careful not to interrupt the flow of the discussion unless I was really confused about

something. At times when I would enquire about the meaning, I would not get an explanation that helped me understand. The Mountain Doctors had learnt the words over time in very organic ways through social life and did not consider their differing contextual meaning until I would ask about them. So, it took some time to understand the lingo just through being around the Mountain Doctors. This made it difficult for me to decode or interpret what was being said in ways I would understand later when either recording or writing daily or weekly reflections. In these moments I had to convince myself once again that just being present in the moment was more important than constant recording and asking of questions which sometimes slowed the flow of interesting conversations. The questioning would also often remind them that I am a researcher and an outsider, in that moment of remembering they would almost go back to being guided. So, it was important for me not to ask questions and rather to learn the meaning of the words through my day-to-day encounters and only start to be more detailed in documenting when I had cracked the code. It also helped that I did most of my interviews in the middle and towards the end of the first field trip. By then I understood the lingo and I did not have to interrupt discussions to ask the meaning of words.

Another challenge to the recording and documenting process was the volume of activities we were often engaged in on any given moment. This was another thing that made it difficult to constantly ask the meaning of words or what context they were being used in, especially when they were used in ways I did not understand. The word would be coming up in a ritual, chant or prayer, which were not ideal moments to interrupt just so I could accurately document. This limitation went beyond the words, it was also in the processes themselves where I was actively involved in a ritual while also trying to document or record what was happening in some way or understand the meaning or symbolism behind certain rituals or activities. I had this challenge during the *rapé* ritual which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven. I had a lot of reflections and moments of realisation during the ritual, but I do not remember all of them because of the challenges around note-taking, especially while with the participants. There was always chaos, always something going on and it was hard to try and take everything in or document everything. I also forgot some reflections because they happened during the ritual or immediately afterwards, when I was going through all the feelings and the emotions and trance-like states. I would not come out of these processes remembering every detail. The newness and unfamiliarity of certain practices and beliefs made it difficult to retain the information for later documenting. Another challenge to remembering was during rituals that led to a trance. One's way of thinking and processing is different and unfamiliar to the "normal" way of thinking when one is not under a trance. In some ways, things get lost in "translation" because the mindset is totally different when writing about the experience, to what it was during the experience.

3.6 Data Analysis

Grounded theory specifically attempts to investigate the real world, usually through data. A goal of grounded theory is to discover the participants' main concern and how they continually try to

resolve it. The questions that the researcher should continue asking are, "What's going on?" and "What is the main problem of the participants and how are they trying to solve it?" (Borgatti, 2006). Grounded theory does not aim for the "truth"; grounded theorists understand the importance of context and social structure. Glaser and Strauss (1967) recognise that the processes of data collection, coding and analysis cannot be separated. They believe that this is an improvement from the traditional positivist research that refuses to join these actions. Positivists see them as separate steps that have to be followed one by one. The researcher cannot move into the next step without completing the previous one, and the researcher is limited from the possibility of simultaneously utilising these steps. Grounded theory instead encourages flexibility (Addison; 1989: 41). It was this flexibility that helped even as the study was experiencing ethics delays. Rather than waiting for stages like the proposals and ethics to be complete before moving onto what was next, I forged ahead to the literature review between moments where I would be waiting for feedback from ethics. When I finally received ethical clearance, I took a step back from the literature review reading and writing process to prioritise the new needs of the study and immediately entered the field.

Even during the fieldwork, I found myself disrupting the set-out steps. Through my journaling and weekly written reflections, I was already analysing and making sense of some of my findings. This ensured that analysis would happen with far more ease. I made critical observations when the data and experiences were still fresh in my mind. When writing my final analysis, I was less burdened by an overwhelming amount of data. The weekly reflections while detailing the experiences and observations also identified important themes that needed to be explored. I made notes of theories to consider that might be useful in a particular theme, or considered opportunities where I could apply my own theorising guided by similar theoretical discussions. For example, as I was learning about the important process of changing names that many Mountain Doctors adopt from Rastafarian practices, I was already analysing in the weekly journaling on the long colonial history of using names to strip people of their identity. While having this discussion, I was reflecting on the value of a name, especially surnames in African contexts, because names in many cultures are not just about naming a person, they are about cultural belonging. They are linked to history when they are performed in the form of praise poetry and provide an individual's history, origin, and story, including which land their families owned (Gunner, 2004: 99). A single name change from an African name to a Western one can erase all of that. I interrogated the decolonial effort the Mountain Doctors take in renaming themselves. I considered the meaning of the new names and possible identity shifts or realisations they might have. Far more detailed discussion on this will be provided in Chapter 5. Writing reflections or memos is also a strategy encouraged by grounded theories because it assists the research with what is called theoretical sampling. Memos help the researcher take stock of what has been done, and which issues have reached saturation and no longer need further exploration. They help the research determine where further probing is needed, which questions have to be asked, and which sample is best suited to answer them (Draucker et al, 2007: 1139). The researcher must remain flexible while doing all of this and must be open to changing research participants, interview questions, the style of questioning, or even the overall approach if the study requires it (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:177).

3.6.1 Narrative approach in ethnographic research

The narrative approach is an important decolonial tool in that, just like ethnographic and grounded theory research, the emphasis is on allowing participants to lead the study and tell their stories without the burden of the researchers' perceptions. It is through the narrative approach that the colonised can begin to re-examine and rediscover themselves, other people, and the world around them. This rediscovery helps marginalised groups start to see themselves in empowered ways rather than as an extension of Western discourse. This makes the narrative approach an important one for both method and analysis (Sanders, 2011: 270). This is another reason why the narrative approach has been used in this research. The participants narrate their daily lived experiences and in doing so dispel some myths and take control of how they are depicted. As the research moves towards the analysis and discussions of common themes, it makes it a point to periodically represent some of the discussion in the exact ways the Mountain Doctors articulated them. In doing this, I avoid relying only on my interpretation and understanding of those discussions/ quotes, and create space for participants to narrate their experiences and their own understanding of themselves. This will also allow the reader to construct their own understandings and build possible critiques on my analysis or interpretation. While not African, the narrative approach is an important methodology for studying historically oppressed groups like the Mountain Doctors. Its flexible participant-centred nature creates room for people who have been silenced to speak with their own voice, while allowing African scholars to explore more relatable methodologies and ways of knowing.

Malawian historian and novelist, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza (2009: 130) warns that Western epistemic traditions detach knowledge from those who possess it. They present it as some 'objective' truth produced by the researcher with scientific methodology. It limits the emergence and applications of different ways of knowing, and of reflecting on knowledge. Western discourse formation claims distance and objectivity and universality, when in fact knowledge is socially constructed. South African anthropologist Pearl Sithole challenges even this notion of Western knowledge being portrayed as universal and suggest that the West has its own indigenous knowledge which it imposes in other contexts as scientific, objective and universal (Sithole, 2011: 82). This approach is often debilitating, often ignores, and excludes minorities or oppressed majorities, like people of colour and women. These groups are still marginalised even as we move towards more inclusive scholarship. They are either left out or not included in strong enough and intentional ways (Mama, 2003: 102; Sithole, 2011: 84). Zeleza calls for a localisation of knowledge, one that reconnects culture to political economy. The narrative approach can contribute to this localisation, as the decolonial self shares their experience. The researcher documents them as they are, without manipulation or modifications. This method takes seriously the idea that context, whether local or global, shapes knowledge production. It is for this reason that I adopt the narrative approach, to counter the erasure and exclusion often found in academia. Western methods are dominant in institutions of higher learning, and such dominance limits the emergence of alternative thoughts and ways of producing knowledge, or places alternative thoughts as just that, alternative and peripheral. Otherwise, they are depicted as only important insofar as they can be juxtaposed with

Western thought, usually in support of Western thought. This kind of knowledge production constitutes a form of control, meant to change how the colonised people valued their being, their culture and knowledge systems (Zezeza, 2002: 16).

The narrative approach helps to re-centre African thought because it details the participants' experiences from their point of view, leaving very little room for erasure or misinterpretation of information. Participants re-examine themselves, and by narrating their everyday lived experiences from their own social and cultural perspective, using their own language, cast away the colonial alienation. I would often witness this in the ways the Mountain Doctors would proudly find ways to add to the almost extinct to South Africa, Khoi language, *Nama* or Khoekhoe. Khoekhoe consists of dialects of Nama, Dama and Hailom spoken in Namibia, as well as South African Nama, plus the varieties once spoken by the early Cape herders (the Khoi, Khoikhoi or Khoehoen), including divisions of the Cape Khoi, the Griqua, Korana and Gonaqua (du Plessis, 2019: 36). Namibia is the main source for the revivalism of Khoekhoe for Mountain Doctors and groups interested in *Khoekhoegowab*. This is why at times some participants use Khoekhoe and *Nama* interchangeable, even though there are slight distinctions between them. The Namibian influence has been shared across borders as part of South Africa explore the language. This effort is often led by indigenous people, cultural and academic revivalism efforts. Mountain Doctors find opportunities to celebrate and practice Khoekhoe in many different ways, sometimes in our interactions during interviews, rituals and greetings. I also found myself greeting in *Nama* and understanding very basic *Nama*. It is through the process of knowing themselves that they are able to know others and explore and discover their external world (wa Thiong'o, 1987: 94). For the Mountain Doctors, reclaiming *Nama* is one of the many ways they try to know themselves, their history and culture. When Africans start to put themselves at the centre of their own knowledge systems, language and culture, they stop seeing themselves as an extension of or alternative to "mainstream" Western ideas. Many of the recorded interviews had Mountain Doctors speaking in *Nama*. They would often translate the meaning. But the spelling and grammar of the words and phrases were not always known to me. As part of the analysis process, I decided to learn *Nama*. It took a few months to find someone who offers shorter-term online courses, but I was able to find a tutor from Cape Town on Facebook. Toroga became my *Nama/ Khoekhoe* tutor. Toroga is a Khoekhoe name he adopted later in life; he is also known as Denver Breda. Toroga has also published poetry in *Khoekhoe* and has been involved in other revivalism projects including documentaries and various media, art and cultural appearances and campaigns. He has also developed a beginner's guide to *Khoekhoe* called *Khoikhoi: Useful words and phrases*, which he self-published in 2021. This guide also became an important resource that formed part of my learning and the research analysis process. The guide is mainly for children but can also be used by adults who have little or no exposure to *Khoekhoe*.

Some of the lessons included historical lessons on different discourse and approaches to writing the language, including debates over the number of clicks that exist - some argue four, while others argue as many as six. I also learnt there are "common" words, Nguni and Afrikaans words, that come from different *Khoekhoegwabs*. Embedded in the lessons there were also interesting facts

like everyday words and names of places like the Karoo have *Khoekhoegwabs* origins. The word “Karoo” means a dry place; in a way a descriptive word, because the Karoo in the Northern Cape of South Africa, is a semi-desert. These lessons helped me to better understand different meanings and interpretations of *Khoekhoe* words and phrases that had been used by Mountain Doctors in interviews. They also created ease in my analysis process, as I did not have to outsource this service as I initially thought I would have to. Detailed notes I had taken, and recordings of the lessons were also useful months later when I was listening to interviews, transcribing, and analysing the data. This process allowed me to better immerse myself in the ethnography and narrative approaches. It helped me better connect with the participants, even if it was months later, and it strengthened the analysis. Outsourcing this service to a *Khoekhoe* translator and language expert would have resulted in them providing simple translations and would have transcribed the work in the approach they have adopted. I would have missed out on the discussions on the various meanings of certain words. Having this background allowed me to better discuss some of the nuances of certain *Khoekhoe* words and their multiple meanings. It provided a richness to the analysis that would otherwise not have been there.

The limitation to this approach, especially in a study of this size, is that many participants were interviewed. While they have some things in common, they are not a homogenous entity all holding the same views and ideas on every part of social life or the cultural rules they live by, and while there are commonalities many of them share, it is also important to represent the plurality and diversity in the thesis. Unfortunately, this was not always possible. A lot of important discussions had to be left out because there were other, more important, discussions. In some cases, interesting findings had to be left out because they detracted too much from the main discussion. At other times it was because the discussion would become long and repetitive. One example of this was the interesting, almost ritualistic, ways Mountain Doctors greet each other. There was already interesting preliminary analysis I was considering. I considered the psychological restoration that must take place when one is made a priority in this long greeting that would sometimes last as long as an hour, especially if there was a big group. I considered the love and intimacy in the practice, something which is usually missing in male friendships, especially between African men. This is to avoid being labelled as homosexual which many consider “anti-African”. Some believe this perception came from patriarchal colonial practices that emasculated African men and the apartheid government pushing heteronormativity in oppressive ways (Gevisser 1995: 69; Rudwick, 2011: 93, 95). Despite many Mountain Doctors holding similar beliefs when it comes to homosexuality, when they perform their ritualised greetings, this concern becomes obsolete, and they embrace each other and give each other much-needed love, care, and support, listen to each other’s pain and provide guidance. There is a lot more that could have been unpacked about this ritual, its psychological healing potential, its importance for men who struggle because of love derivation and these feelings and actions often being attached with weakness or femininity (hooks, 2004: 16). But because there were many other similar discussions in various sections, this discussion could not be built further. This in part was/is remedied by various book chapters and journal publications that are (or will be) based loosely or closely on this research

process. These shorter pieces allow for more targeted discussions on a singular issue or phenomenon linked to this study. These limitations have the potential to create some challenges or weaknesses to the analysis and research as a whole. There were also complexities in trying to represent all the differences and contradictions; a challenge which can provide much-needed depth and further dispute the idea of a single objective truth encouraged by Western scholarship.



Figure 3.18: The ritualistic greeting usually includes a hug, bowing and finally holding each other's wrists (as depicted on the right) while they recite a prayer. They hold each other's wrists to feel each other's pulses which they believe connects them better to each other (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

When doing research on indigenous groups and poor or marginalised communities, deeper consideration of ethics is even more important, partly to ensure that the research does not unintentionally or unknowingly exploit the participants. It is also important for reassuring participants who might not have a good history when it comes to working with researchers or people from other professions, like government officials, politicians or journalists. These are just some of the outsiders that often come to a community seeking something, be it votes, a story, business opportunities or some kind of buy-in. Promises are made and are not always delivered on. I also happened to be conducting my research during political campaign season. Campaigns were for the upcoming municipal elections which took place at the end of 2021. As a result, there were moments when people's guards were up. When explaining my reason for coming to their

community, some people would get confused about exactly why I was there. One of the first questions they would ask is; “Are you sure you are not a politician?” Once I would make it clear I was not, they would ask me to explain again why I was there. I did not always get the ethics right; in a way it is impossible to get the ethics correct all the time. No matter how ethically sound a study is, our work at its core is exploitive as researchers and scholars. Scholars enter communities to extract knowledge that for the most part will advance them as individuals in their studies or careers. It will also benefit the institutions they belong to far more than it does the communities they extracted the knowledge from. Researchers might share their findings with the communities in the end, but for the most part the community is left out of engaging with the work. This is because they cannot even access the libraries which the research is housed in, and many of the institutional standards required that the knowledge be veiled in complex theories and academic jargon that people might not understand. The knowledge is also in English, which is usually not the language of the community the study was conducted on. But even with these limitations, the research must ensure as much fairness as possible and avoid harming the participants.

Anonymity is one lesson from the field that showed that ethics is not as clear cut as the academy sometimes presents it. There are far more complex blurred lines. Many of the participants shared very deep and personal stories with me about their journey in the Sackcloth Movement. They told me stories of time they spent in jail or prison, being harassed by the police and landowners when they are on their trots. They told me how they have watched friends killed for trespassing while trying to get to important Khoi and San heritage sites which sometimes are in the middle of White farmers’ land. Some of these stories would pre-empt me to ask them again if they were sure I could share their real names in the research. My insistence that they remain anonymous or be given pseudonyms almost offended some. In fact, no one I interviewed asked to remain anonymous, not even after I explained the possible dangers. I explained the implications especially in cases where there is a lot of risk because I was interviewing someone who might be wanted by the police for selling weed and other herbs like hoodia which need a licence to sell.

I would tell them that if the police come across this work, they might be able to attach the name they have to a face or get a clearer idea of where they can be found. They would laugh when I say this and tell me that the police do not read, adding that, if they did, they would not hate Mountain Doctors because they would understand why their work is an important part of Khoi and San heritage. And they would know that even The Constitution gives them cultural and religious freedoms to do this kind of work. Some would say, they know their stories are dangerous and sharing some of them can potentially put them in trouble later if the “wrong” people read about them in my research. But to hide means they are ashamed of their experiences, and they are proud of what they have gone through, even the painful parts. Others also felt insulted by anonymity because they felt this is how researchers historically stole important cultural and indigenous knowledge and presented it as their own, while having gathered it from communities who are the custodians of that knowledge. The Mountain Doctors would tell me that people do not think much of them, because they do not have a lot of money and they reject modernity. At times this leads people and institutions to treat them poorly. They would tell me if I hide their names and faces,

people will not get to know the valuable role they play in society; they would tell me that they are scientists, chemists and doctors, and people must know that.

Keane (2021: 30) adds that;

In a rural community research project “the notion of the research anonymity was viewed [by elders] as insulting and condescending. No-one wished to be anonymous. The concept is largely fictitious anyway: when the research derives from an actual setting and events.”

According to Keane (2021:30), anonymity also suggests that the research participants are embarrassed of the knowledge they are sharing, while the researchers will walk away with valuable knowledge that they will put their names to. In several of Keane’s indigenous research studies, the elders received the promise of ‘confidentiality’ with confusion and suspicion. It made no sense in a project where the community all knew each other and relied on trust and transparency in their understanding of interconnectedness, and it did not make sense for them to hide from what they are sharing (Keane, 2021: 30). In the end, I decided that I would not share certain stories, especially of those who are wanted by the police. While the research does address discussions on Mountain Doctor challenges, these experiences do go a little beyond the goals of the study. These experiences were mainly summarised in more generalised ways and the discussion quickly moved on to discuss the more commonly shared experiences. While in the field, I even had my own run-in with the police. Those experiences are leveraged instead of sharing stories that might expose participants to harm.

The Rasta names also unintentionally provide a certain level of anonymity because in most cases the names are so common. As some discussions in the analysis will show, there are only 12 names, based on birth months, so there is a lot of commonality in names that are already common names, even outside of Rastafarian practices. In most cases, the police only have the official given names of the Mountain Doctors they are looking for. They tell me the police seldom have their pictures, detailed descriptions or other important information or identifiers. They also seldom have their Khoi or Rasta newly adopted names. These are the names they give when arrested for other smaller things. Their “new names” are hardly ever connected with the bigger cases they are linked to. I have also in many cases avoided revealing surnames, which means they are less traceable. This is the balance I have made between not causing erasure through the anonymity that the Mountain Doctors question, and not recklessly exposing all details and events that can cause harm. I have also avoided disclosing certain locations where participants pick herbs. There is a danger to doing so because sometimes these places are privately owned land or land overseen by South African National Parks (SANParks) or other environmental and conservation bodies that would rather not have the Mountain Doctors on the land.

One of the experiences I really struggled with when it comes to the issue of confidentiality is Ancient. He refused to allow me to hide his identity even after having shared with me his experiences of having being imprisoned in Pollsmoor Prison and the fact that he is in the country illegally. There is a lot of other sensitive information he shared with me during our interview that made me repeatedly enquire if he is sure I should not hide his identity, because even though

Ancient or Gad-Namibia are not his real names, everyone knows him by these names. I asked him repeatedly about changing his name to protect his identity and he would jokingly say no because he wants to be famous. We had long debates about the risk. In the end I conceded when he highlighted that in a way, Ancient or Gad-Namibia are his pseudonymous because they are not the names that appear in his formal identification, that these are decolonial names he gave to himself with the help of the Rastas. He argued that the Namibian or South African formal authorities are not aware of these names. I decided even as I share images in the research, I would not share any with his face, although I think he would be a little upset with me for not “making him famous”. I believe this is the best way to honour his wish while avoiding harm.

He would often tell me how happy and humbled he is that a learned person would care to learn from him and his life experiences. He said he felt seen, and this made him happy because his interactions with people are often that they ignore him altogether or fear him because he forms part of what people would consider homeless. I suspect this is another reason why sharing his identity is so important to him, because it makes him feel valued. He does not usually feel seen in a city that strips him of his rights and identity and sees him only as a homeless person. Ancient hates the homeless categorisation for anyone, but more specifically for himself. He would often say the mountains and the caves where he sleeps are his home, that he has a bigger home than anyone else because the mountain looks after him, feeds him, provides him resources like shelter and wood for fire just as a home would provide to the people living in it. Visiting his cave, he would often say even the super-rich do not have a view as beautiful as the one his home gives him. He would often also add that the land of his Khoi ancestors is his home. He emphasised that you cannot define a person as homeless, because you strip them of their belonging and humanity because you are saying they belong nowhere. Belonging nowhere is also often attached to Coloureds. In South Africa, Ancient would be classified as a Coloured person, even though he rejects the classification. The belonging nowhere of “Colouredness” is because of they are “mixed race”, neither Black nor White, and they have hybrid cultures based on their origins (Wicomb, 1998: 102). Ancient struggles with this notion, he sees himself as an African first and frames his cultural beliefs around nature, land, ancestry and belonging. He would tell us that everyone belongs somewhere. This an additional layer to why anonymity was so problematic to Ancient and other Mountain Doctors who either live on the streets or in caves or the natural environment.



Figure 3.19: Early morning view from Ancient's Home (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

3.7.1 Observations from Levi's Store

Observations from Levi's store made me think a great deal about the potential harm in my research and in research goals drafted with the hope of unpacking patients' experiences. I visited Levi a few times during my research, often "hanging out" with him for a couple of hours or the whole day. He is very friendly and gets along with everyone. When I visit Levi, I always find him around people, offering them comfort or support in some way. People come to him just to talk and debate about life or smoke. Many of his patients stick around long after he has sold them his medicine just to talk or listen in on conversations that they found taking place between Levi, his friends, other vendors and other patients. Patients and friends talk about everything, including numerous personal issues that brought them to Levi. Many of the men passing by ask about herbs that can help them perform better at sex, and Levi sells them wild red carrot, sometimes supported by other medicines like buchu and wild ginger. Most Mountain Doctors say most of their clients are women, but they add that most of their male patients approach them seeking help for sexual impotence. All the medicines are sold with advice on what the other benefits are and even suggestions on lifestyle changes. He tells the men that the red carrot will help them with their prostate as well, while the

buchu will help clean their kidneys and enhance general holistic healing which will give them the energy they need to perform better in bed.

Other patients come asking for *mpepho* because they fear there are evil spirits in their homes because they have experienced more hardship than “normal”. Many were dealing with job loss, more deaths than “usual” and not just Covid-19 related concerns. Others come for *mpepho* because they are having trouble sleeping. One young man explained he had a court case the next day and he needed to burn the *mpepho* that night and in the morning so that his ancestors could be closer to him during the trial and protect him. Time spent in Levi’s store made me think a lot about my goal of going there and observing him and his patients. I do not think I would have been allowed to do that by the ethics committee if I had proposed I would do this in the offices or practice of a biomedical doctor or clinic. In those moments, I started to see his stall more as a clinic rather than a shop. I think I missed this realisation earlier because he and other Mountain Doctors do not run their practices the same way African herbalists and spiritual healers would. One of the stark differences is that Mountain Doctors almost always go out to their patients, usually in neutral and accessible places like train stations or in town. Other African healers usually require their patients to come to them, where their practice is usually in their home. They also sometimes go to the patient’s home or less crowded natural spaces. Some Mountain Doctors also do work in similar ways, but tend to focus more on being in spaces that allow them to reach the masses. Levi had raised some concerns but said he did not mind if I spoke to his clients, as long as I was honest about who I was and what I was doing. He added if someone became uncomfortable, I must stop my discussions with them. Even from the smaller brief encounters detailed above, something felt wrong about what I was doing. I still could not quite put my finger on why it made me uncomfortable. So, I decided to hold off approaching or talking to patients for the purposes of my research at first. I thought I would delay this research step just for a little while. When I had the realisation later, I decided to remove the research goal entirely. It was meeting **Zandile* (pseudonym) that made me realise what was wrong with what I was doing when probing into the patients’ lives.

3.7.2 **Zandile’s story and rethinking harmful research goals*

I met **Zandile* one afternoon. She was a first-time client, a young woman, probably in her mid to late 20s. Levi’s stall is always busy with people, and it seems that the more people there are, the more others are attracted to the stall. **Zandile* seemed hesitant initially. Levi and a few of the other Mountain Doctors are uncomfortable with convincing or converting people to their way of life. He argued it is wrong to recruit people, and that people who join the Sackcloth Movement or use their herbs have to do so willingly. He argues that when people make decisions that are not right for them, even if the decision is good, the consequences are not always good. He makes an example of some family members believing that young family members join the Sackcloth Movement because they are bewitched or have been peer pressured into joining a “cult”. He believes the same is true for his patients; they have to come to him with an open heart. He says sometimes he comes

across sick people who he knows he can help, but he has to try resist the urge to try to give them medicine, especially because there is such a big negative stigma attached to the kind of healing the Mountain Doctors do. Some link it to witchcraft or question their knowledge of the herbs and their functions, or they just prefer Western medicine.

**Zandile*, a Xhosa woman, approached Levi, and he told her he would help her shortly, but Levi was already helping me and other patients buying various herbs for various reasons. Occasionally he would ask the new patients if any of them are buying just buchu or *mpepho*, as these sales go a lot faster and he tried to help these clients between cutting, mixing, and grinding herbs for the other more complex patient needs. I had also wanted to buy some herbs that day to post to my family in the evening. But when other patients kept coming, I told Levi he could prioritise them, that I was not in a rush. **Zandile* was one of the last patients to arrive, but had already been waiting around five minutes and she was getting a little anxious. Levi turned to ask her how he could help her; she was very brief and just said she needed something for luck. Levi said that he would help the other patients first and get back to her. But I could see she seemed a little uncomfortable, so I asked Levi to attend to her. And reminded him I was in no rush; he could mix my herbs when the buzz had gone down. He asked her again to explain what the issue was, and she said “luck”, that everything in her life is going badly. He asked how, and she started by detailing her love life, saying that everything is going badly, and that men just leave her. Light-heartedly he told her that there is something wrong with the men, not her, and that she must just carry on dating others until she finds someone. But while they were having this conversation, he was starting to mix herbs for her. Occasionally people interrupted their conversation to quickly buy *mpepho*. Levi turned his attention back to **Zandile*. She added that she cannot just keep leaving men or letting them leave her because it puts her in a bad light in the community and makes her look promiscuous. Levi adds that she cannot stay in a bad relationship or be with a man who does not love her just because she is worried about stigma, at this point I was also agreeing with Levi. She started to get emotional and added that it is everything that is going wrong, not just her relationships. She added that she had just lost her job the day before with no warning. She believed the issue was lack of luck because other colleagues had not lost their jobs and she framed this against the backdrop of the failed relationships, money problems, and so on.

We talked at that point about the difficulties of Covid-19 and the lack of leadership that has led so many to experience further repression and challenges as a result of the global pandemic. Other clients and I were adding in words of encouragement and comfort. Some also shared their stories of how difficult the pandemic had been. The load **Zandile* was carrying seemed big and everyone felt her pain in that moment. The buzz of multiple conversations even temporarily stopped while she detailed how lost she felt, and she was desperate for just one thing to go well in her life. Levi gave her a discount upon having a fuller picture of the challenges she was faced with; he charged her 90 ZAR (5 USD) for a bag full of different herbs which would usually go for double or triple the amount. Levi explained how she should use them. He also gave her a few bunches of *mpepho* for free, and she required more detailed explanations than other patients because she was not familiar with some of the practices. For example, when Levi told her *gquma* (steam) with the herbs,

she was not familiar with the word or even how to steam with herbs. As she left, she mentioned that she was nervous but hopeful. She had never used traditional medicine and had her reservations but said she would remain optimistic.

This experience and other encounters made me do a little bit of soul searching and interrogate why I added the patient experiences as a goal. I think what I uncovered is that I am also guilty of being suspicious of indigenous medicine for several reasons, I think partly due to socialisation and the fear of the unknown; indigenous medicine and the rituals at times feel very mysterious even for someone who has been raised in a similar way of life. I give my trust to biomedical doctors, but I struggle to do the same to traditional healers. I had this reflection because so much of my research tackles my own cultural religious beliefs which makes it harder at times to separate myself from the study. The social sciences also train us to create a parallelism and disconnect between ourselves as scholars and the social acts we are exploring. They especially encourage a pragmatism when the topic in question is African religion; the scholar is expected to provide or disprove the validity of religion (Sithole, 2006: 308-309). The social sciences overlook cultural understandings of social life and the reflectiveness of the notion of truth. I was also reminded of one of the important goals of grounded theory, which reminds researchers that they are not in the field to uncover some objective truth. They are there to help narrate the experiences of the participants as they live and understand them (Richter & Müller, 2005: 1002).

I realised that I subconsciously added this goal in part to determine the validity of the healing practices, and I was learning that this is not for the research to say or determine. I added it partly because the proposal is something I have been working on since 2017, two years before I was even registered as a PhD candidate. The proposal had been presented at conferences and different institutions and departments while I was looking for a home and supervisor for the research. After each engagement, I would go back to the proposal and make additions based on comments I received. Admittedly some were important and strengthened the discourse, but others became tick box edits to address other people's/ institutions' recommendations. One of these is the validity of the healing practices and study as a whole, where I would often be asked how I would know that the Mountain Doctors' medicine really works. During my encounter with *Zandile I decided to release myself from this burden of having to try to "prove" (or disprove) the value of the medicines. Another thing that made me reconsider the goal was also the realisation that people come to Levi and other Mountain Doctors when they are going through very difficult times. They may even be going through the worst day of their lives. My presence already made some patients uncomfortable. I had the privilege of being embraced by the Mountain Doctors and their patients, and I had the responsibility to protect this trust and the patients' experiences. Even in detailing *Zandile's experience, I omitted a lot of detail she shared even though she is anonymous. It still felt like a major intrusion to divulge such painful and personal experiences for the purposes of research.

For my own safety and to try to limit the number of close interactions and encounters, I also felt it important for this reason not to do my quick interviews with the clients. Ethics should also protect

the researcher especially when doing research under unusual circumstances like the Covid-19 pandemic. Leaving out this goal would also impact my own safety. Not everyone I came across during this process practised mask-wearing and social distancing. I wanted to avoid unintentionally exposing other patients to Covid-19 while they were there seeking herbs and medicine for other reasons or for Covid-19 prevention. I did not want to add to their stress and challenges. And for similar reasons, I also decided to rethink the methods I would use to answer and unpack another research goal. This was how Mountain Doctors are constructed in other people's imaginations. I had hoped to do quick sound-bite interviews with passers-by. But being in the field during the Covid-19 third wave and tougher lockdown restrictions was hard for me and my own mental health. As mentioned, the restrictions also created their own challenges. I also was one of the lucky few who could still work from home even as commerce slowly reopened. This was as the country tried to balance the needs of the economy and society and the health concerns caused by the pandemic. Then my fieldwork thrust me to the polar opposite; I felt exposed, vulnerable and scared. People were also on higher alert, even approaching someone for directions when lost was difficult, people did not want to talk to strangers for longer than necessary. I felt it best to do away with the sound-bite interviews. I was still able to answer these questions in different ways. This was through my own experiences with the Mountain Doctors and how people's treatment of me shifted when I was around them. Many of the Mountain Doctors touched on this question in various ways during the interviews and informal discussions. They talked very openly about how people are scared of them or hate them. They talked about being chased from selling their herbs in certain places because people had complained to shop owners in the area that they smell or are criminals.

I also considered that asking other people about Mountain Doctors and what they think of them would mean I would have to introduce myself as a researcher. The moments when I would do this during social encounters is what would improve how people and institutions treated us. So, I questioned how honest the responses would be. By documenting these, I would risk invalidating the Mountain Doctors' experiences, even after having gone through the frustrations of being or feeling hated myself. It had a big impact on my mental health and at times I had to briefly distance myself from the participants because it was too emotional. I felt this way even though I got the least of it because I was wearing modern clothes and not the sackcloth. Even though going through life has its difficulties as a young Black female, there are very few moments where I have experienced such overt hate and disdain, and when I have, it is often fleeting. I have never been consistently and overtly treated so badly. Often the Mountain Doctors ended up comforting me because I felt hurt in those moments, or I wanted to stand up for them or myself. They would tell me to calm down, that this is their lives. They have bad encounters every day and that if they had to confront every single one, they would be overwhelmed by the stressful confrontations and never get anything done. They often just laugh at the poor treatment; when it is coming from a White person, they shrug it off by saying the "the White maan is a baad maan". When it is from people of colour, the approach is similar, but usually they will say something like "Decolonise your mind Khoi/ brother/ sister".

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has been a discussion of some of the practical methodological experiences of the research. It has covered everything from the changes made to the research strategy, the difficulties working during the pandemic, meeting the participants and ethical considerations. The ethical considerations are not just something one considers during the fieldwork, they continue throughout, in decisions on which discussions to omit or use. They are important in the context of getting dynamic and consistent consent, beyond the participants just signing a consent form. This should not be seen as blanking consent, even during documenting, especially of pictures and videos, I was continuously seeking consent to capture specific moments. Some of these discussions have also been had in relation to the documenting and recording challenges for a study of this nature. This chapter also started to introduce important theories linked to methodology and why they were important to this study specifically.

The chapter looked at how grounded theory is important for a study of this nature and given the unique challenges linked to doing research during the global lockdown. This led to delays and many changes to the research strategy. Changes in research goals and plans are not uncommon. Often researchers write proposals or conceptualise their study while outside of the field or area of study. When they enter their research field, they discover certain research or a hypothesis they relied on is not entirely accurate or does not portray the full picture. The pandemic did mean I was going through the usual research process of having to rethink certain plans upon entry into the field, and I was having to rethink certain things also as a response to the pandemic and the disruption it was causing. The discussions tried to show how these challenges were addressed. The chapter also looked at the importance of narrative and ethnographic approaches when it comes to conducting research in ways that put agency back in the hands of the social actor. And while these approaches are significant, they are still linked mainly to Western approaches, which can be challenging when studying the African context. The next chapter starts to explore ideas on how this conflict can be remedied and how I addressed it in this study by pulling from African thought.

CHAPTER 4

ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK IN THE 21ST CENTURY: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMES AND GROUNDED METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will be a continuation of the previous one, especially when it comes to discussing research methods like grounded theory and ethnography. This chapter will take a closer theoretical look at these approaches, while also expanding on them for the applicability of the African context. This chapter will be exploring a method which pulls from discussions on pre-colonial education in Africa. Some of these strategies, like initiation schools, though pre-colonial, still have a lot of relevance today (Seroto, 2011). The discussion will pull from a common Zulu practice which is also found in other African cultures. The practice of *ukuthunywa* loosely translates to being sent to run errands. This is usually done as a way of balancing chores and dividing labour in the household. Alternatively, it can represent an important sign of respect from the children or young adults towards the elders who raised them. Embedded in many of these activities are important skills that are likely to have been passed down from grandparents to parents to children and the generations that might follow. Through my theorising of the concept, I will show how it can be used as an important methodology for creating knowledge and an equally important pedagogy for distributing or sharing knowledge and skills. Decolonial discourse is strengthened when we can transform these systems in ways that people see themselves in them, and when African thought can be centred in African methodologies, rather than sometimes conflicting Western ones. The learning and knowledge production practices are also further strengthened.

This chapter is a detailed exploration of the methodologies that were used in this study. I explore the theoretical tenets of grounded theory and ethnography, while showing why these methods are important, especially when conducting decolonial research on indigenous groups. Much of these discussions and the emphasis on the importance of disrupting traditional institutional and research rules when conducting research of this nature are supported by experience, challenges and observations from the field.

4.2 Research methods to consider for studying indigenous groups

The kind of study being conducted is very sensitive mainly due to the nature of how research has historically been done on indigenous groups and people of colour. The social sciences have a long and oppressive history. They analyse research participants using Western lenses and methodologies which do not fit their context. In a way, social science discourse like anthropology is built on these repressive standards which marginalise indigenous groups in the name of academic “objectivity” or scientific “truth” (Sithole, 2006: 308). Researchers did very little historically to analyse their own personal and social bias and how it might play a role as early as the proposal stages when the researcher is considering their hypothesis, when they are deciding

what is worthy of being explored and what is not, what questions to ask, which “objective truth” they hope to uncover, and so forth. By doing this, they degraded the consciousness of the actors from the equality of human intellect (Sithole, 2006: 319). One of the methods adopted to avoid some of the bias embedded in research methods was the use of grounded theory. Though also Western, it goes a little further in assisting the researcher to distance themselves from the preconceived notions they hold before embarking on a study. Grounded theory is an approach to qualitative analysis developed in the 1960s by American sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. They challenged the approaches used by most social researchers.

Many social science approaches take on a study with the intention of proving a certain theory to be true or false. Instead, Glaser and Strauss encouraged the opposite, which is to use data gathered from the field to create theoretical discourse (Addison; 1989: 40). So, rather than coming into the field with a hypothesis to test, the researcher comes in as an empty slate. Slowly, through observations and discussions, the researcher starts to build on the hypothesis, starts to consider important theories to help them make sense of the subject matter. This shift in approach helps the researcher to side-line as much implicit bias they might hold, while making for a richer and stronger study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 1). The theory is discovered, developed or generated and verified through systematic data collection. These steps are followed by an analysis and comparison of the data pertaining to a phenomenon. A fundamental part of the analysis method involves searching out the concepts behind the actualities/phenomenon by looking for the derivation of data analysis through codes. This is followed by the formulation of concepts, and finally, categories (Allan, 2003: 1). In a lot of ways, this is how I set out to conduct my fieldwork and study as a whole, but this was not without some challenges. These challenges, as well as how grounded theory was used throughout my research process will be discussed in this chapter. This will be done while making sense of what worked and what did not.

Since grounded theory breaks away from the traditional methods of social research, it has struggled to be taken seriously by leading social science researchers and institutions. Applying these methods in practice is an even bigger challenge, which is often limited by institutional bureaucracies and administrative processes like Ethics Committees who sometimes have silly requirements (Shrag, 2011: 120). The difficulty is that these processes are important in some ways. Ethical clearance ensures much of the repressions that discourses like anthropology are built on do not continue. It ensures that research goals or agendas are not harmful. The study must also not prioritise the research at the expense of the participants or those the study is attempting to assist. Ethics committees also ensure that atrocities are not committed in the name of exploration or research. Some historical examples include Nazi Germany war crimes which often called on the expertise of doctors, researchers and other professionals. These experts worked on Jewish extermination strategies which included sterilising people, intentionally exposing them to illness and using gas chambers for faster mass killings. Some German concentration camps used Jews for human drug trials for cures or vaccines to diseases like malaria, typhus, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, yellow fever, and infectious hepatitis (Holocaust Encyclopaedia, 2022). Another example that shows the importance of ethics ensuring researchers do not cause harm are the Tuskegee

Experiments. They took place in the United States of America between 1932 and 1972. The study was on the effects of syphilis on humans. All participants were African American men, many of whom were told they would receive free healthcare. The men were not informed they had syphilis and therefore could not give proper informed consent. Even as the study uncovered the dangers of syphilis, the participants were not treated or made aware of these dangers. Even when the researchers discovered syphilis could cause death, the participants were not informed (CDC, 2022).

4.2.1 Institutional limitations to grounded theory

It is clear that there are risks involved when research is not regulated by bodies and structures such as ethics committees. This discussion is not to suggest doing away with these bodies to allow for the flexibility and ease that comes with adopting research methods like grounded theory. Instead, it is to highlight the dangers that can also arise from making these structures difficult to navigate, or making them strict to the point that they cause harm, even if it is unintentional. The risk is that they restrict the creativity that can come from students or researchers using unlikely methods like grounded theory. It limits their ability to theorise and conceptualise their own methods that explore the African context better than Western methodologies can. The global lockdown needed people to have access to this agility, creativity and flexibility. This was a “new normal” for everyone; new laws and regulations were sometimes handed down almost overnight. These affected every aspect of people’s lives, including research; some had to give up or move fully to digital approaches, even when there were safer middle-ground options. Many did this to the detriment of their research, all because institutions and structures like ethics committees were not open to the agility and flexibility needed during this moment, but which would also be meaningful in the future or just generally to advance discourse (Makura, 2022: 14).

Ethics committees cause delays when they are too strict and place too much emphasis on things that are not ethical concerns. At times, ethical regulations are an illusion because they do not always protect the participants and can be more concerned with ensuring institutions are legally protected. In doing this, they impose unnecessary power on the research itself while requiring the researcher to address arbitrary restrictions (Cannella and Lincoln, 2007: 315; Tomaselli, 2014: 631-632). My own experience was my study being rejected multiple times over an eight month period. This caused funding challenges and general delays in the study because the ethical clearance limited my ability to enter the field. The research funders took back 80% of 2020’s budget because Covid-19 and ethical delays resulted in funds being underutilised. The questions that dealt with ethical considerations were dealt with early on, after the first rejection. Later rejections raised theoretical discussions which went beyond the role or expertise of the Ethics Committee. There were inflated concerns over grammar and language issues, it was suggested the work was incoherent. There was also an expectation that I translate questionnaires and the consent form into Afrikaans even though I do not understand Afrikaans, and English and Xhosa versions were already available for participants who preferred discussions in Xhosa.

Many of these challenges would have been far worse had I fully immersed the study in grounded theory methods. This would have required early entry into the field, before a written proposal or engagement with ethics. This is because grounded theory tenets require the researcher to construct the proposal and research plan in partnership with the participants. This is done through pilot fieldwork where the researcher mainly observes. Participants highlight the problem the researcher must explore or resolve through their study. The participants determine the research plan or design, based on what they believe is the best way to study them and their experiences. The researcher constructs a proposal based on this earlier interaction and re-enters the field at a later stage to follow the research plan previously influenced by the main participants. The current university system, and postgraduate process in particular, is often critiqued for failing to catch up to the social and educational needs of today. Many of the methods, processes like ethics and general functioning of institutions remain unchanged for long periods. This is even as society changes rapidly especially with technological innovations, economic change and local and global social and political shifts. Many university structures, regulations and the postgraduate methods and pedagogies are rooted in outdated 19th century practices (Nature Journal, 2023: 414). This often means the gender and racial oppressions systems of higher learning were rooted in are still active today. Funding models are also failing as they become scarce or struggle to keep up with the current cost of living or conducting research. This makes postgraduate research even more challenging for many people of colour and women who have faced historical economic and structural marginalisation. This is as they struggle to find funding or struggle to survive off it or conclude their research when they do have access to funding (Woolston, 2022: 573).

4.2.2 Considerations for decolonising mainstream research ethics processes

In a paper titled; “Research ethics and diversity of worldviews: Integrated worlds and *ubuntu*”, University of Johannesburg professor, Moyra Keane (2021: 23) calls for the disruption of mainstream ethics standards, especially when the study is on indigenous groups and is being conducted by scholars who come from similar indigenous backgrounds. Keane argues that everything from what is deemed useful knowledge to important research designs to access that knowledge can potentially be different for different indigenous groups. Adopting Western epistemology is therefore not always the right move for the researcher exploring indigenous groups in particular. One challenge that I encountered that in some ways links to research design and how I plan to make entry into the field was the issue of a letter of consent from a leader or important figure representing the participants. What made this difficult was acquiring consent from the Mountain Doctors felt like being asked to get consent from an Afrikaner in Bloemfontein to conduct observations and interviews on the group. It is complex because it is a cultural group that might be bound by certain cultural similarities, possibly race, language, maybe religion, but they are still different in some ways. Not all of them might be the same race, they might not all speak the same language, the ways they go about social life might also differ. Who they consider a leader

or important figure in their cultural group might differ and might be influenced by which community they come from.

Even though I got consent from Bradley in the end, and he is an influential figure to many of the Mountain Doctors, he does not represent the Mountain Doctors in Paarl, George, different parts of the Eastern Cape and the Free State. In fact, these other groups might not even know who Bradley is and might not approve of him determining who gets to conduct research on them and who does not. The issue of consent, while important for the protection of the participants, makes more sense when dealing with more formalised or organised communities. These often have clearly set out hierarchal structures or when dealing with smaller institutions like schools, healthcare, places of work and maybe religious organisations. The other thing about consent forms is they are put in place to protect the participants from outsiders/ the researcher who might cause potential harm. What I did not anticipate is that the participants did not see me as an outsider. This is not to say I am therefore incapable of causing harm through my research or presence, but the point is worth highlighting to stress the need of creating different ethical standards, especially when dealing with indigenous groups.

There are many reasons why I was seen more as an insider by the Mountain Doctors, including my race. I looked like most of them and they were used to dealing with White researchers who would in a way be a constant reminder that they were under observation. There were many moments as a result where we just “hung out”, this in some ways allowed me greater access to experiences I might not have otherwise had. One example was attending the planting in George. The family hosting us was very anxious about my arrival. When one of the family members later approached, I realised a lot of the anxiety was over the possibility that this researcher who was coming would be White. The lady said to me, “I was worried you would be White, I’m glad it’s just you”. There was some concern that I would judge them for living in an informal settlement or I would not find the place “up to my standards”. When I would be having conversations with the family members and they would ask me where I am from, they would get excited and less apologetic about their homes because they would realise that I come from a community similar to theirs. The comment “I’m glad it’s just you” made me realise I am far more of an insider than I thought, even if our racial identification might differ, we share the same or similar hues, a similar history and culture. We shared a similar language in cases when some spoke Xhosa; even those who did not speak Xhosa did understand the language because how they learn about the plant knowledge is at times through Xhosa healers. They have a fair or greater understanding of the language when it comes to spirituality, ecology and healing than I do.

I shared that I am from Kwa Mashu, a predominantly Black township in KwaZulu-Natal, which also helped to put them more at ease. We also have similarities in the types of communities we come from and in cultural and religious practices and ideologies. I still had to be mindful of my outsider role and the potential harm that could cause. This discussion is also not to suggest that ethical rules should be relaxed for indigenous scholars doing research on groups with similar cultural values. The whole structure needs to be reconfigured holistically; this might mean relaxing

certain ethics standards that can cause delays and come across as repressive to either the scholar or participants. But equally it could also mean making other standards stricter maybe because of the insider/outsider role. This role should come with more responsibilities so that researchers do not exploit their insider roles to meet their outsider agendas at the expense of the participants. Keane (2021: 28) critiques the manner in which ethics fails to see the world as interdependent, while more applicable Afrocentric worldviews like *ubuntu* are cognisant of the interconnectedness and even encourage it. It is these kinds of approaches that could be adopted in making sense of possible value and risk that can be derived from the interconnectedness the researcher has through their insider/outsider role, instead of the current status quo that requires the researcher to overlook their insider role and address the study as an “objective” outsider. Rather than seeking or claiming objectivity, it is important for the researcher and ethics processes to be reflexive and be mindful of their own positionality within research and society. This is a method referred to as autoethnography and it encourages the researcher place themselves and their experiences in the study (Denzin, 2003: 246). In a way the researcher also becomes the researched subject that is under exploration. This study does this in many ways and embraces the approach, partly because of the insider/outsider role I possess in this research, as have been previously explained.

This is not to say that ethical standards should be thrown out, instead it is raising awareness of the dangers of blindly following Western cultural bias. It is highlighting some of the research and fieldwork challenges created by some of the rigid research and ethical standards in many universities all over the world. The South African San Institute (SASI) raises similar concerns and provides criteria for research. They have developed very easy and clear to understand ethical guidelines that are not veiled in complex academic jargon and traditions. SASI simply requires the researcher respect the community; linked to this is respect for cultural religious practices, the environment, history and individuals they come across. They also require honesty and transparency; they encourage the researcher not to veil information on the research process and goals in complex and confusing academic language. Information must be presented in easily comprehensible ways (SASI, 2007). For grounded theorists, the written research also has to be easy to understand, even for people not in the field of study. More importantly, the participants who guided the research should be able to easily read and understand the research findings. The theories should not be presented in complex ways that alienate ordinary people or the research participants from the study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 23).

The issue around honesty and the use of academic language is one that I also had to address in the field as the ethics process challenged a simple and easy research memo I had drafted. The committee instead directed me to the standardised institutional one, which is long, and in some ways repetitive. It asks questions like whether the study has received ethical clearance, how the researcher plans to store and later destroy data; questions which participants might have very little interest in. This ends up making the memo unnecessarily long, and trying to explain all 12 of the main questions led some to be sceptical. One of the questions I sometimes got was why I had to destroy the data if my research is not anything immoral or illicit, and whether there is information about the study I am not being honest about. Questions like “Why are you invited to take part in

this research project?” and “What is the nature of participation in this study” were repetitive and created understandable confusion. Other questions like “Who is doing the research?” were also confusing because these are things that would have been addressed organically during the first introduction with the participant. This static process often also slowed engagement and enthusiasm for the discussion. Many participants would be excited to get involved and would already be trying to dive straight into the storytelling. I would have to halt the natural flow of the conversation (which would be encouraged by grounded theory approaches) and pause the discussion to go through a long form in ways that are static and almost unnatural.

Eventually I went back to the shorter half-page memo and consent form originally drafted in the beginning of the ethics process. I would leave the 10-page institutional version with certain leaders, which consisted of 5 pages of English and 5 pages of Xhosa. People were also more comfortable signing the short version which I would read out to them and elaborate on in some detail further verbally. Many would also quickly read it themselves, while the longer consent form caused a lot of panic when I was using it. Many refused to sign it out of fear of being scammed or that I was being dishonest and hiding certain information in the long document. There are not a lot of interviews I lost because of this longer consent form, but a few people in the beginning changed their mind about being interviewed when I would bring out the long document. Also supported by grounded theory and encouraged by SASI, is the idea that researchers not only include, but be guided by the community at every stage of the research. SASI sees this as an important step towards justice and fairness within research. Doing this also ensures that another one of the important goals is met, namely that the research should be done in caring ways that align with communities’ real-world experiences (SASI, 2007).

4.2.3 Lessons from grounded theory methods

Grounded theory as presented by Glaser and Strauss can appear as almost paradoxical to traditional theory and research methodology. It works towards generating theory by comparing and analysing data rather than predetermining a hypothesis. Grounded theory encourages the researcher to disrupt traditional methodology. This in a lot of ways puts it at odds with the highly structured and bureaucratic institutions and bodies that set research standards and regulations. A researcher, for example, cannot just simply enter the field without ethical clearance from their institutions. The ethics process requires the research to break a lot of grounded theory rules. The ethics process requires the researcher to do some premature theorising which goes against the main tenets of grounded theory. This theorising is often evident in methodology sections of research proposals. The ethics committee requires research done by other scholars exploring similar subject matter, which creates the risk that this early literature review process could potentially influence the researcher’s opinion on their participants, meaning they enter the field with preconceived notions which might be false or might have changed. What I have learnt from my experience and engaging with grounded theory discourse in practice and in books is that; even as one embarks on a grounded theory study, the limitations of the institution require that the research straddle traditional research

methods and grounded theory. This causes challenges because the two are in stark opposition to each other. But balancing the two is important for the research to avoid unnecessary ethical delays or concerns about how academically sound the study is if it rejected according to many of the guidelines and regulations academia sets.

The researcher has to learn to manage the contradictions that might arise from combining two approaches that clash with one another. Grounded theory is often criticised and questioned for being too flexible, to the point of possibly lacking in structure or proper set out procedure (Allen, 2010: 1612). It raises concerns on how one evaluates the study without rules to judge it against. This extreme fluidity can also pose challenges especially for students or novice researchers still trying to understand the basics of research. These scholars might benefit from learning and mastering traditional methodologies first before disrupting these ways of creating knowledge. This is so that they might understand when disruption is necessary and when to follow traditional methods. The fluidity of grounded theory can also be empowering to a researcher because it gives room to be far more creative. This creativity has the potential to direct the researcher towards interesting discoveries they might not have otherwise made. It allows the researcher to develop their own theorising rather than being bound by the notion of “objectivity” which requires researchers to mimic older scholars or forefathers in the field of study, an approach which limits the kind of creative thinking needed, especially in the current context.

4.2.4 Ethnography and narrative approaches and fieldwork experiences

Ethnographic studies today are important decolonial approaches in the social sciences, but they have a problematic history and origin. Historically, ethnographic research was done on indigenous groups in the early anthropology that underpinned colonial exploration. Knowledge hierarchies were created, and the West pushed the idea that their knowledge systems were the only objective sciences. This is an idea which is slowly being challenged and questioned (Sithole, 2011: 81 & 84). Ethnographic research strategies and Western discourse were used to marginalise, dehumanise and oppress cultural groups they studied. Austrian physician, Rudolf Pöch travelled the Kalahari between 1907 and 1909. His goal was a “study of the living relics of primitive races”. He travelled through the then German South-West Africa (Namibia), Botswana, then Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South Africa. Pöch was supported by the colonial administrators and police in all the places he visited. He moved around, making various voice recordings of the Khoi and San, mainly at watering holes. He strategically set up his camp close to watering holes to have easier access to people. His study was made easier in part by the ongoing drought at the time, as people travelled from their homes to one of the main watering holes. He was seen as an important pioneer of audio-visual media in anthropology. Pöch also collected human remains, cataloguing them and sending them back to Austria. At least 125 people’s remains were taken. These remains came from graves, museums and individuals. Many of these remains are still in Austria and only two have been repatriated. Claas and Troy Pienaar’s bodies were reburied in South Africa in 2013 (!Khwa ttu, 2023a).

Similarly, German adventurer and artist, Hans Lichtenecker travelled South-West Africa creating face casts in 1931. He also wrote about his experiences as he collected these casts. He narrates making a cast of a woman he could not communicate with, whom he forced to do the cast. Distressed by this unusual process and the discomfort, she almost fainted. Another woman tried to stop him, but he continued. The first woman's younger son panicked and ran away from home after witnessing his mother's and brother's traumatic procedure. Like Pöch, Lichtenecker was supported by colonial administrators and structures. He took the casts to Germany (!Khwatla, 2023b). These ethnographers violated people's individual autonomy and culture. For many Africans, connecting with family who have passed away carries spiritual significance. African people believe that the removal of remains severed their link with their ancestors. Grave rituals and ceremonies in African cultural groups are common practice. The Namibian Himba, for example, often have shrines on their graves, with different culturally symbolic objects like oxen skulls and carved wooden objects. They also have annual celebrations at the graves of chiefs who have passed away. They gather to watch colourful parades and listen to speeches, while celebrating the lives of their leaders (Bollig, 1997: 37). Pöch's grave robbing desecrates sacred sites and had the potential to disrupt or permanently alter important cultural practices like the Himba's grave festivities. It also disrespected those who had passed away in the name of research and exploration. The cast-making process and exhibiting of people's remains also fetishised Africans, reducing them to mere objects whose dignity and humanity was secondary to the research. People had no autonomy in controlling the process and what they were comfortable with.



Figure 4.1: Lichtenecker creating casts of people's faces. Images from Namibian Scientific Society in Windhoek, Namibia

African people's truth was misrepresented, and they were portrayed as "uncivilised" subjects to be studied and scrutinised. These anthropologists would present their findings as the only objective truth. Because their explorations found these groups were "uncivilised", the scholars thought it their duty to bring civilisation to their participants. This "civilisation" came in the form of imposing Western culture, often in ways that threaten those communities' own way of survival and cultural

rights. Western researchers struggled or refused to leave their perceptions behind and let their exploration be led and informed by the groups they were studying (Coleman, Coombe & MacAraill, 2009: 183). A lot of historical ethnographic research is considered morally compromised today (Coleman, Coombe & MacAraill, 2009: 184). This raises an interesting decolonial dilemma; should the research method be considered morally compromised and be rejected? Or is there room to use positive aspects of it, while rejecting those that were used to oppress? I am of the belief that the positive aspects can be leveraged even within decolonial discourse. Despite its worrying history, when done well, ethnographic methods have the potential to empower the participants it marginalised historically. Just like with grounded theory, the power does not only lie with the researcher; it is shared with the participants who can steer the research and its goals. One of the most important tenets of ethnography is direct observation. The researcher must immerse themselves with the community or participants they are doing research with and spend a lot of time observing them. Things like interviews or surveys that might come later should be based on those observations (Gobo & Marciniak, 2011: 104-105).

In this way, the participants shape the study, they inform the questions the researcher asks and set the tone for what is important or needs further exploration. This is what makes ethnography an important decolonial tool despite its exploitive history. In other traditional positivist Western research methods, the participants are usually treated as nothing more than “subjects” to be observed and studied by a scholar. The scholar seeks objective truth based on “universal Western scientific” standards of what truth is. The identification of this truth can only be done by the researcher with minimal consultation with the “subject”. This traditional approach limits the richness of the study because the researcher is not open to it being led by the participants. Alternatively, they are not around the participants enough to witness certain exciting and important parts of social life that the researcher might not be familiar with from secondary research or their engagement with texts and books before entering the field. There are a lot of explorations and lessons I would have missed out on if my research was not an ethnographic study. One of these moments was my first *rapé* ritual with the Mountain Doctors. This ritual was so important on so many levels. In some ways, I got to literally walk in their shoes, experience their rituals and feelings. I would have never been able to witness this if all I was doing was arranging interviews. Most importantly, I had to give up control because if I was steering the fieldwork, I would not know there was something like a *rapé* ritual, because I would not have known to ask about it, especially because the practice has South American origins. Even if I had known about it, making requests to see it might have resulted in it being done in a performative way and maybe outside of the usual context of when it is often done. I would not have understood the ritual more holistically beyond the performative aspects that indigenous groups sometimes put on for tourists or researchers. These experiences will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

4.3 Finding solutions in African methodology

The other challenge to documenting my fieldwork was the manner in which I was welcomed into the group and the way they taught me about their cultural and religious practices. This entry seemed to present itself as a challenge at first because it was unfamiliar. But later it proved itself to be an important solution to the documenting challenge. It also presented itself as an African method that is important to consider in research and other facets of social life. I was welcomed into the group in similar ways to how new Mountain Doctors start their journey. I was unprepared for this experience and in some ways it created difficulty in the learning because how I learn and how they teach are very different approaches. When they embark on the journey to become Rastas that work with herbs or Mountain Doctors, they find likeminded individuals to guide them through the journey. Sometimes these are elders or other youth walking the same journey. They even travel to each other's communities all over the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Free State, Northern Cape and on rare occasions, as far as KwaZulu-Natal and even Namibia. They teach/show each other herbs that can be found all over the country or sub-Saharan Africa. Then they also show each other the important herbs (and sometimes rocks, soil and fungus) that are unique to their specific locations. This is how they also taught me about the herbs and their way of life. This way of learning through doing, though in some ways more effective than theoretical learning alone, was still challenging for me. This is because I am used to theoretical learning and formal documenting, which there was not always time to do.

When new Mountain Doctors start this journey, there is some room for error because they will most likely go through some of these experiences repeatedly until they become second nature. This would not necessarily be my experience. There were some experiences that were repeated in different contexts, but for some things, it would be a singular moment. It was not always easy to know if a certain experience would be repeated. This meant I would either not have to worry about being accurate in documenting the first time around because I would witness it multiple times, or it was uncertain if an experience would be a rare occurrence which I needed to record accurately and carefully. Even though I struggled in the beginning with the more practical way of learning, I still found this way of learning to be an important decolonial methodological and pedagogical tool, one that educational structures should leverage to address some of the challenges that weaken these important institutions. This could be an important tool in a multi-layered approach to tackling some of the challenges in educational sectors at different levels. Students are often taught in very theoretical ways and struggle to make a connection between the theory and practice when they get to the workplace or in social experiences where some of the theoretical learning is applicable. (Shange, 2021a: 19).

This way of learning does not only have the potential to address some developmental challenges and struggles within institutions of learning, it also provides an important opportunity to build on African pedagogy and epistemology. One major difference between this way of learning and Western systems of learning and knowledge production is that the process is communal and freely shared with students or those willing to learn. The knowledge is communally owned and

communally shared, unlike Western systems and institutions who store potentially lifesaving knowledge in libraries, buildings and online platforms that limit access to the public who might not be able to afford tuition or journal fees. In the precolonial context, African knowledge is often shared. The process of producing and sharing this knowledge is done as a collective and is built into the day-to-day practices. It is not crafted as a separate experience in the way that mainstream education and research is done today (Shange 2021b; Seroto, 2011: 78). This method of learning and knowledge production is still evident in different parts of African social life, including the manner in which the Mountain Doctors taught me about their herbs, rituals and history.

There is an important method of passing down useful skills that one still finds in African homes and community structures even today. The Zulu refer to it as *ukuthunywa* or *thuma*, which loosely translates to doing errands or chores. Many African households prescribe roles to children at a very early age, in small steps, through this practice of *ukuthunywa*. For example, children may begin by just having to watch while the grown-ups or older children perform certain tasks. As time goes on, children are expected to take on more and more responsibilities in general domestic work, the family trade or even in helping neighbours and other community members. The older they get and the more skilled they become, the more responsibilities they are given. These responsibilities might include teaching others in similar ways. Mothers are usually the primary educators in much of this process, as with other education-centred African practices and beliefs (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017: 53). In examples of schools like African initiation schools, far greater emphasis was placed on more practical learning. These initiation schools would happen periodically over the lifespan of a person's life, often to mark certain rites of passage and pass on important knowledge or lessons. Various age groups would attend the initiation schools with their age mates, usually for a few months. These schools were often away from the community and the students would return ready to apply the knowledge they gained at the initiation school. After a few years, they go again to learn different lessons or to build on the previous teachings. At times the schools would also be used to carry out medical procedures and rituals like circumcision for boys in Xhosa culture. The duration of such schools and the frequency with which they are held are different between different cultural groups (Krige, 1938: 277; Seroto, 2011: 81).

Some challenges arise in the rejection or the disruption of methods like *ukuthunywa* and the move towards purely Western mainstream methods. Students are almost exclusively taught in theoretical ways, separate from their everyday experiences. This makes it difficult to understand and value the knowledge and its place in society (Shange, 2021b). Simultaneously these simpler ways of producing and sharing knowledge are questioned or presented as inferior because they do not mimic the sometimes overly complex Western methods (Shange, 2021a: 2). Knowledge goes from being communally owned to being owned by an individual researcher or institution because this is what is promoted by Western pedagogies and methodologies. This limits who has access to the information and who has the right to use it, and there are even limitations on how it can be used. At times, even the communities from which the knowledge originally came are limited by copyright laws and other regulations preventing them from engaging fully with their indigenous knowledge. One example of this is the criminalising of weed, an important herb used for a number

of reasons. Some use it for recreational reasons and relaxing. Others use it for spiritual or religious reasons; for example, a healer might use it to get into a trance in order to get visions. Others use it for health reasons, with more and more research confirming what African cultural groups have always known about weed: it has incredible healing properties (Duvail, 2019: 12). Weed was first labelled a drug in 1925 which led to its global prohibition (Duvail, 2019: 3). This move created challenges for communities who relied on weed for various reasons because now their cultural practices were deemed as criminal actions. The more recent decriminalising of weed in South Africa and across the globe still sees indigenous communities barred from using weed because selling and using it often requires one go through long and expensive bureaucratic processes to get a licence to use or sell the herb. Many people of colour globally still get arrested for weed possession despite the move to decriminalise it (Duvail, 2019: 5). This is a risk that many Mountain Doctors are also faced with, and many of those who I interviewed have been arrested multiple times for weed possession and distribution. The adoption and possible mainstreaming of methods like *ukuthunywa* has the potential to restore side-lined African practices; this while placing knowledge that belongs to indigenous groups back in their hands and freeing it from Western administrative and bureaucratic systems.

This theorising on *ukuthunywa* is important because it illustrates the manner in which the participants integrated me into their way of life. It shows how they shared knowledge with me and participated in its production. Even with all the benefits of learning through practice, I knew I had only a few months in the field, so I had to figure out a balance, between the more organic practical learning and the documenting and more “formal” way of recording that I am more comfortable with, and that the academy expects from researchers. It was not always easy because things happen fast, we work fast, we must be discreet and quick; sometimes even when doing the rituals because we were not always welcome in the reserves, mountains and other natural environments we went to. The difficulty in documenting during medicinal herb trots or rituals was also because of the things we would be carrying and the walking itself, it was not always easy to stop and write on a notebook. Often, I would record on my phone or write quick notes in the phone. This also forced me to be selective because my phone battery could die if I over-documented, and using my power bank was also not always convenient, especially because we did not always have access to electricity, so I also had to save the battery life of even the power bank. It was also difficult to determine when to document in detail and when not to.

In the end I decided capturing the overall experience through photos and weekly written reflections was more important than documenting every little detail especially when it came to more complex things like the herbs and their functions. Sure, the information on the herbs might be important in certain parts of my data analysis, but a few can be used on a case study basis to highlight certain points. The goal was not to document every single plant or flora and fauna in the Western Cape that the Mountain Doctors had knowledge of. Had I tried to do this, I would have had a very difficult time. Even when I had this realisation and decided to be more strategic about what I would record and what I would not, it was still difficult because I had a personal interest in some of these

things, partly because there is strong intersection with my Zulu culture, and as a Zulu, my personal interest would often be piqued.

Despite these early challenges and compromises, the more I was in the field, the easier certain things were to remember, sometimes with minimal or no recording. I did notice that from the daily interactions, some information started to come more and more naturally. It was often the things I had documented that I would struggle to remember and would at times have to page through notebooks or my phone to refamiliarise myself with certain information. The herbs I would have learnt about through the *ukuthunywa* pedagogy would come to me easily in general conversation and I would find myself discussing it like an expert - this happened a lot during a culture walk with Bradley, Monty, Arthur and some tourists. Many of the tourists were surprised at the knowledge I have and assumed I was either a Mountain Doctor or part of the Khoi and San. While knowledge tends to come more easily through this African method, it is harder to retain because this was not my real life so when I left the field and time passed, I would find myself forgetting certain information that came more easily to me before. I found myself having to rely on the information I documented to refresh my memory, arguably also because I was only in the field for a relatively short time. The Mountain Doctor experiences were not part of my social life long enough for information around their practices to come easily to me long after I left the field. This is arguably a further illustration on the importance of adopting mixed-methods approaches in teaching and research, rather than prioritising one epistemology at the expense of another. It is interesting to see how the Mountain Doctors are revitalising this *ukuthunywa* practice despite the way Western systems disincentivises it. And even though there is enough information on the importance of some of the herbs they work with, their knowledge is still unrecognised because they do not come to it in institutionalised ways. It is my observation that they come to it through the *ukuthunywa* process that allows for the radically democratic free flow and exchange of knowledge.

4.3.1 What constitutes knowledge?

African thoughts and practices are often seen from a Western lens and when they do not live up to certain Western standards, it becomes easy to see them as inferior or disregard them as knowledge entirely (wa Thiong'o, 1987: 18). Sometimes even Africans themselves start to believe their knowledge systems are either inferior, or at best, nothing more than “common knowledge” that does not hold great importance or does not require further explorations or analysis. This is one of the contradictions I faced in the field, where some even turned down interviews because they did not believe they had anything of value to share. Sometimes, I would hear, “What can I teach you, sister, when you are so educated?” or something along those lines. This did become easier to navigate when I started working with the Kalk Bay Mountain Doctors, who the more they saw me work and conduct the interviews, the more they understood the research. They would at times interject, explaining to the new potential participant why their involvement was important and how they could feed into the study. On several occasions, namely in Paarl, Saldanha and George, I would also have to eventually tell the Kalk Bay Mountain Doctors that we must respect the

participants' wishes, because it would be unethical to coerce them to speak. When meeting new participants, I liked to talk to them off the record about the research, get a sense of who they are, and this also often helped me determine what kind of questions I should ask. I seldom met a person and immediately jumped into an interview. If I was with potential interviewees for a few days or weeks, I would even wait and only do interviews closer to the end of our time together. In some instances, I would even advise that I no longer do an interview with a certain participant because after getting to know them I would find out they had pending legal processes of police-related matters that are linked to their cultural religious practices, for example in the cases of Naphthali-George, Monty and Gad-Nambia. I would voice my concern about interviewing them or suggest pseudonyms or anonymity. They would insist that I should not do that, or tell me that they are fighting for their cultural rights and they have nothing to be ashamed of.

Gad-fire would offer to translate from Afrikaans to English for me if he thought those refusing an interview were doing so because of the language barrier. But they would still insist on not doing the interview. There were roughly five people who refused interviews during the fieldwork, and they all gave similar reasons: the fear that they were "uneducated" or that they did not have anything of value to share. Even when I would promise not to ask "technical" questions about the functions of the herbs, and I would suggest keeping the conversation to who they are, their experiences before joining the Sackcloth Movement, why they joined, and so forth, they would still say no. I do not think the issue was fear of being asked technical questions, because they knew the answers to those. I think the problem was not seeing themselves as the right custodians to share this knowledge, or perhaps they do not see it as knowledge because it was passed down to them by a grandparent or it actively lives in their community through *ukuthunywa*. Perhaps they believed it would only become knowledge if they had the opportunity to produce it in a lab or research in the way I was doing, or if it had come from a teacher or educational institution. This experience raised important questions around what knowledge is and who decides this, and when knowledge is considered important or valuable. For Michel Foucault, these questions largely revolve around power and who has it.

Foucault, a French postmodernist philosopher, believed that history and context are important in determining what knowledge is and its relevance and importance (Hall, 2001: 74). For example, something as simple and common as hygiene or handwashing might not be considered knowledge today, but there was a time when this which we almost view as common sense was considered ground-breaking new scientific knowledge which helped save millions of lives and shaped the face of modern medicine. The "germ theory" in the 19th century helped stop the spread of viral and infectious diseases through the development and exploration of hygiene practices in Europe (Murrell, 2018).

Foucault further believed that there is constant interconnection between knowledge and power. In his theorising, he rejected the idea that any thought could claim absolute "truth". When it attempts to do this, knowledge turns into a form of power or power itself. When knowledge is linked to power, it assumes itself to be "true" and has the power to do so, overlooking its "truth" in relation

to history or context. When applied to real-world contexts, knowledge can be used as a constraint or to regulate conduct (Hall, 2001: 76). When context is overlooked in the production and sharing of knowledge, and Western knowledge is applied to the African context for instance, African knowledge at best becomes inferior and at worst, is eroded altogether.

Similar to Foucault, Sithole suggests that when Western indigenous knowledge is presented as superior, other knowledge systems like African indigenous knowledge, and then other knowledge systems are alienated, and seen as inferior or less of a science (Sithole, 2005: 439). She further suggests that the representation and participation of different types of knowledge systems and researchers would be more evident in discourse if we freed knowledge from Western association, which also sees itself as universal and applicable to all contexts (Sithole, 2005: 441). The Western association sees Western knowledge systems being labelled as important dominant science, while the contributions of other parts of the world are seen as less important or are portrayed as Western sciences. Sithole adds (2011: 84):

Historically, scientific innovation has been popularly regarded as emanating from the West and extending to the rest of the world. In fact, the scientism of the West has been maintained by branding science as Western even as it continues to be reproduced in various parts of the world. The contribution made by the West to science is not in question; what is contested is the Western world's monopolisation of the ideas of objectivity and science...

Science can strive for universality and objectivity, but these will never be achieved in absolute terms (Sithole, 2005: 443). The challenge is that there is a notion often perpetuated by institutions and academic structures that this absolute objectivity can be achieved or has been achieved. The academy further suggests objectivity can be gained through educational structures that create and teach western sciences. This potentially causes conflict as other knowledge systems are looked down on. This is one of the challenges I had to deal with at times, because some participants would suggest it would be better for me to look for the knowledge I am seeking in books alone. Often, I would debate with them and state that I will not find their personal experiences in books. One participant in Saldahna Bay who refused to be interviewed, commented saying that I would think he was crazy if he narrated his experiences. When I enquired why he thought that, he said because of the dreams, the knowledge, and because he follows the guidelines his ancestors share with him. He added that he cannot explain these to me in ways that would fit into the Western approach I had adopted by exploring these topics through a Western institution and a Western process like a thesis. I tried to convince him by saying that I am familiar with the contradiction because I was raised in a traditional African home which participates in ancestral practices and honouring and I have a mother with the calling. Then he questioned why I decided to explore African topics in a Western way when I know the contradictions. I had little to say after that. Even though I never interviewed him, our conversation stuck with me, and in some ways inspired this and other sections in the thesis. It also inspired me to tackle topics on dreams and dreams as a way of knowing or tool for knowledge production in certain African indigenous knowledge.

4.4 Conclusion

This methodology chapter has discussed as many of the fieldwork experiences that are useful for setting the context for the analysis to discuss and the overall goals of this research. The methodology has addressed many different difficulties of doing research during the Covid-19 pandemic and agitates for academic institutions to be open to agility and creativity. This is because traditional approaches are limiting and the pandemic created even more challenges than normal. The pandemic also led to a reconsideration of research goals and design and many other things. Many of the solutions I came up with were possible because of the flexibility grounded theory offers. This is one of the methods which the research adopts. The study also pulls from similar methods, namely, ethnography and the narrative approach.

The chapter also theorises on African approaches that were adopted during the fieldwork. The chapter adopts the Zulu word and African practice, *ukuthunywa*, which encourages learning through working in shared communal ways. The benefit of this theorising comes from the participants leading the activities, the study and what it should tackle. These are fundamental principles of grounded theory, ethnography and the narrative approach. Many of the discussions also pull from personal experiences, something which is usually discouraged in positivist approaches. In doing this, I am challenging the notion of objectivity, and questioning if it is possible to remove the researcher from their history, background and implicit biases. I acknowledge my positionality as an outsider who carries a lot of power and show my role as an insider as well. Having had a similar history, coming from a similar community and sharing similar cultural religious practices with the participant meant there were ways I could better connect with the participants.

In many cases, my insider role helped in navigating certain challenges. It meant I could understand a lot of the African spiritual discourse which Mountain Doctors adopt in part from Xhosa, which I understand and am fluent in. Beyond the study, some of these recommendations, acknowledgements and discussions are encouraged for a consideration of a new way of doing things in the academy, especially in African universities and when working on issues that affect Africans. The chapter adopts decolonial approaches that move academic research discourse away from its troubling origins, rooted in the exploitation of African people, their culture, and even their land and resources.

CHAPTER 5

HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY STRUGGLES: SITUATING THE MOUNTAIN DOCTORS' LAND HISTORY

5.1 Introduction

Post-democratic South Africa is still plagued with conflict over land. Africans who were once displaced from their land are still mostly landless. Many of the Mountain Doctors attribute this failure to the ANC ruling party losing sight of the main liberation goal, which was to get the land back. Instead, the focus shifted to abstract ideologies like democracy which do not address poverty and the violent history of land loss. This chapter will discuss historical land loss challenges that Mountain Doctors and similar groups experience. The kind of work Mountain Doctors and many African healers do relies heavily on access to land and certain resources. They need land for the medicine, both for growing and harvesting medicine, and for certain rituals. The history of land loss will be juxtaposed with the currently emerging Two Rivers Amazon development. The Two Rivers area has very important historical and heritage significance. Cultural activists and experts like Jenkins consider it to be one of the first sites to have been colonised/ occupied by the first Dutch settlers in 1652. This moment in the Cape and later the rest of South Africa, became the site of the slave trade; it marked the start of colonialism and the centuries-long oppression that would then follow (Sindane, 2020: 19 & 31). Many battles were fought on this land and for many Khoi and San groups, this land is an important mass grave where their ancestors' bodies still lie. There are also community concerns that this development will exacerbate gentrification and displace the poor in the community. Environmental bodies share their concerns, based on the threat to biodiversity and other social and environmental risks attached to building Amazon's headquarters in the area.

This contemporary land struggle and all the conflict and tensions around it is framed as a historical *déjà vu* playing itself out a lot like colonial moments that took place centuries ago. This comparison is made with a series of events, tensions and battles that mainly took place between the late 1700s and throughout most of the 1800s, including the Damaraland and Namaqualand case studies. This chapter will end with a discussion on solutions Mountain Doctors adopt in dealing with these challenges. Many reject the existing structures set in place like state land reclaim processes or the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)⁷ housing applications which Mountain Doctors believe are geared towards protecting White interests. Often this happens at the expense of the claimants, who opt to occupy significant ecological and cultural land which they need for their homes or for medicine and cultural rituals. They occupy these pockets of land temporarily and permanently. The case studies this chapter will present are the 2021 Table Mountain

⁷ A strategic government programme that was rolled out in 1994. The programme is usually associated with the low-cost housing built mainly for previously disadvantaged people of colour. But the strategy is broader and more comprehensive. It includes; land reform, a commitment to provide electricity, clean water and public works in the form of building roads and sewage and sanitation facilities and various other basic needs (O'Malley, 2023).

occupation, which resulted in the arrest of 12 Mountain Doctors and various Khoi and San groups, as well as the Philippi Horticultural Area (PHA) or what the Mountain Doctors call “The Compound”.

Mountain Doctors believe that the death of liberation leader, Nelson Mandela caused the failed revolution and continuous land dispossession. Many of them believe Mandela, who was imprisoned by the apartheid government, never left Robben Island, where he was imprisoned. Their belief is that Mandela died in the 1980s and not in 2013. They are not the only people who hold this belief, masses even recall his funeral and share similar collective memories of the events (French, 2018: 203). The phenomenon is referred to as the Mandela Effect. Some believe the Mandela Effect is nothing more than people intentionally and unintentionally shaping and influencing each other’s memory as these ideas spread, especially online. Others see it as just conspiracy theories (French, 2018: 201 & 206), while still others suggest forgetting or having false memory of things does not only happen to individuals, it is a strange phenomenon that can happen almost simultaneously to a collective group of people in different parts of the world; for example, not only the belief that Mandela died long ago, but also the collective memory of when he died (Prasad & Bainbridge, 2022).

The Mandela Effect was coined by Fiona Broome in 2009 (Broome, 2023). She investigated this phenomenon when she realised that she was not the only one who had this memory of Mandela dying in the 1980s. Some even recall his then-wife, Winnie Madikizela Mandela, being televised walking besides his coffin. People recall speeches that were made (KaMhlanga, 2022). Philip K. Dick, American science fiction writer and philosopher, suggests that these collective memories are not false. He says there are many different universes; some are even similar to our universe and realities. He suggests it is not uncommon for different realities to intersect or bleed into each other. He also believes, similarly to many Africans who believe in connecting with ancestors, that one can connect with the different universes and their reality. This is how he also explains things like *déjà vu*, when people experience a moment in our current reality and are convinced they have lived that exact moment before. Using Dick’s theorising, some suggest that Mandela’s death did take place in the 1980s in an alternate universe, this reality bled into our reality and that is why so many believe this (Dick, 1977). Because of this belief, some Mountain Doctors are convinced that the Mandela that went into Robben Island is not the same one who came out 27 years later in 1990. They believe the Mandela who went into Robben Island would have never bargained about something as important as land during peace negotiations in the transition from apartheid to democracy in the early 1990s⁸.

⁸ CODESA: Convention for a Democratic South Africa took place between 1990 and 1994. It took place in two stages, CODESA 1 and CODESA 2. It was a series of engagements to negotiate the end of apartheid with various political and social movements and government stakeholders. The legitimacy of these engagements is often critiqued because of the lack of involvement of important structures like the Pan Africanist Congress, Inkatha Freedom Party, Azanian People’s Organisations, African traditional leaders and several others who questioned different approaches and decisions taken on by this structure (SAHO: 2017).

The pragmatic implications of the Mandela Effect play themselves out in contemporary land struggles like the resisting of the Amazon development which threatens to displace Mountain Doctors and indigenous groups even more. While Mountain Doctors like Bradley have been active in resisting this development, the resistance is not unique to Mountain Doctors. Many are concerned over what this development will mean for them, especially because the proposed areas are where many sell their herbs. But they balance this concern against the need to make money in the short term to take care of themselves and their families, while navigating other more immediate oppressions like being denied access to natural spaces where many of the herbs they need grow. All these complexities will be discussed in relation to their historical and present-day land dispossession challenges. The Amazon development in some ways becomes more of an illustrative metaphor of the local and global dispossession that indigenous, poor or marginalised people are victim of when the demands of capitalism and neo colonialism demand it. In doing this, the discussion shows the oneness, growing landlessness, shared struggle, shared experience and shared resistance connecting indigenous people all over the world. The Mountain Doctors' struggle over land often sees them on the wrong side of officialdom. They find themselves always battling legalities over their basic need for freedom of movement and a desire to explore and interact with nature in different ways. The proposed Two Rivers Amazon development and the accompanying intensified gentrification will threaten this spiritual and cultural desire to connect with nature even further.

5.2 Contemporary land struggles mirroring history: Two Rivers Amazon Development

The proposal of the Two Rivers Amazon headquarters development has aggravated a deep colonial wound. The areas that would be affected by this development are between Liesbeek Parkway, Two Rivers Urban Park (TRUP) and Voortrekker Road in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town. The proposed development will potentially affect areas like Maitland, Goodwood, Parow, Woodstock, Observatory, Mowbray, and Rondebosch (Liesbeek Leisure Properties Trust, 2019: iv). While the Amazon headquarters make up a big part of this development, it is not the only development being considered. There are also plans to build houses, schools, malls, hospitals and many other things. These developments will happen on the pathway of the Two Rivers, and the developers plan to redirect the flow of the water to make way for all the construction. The area around the Two Rivers is considered one of the first sites of colonialism and land grabs and because of this and many other reasons, it holds great heritage significance;

There is a spiritual dimensionality which is extremely important, this is the place of the ancestors... It is the epicentre of colonial conquest. This is the place where we can locate [pause]... If we talk about reparations and restorative justice, this is the place where the very first theft of land happened with the granting of the title deeds. What does it mean for South Africa and the rest of the world when we can locate exactly where land was stolen for the first time? What does it actually mean, when you can say there's a title deed for it? This thing happened, here's the date... [Stutters] When people talk about colonialism and apartheid we often talk about the architecture of it and often that's in imagined terms and it's in conceptual terms and it's framed in a way where it's less embodied. But what does it mean when you can touch the soil and river water and

you can track that this place was called |Gamirodi !khaes, which means the place where the stars gather. Suddenly you are not only in an important part of the universe where the Khoi and San people navigated the stars before it became the South African Observatory. But you are also in important ancestral terrain, the very first terrain that was stolen, this is the first occupied territory for agricultural purposes, this is where the slaves were brought down... It is an Important recognition of a terrible deed [that] took place, a terrible sin [that] took place, this should be a place of national healing (Tauriq Jenkins, interview with author, 2021).

Tauriq Jenkins goes on to add that because of the heritage and environmental importance of this area, the consultation should not be left to a small handful of Khoi and San chiefs who are for the development, while the majority of Khoi and San leadership reject it. Its colonial, slavery and environmental importance means that whatever happens in this area can affect more than just those in the Western Cape. The civic duty to engage in this topic is one that should be held by all South Africans and not just a small group in Cape Town. Chief Khoebaha has a similar discussion, further elaborating that areas like Maitland and Ndabeni, which would be some of the affected areas, were one of the first Nguni settlement areas. These areas had a mix of amaPondo, amaFengu and amaThembu, all various Xhosa clans. Many started to move to this area during the nine Frontier Wars between the Xhosa and both the British and Boer colonial threats. These wars took place between 1779 and 1879 (de Villers, 2013: 33). Some fled to this area for protection, while others came because of various treaty agreements. Nguni people were brought to these areas to remove their ability to declare war on the British or the Boer because chiefs and kings could only declare war on their own ancestral land. But unlikely coalitions came about between the Nguni and Khoi and San from these forced migrations. This posed further threat to the colonial administrators who responded by creating the 1868 Border Protection Act to weaken these alliances and the stronghold that various indigenous groups had over certain borders (SAHO, 2011).

The colonial administrator struggled to weaken the protected borders which went over vast stretches of land. Finally in 1869, Sir Walter Currie created a small frontier army. It was made up of mostly colonial administrators and the police and Boers, but it also consisted of groups of Coloured and Xhosa people. Supported by the Royal Artillery, this small army was able to crush the border alliances and strongholds that had been created. These defeats were soon followed by droughts, which made it difficult for Nguni and Khoi and San forces to regroup. Many of their leaders were imprisoned on Robben Island and the clans dispersed to different areas (SAHO, 2011). During my fieldwork, Chief Khoebaha further mentioned his own family were Kei Korona royalty and were instrumental in the creation of these alliances and the defending of borders in parts of the now Eastern and Northern Cape areas that border the present-day Western Cape province. Chief Khoebaha added that he is a descendant from these alliances, as some were established through marriage. He adds that the Amazon Development not only sidelines Khoi and San people and the ancestry chiefs, but it also does the same to various Nguni chiefs who migrated to this area in part to create stronger alliances between indigenous people against the colonial threat. He adds that many Nguni graves and kraals are still in these areas, as well as the bodies of Nguni and Khoi and San warriors who fought in the frontier wars. He added a development of this nature would disrupt sacred land with great spiritual and historical significance. He also shared fears of how those pushing the development have overlooked this history and have perpetuated the

divide created by Sir Currie's army, pushing the notion that Nguni people do not belong in the Western Cape. As a result, he alleges many of the consultative processes have left Nguni people out of areas that they fought for or which in part belonged to them;

... that's a burial site of many Nguni warriors who fell after being taken captive or prisoner by Sir Walter Currie. Upon their death, they were buried on the banks of the Two Rivers, so it's an abomination to build on top of the human remains of warriors, chiefs and traditional leaders. So, our other problem is that Amazon is mostly owned by Zionist business investors. And their contempt for our culture and our heritage in Cape Town is no different than the contempt they have for the Palestinian people in the Middle East⁹ (Chief Khoebaha, interview with author, 2021).

Amazon also came under fire in 2020 for its treatment of its warehouse workers in the USA, most of whom are people of colour and women (Sainato, 2020). South Africa already has its own labour challenges and racial histories dating back centuries. Leaders like Chief Khoebaha fear that rather than development and opportunities, Amazon will perpetuate past oppression while bringing in other forms of oppression. He cautions those who focus on the jobs narrative and adds that he believes that most jobs will either be short-term jobs during the construction stage, or part-time work like domestic work and other poor paying, low skilled jobs that will not bring much real development. He compares this proposed development to other development strategies like the 1995 Rugby World Cup, 2010 Soccer World Cup and many others. All these events and related growth strategies made huge job creation and poverty alleviation promises, and they underdelivered. The 2010 Soccer World Cup failed to deliver on the promise to prioritise local and informal traders. Many were undercut when they could not meet the policy guidelines of the World Cup (Nyar, 2014: 26). The development of stadiums and infrastructure saw many poor South Africans forcibly removed to make way for these developments. Most of the forced removals took place in big cities where most of the main matches took place, namely Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town (Nyar, 2014: 28-29). People's lives remained unchanged and many of the local businesses who were able to trade during the World Cup reported that they did not make as much profit as anticipated (Nyar, 2014: 27). Others even reported losses. No real long term sustainable upward mobility was experienced by local businesses and South Africans as a whole.

The World Cup, through things like the forced removals, reignited many of the apartheid and colonial injustices that led to land dispossession and displacement and the general oppression of people of colour. Dr Roux cautions that the proposed Amazon development will aggravate this wound once more. The developments promise to assist the masses, but are likely to lead to further economic exclusion and tensions in the community. Dr Roux adds;

So, the experience in, you know, Salt River, or Woodstock has been, the development has been driven very much by the kind of economic imperatives of property development. So, you know, it's not about, how do we provide sustainable housing for families or for, you know, people who work in shops or supermarkets or, who are cleaning houses, for people in the mansions in our areas, if you need to live close to work, you know.

⁹ Amazon has come under scrutiny for ignoring the Apartheid Israel state and entering technology deals that will strengthen the oppressive illegitimate Israeli government. One such contract would strengthen the Israeli military which frequently launches attacks on Palestinian families, schools and clinics in Gaza, while slowly pushing them out of Jerusalem (Ongweso, 2022).

*So, the kind of development that's been happening has been, I think, in lots of ways very destructive, because it's been... I don't know, there's this weird sort of rhetoric about, you know, affordable housing, which is different to kind of social or subsidised housing in Cape Town. And what affordable housing tends to mean, is like, you know, a block of 18 square meter studio apartments that is sold for, like R1.2 million *over 66 000 USD* to young professionals or Airbnb investors. I mean, it's like, 18 square meters, is like, you know, you might look at as a student, or as someone in like, their first job. And so, you have that kind of development in spaces, like, Woodstock, Salt River, that have very long histories as kind of working-class communities. With generations of families that have been living in kind of the same houses or the same streets (Dr Roux, interview with author, 2021).*

Dr Roux further adds that these changes will lead people who are relocated outside of the city to lose the access and convenience that comes from living in or close to the city. This will happen in similar ways to how it happened during the World Cup. People will lose the social networks and support structures that these people have fostered with each other over decades or longer. Dr Roux also highlights the potential for conflict between neighbours as some decide to leave the city and sell their homes in the city to meet other imminent needs. This threatens the resolve of those who are fighting to stay and protect their neighbourhoods and makes the looming gentrification almost inevitable. The gentrification from the proposed development will draw the rich and affluent to the city. This will lead to a drastic rise in the cost of living, which will potentially push people out of the city as they struggle to keep up with rising prices (Zukin, 1987: 129). Just like the World Cup, many believe that this development will lead to forced removals. Community members and environmental bodies are also concerned about the climate change and biodiversity implications;

*... it's the connection to the mountain, to the land, the river, the animals. It's bizarre that anyone can think that you can wipe that away and put up 150 000 square metres of concrete, 44-metre-high buildings. And put up a media centre, an amphitheatre, a herb garden and think that's cool. Because that's essentially what is being offered. This area is part of the green belt. The original plans for the area was a park, this was in the city policies. *The development* it's bad for climate change, they want to put up huge buildings, where there are empty huge buildings elsewhere that you can turn into *office space* to suit Amazon. You're putting down concrete on a green space, no matter how many trees you put on the concrete, concrete heats up and creates heat islands. You're filling in a river, which is completely against climate change policies, to fill in a waterway, especially in a flood plain. There [are] also the flooding issues. Essentially, it's about climate change and the need for green spaces (Prof London, interview with author, 2021).*

The environmental and climate change risk linked to this development have even caused divisions between leaders and officials. In late 2020, the City of Cape Town's Environmental Management head, Keith Wiseman, lodged an appeal against the provincial environmental authorisation (EA) for the redevelopment of the River Club. Wiseman adds that the plans are a violation of the NEMA¹⁰ (Kretzmann, 2020). Penelope Meyer, Deputy Director of Heritage Western Cape Legal Support, also lodged a similar appeal in September 2020 (Heritage Western Cape, 2020). While Heritage Western Cape focuses more on heritage issues, it does also consider the environmental considerations that have not been given sufficient attention. Similarly, the City of Cape Town appeal focuses more on environmental impact, but it also considers heritage concerns. These issues

¹⁰ National Environmental Management Act

in some ways are two sides of the same coin and they need to be observed concurrently with equal consideration, and these two appeals do just that.

The appeals state that the EA decision did not adequately consider the environmental impact that would result from the scale of the development. The EA has also ignored the planning infilling of the river corridor (City of Cape Town, 2020). The developers plan to redirect the water flow of parts of the Two Rivers to make way for construction. This would be a huge threat to biodiversity. The redirecting of the water flow would cause environmental harm to an area with great environmental significance. The area is a protected area, and the development would mean the protection status of the area is being relinquished, making it vulnerable to even more exploitation and harm in the future. There are also concerns over the development being built on a flood plain, where the developers used outdated information to track the risk of flooding (City of Cape Town, 2020). This would not only be a serious risk to the effort and finances pushed into the development, it would also pose a significant risk to those who live there as they would face the risk of floods and all the dangers attached like injury, death, pollution, and many other issues. Smaller investors in the area would feel the biggest knock to their finances should the area flood before they get a good return on their investment. The appeals also state that these plans furthermore go against the historical plans for this area which were decided with heritage and environmental protection as the greatest goal in mind (Heritage Western Cape, 2020). Heritage is also important given the colonial memory the Amazon development has awoken, heritage and the observing of it is also an important form of healing from the colonial wound. Heritage and heritage sites, are reminders to oppressed groups that one day they will receive social redemption from colonial oppression (Bam-Hutchison, 2017: 238; Modisane, 2015: 237). The threat to heritage sites like Two Rivers disrupts the promise of healing and redemption that indigenous people derive from these sites and can potentially lead to hopelessness.

5.2.1 First Nations Collective: A case for supporting the Amazon Development

The proposed Amazon development has created a kind of historical *déjà vu*, where many believe they are living through the same pain their ancestors endured during the first settler occupation of the Two Rivers area. The similarities between the two events are hard to miss, even though they are taking place centuries apart. There is even a sameness in the strategies that were used across history by colonial settlers to divide indigenous groups and clans. Historically this can be seen in things like the involvement of people of colour in Currie's war, to topple other indigenous groups that were resisting the colonial threat. The proposed Amazon development has also deepened existing divides between the collective of Khoi and San Kings, Queens, and Chiefs. Chief Khoisan has been one of the main leaders who form part of the five Khoi and San leaders who support the proposed Amazon development. They call themselves the First Nations Collective and are made up of Khoi and San leaders from the following groups: Gorinhaiqua, Gorachouqua, Cochoqua, Korana and Griqua. They believe that the proposed development will give them cultural agency which will allow them to develop linguistic, territorial and cultural heritage of the indigenous

peoples and their descendants. The First Collective approached LLPT¹¹ Director, Jody Aufrichtig, to share their vision which was incorporated into the proposed development (Khoisan, 2020: 26 & 28). The development promises to acknowledge Khoi and San culture and history by building a;

fully fledged heritage centre, a functional indigenous garden and cultural praxis site, a world- first international indigenous media and communication centre, as well as an amphitheatre where the best of Khoi and San art, culture and music can be showcased (Khoisan, 2020: 29).

Chief Khoisan also adds that this collaboration has come as a result of the failure of the post-apartheid government, adding that they have spent years engaging with various government structures on multiple levels. Some of these include;

[the] Western Cape government, provincial ministers of several Western Cape government administrations, mayors of the City of Cape Town, the chief land claims commissioners, several ministers of the national government and even the apex of governance, the Presidency (Khoisan, 2020: 28).

In most cases they have been ridiculed, ignored, met with broken promises, generally disregarded and their plight has been trivialised. Khoisan adds that the developers have seen their pain in a way that government has failed to acknowledge. He adds that the developers have shown this through their commitment to integrate Khoi and San history and culture in the proposed Amazon development. The First Nations Collective believe the cultural centre will help to empower Khoi and San people through training that will be provided, storytelling, crafts and other cultural practices (Khoisan, 2020: 28). Khoisan further adds that the cultural centre is also an important way for them to get their independence from government leadership that has continuously marginalised them. He concludes;

In the instance of the River Club it is our belief that we have removed ourselves from the evil gridlock of government paper pushing, paternalistic arrogance of the landed gentry descended from those who usurped our custodial lands and the real and present danger of local and worldwide economic catastrophe. Through this act of agency, we cut our own path of destiny through a minefield (Khoisan, 2020: 30).

5.2.2 Divide between indigenous groups on the Amazon development as a contemporary *déjà vu*

The development has caused a divide between leaders and cultural groups. Despite the Korana being one of the cultural groups that form part of the First Nations Collective who support the proposed Amazon development, important leaders that form part of the Korana, like Chief Khoebaha and !Kora are openly opposed to this development. Another cultural key figure opposing the development is Tauriq Jenkins, who has been accused of being a fraud by LLPT¹² and the First Nations Collective. Jenkins alongside OCA¹³ won a court ruling in March 2022 against LLPT's development. Deputy Judge President Patricia Goliath ruled that LLPT had failed to sufficiently consult with Khoi and San cultural groups before going ahead with their

¹¹ Liesbeek Leisure Properties Trust

¹² Liesbeek Leisure Properties Trust

¹³ Observatory Civic Association

development which would be erected on a significant heritage site. Judge Goliath issued an interdict halting construction. The interdict was in place for a few months while LLPT worked on appealing the decision, and they claim they lost R22 million (over 1.2 million USD) in the period construction was halted.

A few months after the March 2022 ruling, Jenkins's role as a GKKITC¹⁴ representative was called into question and it was said he presented fraudulent information which misled Judge Goliath into making her judgement and issuing an interim interdict to halt construction (Williams, 2022; Times Live, 2022). High Court judges Elizabeth Baartman, James Lekhuleni and Hayley Slingers ruled that Jenkins had misrepresented himself and provided fabricated evidence in order to halt the construction. The judges overturned the interdict, and stated that Jenkins had no right to represent the GKKITC. The judgment also ordered OCA, a structure Jenkins is part of, to pay all the appellants' legal fees from the original matter (Times Live, 2022). This ruling led a crowdfunding platform that OCA was using to pause the handing over of their funding. This was out of fear of being implicated in this damning ruling against OCA and Jenkins. OCA were able to start other crowdfunding pages on different platforms, but this was still a significant blow to Jenkins and OCA because a lot of the money they had fundraised was still held in the first crowdfunding platform. All the money they have used to challenge LLPT in different ways has come from this crowdfunding and they do not have other donors or sponsors driving their campaign or legal action.

Jenkins and OCA worked to appeal this ruling and continued to challenge LLPT's development until June 2023. Their campaign continued, but they had to pull away from their legal action because they were running out of money and still owed the developers 1.4 million ZAR (over 78 000 USD) in legal fees. This was 96% of their crowdfunding money which they had hoped to put towards the legal battle. The Amazon developers agreed to waive the debt in exchange for the OCA dropping the legal action against them. They took the deal and continue to explore other ways to challenge the development (London, 2023). LLPT's construction continues as OCA tries to recover from the blows that the later judgment and other tactics have caused (London, 2022).

¹⁴ Goringhaicona Khoi Khoi Traditional Indigenous Council



Figure 5.1: Tauriq Jenkins (Front Line Defenders, 2023)

The repetition of history is hard to overlook even in how some leaders are treated or the tensions and conflict that build up between the like-minded cultural groups that get pitted against each other. As depicted in the newspaper adverts below, even things like bounty hunter rewards were used as incentives to apprehend rebellion leaders during times of conflict. These 1852 adverts depicted below could potentially divide marginalised and displaced cultural communities. For landless communities struggling to survive, these monetary rewards could create tensions, while some oppose the colonial agenda and others perceive the money as a way out of the poverty that was created by the settlers. It was not uncommon for the adverts to encourage violence. The second advert even mentions that the monetary reward would still be given to the person who brings in Willem Uithaalder, even if he is killed in the capture. Uithaalder was one of the rebel leaders during one of the frontier wars. Uithaalder took over leading the rebellion after that death of Hermanus 'Ngxukumeshe' Matroos. Uithaalder applied tactics he had learned during his time in the British army in their fight against the Cape Colony (Ross, 2013: 219). He would also travel to different farms recruiting farmworkers to join the movement. This war, which took place between

1850 and 1853, was significant because it also united diverse groups, mainly Khoi, San, Xhosa and other Nguni groups. The rebellion is also sometimes referred to as race warfare (Elbourne, 2000: 17 & 21). The White settlers would further exacerbate the differences between indigenous groups and prey on past tensions and historical conflict between the groups in order to divide and conquer, while also recruiting African allies to fight on their side, but even with these tactics, the battlelines still remained Black/ Africans versus Whites/ Europeans (Elbourne, 2000: 17).

These historical divides created or perpetuated by external forces have similarities to the current media and legal wars amongst the Khoi and San communities divided over the proposed Amazon development. The lack of unity historically was just as important as the military conquest because it ensured that indigenous communities remained defeated long after the physical conflict. This is because they would not be able to regroup just for the purposes of defeating the bigger common enemy. This was even as the White common enemy caused a much bigger threat than the one they potentially posed to each other. Both in the 1800s and today, the influence of the media and justice structures is also very prominent. They are used as tools to create divides between people bound by a common goal. Even as their approaches might differ, their goal is the same: to divide and conquer. And just like in the 1800s, the race war is still the same. The Amazon development represents Whiteness and a foreign invader posing a threat. The resistance to the Amazon development is made up primarily of Africans and the mostly poor masses who are mainly people of colour. Just like the 1800s, the goal of the indigenous groups that were resisting colonialism is still the same as those resisting this exploitive modern-day expansion. They strive to heal from the pain of historical injustice and have the power to practise their culture unencumbered by land issues, poverty or lack of formal recognition.

for whose Apprehension the Sum of £500 has been already offered, and

**Hans Brander
Jan Cornelius
Simon Paarl
Oerson Magerman
Klaas Love
David Laverlot**

**Gert Erasmus
Jan Bannies
Frederick Hendrik
Willem Brass
Tilman Marthienus
Speelman Kievit**

who are known to have been Leaders in this Wicked Rebellion.

And I do further hereby offer a Reward of £50 to any Person not being a Rebel—and, if a Rebel, a *FREE PARDON*, who shall Apprehend and deliver over to Justice any one of the above-named Rebels.

DESERTERS who surrender themselves will be much more mercifully dealt with than if they be either taken in Arms or brought in as Prisoners by others ; and if they bring in any of the **PROSCRIBED REBELS**, they will be **PARDONED** for the Crimes of **REBELLION** and **DESERTION**.—I further Declare and Make Known, that no Person will be allowed to harbour or give any protection to Hottentot Rebels with impunity.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN !

Given under my Hand and Seal at Graham's Town, this 30th day of October, 1852.

GEO. CATHCART, Lt.-Gen., Governor.

By Command of His Excellency the Governor,

WM. F. LIDDLE, Private Secretary.

Figure 5.2: A NLSA (1852) newspaper adverts show the public response the colonial government had towards Khoi and San rebellion leaders who were resisting land grabs and other colonial oppression



PROCLAMATION

*By His Excellency the Governor and
Commander-in-Chief in Her Ma-
jesty's South African Dominions
&c. &c. &c.*

— 00 —
£500 REWARD.
— 00 —

WHEREAS, a certain evil-disposed and re-
bellious Subject of Her Majesty, by name
WILLEM UITHAALDER, has become a
Leader of a Band of Robbers—who have commit-
ted many Robberies and Murders within the Colo-
ny, as well as in British Kaffraria—and by induc-
ing his Followers to continue these evil practices
prevents the return of Peace, and causes the land
to remain uncultivated and barren :

Know, therefore, that i hereby promise a Re-
ward of £500 to any person or persons who shall
arrest, and bring to justice this wicked and mis-
chievous offender against the laws of this country
and the happiness of his fellow-countrymen—by
name **WILLEM UITHAALDER**. And
should he be killed in the endeavour to bring him
to justice—the same reward of £500 will be given
to the person who shall kill him.

And, moreover, should the said person who may
arrest or kill the said **WILLEM UITHAAL-
DER** be himself guilty of the crimes of rebellion
or desertion from Her Majesty's Service—or both
—he shall receive a Free Pardon for the same.

Given under my hand at Fort Beaufort, this 10th day of September, 1852.

GEO. CATHCART, Lt.-Gen.,
Governor.

By command of his Excellency the Governor.

WM. F. LIDDLE, Private Secretary.

Figure 5.3: A NLSA (1852) newspaper adverts show the public response the colonial government had towards Khoi and San rebellion leaders who were resisting land grabs and other colonial oppression.

The tactics used against Uithaalter are not unlike those being used against Jenkins today. Like Uithaalter, Jenkins has been publicly shamed in the media. While direct violence against Jenkins has not been encouraged, the accusations against him could heighten tensions and potentially have overt and covert violence directed towards him. In both the present and historical cases, the potential to divide indigenous groups is also strong. These tactics create manipulation and tensions that make it difficult for people to come together to discuss and negotiate their preferred outcome/s. Both tactics also attach criminality to resistance, especially when it is led or supported by men of colour. Activist and philosopher, Biko theorises this notion which he calls *swart gevaar*. *Swart gevaar* is an Afrikaans term which means “Black danger”. Biko says Whiteness will often attach the country’s inhumanity to Blackness and Black men in particular. This creates an irrational unjustifiable fear of Blackness and attaches Blackness to violence, danger and criminality (Biko, 1987: 78). In this case, Jenkins is portrayed as the *swart gevaar* that will threaten progress, jobs and overall wellbeing that the development promises to deliver.

This historical echoing also looks like the English colonial expansion from the Cape to parts of modern-day Namibia. Colonial administrator, William Coates Palgrave (1877: 5) was instructed by Governor of the Colony, Sir Henry Barkly, to explore every inch of this land for British colonial expansion. Palgrave kept detailed reporting on his exploration of this land which was then known as Namaqualand and Damaraland. His records tracked and documented everything from the ecology, weather, local tensions, and conflicts within and between groups, right down to intellectual capabilities and which chiefs or guides he believed were smart and which they had to be careful of. His recording is riddled with contradictions like the area being dry desert land, adding that people struggle to access water, which is one of the many challenges they are there to address, but confusingly, he also adds that some of these groups have lived in this desert for over 150 years. Given the mobility of this era and the more fluid boundaries, it makes one wonder why they would have stayed in this area if they were suffering, and how they could possibly have survived for 150 years. He also mentions that the Damara in particular came from the Zambesi (Palgrave, 1877: 14). Given their origins, why would they not migrate back closer to the Zambesi where water is abundant? He also highlights racial differences, labelling the Damara mainly as Black. The Namaqua were Khoi and San people and therefore were framed as differ from the Damara who had darker skin; the Namaqua were therefore not Black.



Figure 5.4: Parts of Damaraland around the period Palgrave was doing his exploration. The image depicts traditional architecture like mud and grass huts. There are also more modern square houses but that appear to have been built using African traditional methods and material like mud. There are also things like wagons in the background (NLSA, 1876).



Figure 5.5: Though this image has a closer, clear focal point, it depicts a similar scene to Damaraland. This image of Namaqualand shows similar land and terrain to the Damaraland image above. It shows similar traditional African huts and a juxtaposing of the Western and African in things like architecture

In his documenting, Palgrave did not highlight any commonalities between the groups. Even as he writes about tensions over areas that are contested between the Damara and Namaqua, but are also significant sites for medicinal herbs, he fails to look deeper into the shared sciences and cultural religious practices that led them to value the same spaces or herbs. He does not highlight some of the commonalities in their traditional attire or how things like their architecture and how they organise their villages seem to mimic each other. Perhaps he knew that doing so might show that the tensions between the Namaqua and Damara were not self-imposed, or were at the very least healthy normal conflicts being fuelled by the English for their colonial vested interests. Palgrave instead highlights tensions like the Namaqua wanting to move closer to the sea but fearing that the Damara would betray an earlier promise they had made to allow them to cut through Damaraland (Palgrave, 1877: 26).

These issues are presented as minor squabbles, with no acknowledgment of the fear of outsiders coming from the devastating impact the settlers had already had on different indigenous groups, or the old and new tensions that would be exacerbated by one group abandoning their territories and sometimes having no choice but to run towards land occupied by old enemies. This in many cases would cause further tensions, as those running from colonial conquest would run towards those they might have fought with in the past, only to be met with more tension and conflict where they settle. The Orlam Afrikaner group is also referred to in relation to the Damara and Namaqua conflict. Eventually they clash with the Damara and are defeated by them (Palgrave, 1877: 26).

Palgrave does not mention what caused the conflict, or that many African groups did not want proximity to the Orlam Afrikaners and their leaders because they feared colonial administrators

drawing an association between them. The Orlam Afrikaners spent a lot of time being nomads and being chased by colonial administrators because they killed White people and freed enslaved people. Other groups did not want the scrutiny that would come with them living close by, and so tensions started between the Orlam Afrikaners and different cultural groups. Palgrave conveniently leaves out a lot of this history. He does this so that he can not only present the English as the saviour in general, but also as the saviour that the Damara and Namaqua are desperate for (Palgrave, 1877: 13). He also posits that the British have some kind of ethical and moral responsibility to ensure these groups do not whip themselves to extinction through thirst or senselessly killing each other over medicinal roots and pathways. Palgrave glossed over or ignored commonalities like similarities in culture and traditions, the similarities in traditional attire or the proximity of their shared homes, including resources and experiences.



Figure 5.6: Collection of Damara images depicting the men, women and girl children in their traditional attire. While there are differences, the attire looks a lot like what the Khoi and San would have also worn or in this case, the Namaqua (NLSA, 1876)

The Two Rivers development takes a page out of Palgrave's book. It presents this development as the "be all and end all" of solutions. They ignore the neoliberal agenda's influence in creating problems like poverty that must now be fixed. Like Palgrave and the British, White local developers, foreign investors like Amazon and government officials stand the most to gain from the development. But these stakeholders present themselves as the saviours who are making sacrifices to bring some kind of empowerment or deliverance, and while making these veiled development promises which do not show in clear and tangible ways how people's lives will be improved, they also expose the environment to further harm. Exhibitionists' media and legal battles highlight more of the differences between the divided indigenous groups made up of those who support the development and those who reject it. In the public display of aggression between the indigenous groups, there is little room for discourse on the ties that bind them, the shared history, culture, experiences and ideals. And like 1876 when Palgrave was writing, it is the colonial settler that stands to benefit the most from these divides. Contemporary South Africans continue to reify debilitating regressive paths, sometimes through national, racial, xenophobic, ethnic and many other categories (Tomaselli, 2023: 14). These regressive paths are clear in this discussion, where certain happenings around the Amazon development look more like Palgrave's 1800s racist and tribalist methods, instead of functioning like a democratic and progressive society that listens to its constituents.

In Palgrave's records and in the 1852 bounty hunt adverts to crush colonial resistance, the African leaders are vilified. Some are even accused of crimes or senseless killing. In the 1852 newspaper adverts, Uithaalder was accused of robbing the colony and of murder. He and those who led the battle against colonial administrators were described as bandits, which also further minimised and delegitimised their action as nothing more than criminal action. People were not discouraged from using violent means to apprehend Uithaalder. Palgrave's records questioned African leaders' legitimacy. They were often portrayed as stupid infants only acting in their own interest at the expense of the great good of everyone. This was especially the case when they were against British recommendations being presented to them. Similarly, Jenkins has been accused of fraud which could threaten his position as a leader, while threatening his reputation, freedom and potentially his livelihood and career. The potential for violence towards him is high given that it is not uncommon for environmental defenders to be killed when stopping development to protect ecology. The case of Fikile Ntshangase comes to mind, her death has been said to be linked to her anti-coal mining activism in Somkhele, KZN¹⁵. She was gunned down in 2020 for questioning mining expansion for the health and ecological risks it brings and its long history of land grabs and land dispossession of Africans (Nxumalo, 2020). Similar to Palgrave's records, Jenkins' legitimacy as a leader in his community has also been questioned in a public court case. This discussion is not to defend Jenkins' innocence or determine guilt, but the historical parallels are difficult to ignore or overlook. It is also more than just mere coincidence given the dominance of Whiteness and the West pushing a capitalist agenda. This agenda is pushed at the expense of

¹⁵ KwaZulu-Natal

indigenous groups and has deepened divisions they continuously try to mend during periods of relative peace or moments of lessened Western interference. The land issue and the racialised tensions over African land, which Africans themselves have no control over, also makes the Amazon development look a lot more like a painful colonial *déjà vu*.

5.3 Mountain Doctor solutions: A case for land occupation

Many Mountain Doctors and related groups forcefully occupy land rather than go through formal channels to acquire it. They state that the RDP¹⁶ system has failed and offers people subpar housing, land, services and resources instead of delivering radical transformation that can significantly improve people's lives. The often-small RDP houses that form part of the programme are often not big enough to house a whole family. Poor construction also leads many houses to dilapidate very quickly, and the processes of acquiring and being contracted to build these houses have come to be associated with corruption (Sizani, 2021; Mashwama, Thwala & Aigbavboa, 2018: 1697-1698). Many Mountain Doctors believe the Land Reform programme has also failed for many reasons, because it does not allow those who lost land during or before the 1913 land grab to come forward and claim their land back. This was arguably the start of one of the biggest and most significant colonial projects, which would eventually see a substantial majority of indigenous people dispossessed, landless and poor. However, land loss took place even before 1913 and the fixation on this moment in scholarship and policy should be challenged. Intentionally or unintentionally, it suggests that this is when land loss started, discrediting the other land lost before this moment (Sithole, 2021).

Mountain Doctors question why the government pays the White owners for the land they stole and suggest that in cases that they know of, they have seen corruption where White owners drastically inflate the value of the land. By contrast, the claimant sometimes chooses a pay-out to avoid a long process that can easily last years or to avoid having their claim rejected because of insignificant proof or because it is ill-advised to hand over land that is now a mine or huge commercial farm to new owners overnight. These claimants seldom receive a cash pay-out that is the value of the land, it is often significantly less, or the White owners sabotage the land or resources that might be part of the land reclaim process, leaving the new African owners in a precarious place that can push them deeper into poverty. Some are forced to sell the land again at a much lower rate than what the White owners sold it for. The willing buyer, willing seller model is also problematic because it means that even if one has enough evidence of their family having once owned a piece of land, if a White owner is unwilling to sell that land, the land reclaim can fail or be significantly delayed (Binswanger-Mkhize, 2014: 255). The Mountain Doctors argue that in the processes they have witnessed, the White landowners can be directly or indirectly linked to the White families who first seized the land. They suggest that it is not always the case that the land has had different ownership, where later owners would have made purchases based on a fairly recent valuation of

¹⁶ Reconstruction and Development Programme

the land. Participants therefore suggest that the huge sums of money given to the White owners are not warranted because they acquired the land illegally and they would have more than benefitted off the land in the decades or more that they and their families have owned the land.

Many also question why indigenous people bear the burden of proving that they once owned the land and suggested that this burden of proof should be placed on the White owners. When discussing with Sister G if she believes Mountain Doctors will ever consider going through a collective formal land claim process given how significant land is to them, she critiques the colonial adoption of ownership, rooted in the Western economic identity that is adopted by even seemingly decolonial processes like land reform (Sithole, 2021). The official processes threaten or ignore the pluralistic meaning land has to Africans, which is not always based on Western ideals of commodity and ownership. Sister G further discussed the polarisation of land as a racial Black and White issue, which leaves the Coloured and/or Khoi and San community out of the process. She responded;

*The process for taking land back should be that they *white landowners* should prove to me that it's not *my land*... So how they're gonna prove to me that it's not my land? Because if I go there, they're gonna tell me I'm not black. So then where did I come from? [long pause] Where did they *white people* come from? It's like seeing a piece of land. [pause] Identifying the land. Yeah? [long pause, thinking] I wouldn't call it reclaiming the land because ownership *is there*. You can't claim something if it is already yours. Exactly! There's nothing to reclaim because ownership is. No, cause, ownership is. Yeah. You know what I mean? It's like, you can't claim it if it's already yours. There's nothing to reclaim, ownership is (Sister G, interview with author, 2021).*

!Kora, who lived through forced removals, critiques land reclaim procedures by also highlighting that the violence of forced removals did not allow people time to hold on to memorabilia like photos or records that might assist one now in a reclaiming process. Many Mountain Doctors suggest that if an indigenous person claims a piece of land, the White owner should prove that they did not acquire this land through violent or colonial or apartheid-related means. Apartheid is a violent moment in history which was labelled a crime against humanity in the 1977 Geneva Convention (Lingaas, 2015: 106). To pay those who acquired land through these means is to reward violent criminals. Many of these and other challenges or critiques regarding land reform show that the strategy is divorced from the rural context of poor and marginalised people. This is in part why the government failed to redistribute 30% of the land by 2014, which was their intended plan (Binswanger-Mkhize, 2014: 255). For many Mountain Doctors, land issues are an open wound that also cause a lot of pain when reopened, especially in ways that are superficial and will not adequately address the historical injustice. Many can track and locate even the sites of their more recent dispossession because they still live in very close proximity to them;

*Well, first of all, why did my parents [have] to move from town to a township? We had a nice big house in Stellenbosch in town in Dorp Street. And then suddenly, one morning, we had to pack up our things and go, you know? [voice cracks] That was my first encounter *of forced removals* as a little boy. Why the heck did we [have] to leave our house? And now we're staying in the single room somewhere, with [pause] people*

around us, with no more yard, no more playground, nothing, just all these crowded houses.... That was in 1970, then the big riots followed soon after in 1972 and 1976¹⁷ (!Kora, interview with author, 2021).

!Kora later adds that Dorp Street in Stellenbosch is a living active memory of the violation he, his family and many others went through. Others tell me that even the houses their families were evicted from still stand as they were in the 1960s and 1970s, where the forced removals were at their peak. Their parents and grandparents actively avoid those areas, even if it is necessary to pass through them to reach their final destination, be it work, school, the shops and so forth. Their old houses and neighbourhoods are now living memory of trauma, violence and dispossession which for many either started or drastically worsened the poverty they find themselves living in today.

These are just some of the reasons why the Mountain Doctors reject the formal institutionalised restorative justice measures set in place to address apartheid and colonialism. They also argue that apartheid is not over, and state-protected “White monopoly capital” continues to thrive on the oppression and marginalisation of people of colour. One example many referred to in relation to this view is a poultry farm in Philippi Horticultural Area (PHA). Driving up frequently to PHA, I was always intrigued by the demolished structures right outside The Compound. These looked like they were once big, beautifully designed houses. I asked people what happened to these houses, many of which looked like they could not have been more than a few years old when they were torn down. People would just say they used to belong to farmworkers and were reluctant to give more details. Monty, who lives in The Compound, helped to fill in some of the gaps. He tells me farmworkers had gradually built these homes over a long period and across generations. Not long before the lockdown, many of these farmworkers came together to challenge old and new workplace challenges and racial injustices. The White family who owns the farm were unwilling to listen to them. Many were fired and kicked out of their homes even in cases where they and their families had lived on this land for years or decades.

The area where their houses were situated is close to the farm, but some argue it is not in the farm and suggest the land is not even owned by the farm owners. But the farm owners insisted the part of the land where the farmworkers’ houses were built was on their land. These houses were demolished. For some, this happened while they were at work and they came home to find all their belongings damaged and their houses in a rubble heap of dirt and bricks. Many had to move to the neighbouring squatter camps. This action quickly crushed the rising worker resistance. The story received very little media attention from small community print newspapers. I tried and failed to find online versions which reported on this story. Monty and I took a tour to these houses outside The Compound, and we were both overcome with emotions moving from room to room, trying to imagine what each room might have been like. Some demolished houses still have damaged pieces of furniture and other random broken ornaments and household objects. Some of the divisions

¹⁷ The 1970s uprisings are popularly linked to education and the fight against forced Afrikaans education in black schools. They are also popularly linked to Soweto, in Johannesburg, Gauteng but they took place all over the country. And while issues round Bantu Education, an inferior system of learning targeted at people of colour, were the main driving force, they tackled many other apartheid oppressions and were mainly led by the youth (Ndlovu, 2011: 317).

were still clear and we could make guesses like this house must have been a five-bedroom house, and this would have been a very big family. For some of these, one could tell they were built over a very long period, possibly by different generations. Some parts of the structure looked older than others or the building material differed between different types of bricks and building blocks. These houses were very important symbols of resilience and rising above oppression. Now they exist as symbols of fear and what happens should one dare to threaten the White patriarchal neoliberal project. Here, the profit agenda is placed above all else, even human lives and dignity.



Figure 5.7: Protesting farmworkers' homes demolished by farm owners (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

Monty and many of those who live in this smaller part of the PHA¹⁸ also fear that one day it will be their homes that are torn down. The land they live on is a much smaller part of the PHA; they call this area The Compound or Oasis Farm. The Compound land is contested, and it is not clear who owns it. Some speculate that the previous White owners fled the country in the 1980s or 1990s when there was still fear of civil war breaking out in South Africa. Others suggest the land is municipal land. They have been confronted with the fear of eviction in the past, with some developers trying to move them off the land. They were able to resist this intimidation. Many other interest groups including farmers, environmentalists, and different communities located in and around the area have lobbied to have a significant portion of the PHA be declared a protected area (Adams et al, 2020). This would allow for the area to remain mainly untouched or used mainly for agriculture, tourism and conservation. The PHA is important because of its ecological significance as a wetland. The whole PHA used to produce up to 80% of Cape Town's fresh produce in the late

¹⁸ Philippi Horticultural Area

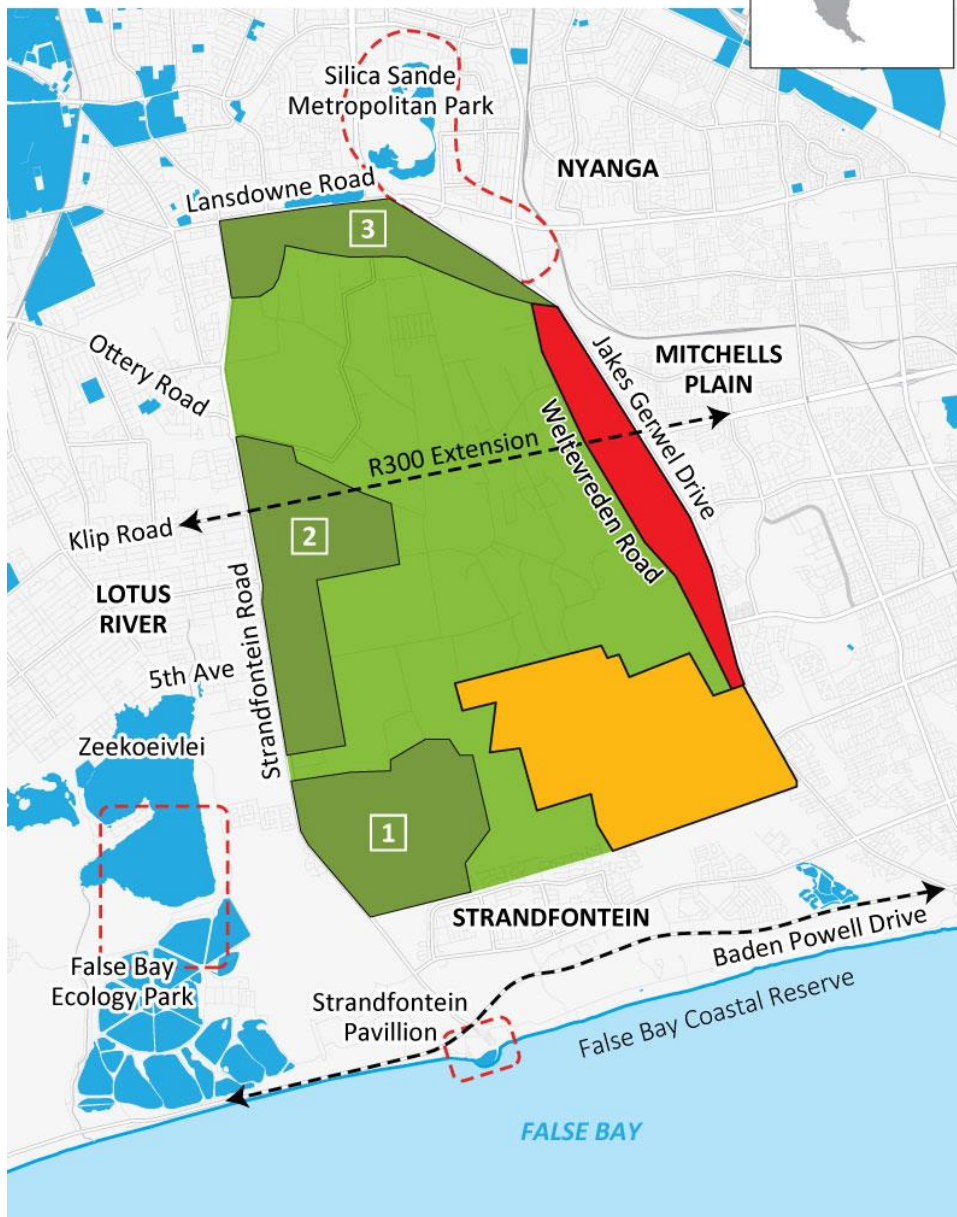
1980s. In 2012 this figure was estimated to be between 40% and 50% (Battersby-Lennard & Haysom, 2012: 42).

Philippi Horticultural Area (PHA)

Core PHA farm area (untouched)

Rezoned areas

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p> 1 UVest Properties area</p> <p> 2 Schaapkraal smallholdings area</p> <p> 3 Lansdowne Industrial Area</p> | <p> Weltevreden Wedge (Oasis Farm)</p> <p> Oakland City Area</p> |
|---|--|



Graphic: Rudi Louw

Figure 5.8: HPA map depicting untouched horticulture land and different developments or land use in and around the area (Shoba, 2020).

The Compound still represents an important case study for some of the strategies Mountain Doctors and related groups use to reclaim land. It is an example of the permanent or longer-term occupation of land. The families living here mainly use wood and other organic recycled materials to build their homes. They do this in part to be in harmony with the ecology and acknowledge that development and construction can cause environmental harm. This has caused some challenges, especially more recently, as rains and floods grow more and more violent year after year. They risk losing their homes to the rains and they find themselves having to do repairs more and more frequently. Monty discusses one day wanting to build a stronger brick structure, but they also fear eviction and their homes being demolished, a threat that is always looming, with a reminder right outside their enclosure. They live almost entirely off the land. There are indigenous gardens in little pockets of The Compound. They leave these areas untouched. The indigenous gardens have different plants growing that can be used as food or medicine. Monty says the indigenous gardens have been totally washed away in the past from heavy floods. Other plants also struggled and died when Cape Town was experiencing drought around 2017 and 2018 (Bohatch, 2017). But, he says to his surprise, even after some of the harshest threats, they always come back. This has taught him a valuable lesson on why it is important to protect nature, adding that we need it more than it needs us. Nature is resilient and will always find a way to recover from the destruction people cause. It will rehabilitate long after people are gone.

The families on The Compound also have their own food gardens; some are communal, and others belong to individual families. Monty also showed me around to his lettuce farm, where he shows me all the different kinds of lettuce he grows. He shared that he had recently become a supplier for some of the neighbouring supermarket chains. He is excited for this venture because it will allow him to better provide for his family. He added that it shows that protecting and taking care of nature does not mean one is picking poverty and struggle. He adds that one must expect struggle and difficulties, but mainly because everything comes with a certain level of challenge. He believes that if people can strike the balance between their need for money and material things and protecting nature, nature will provide. He adds that this is especially true because of the link between nature and ancestors, and because ancestors do the same for people in the spiritual and physical realms. The Compound is also important for both these realms. Monty and other Khoi and San groups have created a sacred space in The Compound. They have built a kraal, representing a similar idea to *umsamo* in Zulu culture; in fact, they also refer to it as *umsamo*. It is this kraal that they use during full moon ceremonies to mediate and perform rituals. They burn *mpepho* and do animal sacrifices for the ancestors there, especially when there is a huge challenge they are confronted with. This is the only time they eat meat, with the understanding that it is being done for the ancestors, and eating the meat will better connect them to the ancestors. They also eat it in part to avoid wastefulness, which they believe could lead to even more misfortune.



Figure 5.9: Driveway into Monty's home at The Compound (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

Many Mountain Doctors and similar groups opt to occupy land to different degrees, from hours to a few days for trots for herbs and to perform rituals. Some occupation is short-term, where they might live in caves and other natural spaces for weeks or months as they travel to different provinces to find herbs or learn from other healers. They also retreat to live in natural spaces momentarily as an escape from various social challenges and to find healing in nature. Other occupations are more permanent and long-term, as discussed with The Compound, while others take on the form of protest or straddle protest and spiritual needs and practices. One such example was a ceremony held on Table Mountain on 1 January 2021. Twelve people were arrested during this ritual, they represented different Khoi and San cultural groups and were later dubbed the “Mountain 12”.

Those who were arrested were; Chelsea Smit Lee, Niel Moffat, Sharon Moffat, Wanda Danster, Clive Danster, Shane Chamberlain, Eric Bowers, Connie Smit, Bronwyn Paulsen, Edgar Smit, Gairoodeen Mitchell, and Timothy Maasdorp (Monty). They were released on bail the next day and had to appear on 28 January of that year at the Wynberg Magistrate's Court (Ferris, 2021). While there were important rituals they were performing at the mountain, especially with Table Mountain carrying cultural and ecological significance for them, there was also a protest angle to the action, and also make commentary on the dispossession of Khoi and San groups, marking the

space as belonging to them and agitating for it to be given back to them. SANParks¹⁹ management had been made aware of this event before it took place, but people were still arrested for practising their culture on a site that has great significance (Ferris, 2021). They invoke Article 11 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which says (United Nations, 2007: 11):

Indigenous Peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.

5.4 Conclusion

Mountain Doctors turn to cultural religion to restore their sense of self for their own healing and to strengthen themselves in order to be strong enough to resist oppression, including land dispossession. They turn to their own understanding to liberate themselves, rather than waiting on a messiah to save them as many did during apartheid and colonialism. It is not uncommon in different African cultures for leaders and rulers to take on God-like, or deity status. Many believe at times a leader is called to rule, not by the people, but by God, ancestors or other important spiritual beings. When Western imperialism had eroded many of these beliefs and African cultures and people still witnessed strong leaders like Mandela emerging from unthinkable hardship, many tapped into the old divine understandings of leaders. Freedom fighters like Mandela and many others became more than just leaders or activists; people all over the country and continent placed similar deity status on them. They were more than just leaders, they became saviours akin to Jesus himself, representing the promised second coming where God says Jesus will come again to save his people. This is also in part because Western imperialism created such stifling conditions that it was almost impossible to imagine any kind of greatness or unshakable leadership emerging from those circumstances. So, one could easily conclude that for such greatness to rise from the ashes of chaos, hate and destruction could not have been a result of a worldly consequence. It must have been the influence of their ancestors who Africans believed always protected them and guided them even through the worst oppressions, or it must have been God fulfilling her promise to one day bring her son back to save her people.

Mandela in particular was even frequently referred to as *Morena* which can mean both Jesus and king in Sesotho (Havenga, 2020: 4). This title was not exclusively reserved for Mandela and depending on the context, it could represent other leaders. This spiritual understanding of leader had evolved to also fit into political discourse in South Africa during the second half of apartheid. All group gatherings were banned except for funerals, weddings, church and other Christianity-related events. These spaces became the only ones available for people to share important political information and ideologies. But because churches were still under the watchful eye of the apartheid state, and it was not uncommon to find police in these gatherings, people still had to be careful.

¹⁹ South African National Parks

Religious codes like *Morena* were used to veil political discourse. The 1981 protest workshop theatre play, *Woza Albert!* did just this. *Woza Albert!* means “come forth Albert!” The play was written and performed by Percy Mtwa and Mbogeni Ngema. The play is about Jesus’s second coming; he is referred to as *Morena* in the play. He arrives in apartheid South Africa and is shocked to see how his people are treated (Havenga, 2020: 1 & 2). Jesus becomes a freedom fighter and ends up being jailed on Robben Island near Cape Town, where many other political prisoners were jailed. In the play, he manages to escape and walks on water from Robben Island to the mainland in Cape Town. The apartheid government drops a nuclear bomb on him, killing him and destroying the whole city (Havenga, 2020: 9).

One of the characters, Zuluboy, is confused that this action would kill the messiah, but *Morena* reminds him to never forget that he will rise from the dead after three days. When *Morena* is resurrected, he wakes up all the dead activists like Stephen Bantu Biko, Lilian Ngoyi, Robert Sobukwe, Albert Luthuli, and many others. In the play this happens as celebratory music plays in the background, getting louder and louder as the play draws to a close (Mtwa, Ngema & Simon; 1999: 256-259). The play’s portrayal of *Morena* represents the spiritual religious meaning attached to leaders traditionally, but it also represented the political meaning that was growing during apartheid. In the play, Jesus is portrayed as a fighting messiah, not a passive one (Ngaboh-Smart, 1999: 178). Freedom fighters were depicted the same way. When political prisoners like Mandela were released and they no longer exhibited the same fighting spirit, it caused confusion with the masses who saw the release like Jesus’s second coming to save his people. When the passive messiah came out and the salvation did not follow, it caused a lot of tension and confusion. Salvation in this case can be interpreted as freedom from oppression, access to structures like healthcare and education, reviving African culture and most importantly, getting land back.

The failure to fully reap the fruits of the revolution caused angst, pain, confusion and a feeling of being betrayed by a saviour or Jesus himself. This is difficult to reconcile especially because of what a messiah or saviour represents to the oppressed, not only spiritually, but politically too. Mountain Doctors might use the Mandela Effect theory to make sense of this inexplicable phenomenon and why the salvation that their ancestors had waited and fought so long for never came. Disrupting the idea of the messiah might not be possible because it would mean turning their back on fundamental parts of their cultural religion, or even on their sense of self, which as the literature review showed, is also connected to their understandings of God. Mountain Doctors reject politics and the state in part as a result of this and believe it is the inward-looking and revitalisation of their lost cultural ideals that will offer them the salvation they once sought from political leaders and anti-apartheid activists. Something like the Mandela Effect and other political discourse around the democratic turn from apartheid helps to save the messiah while also providing an explanation for the confusion caused by salvation and land not coming to the deserving oppressed custodians.

The land discussions had in this chapter are important to frame the historical experiences of Mountain Doctors and show how this history impacts the contemporary. The historical land

dispossession means that Mountain Doctors and similar ethnic, cultural and religious groups have limited powers. This is evident in the case studies discussed, where land dispossession happens even in post-apartheid democratic South Africa, thus perpetuating colonial trauma and oppression experienced by Africans. The landlessness creates and perpetuates poverty, conflict and tension between people, especially around access and resources. This shows in some of the tensions caused by the proposed Amazon development. Some of these tensions come from external interference; in the proposed Amazon development, LLPT²⁰ developers have been accused of allegedly getting too involved in both Khoi and San cultural decision-making and in the environmental assessment. The Mountain Doctors' landlessness also negatively impacts their work, where their access to herbs and natural spaces for rituals is also limited. This further perpetuates their socio-economic challenges.

Mountain Doctors respond to this displacement through occupation. Their occupation presents itself in different ways. Their occupation receives a hostile and at times violent reaction from the landowners, government, and environmental bodies responsible for the land. This is even when the occupation is peaceful, temporary, and causing little to no interference to land or those legally responsible for it. This is evident in the Mountain 12 case, where a group was arrested for a peaceful protest and cultural ritualistic practices staged on Table Mountain. The increase in land occupations often leads to violence. It shows the need for government to be more decisive and just in their approach to land reform. Africans grow more frustrated as they find themselves still navigating challenges that are similar to those they experienced under apartheid. Even though the sackcloth movement is mostly a cultural and religious one, the focus on selling herbs does offer income creation opportunities for Mountain Doctors. When Mountain Doctors are not able to access land for herbs, a sense of anomie and helplessness is created. Not only does it mean a struggle to fulfil certain cultural religious ideologies and practices, it also means their income generation options are threatened in an already cruel, harsh and unaccepting city. This chapter shows the holistic blend of spirituality, land, and the environment in the life of Mountain Doctors has a relationship of strife with modern governance systems and ownership patterns.

²⁰ Liesbeek Leisure Properties Trust

CHAPTER 6

MOUNTAIN DOCTOR AESTHETIC, IDENTITY, LANGUAGE AND SYMBOLISM

6.1 Introduction

The physical appearance of Mountain Doctors in a modern, world-class city like Cape Town is intriguing. Dressed in brown hessian sacks, usually in cool trendy designs that bring an artistic element to them, they rope in the modern and the ancient in their traditional Khoi and San accessories and the fashion-forward Rastafarian elements. Their aesthetic is about more than just being fashionistas who stick out; it has a lot of symbolism which is deeply tied to their identity. This chapter will discuss the Mountain Doctor aesthetic while connecting it to different elements of their identity.

There are many things to discuss on Mountain Doctor aesthetic, some include interesting cultural objects like the shell of a tortoise which was traditionally used as a small purse mostly to carry smaller portions of herbs or snuff. Mountain Doctors today might use them more as accessories or as a symbolic way/object of remembrance of the lost cultural identity they work towards recreating. Others wear various accessories made from ostrich eggs or animal paws; they all have different individual and cultural meaning. For the purpose of this discussion, I will only focus on the common aesthetics like the sackcloth, long and often dreadlocked hair, and walking barefoot. All these have different and sometimes related social, historical, or biblical significance which will be unpacked in this chapter. What is common in all of them is their revivalism roots and importance, which is also similar to how *Khoekhoegwab* are revived.

The growing of hair, rejection of shoes, embracing of sackcloth and revival of Khoi and San languages are all attempts to rediscover their ancestry which they also see at a return to creation. This return to creation is significant and symbolic and it can mean connecting with God, ancestors, nature, or the self. Often it means an interconnected version of all these things. This is like the earlier discussions on how *ubuntu* is an identity which binds different cultures, spiritual beings, objects, ideas and individuals in African ontology. Rediscovering ancestry is important to allow this return to creation to happen, because the Mountain Doctors see their Khoi and San ancestors as having had the closest connection to creation. They learn from their ancestors through these revivalist practices that they adopt; these allow for a restored revitalisation and connection to creation. Symbols, clothes, hair, language, and many other things are the most important tangible starting point.

Language and shifts in identity will also be discussed. They come from adoptions of Rastafarian culture which were briefly discussed in the literature review. But in many instances, Rasta practices are a vehicle that lead Mountain Doctors closer to their Khoi and San cultural identity. With this, one starts to see a revitalisation of different Khoi and San languages that are extinct or very rare to the South African context. Revivalism of languages includes participants adopting Khoi and San names, which often come from family (usually grandparents and great-

grandparents), cultural leaders, events or even physical or personality traits. This chapter will discuss Khoi and San names as important steps in reconstructing their cultural identity.



Figure 6.1: Beaded tortoise shells that were traditionally used as purses and ostrich egg beaded necklace or body accessory that can be worn around the waist, torso or different parts of the body. From Iziko Museum's Dr WM Borchers's 1971.²¹ (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

6.2 Sackcloth and its ecological and cultural importance

The sackcloth is symbolic of many different things. It shows the Mountain Doctors' respect for ecology or creation. They believe that the sack is important because it is made out of plants or animal skin, and it usually has not undergone extensive manufacturing processes, meaning it is biodegradable (Yono, 2020). The modern day sackcloth is often made out of sisal. Sisal fibre is a hard fibre extracted from the leaves of the sisal plant (*Agave sisalana*). Even though it is native to sub-tropical North and South America, sisal is now widely grown in other tropical regions across the world, with Brazil and Tanzania being the two main producers (Li, Mai & Ye, 2000: 2037). If the sackcloth is discarded of improperly, it will cause almost no harm to the environment because

²¹ The collection states it is from 1971, but it is likely to have been from a lot earlier because Borchers lived between 1866 and 1948. 1971 could be the year they were properly catalogued or the year they were donated or "discovered".

in a way, it is part of the environment. Even the colour of the sackcloth has important symbolism linking it to creation; it is brown like the soil, mountains, rocks and most importantly, it is brown like the people who wear it and their ancestors. A perhaps unintentional benefit of the colour is that it allows Mountain Doctors to easily hide or camouflage themselves in nature, especially when they are at risk of being shot or arrested for picking herbs in certain restricted areas. Chief Kingsley (interview with author, 2021) adds the important symbolism the Mountain Doctors attach to brown and the sackcloth, based on its reference to nature and Judah²² who is also represented by the colour brown in Rastafarian culture derived from Christian scripture.

The sackcloth is part of a tree, is the, is the twine inside the bark of the tree. So, it's part of the roots, it's a body...much like our bodies. Also, the sackcloth is brown, [pause]so also, the blessing goes like this unto Judah, because Judah is representing the colour of brown. So, when we talk about the colour of brown, we talk about the mountains the earth, the land, the soil, you see.

²² Judah is the 4th son of Jacob and Leah and he forms one of the 12 tribes of Israel (Britannica, 2022). These 12 tribes are also important adoptions in Rastafarian and Mountain Doctor interpretations.



Figure 6.2: Sackcloth is important, it is not uncommon for Mountain Doctors to incorporate Rastafarian elements like the red sackcloth, red is an important colour to Rastas. Gad also wears a blue beaded porcupine paw necklace he made from roadkill porcupine²³ (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

Linked to the ecological significance of the sackcloth, is the rejection of the capitalist consumer culture, which is seen as a threat to creation. The goal of the sackcloth becomes a return to minimalism that does not harm creation, but instead supports and reflects it. Bradley (interview with author, 2021) discusses the importance of the naturalness of the sackcloth, especially for healers who work with herbs and need to connect more deeply with creation. The sackcloth is an important symbol that helps them do that;

*... because of the naturalness of it *sackcloth*... it was more nature. It's a natural material that is used, not so processed, it doesn't go through so much. Yeah, so, it still has a very natural element to it, because it's natural fibres that is used. So, people took well to it, you know. So, there was instances where like, you know, they made some garments and some attire... but in our modern era, you know, sackcloth, took really different*

²³ Porcupine is important in Khoi and San and other African cultures. It was not uncommon for Khoi and San groups to eat porcupine. It can also be used for medicine. Different body parts are used to make medicine more potent (van Wyk, 2008: 333 & Kruger Park, 2022). The spines/spikes are also used a lot like injections or acupuncture, making repeated pokes on the skin to administer medicine.

shape as part of healers, the healers, that is deep connected with nature. You know, and then to be part of nature, you know, wear something that is natural, and the sackcloth offers that through natural attire, you see. So, even now, there's also been another movement of wearing animal skin. So, when we do our cultural rituals and ceremonies, then we will put on our ceremonial garb. And that's when we wear our skins. Yeah, because the thinking and the meditation behind this is that it's not manmade, you know. The skins are... as it was given to humanity initially, as the first garments.

Bradley's discussion also shows the wearing of sackcloth is in some ways an extension of the old tradition of wearing animal skin that was practised by the Khoi and San. Just like the symbolism and connection to land, there are similarities in the colour, with both the traditional animal skin and more modern sackcloth being brown. Both have closer connections to nature, with the animal skins being closer because they undergo even less processing and modification. In some ways the sackcloth is a more modern, more accessible, and a cheaper representation of the old practice of wearing animal skins. It helps in part to remedy what Nyasha Mboti (2014: 473-474) calls the glass case effect, where Khoi and San people become invisible in their own art, aesthetics, history, stories and cultural heritage because so much of it is owned or documented by White people or institutions. The glass case effect is a metaphor for the separation that happens between Khoi and San groups when their culture is turned into tools for museums and galleries, often stored in glass containers or displays. The traditional revivalism in the sackcloth-wearing process helps to remedy this erasure and the limitations around accessing similar resources to what was used for traditional attire.

Given that groups like the Khoi and San have gone through centuries of being displaced from their land, animals and livestock, the sackcloth has become a more accessible way for them to revitalise old Khoi and San practices (Verbuyst, 2016: 87). They also often make bags out of the sackcloth. The bags are designed in a similar fashion to those made of animal skin depicted in the image below. Other times the bags are the original square bag form they acquired the sackcloth in, as most approach businesses like coffee shops to buy the sackcloth cheaply or get it from them for free. On some occasions they buy the sackcloth from textile shops, and it is still a lot cheaper than other materials. They buy the sackcloth when they want to fashion a certain kind of style, or when they want a specific significant colour, usually it is a colour linked to the 12 tribes of Israel which are an important part of their Rastafari and their contentious Christian identity. They also at times buy the sackcloth when they have received a dream or a vision of themselves wearing a specific kind of sackcloth, with unique colours or design. This is quite similar to dreams *izangoma* and people from African Indigenous Churches have about what to wear, especially when a culturally significant moment is about to take place. For example, *amathwasa*²⁴ usually dream about what to wear when they are about to finish their training and graduate to being *izangoma* (Bakow & Low, 2018: 445).

Mountain Doctors see dreams and visions as messages from their ancestors which will draw them closer to creation or help them to better navigate different social challenges, especially those relating to money, access and supporting their families. Dreams and visions are important in

²⁴ African shaman or traditional healer still undergoing training.

African spirituality or indigenised Christian groups like the Shembe Church. These dreams and visions represent messages from God, cosmological beings, or spirits like Nomkhubulwane and ancestors (Mbiti, 1997: 511). For the Mountain Doctors, following these visions is also important because they believe the visions are signs that bring them closer to personal goals and desires, be it being a stronger healer or for protection during the dangerous trots for herbs. The visions are also important for navigation of interpersonal decisions or conflict like wishing to reintegrate back into modern-day life by going back to school or finding work and navigating the financial difficulties attached to this desire. They might rely on these visions to address the conflict over how they return to modern-day life which represents a lot of things they avoid or reject. The fear is often that they will lose the lessons they learnt in the sackcloth movement because these lessons and practice clash with modern day fast-paced capitalist ideals and practice rooted in present and historical oppression and the degradation of the creation and ecology they care deeply for. Their visions and dreams might show them performing certain rituals or adorned in a certain way; in most cases they must work towards decoding the hidden message by following the steps that might be revealed in those dreams. Many enter the sackcloth movement because they dreamt of themselves wearing the attire, similarly, when they are conflicted about “leaving” the movement, they might have dreams of themselves wearing Western clothes. Usually this assures them that their desires align with what creation wants for them, the lessons they were called to learn, or the bond they had to create with creation in the movement has been successfully acquired.



Figure 6.3: Different types of animal skin with different shades of brown are depicted in this image of Khoi and San aprons and bags. They are an example of Mboti's glass case effect. The shades of brown and texture of the skin do show a resemblance to the look and feel of the sackcloth. From Iziko Museum's Dorothea Bleek's 1913 collection (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

6.2.1 Sackcloth and its relationship with Capitalism, Colonialism and Christianity

For Mountain Doctors, the sackcloth is an important symbol of the rejection of capitalist-led material consumption and social and ecological exploitation. The contradiction is that the sackcloth is one of the early signs of the trade that brought slavery, colonialism and capitalism to the African continent. The early European transatlantic slavery and global exploration mostly led by the Portuguese saw the rise of resource production (Krige, 1965: 2; Super, 1979: 268). One of the resources being produced was the sackcloth, which was used as packaging for shipping or trading goods in bulk. The sack was also traded as a resource in its own right and used in diverse ways. By the mid-18th century rise of the first industrial revolution in Europe, mass production, consumption and trade had grown exponentially (Deane, 2003: vii).

Western countries struggled with these changes; waste management was one of these challenges. Waste was often disposed of in natural water sources or was thrown in pits that were dug up next to businesses and people's homes. Landfill sites were eventually developed further away from people in an attempt to come up with better waste management practices. This move did not change much, and the poor disposal practices still polluted the air, soil and water. The unhygienic conditions saw a rise in rats and disease-carrying insects. Various bacterial infectious diseases including plague, cholera, dysentery, tuberculosis and influenza started to break out in more industrialised counties like England (Gani, 2019: 287-288). Even though the sackcloth is made from natural materials and is biodegradable and would have not contributed to the waste management issue and the resultant public health crisis, it still would have had a negative impact on ecology even if it was to a lesser extent. The mass production of the sack would have led to trees being cut at an alarming rate and would have led to a risk of deforestation, especially if not recycled, and this would have eventually threatened biodiversity.

While today the sackcloth is a more sustainable and environmentally friendly option compared to plastic and more heavily manufactured packaging options like paper, at the rise of trade and eventually capitalism, it was a symbol closely attached to these harmful practices. The sackcloth ended up being associated with the arrival of Europeans on the African continent. It was also associated with practices that came with slavery and the start of the modern-day exploitation of women, people of colour and other marginalised groups (Graeber, 2006: 61 & 74; O'Dwyer, 2019: 84). Bradley discusses elements of the repressive history that led to the influx of the sackcloth and narrates how people used it in different ways. In this instance, Bradley highlights both positive and negative functions. He narrates the positive aspects as he discusses how some saw the sustainability of the sackcloth, which they recycled and used to build or repair their huts or make clothes. He also talks about how it was a symbol of oppression for prisoners whom the Europeans had very little regard for. They were given sackcloth to make their clothes out of because the material was cheap, accessible and inferior especially as a garment-making textile. The Khoi and San were seen to be inferior by the Europeans, so an inferior material seemed fitting, especially for people who were perceived as social deviants or rebels like prisoners. Bradley adds;

*So, what happened was, sackcloth was introduced into this *culture* through trading. After the goods that were traded with the local inhabitants *we traded*, you had sackcloth. Sackcloth was a bag to put goods in. So those goods, were in the sackcloth because it can let in air, you know, it won't get mould[y] or go off. So that is the first time that they actually got the sackcloth material in that form, it's through the initial trading, which the Europeans and the sailors had with the locals here. Yeah. And, and then the people started using some parts of the sackcloth for covering over their huts. And some also used it for the clothes... One of the oldest prisons in South Africa, Breakwater Prison by Waterfront... And then you find that a lot of the prisoners were indigenous, were Khoi and San people, other people from this part of the world. So, they were imprisoned there, and at certain times they would be given sackcloth, to make clothes with, because they *Europeans* had very little, you know, respect for the locals (Bradley, interview with author, 2021).*

The sackcloth was also used in American slavery, and enslaved women's dresses were made from sackcloth (Smith, 2013: 18). Many Mountain Doctors, however, believe their enslaved ancestors wore different Western clothes often made from cotton. When they had escaped slavery or had been freed, they would sometimes start wearing clothes made from sackcloth. The sackcloth was more easily accessible and more closely resembled their traditional attire, which made them fond of the material, leading them to embrace it. Because it was worn by free slaves, it started to represent freedom and liberation, while also representing an important minimalism that was a symbolic rejection of capitalism and its growing consumption practices. This is one of the many meanings of importance Mountain Doctors add even today to their practice of wearing the sackcloth. American anthropologist, Arjun Appadurai (1986: 6-7) explained this contradiction by highlighting that things, be they artefacts, commodities or religious symbols, have social life or meaning. The sackcloth in American slavery plantations represented oppression, while it represented freedom to the South African enslaved because of the different ways it was used in different contexts. The meaning, functioning or significance of things changes depending on the social potential people place on objects. The meaning one society places on objects can potentially change when different societies interact with the said object (Appadurai, 1986: 88). This could be one way to make sense of the historic symbolism of the sackcloth as significant for the rise of trade and production, while also being an oppressive symbol of colonialism and being a sacred liberation representation for Mountain Doctors today.

African religion scholar, Federico Settler, takes Appadurai's discussion further to make sense of the significance religious groups place on things. Settler (2018: 40) makes a distinction between everyday objects and things that African religious groups attach meaning to. Many everyday objects are entangled with colonial meaning or origins but are still embraced by the religious groups that attach importance to those objects. Some of these objects include spices, different kinds of fabric and incense. Other everyday sacred religious objects, just like the sackcloth, are modernised reinterpretations of ancient sacred artefacts. Religious ideas integrate into everyday life and deploy sacred meaning to everyday objects they encounter or interact with (Settler, 2018: 44). One example is the *vuvuzela* which is a long plastic replica of the kudu-horn. The kudu-horn and now *vuvuzela* are used in African churches like the Shembe Church or religious ceremonies. The *vuvuzela* makes a loud elephant trumpet-like sound. It gained more popular commercial attention in South African soccer games and attracted global attention during the 2010 Soccer

World Cup (Chidester 2012: 185). Some everyday objects that churches adopt start off as everyday objects and gain spiritual significance over time. At other times, like with the *vuvuzela*, the everyday object starts off having important religious symbolism and over time it starts being used by a different society or external group, just as soccer fans adopted a religious object for sporting entertainment.

The sacredness of everyday objects is created through a process of continuous reinterpretation and ritualisation as people turn the object into their own (Chidester 2012: ix). The sacredness of objects also usually requires the object to engage with the body in a way the religious group believed to be significant. Without engaging with the body and the ritualisation and reinterpretation of the sackcloth, it is arguably nothing more than a commodity often used historically for packaging and to a slightly lesser extent today (Settler, 2018: 42). Some of the ways that Mountain Doctors reinterpret the sackcloth is through linking it with creation and seeing it as important for connecting with their Khoi and San origins. It is not uncommon for the meaning of everyday sacred objects to change over time and new objects can also be introduced as sacred. The sacredness of the sackcloth has also changed over time and has been reinterpreted in different ways by different religious groups, from Christians to Rastafarians and the Mountain Doctors. Other everyday objects like oils, holy water or candles are more accepted as sacred objects because they are often theologically justified in religious texts and because they are more commonly used (Settler, 2018: 47). Although it is a lot less commonly used, the sackcloth is one of the more accepted religious objects, partly because it is justified in theology through its biblical representation.

The contentious relationship between African religious groups and Christianity is also important to consider when looking at how the oppressed attach meaning to common objects. Like the capitalist and ecological conflict discussed above, Christianity represents struggle for Mountain Doctors and Africans as a whole. Christianity is closely linked to slavery and colonialism. Evangelical Christian missionaries used various violent and manipulative strategies to force Africans to reject cultural religious practices and ideals which they portrayed as evil and hedonistic (Vilakazi, Mthethwa; Mpanza, 1986: 76). Many different African religious movements still adopt aspects of Christianity, which end up being spaces of peace and comfort despite their violent history and origins. The African Methodist women's (*manyano*) religious movement draws from various Christian practices and ideas, the most notable of which is their uniform. It is a predominantly Black structure which uses religion and motherly solidarity to address social issues. They are most identifiable by their red coats and white hats. The uniform represents Christian commitment (Haddad, 2004: 9). But the movement also represents *ubuntu* ideals found in African Traditional Religious movements or culture, while also representing a womanhood-like ideology founded on care and the importance of mothering and protecting other women and the community (Haddad, 2004: 5). The *manyano* also represents resistance against apartheid, even though apartheid has similar Christian religious origins to the space they find comfort in (Settler, 2018: 45).

The sackcloth represents similar conflict; just like the *manyano* women, the Mountain Doctors both embrace and challenge elements of Christianity which they experience both oppression and emancipation from. The sackcloth and its symbolic meaning is one of the Christian things the Mountain Doctors embrace. The sackcloth represents grief and is sometimes worn after a death or loss. In Genesis 37: 32-36, Jacob mourns what he believes to be the death of his son Joseph after his bloody robe is handed to him. In his pain, Jacob tears his clothes off and wears a sackcloth and declares that he will mourn the loss of his son until his own dying day. The Mountain Doctors wear it because they grieve the threat to creation, the loss of their Khoi and San cultural identity and ancestry and the oppression of their ancestors, while others wear it to grieve the loss of a loved one;

This is my first year I've started the sack clothing after, wearing clothes and stuff like that, this is my first year, this is my seventh month yeah. Because of the last passing of my sister, it was very bad for me, you see. I will start thinking I must go deeper in the in the history, also in the culture of Rastafari that's why I decided I want to [stuttering] wearing the clothes and be part of them also. Yah. She was also part of the Rastafari (Gershwin, interview with author, 2021).

In the sackcloth movement and in the Bible, the sackcloth can also represent punishment or repentance that is followed by God's grace and forgiveness. Even though Job had not sinned, his story in the Bible is often associated with repentance. God strips Job of his riches and loved ones as a test after Satan suggests that Job is only devoted to God because God blesses him, and if Job lost everything, his devotion to God would also end. Job wears sackcloth during his suffering as a sign of repentance. He also sits in dust and ash, which are symbolic because they represent lowliness and the extreme humility that comes with it. Job had been reduced to almost nothing, just like the dust and ash he sat in. In the end God rewards him for his devotion. The dust and ash are also important symbols of healing or connecting to nature.

Dust and ash are ritualised in African Traditional Religion (ATR), including Mountain Doctor practices, and they are sometimes mixed with herbs and medicine for healing or used in rituals (Singh & Bhagwan, 2020: 408). Ash is also important in the Catholic church, where it is used on Ash Wednesday to draw a cross on congregants' foreheads, which marks the start of Lent. Lent is a forty-day period of fasting and sacrifice that takes place before Easter; it is a remembrance of Jesus's sacrifices, death and the events that led up to it (Senn, 1998: 15-16). Honorable Mhlali narrates how Rastas and Mountain Doctors seek out the sackcloth for salvation and how many wear it to acknowledge the mistakes they have made and the harm they have caused others;

Because before Rastafari came, like, all of us, I would say we were in the world, as we say, and in the wicked world, in the Western world. And then with that, we will all westernized and so with that you're doing wrong. You see, before we became conscious. So, we were doing wrong things robbing, stealing, murderous, some of us, you know, some of us went to jail. We went [to] dark things. So, we... sackcloth was the, basically was the last option and was the light for all of us. So, it was the salvation of everything. And Rastafari is our redeemer. So, yeah (Honorable Mhlali, interview with author, 2021).

6.3 Barefoot Mountain Doctors

Being barefoot, much like the sackcloth, has different meaning and importance for Mountain Doctors. Like the sackcloth, there are similarities to why being barefoot is important. For this reason, the discussion on why Mountain Doctors reject shoes will be kept shorter. Being barefoot, like the sackcloth, is an important Khoi and San revivalist practice, and many reject shoes because their ancestors also rejected shoes, which they believe made them stronger and good climbers. This was important then as well as today, especially when there were trots for herbs in the mountains. For many Mountain Doctors, the rejection of shoes is usually the first of many steps they take before a complete transition into wearing full sackcloth. They start to consider themselves part of the sackcloth movement even before they fully immerse themselves into wearing sackcloth;

Me being in the sackcloth it's a few, it's a few... maybe it's 2 years now for me. But me walking bare feet and working with herbs, since 2000 and ahh... yoh! It's long now sista moss. Yah, I'm going to talk about 2012, you see? So, it's probably 10 years that I'm dealing with medicines. You understand? (Joseph, interview with author, 2021).

The decision to reject shoes, just like the embracing of the sackcloth, is a multifaceted combination of biblical and spiritual symbolism, capitalist materialism rejection, a desire to connect to ecology and to heal one's body before one can heal others. Joseph (interview with author, 2021) further adds;

*Ok, you see, being bare feet is connecting you to the earth maan, to mother nature. Because you must feel the mother nature first before you can feel the medicine. So, it's part of the movement, the earth, you see? Where, you see... by the animals, they don't wear the shoes. They are connected *to nature*, you see? Same like us *mountain doctors*, it's nothing new to indigenous people of other lands to walk bare feet, you understand? Yah... It's to bring us closer to God even. You feel the sufferation of the poor, you, see? You feel the earth, when the earth is in that state *of suffering* you see? Yah! it's connecting you much more better, because when you have shoes, when you have a pair of Nikes, when you have a pair of Adidas, you're going to focus more on the material. You understand what I'm trying to say? Whereby if you are bare feet you're not going to focus on this material because it is something natural, it *nature* is something part of you. It's *feet are* not something that can break like shoes, when it breaks you must throw it away or glue it... You know sometimes you get thorns, and you get all of these things in the mountains, you see. So, you must [be] careful when you walk in the mountains, you must be vigilant you understand...but the medicine is healing us *when we get hurt*. You understand?*

Walking barefoot is something that has recently become a trend, especially in the Western world, as it wakes up to the benefits of this practice that was historically done by different indigenous communities in the Global South. The benefits of walking barefoot range from improved sleep, reducing inflammation, strengthening of the body and the feet themselves and many other things (Basson, 2019). A recent comparative study done in South Africa and Germany found that South African children are generally stronger when it comes to different aspects of physical development. South African children, mostly due to socio-economic challenges, are less likely to wear shoes during certain activities like sports, playing, and sadly at times, even to school. Prof. Ranel Venter and Dr Elbé de Villiers from Stellenbosch University's Department of Sport Science collaborated with German researchers from the University of Jena and the University of Hamburg. They found

that South African children developed stronger jumping and balancing skills and improved general motor performance and flexibility (Basson, 2019).

Being barefoot also has important religious and spiritual significance. In the Bible when God delivers a message to Moses using a burning bush, God instructs Moses to take off his shoes because the land he is on is sacred and holy (Chinitz, 2007: 44 & 46). For Mountain Doctors, much of ecology is holy because it protects, nourishes, and heals them. In return they believe they must protect and respect nature. Some places are considered important because they have historical significance; these include places where battles for land took place between settlers and Africans. These areas are seen as mass graves and are given holy status as a result, and so shoes are strictly forbidden. Even Mountain Doctors who have not been in sack for a long while will usually remove their shoes when they go to these areas for herb trots, rituals or even leisure.

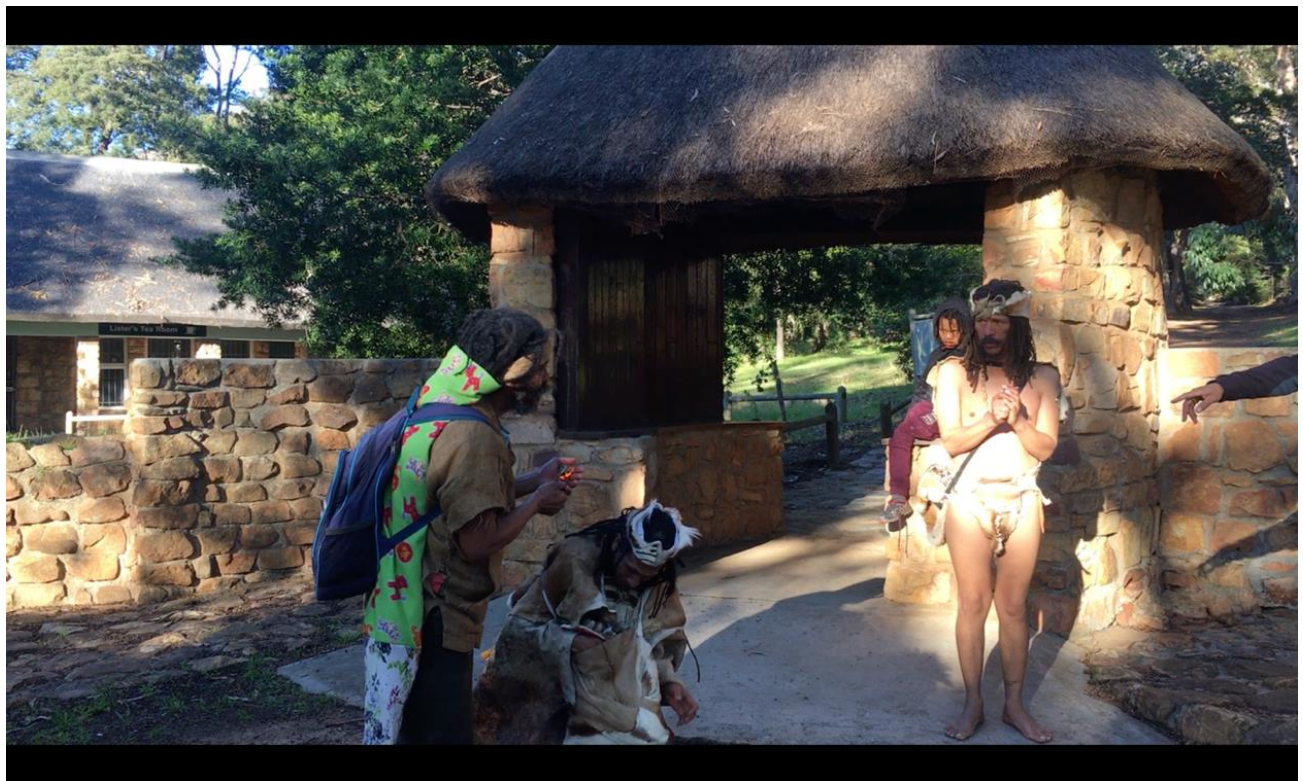


Figure 6.4: Even though Mountain Doctors like Arthur, Bradley and Monty have not been wearing sackcloth for a long time, they wear sack or animal skin and walk barefoot when they come into sacred areas like Elephant's Eye for rituals (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

Other culturally significant places are given holy status because they are areas where royalty might have lived or passed away, or these areas have very important ecological significance either because of the biodiversity, or the belief that certain places are potent and can heal or provide stronger connection to God or the ancestors. Holiness is also attached to areas where important spiritual and religious rituals might have taken place. Elephant's Eye in Tokai, Cape Town is one of these places and is considered holy and sacred for multiple reasons. Elephant's Eye is called that because it looks like the head and eye of an elephant. It was not uncommon for the Khoi and

San to name certain areas after the objects they resemble or sounds they make. Not too far out of George is a mountain called the Sleeping Giant because it resembles a giant lying down.



Figure 6.5: Elephant's Eye caves and mountains. Called Elephant's Eye because the cave looks like the head and eye of an elephant (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

Elephant's Eye is considered important for several reasons; the biodiversity in and around the area is crucial and there are plants with significant healing capabilities. Even the water is clear and pure and is believed to carry healing properties. The land, once covered by sea water, is considered a gift from God, not just the land itself, but the incredible richness and ecological diversity it carries. The cave inside the elephant's eye was also believed to have been Princess Vlei's castle (also known as Prinses Kasteel). She was a beautiful Khoi princess who was raped and kidnapped by European men. It is believed that she was so devastated by what had happened to her, her endless tears eventually created the Princess Vlei Lake in Grassy Park, Cape Town (Pitt, 2012).



Figure 6.6: View from inside Elephant's Eye shows the shoreline and the land below, all of which was once covered in water, showing only the mountain tops that are at a distance and those closer to Elephant's Eye (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

Mountain Doctors are not the only African group that observe the sacredness of a place by removing their shoes. This is also a common practice in the Shembe Church, where members do not wear shoes at the holy grounds of eBuhleni and ekuPhakameni, both situated in Inanda, KwaZulu-Natal. They are also restricted from wearing shoes in the temple, which just like the spaces that Mountain Doctors use for rituals, are out in nature, distinguished by rocks painted white and placed in a circle (Browne, 2005: 104). Shembe members also make an annual January pilgrimage to a holy mountain, Mount Nhlankakazi, where church founder, Isaiah Shembe had many of his religious and spiritual revelations. Because the mountain is holy, the pilgrimage must be done with no shoes on. This sacrifice and connecting to the mountain is said to bring healing and good fortune for members who make the three-day, over 80km long journey from eBuhleni or ekuPhakameni to Mount Nhlankakazi. Different rituals and sermons are performed throughout the journey (Becken, 1968: 138 & 140).

Ethiopians similarly have the Abuna Yemata Guh Church, named after its founder. The church is nestled within rocky mountains, and it is one of Northern Ethiopia's more than 100 churches that are in the mountains. The church stands 250 metres above ground, and churchgoers believe it is

sacred because it is closer to God. It is also holy because it holds many of the remains of the priests who have led the church in small enclosures within the rocks. The church also holds a lot of important biblical artefacts and history, like a 5th century goatskin bible and paintings which are in good condition because of the favourable conditions inside the high caves, and because of strong pigments that were typically mixed with animal fat to preserve the colour. Many of its members observe the church's sacred nature by making the dangerous climb up to the church barefoot; women even make this climb with their newborn babies so that they can be baptised (Bearak, 2019; Great Big Story, 2018).



Figure 6.7: Abuna Yemata Guh Church is situated within these mountains (Bearak, 2019)



Figure 6.8: The inside of the church is filled with important religious history and artefacts like the paintings in this picture depicting important biblical figures.



Figure 6.9: Abuna Yemata Guh Church artefacts, a Bible made from goat skin (Travels & Books, 2018)

6.4 Mountain Doctors and hair

The similarities between Mountain Doctors and the Shembe Church do not end with their barefoot practices which show respect towards important sacred places. They also have hair in common. Both groups encourage members to grow their hair and keep it natural to reinstall the African pride once lost. It also has biblical significance for both groups. In Numbers 6:5 God instructs Moses how Israelites should behave and one of these rules has the following to say about hair; “During the entire period of their Nazirite vow, no razor may be used on their head. They must be holy until the period of their dedication to the Lord is over; they must let their hair grow long.” God also places the strength of Samson in his hair. Samson is very strong and when he reveals to his wife Delilah that his strength is in his hair in Judges 16: 15-17, she has his hair cut and he loses his power.

African hair has always been political. In many cultures before colonialism and today, African hair communicated different spiritual, cultural, ethnic or social status symbolism about the individual or group. Hair in a way was/is an identity in its own right, while it also connected with other identities. It also communicated certain important messages to the external world about who one is and could determine how one is treated. It still serves this role today. When there is a loss in the family, family members must shave their hair and wear symbolic cultural objects, like specific kinds of beads or a small pin/ button covered with black material. This communicates that this person or family is grieving. This might suggest this person deserves to be treated with a lot more kindness, caring and understanding (Tshoba, 2014: vi). Older, married Shembe women still practise an old beauty practice which also symbolises status and social position in society. They grow their hair long, dye it a reddish colour, stretch it (without chemicals) so that it looks straight and can be pulled far enough to be woven it into a hat-like structure that almost resembles *inkehli*, a traditional Zulu hat (Ngubane, 1986: 7). *Inkehli* also resembles the helmet crown that the Egyptian Queen, Nefertiti is usually depicted in.



Figure 6.10: Shembe women weaving/ sowing hair into hat-like structures (Shange, 2011, Inanda).

African hair was a source of pride and it spoke volumes so during the slavery trade, enslaved people were forced to have their heads shaved. This stripped them of their dignity and identity to create a barrier between who they were before and who the slavery traders needed them to be. This made them better fit into the enslaved role and removed the possibility of any kind of non-verbal communication. The enslaved people's hair or any other culturally significant markers or identifiers on the body could no longer communicate the kind of subliminal messages they could communicate before about ethnicity, social status and age. This also helped to keep enslaved people divided, meaning they could not connect along similar identities or create alliances that might lead to resistance (Byrd & Tharps, 2014: 33). For Black Consciousness Movement liberation leader, Bantu Biko, growing and celebrating one's hair is one of the many important ways the colonised body starts to embrace itself and all the things that make it uniquely African after centuries of everything African being viewed as inferior or being disregarded entirely (Biko, 2004: 111). Mountain Doctors similarly grow their hair to reclaim the autonomy and cultural identity that was taken away by systems of Western rule and oppression.



Figure 6.11: Mountain Doctors take a lot of pride in their hair, they grow it long and sometimes adorn it in sackcloth, Rasta or Khoi and San inspired headdresses (Shange, 2021, George).

6.5 Language as identity: Rastafarianism and creolised language

Names are very important in the Rasta, Sackcloth Movement and Khoi and San culture, and indeed in many other African cultures. When it comes to names, there is a layer of complexity that must be unpacked so that one might understand why Mountain Doctors refer to themselves in certain ways or why so many have the same or similar names. Many Mountain Doctors change their names because of the conflict many of them have over what they often jokingly refer to as their “colonial names” or “slave names”. Significant numbers of the participants and their families and communities were stripped of their identity first when their enslaved ancestors were given new names, and later when they were reclassified as Coloured by the apartheid government. Enslaved people were given “simpler” English names by their slave owners or would be named after their owners in part to mark them as possession (Cohen, 1952: 103). Many of the people I interacted with changed their names to what they believe are more relatable Rasta Tribe names or Khoi and San names as a decolonial act and rebellion against a historical system that took their names, history, and culture away from them.

While their new names are a sense of pride for many, they still cause conflict for some. The names their parents/ families gave them are still special to them because of the bond they have with their loved ones. Some felt conflicted because they know their families loved their names and put a lot of thought into naming them, some are named after important family or community members and activists who made a difference. The conflict is that they also look up to these people and do not want to disappoint their families with the name change. In these instances, they would either alternate their names or double-barrel them. Arthur, whose Rasta name is Judah, uses both names equally and frequently introduces himself as both names when he meets people. The double-barrel naming is also useful for the Rasta names which are 12 names based on the Twelve Tribes of Israel, whereby each Tribe Name represents a birth month. For example, people born in June are Levi. Arthur-Judah is July because Judah is for July.

Because there are only 12 names, many of the Rastas and Mountain Doctors have the same names. There were moments where there is a group of about 10 Rastas and Mountain Doctors and three of the 10 are Gad; Gad represents the month of November. It would get very confusing when someone calls a Gad. So, they would try to distinguish which Gad by double-barrelling their tribe's name with their other name, a location or another characteristic or personality trait they have with the Twelve Tribes of Israel. The characteristics also include colours, tribe functions like power for Gad, will for Levi, etc. Some lean into certain tribe characteristics more than their other name sakes. Even though red is an important colour for all Gads, if one Gad leans into this characteristic by always incorporating red in their colours or generally being drawn to the colour in different ways, the person might also show a lot of personality traits that are associated with red, like quick to anger or passionate, and that Gad might refer to themselves or be referred to by others as Gad-red, for example. The table below shows just some of the elements that link to the Twelve Tribes; others not included in this table include different gems and stones, zodiac star signs, and even essential oils. I chose a simpler table because I wanted to highlight the basics and I will not be delving in too much on zodiac signs and which oils are important for which tribe. The table below is a brief illustration of the names and their association with certain months or what Rastas believe are shared personality traits.

<i>Tribe Name</i>	<i>Month of Birth</i>	<i>Tribe Color</i>	<i>Body Part</i>	<i>Tribe Function</i>	<i>Apostle</i>
Reuben	April	Silver	Eyes	Strength	Andrew
Simeon	May	Gold	Ears	Faith	Simon Peter
Levi	June	Purple	Nose	Will	Matthew
Judah	July	Brown	Mouth and Heart	Praise	Judas
Issachar	August	Yellow	Hands	Zeal	Thaddeus
Zebulon	September	Pink	Stomach	Order and Compassion	James Son of Alpheus
Dan	October	Blue	Back	Judgement	James Son Of Zebedee
Gad	November	Red	Reproductive Organs	Power	Philip
Asher	December	Gray	Thighs	Understanding	Thomas
Naphtali	January	Green	Knees	Love	John
Joseph	February	White	Calves	Imagination	Bartholomew
Benjamin	March	Black	Feet	Elimination	Simon the Zealot

Figure 6.12: Twelve Tribes of Israel <http://www.tozion.org/Rastafari-Twelve Tribes Of Israel.html>

Mountain Doctors embody pluralism in almost every aspect of their social life, and language is no different. The pluralism that they embrace also becomes an important part of their identity. When one meets them, one might find them wearing the hessian sack. They accessorise with culturally significant bracelets, necklaces or head wraps from either Rastafarian culture or sometimes from Nguni influences like Xhosa culture. They might even be wearing items with more modern-day significance because they take a lot of pride in their attire and fashion elements. Even modern items at times go into how they design their attire and adorn themselves. Lingo and language are no different, it is sometimes hard to keep up with the eclectic way they pull from English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, *Kasi-taal*, Rastafarian-driven creolised English and the revitalisation of *Nama*. *Kasi-taal* for example is already so diverse as it is often mixed with Afrikaans, English and the local African vernacular or a combination of African languages if there is more than one prominent African language in the area. The creolised nature of *Kasi-taal* challenges the traditional conceptualisation of language and creates space for possible merging of either different African languages or African and Western languages (Makalela, 2013: 111). It is through this creolised process of language construction that Mountain Doctors construct their own internalised identity, while also using it to help them navigate their diverse external world.

6.5.1 Transitioning from Rastafari to *Khoekhoegowab*

Rastafarianism is an important vehicle, because of its prominence, especially in the Western Cape. Many Mountain Doctors speak of adopting Rastafarianism first. But the Rasta principles encourage them to seek their heritage and embrace their culture so that they can give salvation to the colonised self. This is how many start engaging different Khoi and San practices, either within the Rastafari space or the Sackcloth Movement space, but more often in a combination of the two. As they use Rastafarianism as a vehicle towards their Khoi and San identity, many start to play around with new names to fit their “new” identity. Some of the participants try to loosely translate their Rasta name, characteristics or important symbols into a *Khoekhoegowab* and they adopt that name, while others choose to name themselves after a *Khoekhoegowab* and might name themselves after a grandparent if the name is still known in the family or they name themselves after important events, locations or leaders they look up to. One example is !Kora-Brian, he is named after the first Khoi leader that Jan van Riebeeck met when he first came to Cape Town. !Kora also means broad shoulders, which !Kora-Brian also has, so in some ways the name is also descriptive. !Kora means someone who is a leader and plays a leading role in the community, which !Kora-Brian also does. He has mentored many Mountain Doctors and continues to have an impact in his community, while also influencing government, universities and other mainstream institutions when it comes to plant medicine and the protection of Khoi and San knowledge, as well as groups like the Mountain Doctors. When introducing himself, !Kora (interview with author, 2021) states;

*Brian Damonse since I've been Christian, but my cultural name and to all my peers in the cultural movements and stuff, I'm known as !Kora... !Kora is an indigenous name. As you'd know when Jan van Riebeeck came to Cape Town. The first leader of the people which he met in, in the Cape area was also called !Kora. But translated out of the Bushman language, it means bro, the one with a broad shoulder [laughs]... I think *I got the name* because of the many positions I, I wouldn't call it positions. But [pause] in our indigenous culture, there's certain things that a person needs to do. And I'm more like a leading figure in a lot of things.. Actually it's *the name* also in my family bloodline. Well, the name came actually from my grandma, was an elder medicine woman, dealing with medicine all her life. So, even as a young boy. Since I can realise that I have a brain to think for myself, I've been with plants and I've experienced plants, doing medicines with her, she taught me most of the knowledge I have about plants. And when I started to practise on my own, she was the one that actually started to call me by that name, she told me about my family history and then the acceptance of the name was like, second nature to me.*

What is interesting in !Kora's statement is the use of the word Bushmen, which many other research participants also use. Scholars labelled this word derogatory, racist and even sexist, But many Khoi and San people still use it for various reasons. These include to challenge the derogatory way it has been used in the past, to observe their closeness to nature or simply because this is their preferred identity/ label. The label is complex because it can have both negative and positive connotations (Ellis, 2015: 120 & 122). !Kora also later narrated that his name was almost lost because of the tendency of colonial settlers to change indigenous people's names. Some of the loss of ancestry happened in violent ways as already discussed in the literature review. Others lost their link to their Khoi and San names, language and cultural identity from merging with other

Nguni groups as a form of self-preservation and a defence against the colonial threat. The Duma clan in Kamberg, KwaZulu-Natal is one of these. Many San people in the Drakensberg region joined the Zulu when they felt the colonial threat intensifying (!Khwa ttu museum, 2022). Richard Duma, who has worked with !Khwa ttu museum and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife to record parts of this history, says he grew up believing he was Zulu. But he would get confused when his family would also occasionally say they are not Zulu. He grew up not knowing where he belonged and where he fits in as a Zulu who is also not a Zulu. After some time, his family told him they were San and they existed in the shadow of the Zulu so that they could survive. Richard would later learn about his San ancestry and culture from his father. His father took him to Inkanyamba Shelter, a sacred San heritage site with rock art in Kamberg (Anderson, 2007: 39 & 40). While his father was able to teach him some things about his heritage, their language was lost and is now extinct. It is also unclear if the Duma name is one they adopted within the Zulu culture or if the name or a similar version of it existed in the San culture and was possibly readapted or connected to other Zulu names.

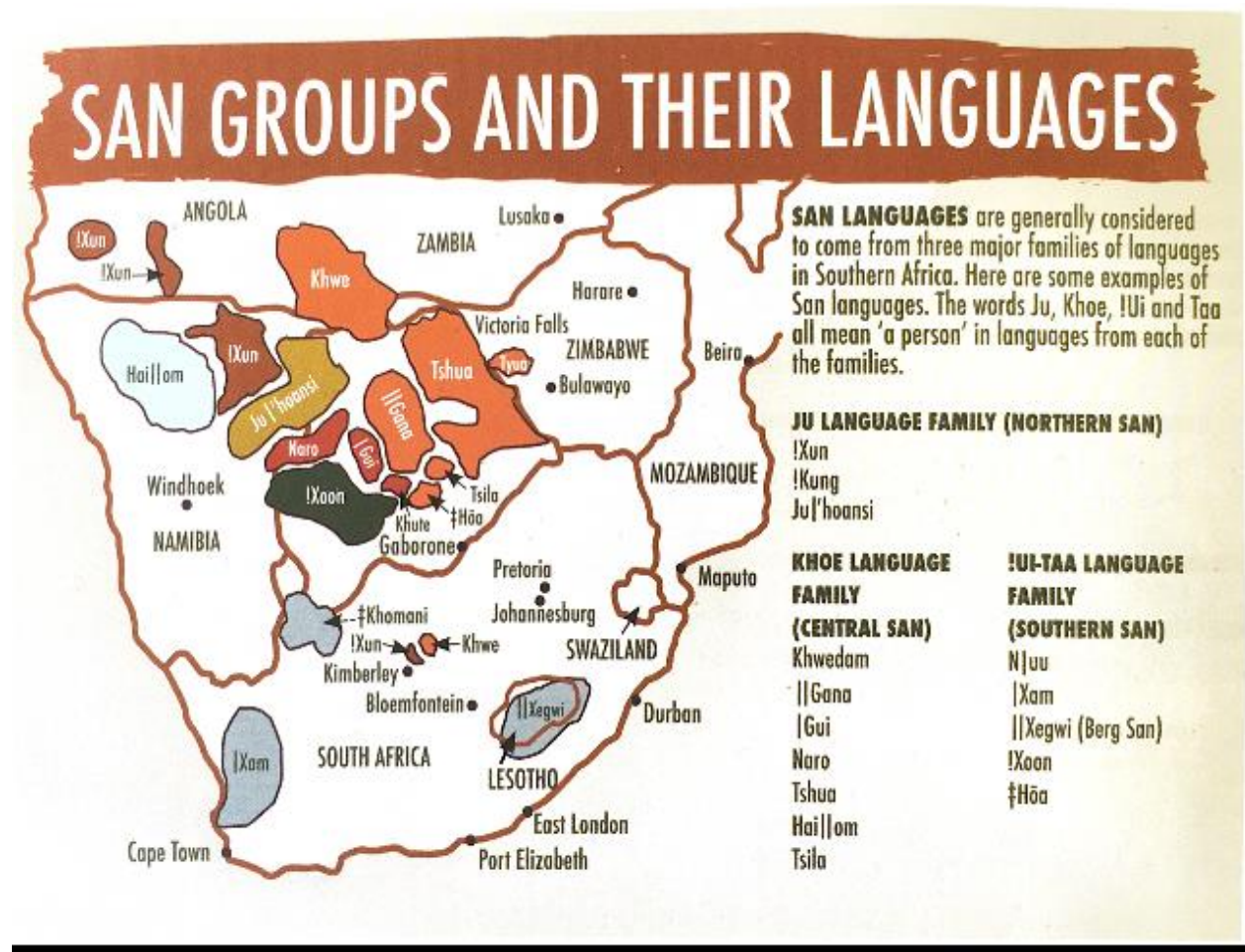


Figure 6.13: Map of Southern Africa depicting the origins of various Khoi and San languages (!Khwa ttu museum, 2022)

The act of reclaiming lost cultural names is not uncommon amongst groups that are or were previously oppressed, and this practice can be seen across different African cultural groups, even among African Americans who reclaim their African roots through renaming and many other ideology and practice shifts (Mphande, 2006: 104). The way it is done, as already discussed in relation to the Mountain Doctors, differs for every individual or cultural group. One of the ways Nguni groups like amaZulu and amaXhosa did this was through *izithakazelo* (praise poems/praises), which are based on *izibongo* (surnames or clan names) of an individual or family. *Izithakazelo* are performative oral traditions usually performed by *imbongi* (poet). Nguni people also received varying levels of oppression and ethnic cultural cleansing from colonial settlers. Many of the efforts were successful, but they also failed in some ways. Many Nguni people continued to practise their cultural religious ideologies in private. The shame and secrecy attached to the ways they engaged with these practices, coupled with Christian views that labelled ancestral honouring as evil, resulted in many being labelled witches and being killed or imprisoned as a result. African revitalisation movements and indigenised Christianity movements sprung up all over the African continent in the late 19th century, which further helped with the preservation of African identity and practices linked to it (Muller, 1994: 36; Cobley, 1991: 356).

In South Africa, Shaka Zulu's unification process was arguably one of the early steps taken to strengthen clans under one Zulu umbrella and this preserved cultural practices at risk of experiencing colonial erasure. Later, the Shembe Church and African Zionist Church were the main players protecting cultural religious beliefs, as well as similar smaller movements. At the dawn of democracy, some of these hidden practices came back to light, growing and becoming more mainstream and accepted over time. Some of these revitalisations were responses to modern-day challenges, while others were more focused on cultural identity restoration as the only goal (Scorgie, 2002: 68). *Izithakazelo* is one of the many practices that was tactfully preserved through time and later made more prominent. This was partly done through taking advantage of language. Nguni people could engage with *izithakazelo* sometimes in full view of Whiteness without White people knowing or understanding the cultural or historical significance of the practice. This is because in some ways, Whiteness never cared for indigenous languages and saw them as inferior, and such practices might have been viewed as non-threatening. Instead, they were important revivalist rebellions ensuring that some elements of African culture were preserved in the midst of the colonial erasure taking place. *Izithakazelo* include a list of other ancestors, clans who are enemies and allies, important places, migration patterns, wars and important events which come up in the almost spoken word-like performance of the family history (Gunner, 2004: 99). This tradition also records changing social and political conditions. Zulu oral tradition represents stability as well as continuity. *Izithakazelo* change to record important more recent details or to slightly personalise them to the person the performance is being done on; the change, however, is never radical (Gunner, 2004: 100).

The Mountain Doctors' revitalisation of Khoi and San names has a lot in common with *izithakazelo* recording and sharing. *Izithakazelo* sometimes even make reference to personality traits or physical attributes, similar to the "broad shoulders" meaning behind !Kora's name. These might be literal

traits, metaphorical, or both. In the case of !Kora, broad shoulders are also attributed to stability and leadership. Both the literal and physical descriptors apply to !Kora-Brian. *Izithakazelo* and *izibongo* also link to or narrate certain things related to ecology, names like Ndlovu (elephant), Ngwenya (crocodile), Dube (zebra) and many others are common in Nguni *izibongo*. Chief Kingsley discusses how his revivalist Khoi name links to ecology, particularly new life and new beginnings; the second part of his name also means October, which is reminiscent of Spring when new life is in full bloom;

I learn that actually I have an ancient name, and that name is †Nu ||naiseb ... I remember that I was already a member of the society through my ancestors, that's how I start to take that African name. †Nu ||naiseb, meaning the start and the beginning of the leaves and the flowers. The first part of the name, it means black. When I say †nu, it means black [pause]. This language is a language of your mouth, your mouth must be wet, otherwise you'll struggle with the clicks. And especially this click I'm making, it's referred to as the 'water click' “† † †”. ||Naiseb means the beginning of the leaves and the flowers (Chief Kingsley, interview with author, 2021).

References to the land, ecology and human connectedness are everywhere in Mountain Doctor identity and the cultures they pull from. Language is no different; there are many elements of *Nama* and other *Khoekhoegowab* that make references to the land or draw inspiration from it. We see this even in Chief Kingsley's narration of his African name. Land for Africans is more than just a resource that is used for commercial and development profit-driven activities like farming, mining or construction. For Africans, land is a kind of identity which they connect different parts of their culture to, from rituals, to language and spirituality. The Khoi and San, for example, even model parts of some *Khoekhoegowab* on sounds coming from nature - the various clicks are a good example. The palatal water click “†” which is prominent in Khoi and San languages is based on the sound made by water droplets, while the Nguni “Q” alveolar click in Khoekhoe which is symbolised by “!”, is also prominent in Zulu and Xhosa. This click is based on the sound of rocks knocking together. Even certain words in Khoi languages are based on particular history of the land which allows the story to live on in the word. It enables people to continuously attach identity to that connection between the land, language and the stories embedded in both. These stories shape their social life and various cultural practices, especially historically. The word for Table Mountain in Khoekhoe for example is *Huri †oaxa*. This word means “mountain in the sea” or “rising from the water”. The word tells a story of a mountain that was once engulfed in water under the sea, but over time, the mountain slowly started to rise from the sea as the water levels started to drop. This word not only tells a story about the mountain, but it also tells a general story about the land, that there was a time when most of Cape Town was covered in water. The water click “†” makes a sound that almost allows one to visualise and hear the sound the water makes as the waves hit the rocks of Table Mountain. When discussing land, Sister G (interview with author, 2021) intersects the issue of land and lack of access to it, with issues of language and identity. She says;

You know, what's quite interesting is why? The [pause], first of all, obviously, because we don't have our language, we don't identify with the land. So, people don't put enough into claiming the land because they don't identify with the land because they don't identify with themselves... But the land is important, like, you know, and to those of us that are aware of that, like, you know. We also need to know how to make it accessible

and liveable, doesn't necessarily have to be your average farm. It can be something of our own design, which is what we've always done.

Sister G further goes on to discuss the potential dangers of linking people to land without restoring their identity and language. She suggests the danger is that people might not have enough knowledge of the land, and how it connects to them. They might struggle to derive sustainable benefits from it. She adds that while it is crucial for Africans to take their land back, it is equally important for this process to be accompanied by a reclaiming of language and cultural ideologies that will better connect them to the land. She adds this is especially true for Coloureds and Khoi and San people, whose ties to their language have been severed the most in South Africa and across the African continent.

6.5.2 *Sida sida gera tsoa tsoa*, “We start again”: The dangers of losing Khoekhoegowab and related identities



Video 6.1: *Singing song/ prayer before hike to Elephant's Eye where a ritual will be performed and sand will be collected for future rituals or to be mixed in with herbs. They sing “Sida sida gera tsoa tsoa” (Shange, 2021, Cape Town). (Click on [UFS Figshare link here](#) to watch video)*

Sida sida gera tsoa tsoa,

Sida sida gera tsoa tsoa,

Sida sida gera tsoa tsoa.

The above commonly-known Khoekhoe prayer or song is one which the Mountain Doctors I encountered often sing before rituals or at times just to lift each other's spirits when there is difficulty. It means “us (we) start again”. It is a revivalist song, not just because it is one of the rare recreations of a *Khoekhoegowab* in South Africa. It is revivalist because it speaks of a retrospective-looking new beginning. The new beginning marks their recreation of their lost identity, their reconnection with *aboxan* (ancestors) and their reuniting with their pluralistic understanding of creation. Mountain Doctors often sing this song and teach it to children when they have encounters with them. Children also represent a new beginning, and the catchy repetitive

song is easy to learn and remember. They tell the children about their shared Khoi and San identity and through this simple act of teaching the children this song or how to count or greet in Khokhoe, they start again. They ignite excitement and intrigue in the children. They start again because so much was taken away from them, so much so that they almost have to start from the beginning;

*I will start with saying my slave name is Timothy Maasdorp. Yes. Because a language genocide happened to us. Genocide, honestly happened to us. So, the language that our people is speaking was born out of a whip. Our people was tossed upside down, four teeth *pulled* out so they couldn't do "l" *C" click* they couldn't do the clicks... Like if you want to count in your language [starts counting from 1 to 10]; /gúi, /gam, !nona, haka, koro, !nani, hú, //khaisa, khoesa, disi. So, you can't count because *of* the gap here [points at front teeth] you can't sound your clicks. Today we learn our own language because if you don't know where you come from, then you don't know where you're going... So, to reclaim my language today, I call myself Xam |gareb this means the lion's mane, a lion in my African culture is linked to September the month that I am born in. September is also symbolic of the African new year. I also have the name because of my hair [pulls at his huge mane-like dreadlocks]. (Monty, interview with author, 2021).*

The forced removal of front teeth in Coloured people is believed to be an important way of erasing parts of their African identity. This is because many *Khoekhoegowab* have a lot of complicated click sounds which cannot be pronounced without the front teeth. This alienated the Khoi and San from their languages and even from their names which they could no longer pronounce. There is a lot of mystery around the origins of the practice. Some believe it is an old slavery practice, whereby enslaved people would remove their front teeth in order to drop their value so that slave owners would not sell them to other plantations. Doing this allowed enslaved people just a little bit of agency and bodily autonomy. This was also one of the ways families ensured they stayed together in a plantation instead of being sold to different slave owners (van der Ham, 2013). The belief is that this practice grew more and more into a fashion statement over time or a way of fitting in. Today, some say they remove their teeth for sexual pleasure in oral sex. Others say that it is a popular gang and prison trend. There are a variety of other reasons people give on the origins of this practice (Allen, Gasson & Vivian, 1990: 335). Mountain Doctors amongst each other and in their communities discourage people from removing their front teeth as they believe it was a harmful oppressive practice and to do it as a trend or fashion statement is to celebrate the harmful legacy that isolates them from their language.

As different discussions have shown throughout this chapter, especially the discussion on Table Mountain, language is such an important part of identity. If lost or taken away, people will be disconnected from the land, geography, science, ecology and spirituality. This is especially true for already threatened *Khoekhoegowab*. All these risks will and have been accompanied by a disruption of the social fibre of the people who speak the language. This is why the revival of language is so important to Mountain Doctors; it reconnects them to all these other once-severed links which they need for their healing practices and general way of life. It reconnects those who were disconnected from each other and from their identity by the homogenous yet divisive Coloured classification. But even with the revitalisation efforts, many *khoekhoegowab* are extinct or only have a small number of living people who still speak the languages fluently. Katrina Esau is one of the last living N|uu speakers but has established a school and written a children's book

in an attempt to preserve the language and cultural identity. The book is titled; *!Qhoi n|a Tjhoi* (*Tortoise and Ostrich/ Skilpad en Volstruis*) (Letsebe, 2021). In Zimbabwe, Tjwao is spoken by roughly 20 people between the ages of 60 and 90. In 2013 the Zimbabwean constitution was amended to add it as an official language (!Khwa ttu, 2022). Much more needs to be done in South Africa and across the continent to strengthen these efforts and more importantly to recognise and support indigenous groups like the Mountain Doctors and many others who revive these cultural identities, especially language. Even languages like *Nama* or Khoekhoe are almost extinct in South Africa, even though they are more commonly spoken in Namibia.

EXTINCT SAN LANGUAGES	EXTINCT KHOE LANGUAGES
Seroa†	Eini†
!Haasi†	Kora†
!Xam†	Kwadi†
!’Auo †	-
‡Ungkue†	-
!Ga!ne†	-
!Ull’e †	-
!Xegwi†	-

Figure 6.14: An image showing all the known extinct Khoi and San languages (!Khwa ttu museum, 2022)

6.6 Conclusion

There are many ways that Mountain Doctors construct their identity, but this chapter chose to focus on the more aesthetic or tangible aspects like hair, attire and language. All of these connect in some way or another with more symbolic or abstract elements that have also been discussed in this chapter. Some of these include the practice of walking barefoot being seen as significant for healing and strengthening the body, so that Mountain Doctors might better connect with the herbs they are working with. They emphasise the importance of their own strengthening and healing before they can heal others. They seek their own healing through the herbs and through the restoration of their cultural practices; like embracing their once-rejected African hair, attire and aesthetic. Many of these discussions are had in relation to how Mountain Doctors relate to or share similarities with other cultural religious groups. Some are more obvious and have been addressed in different ways throughout this chapter and the thesis. These are the connection with

Rastafarianism and Khoi and San cultural ideals and practices. Others seem less likely or may come across as more removed and conflicting; these include Christianity, the Shembe Church and the Ethiopian church, Abuna Yemata Guh. All the identity traits in this discussion have had some interaction with oppressive Western systems like colonialism, slavery, capitalism and evangelic Christianity.

Many of the things discussed in this chapter suggest or indicate resilience within hybridity and creolisation. For example, it is not clear why African cultural religious groups like the Mountain Doctors embrace Christianity even though they also see themselves as revolutionary movements who challenge the oppressive status quo set by Christianity and colonialism. One could suggest that they relate with certain aspects of Christianity because it originated in Africa. Many of the historical accounts in the Bible refer to the Middle East and Africa, including areas like Egypt and Abyssinia, which spans modern-day Ethiopia and Eritrea (Fatokun, 2005: 358). Christianity is said to have penetrated North Africa in 180 AD as stories of the 12 disciples spread, who Jesus chose to represent the 12 Tribes of Israel. These as discussed are quite significant in Rastafarianism. As these Christian ideas started to move towards Eastern and Central Africa, Africans indigenised them. They combined Christianity with their existing cultural religious practices, as they still do today in religions like the Shembe Church. Africans often indigenise religions like Christianity and Islam. Christianity in Ethiopia was further strengthened in the 5th and 6th century by work done by nine missionaries from the Syrian Church (Fatokun, 2005: 360-361). For these reasons, it is possible that while Western evangelic Christianity caused a lot of harm, African cultural religious groups still identify with aspects of it that might resemble their much earlier engagement and possible adoption of Christianity. While Western systems like evangelic Christianity and capitalism cause damage, discussions around the sackcloth, for example, show how Mountain Doctors take objects that were once tools of oppression and give them new social meaning. Things like the sackcloth go from having been objects of conflict, to sacred tools for peace, reflection, repentance and much-needed healing of the colonised self.

CHAPTER 7

HERBS, RITUALS, HEALING, HEALERS AND THEIR EXPERIENCES

7.1 Introduction

Mountain Doctor healing practices are an important part of their identity. This is arguably one of the most important ways they revitalise or embody a resilience of African indigenous knowledge. This chapter will discuss these healing practices in more detail, highlighting all the complexities that are attached to them, from the genderisation of the labour and a look at why womanist²⁵ Mountain Doctors are considerably fewer in number, to a look at the internal and external dangers and risks attached to the work. The internal challenges come because of the group's sackcloth beliefs, like the belief in walking barefoot, which can cause serious injuries when Mountain Doctors trot for herbs on dangerous mountains, thick thorny bushes and many other harsh natural environments. The external challenges and risks are linked to how the external world engages with them. They take risks by picking herbs on private, often White-owned land which sometimes leads to arrests, fines and violent altercations that have led to some dying. They experience similar clashes with police, environmental and conservation institutions and even local businesses and residents. A lot of the hostility they experience is linked to earlier discussions on violent land dispossession and theft historically and today. But before diving into practical challenges, this chapter will start off by looking at how Mountain Doctors and other African cultures revitalise rituals and plant medicine through ancestral memory.

The ancestral memory comes in the form of dreams and storytelling. Africans believe that ancestors created these stories centuries ago to communicate important cultural religious knowledge. They also leave behind stories that carry important lessons on social life, spirituality, and healing practices. They often also have important active living knowledge on land, sustainability, history, astronomy, and many others. Interpretations of them differ, encouraging debate and discourse on healing, rituals, and other aspects of social life. This chapter will use two of these stories as a case study. The discussion will pull on the *Nongqawuse* and *The Moon and the Hare* story. This chapter will also analyse how knowledge is transferred through dreams, especially to those who are healers or can connect more strongly to spirituality. A discussion of a select few herbs that are significant to the Mountain Doctors will also be done. A ritual linked to the *rapé* herb will be discussed together with *undlela zimhlophe* (dream root) which are important for visions and dreams but also have other important holistic healing functions. The chapter will also discuss *Sceletium* or *Kanna*, which is often used as a natural anti-depressant by Mountain Doctors. It is sometimes mixed with *Buchu*, which is commonly found in the Western Cape. It

²⁵ Womanist means Black women or women of colour; a phrase often used in feminist discourse to highlight the difference in experiences and challenges Black women face compared to Black men or the different complexities Black women/ women of colour face compared to White women. It also highlights that while White women and Black men also make up marginalised groups, sometimes the repression that Black women experience comes from these groups (Walker 1983, xi).

works a lot like a natural multivitamin and has many different healing functions, while also creating general holistic well-being.

In the details of this chapter, it will emerge that the healing practices of sackcloth people contain unique cosmology that is sustained or continued through ceremonial and ritual practices. The portrayal of their practices also shows the resilience or revival of their healing approaches, executed deliberately to ensure continuity, and assert their indigenous healing methods – as a necessary alternative to coexistence with nature. Hence what is described here is connecting the living and the spirits, purification, and humility to the environment which are emic themes fundamental to the sackcloth identity. The emic themes narrate the Mountain Doctors' worldview through thick descriptions, like those of the *rapé* ritual discussions or storytelling and memory as important journeys towards unlikely healing paths. These thick descriptions paint clear pictures of the fieldwork experiences, especially when it comes to the healing themes covered in this research. They allow the reader to almost visualise and imagine the experiences (Ryle, 1968: 225). They agitate the researcher to go beyond textualised, structured academic discussions that ignore the day-to-day experiences and observations, while marginalising the true custodians of knowledge/experiences (Tomaselli, 2003: 856).



Figure 7.1: Mountain Doctors display their herbs on the side of the road for people to buy. The word Buxu is written on some of the packages, this is the Khoekhoe spelling for buchu (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

7.2 The significance of purification: Healing, ecology and ancestral memory through storytelling

Memory is one of the ways Mountain Doctors revitalise various cultural and healing practices. They believe that historical memory exists in ecology. Some areas are believed to have important cultural meaning and can be spaces used for rituals. Memory exists in people as it is transferred from ancestors to the living, which will be discussed. But first, this section will show how memory and knowledge are transferred through storytelling. Some of the stories were created by the then-living, to communicate an important message that might impact those in the future. Embedded in these stories is knowledge on ancestry, history, sustainability, spirituality, and many other things that were important then and still are now (Okpewho, 2009: 111). The stories also had important life lessons and virtues integrated into them. Some are light-hearted and entertaining, while others carry warnings and cautionary tales. African storytelling across different cultures is almost always done at night, around the fire. This is a process kept alive by the grandmothers and matriarchs in the community and is transferred to children (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017: 52). Some are made up fables, while others are historical accounts of real-life events or moments (Okpewho, 2009: 110). This section will use two African stories to illustrate how ancestors and the stories themselves passed on important messages, namely *Nongqawuse* and *The Moon and the Hare*.

The story of *Nongqawuse* is about a Xhosa prophet who had a vision that led to the cattle killing moment of 1856-7 (Mphande, 1991: 172). She had an ancestral vision at Gxarha River where two strangers appeared to her when she was 16 years old. The strangers' pronouncement was that the dead will arise. The prophecy also further instructed her to tell people to start anew, destroy old houses to build new ones, kill all the cattle and crops. There was a lot of scepticism, but eventually some followed the prophecy while others remained sceptical. When the rewards of the prophecy did not materialise, people grew anxious and started to doubt the prophecy. She was finally taken to Paupers' Lodge as a prisoner; records of her life are contested and not clear after this point (SAHO, 2020). The prophecies deepened the already existing divide between those who believed in the vision and African spirituality in general versus those who did not believe in African spirituality and believed *Nongqawuse* was a fraud (Samin, 2008: 50). There are different perspectives on the story. Some say *Nongqawuse*, a young girl at the time, was manipulated by her uncle, Mhlakaza, who was her main source of guidance. Others think that the colonial authorities used her to weaken the amaXhosa, whom they eventually defeated after this moment. The Xhosa people were weakened many starved to death and were not strong enough to defend their territory. Still others saw her as a foolish young girl who was not old or strong enough to properly interpret her vision, while others question the vision entirely and suspect that *Nongqawuse* was duped by strangers (SAHO, 2020).

The notion of the dead rising was not presented for the first time in the story of Nongqawuse. It was first heard in Makhanda Nxele's leadership in 1820 and later emerged during the Mlanjeni war between the Xhosa and British between 1850 and 1853. Famous South African playwright Zakes Mda's interpretation of it is based on the return of the messiah in Christian text; he reinterprets it to fit into Xhosa thought and practice and more specifically, Nongqawuse's story (Samin, 2008: 51). This story was in part a rejection of modern strategies of development which had already been imposed on Africans as early as the 1800s, when the first prophecy of the dead rising was made. Because of this, the divisions between African people and the rise of witchcraft (which can also be read as capitalism, Whiteness or colonialism), the belief was that the crops and cattle were contaminated, and the healing and purification process required this great sacrifice. The purification would shield against the rise of witchcraft, which was dividing Africans and contaminating ecology, spirituality and social relations. This was also for the Western and sometimes harmful development practices which Africans also needed to distance themselves from. Those who believed in the prophecy believed the ancestors would eventually reward them for their sacrifice (Samin, 2008: 51 & 54). Others believe the story has been oversimplified and some details misrepresented. The suggestion is that the emphasis on destroying and destruction be reevaluated to show the message of renewal and emancipation embedded in Nongqawuse's prophecy (Iannaccaro, 2014: 198). Stories and historical events such as this one have important lessons that can be carried on even into today, namely the dangers of colonialism, where some interpretations of the contamination have been linked to colonial ecological and social destruction. The focus on purification rather than destruction raises questions of ecological sustainability and rehabilitation, which will also be discussed in this chapter in more detail. It also raises considerations of the purification of society as a whole, where the Xhosa are presented with an option to rebuild outside of the growing colonial threat, and to revisit more ecologically and socially sustainable practices they once used before the colonial impositions.

Purification considerations are also important and common in African healing practices and rituals. Water and cleansing rituals are crucial in these purification rituals. The belief is that purification rituals also strengthen connections to ancestors. They are different kinds of purifications rituals, such as baptisms or *ukugeza*²⁶, often in natural bodies of water like the sea, waterfalls and rivers (Oosthuizen, 1992: 149). In each of these rituals, elements like water, fire (usually for burning incense or cooking), ash and herbs are usually very important. During a tour of Grassy Park with Bradley and Arthur, the importance of water rituals came up as they showed me different water sources that have heritage significance. They tell me that the water is also very important, and they go to Princess Vlei, Zeekoe Vlei and other water sources frequently. They do this especially when they are building up to a ceremony or ritual like a full moon ceremony which they try to honour and celebrate as much as possible. They burn *impepho*²⁷ at the reserve, something which grows all over the reserve, they chant and sing and collect some water from Zeekoe Vlei. In other areas they collect soil, *impepho* and other herbs. They use these in some of the build-up ceremonies and save

²⁶ Zulu word meaning spiritual cleansing in this context.

²⁷ *Impepho* is a Zulu word for *Helichrysum*, a type of African incense used for awakening ancestors.

some for the final ceremony. One of the things they do with the water is they collect some from Zeekoe Vlei and travel to different bodies of water like Princess Vlei, collecting more water and pouring some from a previous water source into the new water source. They say this is an important way of connecting the natural environment and the ancestors with each other, adding that; “we make the water meet”. Water is important as a life source and they believe it carries particularly memories from the past. Water sources or natural environments where it is known that active social life took place are most important because they carry more of the ancestral memory. This means greater connections and strength can be pulled from these areas. They might also collect water from the mountains when conducting a water ceremony of this kind. In places where they collect soil, they mix it with *impepho* and other herbs they burn, and they mix the soil with the ash and make marks on their faces and bodies. The belief is also that this connects them to the earth.

Even in many of the discussions, Mountain Doctors talk about certain herbs cleaning the body and the blood. The “cleaning” is seen as an important step that leads one towards holistic health and well-being, as well as healing of the specific condition or illness the patient is looking to heal. Even in the administering and utilising of the herbs, water as an important symbol of cleansing and purifying is important. Most herbs must be cooked or soaked in hot water. The remaining liquid is used for steaming or colon cleansing, procedures which are also associated with detoxing, cleansing or purifications. Depending on the herbs and the illness, the herbs can also be used to bath in, which cleanses the body while also healing it. When the herbs are ingested as tea, it is not uncommon for them to induce vomiting or diarrhoea, especially in the first few days. These side-effects are seen as important to the healing process and are the body cleansing itself from the inside out. The side-effects might make the sick individual feel worse before they feel better. This in a way is similar to Mda’s interpretation of the Nongqawuse story where he suggests the destruction Nongqawuse’s vision caused should be seen as an important part of the purification, healing and new life process. The more negative side-effects in Mountain Doctor healing practices carry both parallels as almost two sides of the same coin, where the purification and healing process sometimes requires “destruction” where the body is first “weakened” by side-effects like vomiting and diarrhoea before the herbs start to strengthen and build it back up. As a result, the use of the herbs come with instructions that require extra care and caution, especially depending on the main reason why the herbs are being used. Dimitri explains this fine line between destruction and healing when he narrates how he helped a patient who was struggling for years to fall pregnant.

*I went back to that people’s house, only meditation *instructions from ancestors*, without nothing... only this five litre buchu water. I went back to their house I told sister, okay? I put this five litre on the table now. I guarantee you before this five litre is finished. Something is gonna be there. Maybe three, four months later, I went back to Sister. Sister say she never finished the water... Yeah. So, she was already a month pregnant that time. So, her mother took the water because I told them that she should check in between, because I don’t want the buchu water to flush out *the fetus*, you see? Because that’s also to flush, it can cleanse that baby out, cause a baby’s mos still small, it’s being created maan, you see? (Dimitri, interview with author, 2021).*

The patient had to take extra caution and conduct regular pregnancy tests, because this buchu water that carried the potential to heal her body and make it strong enough to fall pregnant also had the

potential to cause destruction that could threaten the very thing for which she was seeking help. There are many other ritualistic ways that different African groups use purification as a healing practice, from cleansings and rituals in rivers and waterfalls to cleansings that mark a moment, like after a funeral, cleansing a home or family and the environment. Some of the procedures followed might resemble the destruction feared in Nongqawuse's prophecy, where after a funeral or mourning period certain items must be "destroyed" often through burning as part of the family's healing and purifying process. Indigenous American cultural group, the Kumeyaay burn all the clothes and possessions of a loved one after their passing. The ritual allows the family and community to remember the person and share stories about them, while letting go and healing from the loss (Schaefer, 2000: 186). Different variations of similar practices exist in different African cultures. Sometimes it is those close to the person who has passed who must burn clothes worn during the funeral or over the period of mourning period. The clothes in Zulu and Xhosa culture are burnt along with the hair of the mourners (Richter & Müller, 2005: 1006). This is a symbolic ritual that requires one to let go of any reminders of the grief after a certain period to avoid future trauma and triggers, while other cultures donate items belonging to the person who has passed or divide them amongst the family and friends. Some might also be burnt, especially items with important cultural significance that are inextricably linked to the person who has passed or their ancestors (Yawa, 2010: 29). The belief is that some must be destroyed because they are too closely attached to the person's essence/soul or to their ancestors. These, as Ngubane's discussion will show shortly, cannot just be given to someone else because the essence might still be attached and can cause problems for the next person, especially if the essence is negative, pained or steeped in conflict. Fire itself is an important purification process that will also be discussed in more detail later. It also ushers in new life in nature and a similar idea is carried into the purification processes linked to funeral or post-funeral rituals or even linked to Nongqawuse's pronouncement to "destroy" cattle and crops.

Khoi and San fable *The Moon and the Hare* also carries similar precaution on the importance of listening to ancestral visions and teachings. The story was documented by Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd (1911) who recorded and collected a lot of Khoi and San artefacts. The story and many others were narrated in 1875 by Dialkwain, a !Xam storyteller. The story is also referred to as *The Origins of Death* or *A Prayer to the Young Moon*. The story is about death and rebirth, the message from the moon is for people to learn from its life cycle and learn that with death and destruction, comes new life, youth, new experiences, and prospects. The moon shares this message with a young man who the moon hears crying. When the moon asks why the man is crying, the man responds that his mother has passed away and he will never see her again. The moon tells him not to cry, he will see his mother again because she will only sleep for a little while and return. The young man insists that his mother is really dead. The moon consoles him once more, but the young man disagrees more strongly. Finally, the moon curses him by turning him into a hare and said from that day people will die and not come back to life. The curse will only be reversed when people believe the moon's teachings and one day they will rise from their graves. Like the Nongqawuse prophecy, the man's failure to listen to the lessons from the spirit world led to

devastating impacts, as some believe that the prophecy did not come to fruition because it was not properly accepted and implemented. And just like the Nongqawuse story, destruction and loss is closely linked to growth and new life, where it is almost like the one does not exist without the other.

7.3 Healing through dreams and visions: ancestral and ecological memory and communication

Just like storytelling, dreams in African spirituality have different meanings and are very significant. For many African healers, including Mountain Doctors, dreams are what guide them to their practice. When asked why and how they joined the Sackcloth movement, many participants referred to dreams and visions guiding them towards following this path. Some would dream of their ancestors, who would give them different types of messages or symbols that they interpreted as an instruction to revitalise their cultural religious traditions. Many also said they would get visions of themselves or their ancestors wearing the sackcloth or traditional attire. They see these visions as their ancestors guiding them towards this way of life;

*... because I was get a vision, you see, about the movement. It's a way of life, you see, it was telling me I must join the sackcloth... I was dream I had the clothes *sackcloth* on all the time (Francois, interview with author, 2021).*

According to Mountain Doctors, ancestral spirits use dreams to communicate with this world. They communicate messages on the past, present and future and will often also share their approval or disapproval with their descendants or *sangoma* interpreting the dreams or visions. It is not uncommon for messages sent to *izangoma* through dreams to also be used to diagnose or prognose the illness of a patient (Lee, 1958: 265). Dreams are also important to *izangomas*' own journey towards being healers and spiritual guides. It is through dreams that many find out they have the calling to heal. They then become *amathwasa* (apprentices) where they are taught lessons, plant medicine and rituals by a more experienced *sangoma* or *gobela*²⁸ (Nkabinde & Morgan, 2006: 12). They are also guided by their ancestors, especially the main spirit/s that gave the *thwasa* calling. The ancestors guide them through dreams and visions which they must interpret and action through rituals, plant medicine discovery and exploration. The dreams also include guidance on the concluding ritualistic ceremonies. These rituals often take place in nature, which is also important for bringing more visions or clarity to the existing dreams or visions. The ancestors and certain spiritual beings are also believed to reside in nature to be connected to important natural elements. For example, Nomkhubulwane being linked to water and clouds by the Zulu or *Tixo* being associated with the praying mantis by some Khoi and San groups and the Xhosa (Scorgie, 2002: 57; Fuze, 1986: 5). The praying mantis is also connected to rain, making it an important symbol of new life and growth, especially in nature (Schmidt, 2018: 69). The *thwasa* leaves as a *sangoma*, possessed by the ancestral spirit/s that draw them towards the healing practices and ideology. They

²⁸ A more experienced *sangoma* or trainer that teaches or guides *amathwasa* or *sangoma* trainees.

often perform rituals in nature or spiritual cleansings on beaches, in rivers or waterfalls to reconnect with these spirits when their spiritual ties have been weakened (Lee, 1958: 266).



Figure 7.2: Sculpture of a praying mantis in !Kwa ttu museum. It is depicted in various ways through art and storytelling. An important spiritual and cultural symbol in Khoi and San culture, it carries diverse symbolic meaning (Shange, 2021, Yzerfontein).

Medical anthropology analyses the kinds of healing practices discussed, practices that are guided and supported by things like dreams, ancestors, people and ecology. Medical anthropology can be a great source to help make sense of how the Mountain Doctors engage with the environment as a source of healing, and how they define health and illness. As already mentioned, this group does not only look at the physical manifestations of illness, but they also consider cultural and spiritual

elements, a practice which is missing in the Western biomedical model, which often looks at the body in isolation. Harriet Ngubane's (1977) *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine* explores similar views on health and illness in Zulu cultural identity. The Zulu believe that illness can take on two forms. The first form encompasses "natural" causation which is often unavoidable illness which everyone will get at some point in their lives, such as flu. These illnesses can be cured with Zulu herbs or Western medicine. The second type of causation is often external or environmental (Burton, 1979: 285). The Zulu believe that the latter can be caused by sorcery, unknown external factors or clashing "essences". The belief is that all living things carry an essence, and when people move through the world, they leave parts of their essence behind. When conflicting essences come into contact with each other, illness and disharmony can be created. The idea of harmony here intersects with the notion of *ubuntu* which has already been discussed. This kind of healing from illness requires rituals, and the participation of family members, where the home itself sometimes has to be cleansed from illness to erase the bad essence that might linger in the home and to prevent reinfection. Dreams and messages from ancestors are important guides for tackling the external kind of illness or removing the bad essence that caused it (Burton, 1979: 286).

Mountain Doctors even categorise the herbs used in treating illness in similar ways. There are herbs just for treating the natural causation of illness and which do not really need rituals attached to them. They follow a simple logic: if the body is sick and they are used, the body will heal - not much further exploration is required. These are herbs like *buchu*, which while it has many other holistic healing functions, its main function is healing kidney and bladder infections (Joseph, Gad-Fire, Simon, Asher & Oliva: 2019). Other herbs have far more spiritual functions and might be used more to deal with or aid in dealing with the second kind of illness that might come from witchcraft or engaging with a bad essence. Herbs like *impepho* awaken the ancestors who can share the message or guidance needed to tackle the illness or disruption caused by the bad essence. *Impepho* might not be used in the actual medicine used to cure the spiritual or social issue caused by the bad essence, but it might be used multiple times throughout the ritualistic healing process because of its powers to draw *aboxan* (ancestors) closer (Shange, 2021b: 12; Zondi & Ntshangase, 2013: 230). Arthur emphasised the importance of inviting *aboxan* to the healing process, later adding that it is the ancestors that do the healing; the healers are just a vessel they use to heal the sick individual or community;

*You know, before you do the healing, before you do the healing, we call on all the ancestors and the creator to be part of the healing, to be in the process... When you call the ancestors and the creator in the midst of the spiritual way in which you do the healing. You are not normal when you do the healing because you go into a trance you know, you go into trance without using nothing *weed or psychedelics*, besides the spiritual, the spiritual journey (Arthur, interview with author, 2021).*

Other herbs straddle both the natural causation healing functions herbs like *buchu* have and have equally powerful spiritual functions that *impepho* possesses. The spiritual functions of the latter tackle more of the negative or clashing external essence that might cause illness or misfortune. Herbs like mountain/wild garlic straddle both, it is good for dealing with evil spirits, but is also important for dealing with natural causation illnesses. It is considered African's natural antibiotic

and helps with colds and flu, dry skin, poisoning and many others (Joseph, Gad-Fire, Simon, Asher & Oliva: 2019). Levi suggests that while this distinction is important to make, especially to encourage caution when people use herbs with strong attachment to spirits without the advice or guidance of a *sangoma*, he suggests all herbs have spirits and divine functions, even those like *buchu* which are used more for naturally occurring illnesses. These spirits aid in the healing or communicate certain important messages to the healer and/or the patient. Mountain Doctors believe that herbs, like all living things and ecology, have spirits or spiritual ties. This is because all herbs are gifts from *aboxan*, God and spiritual beings. Therefore, the herbs are living things that have connections to cosmology in the same way that people do. Herbs for curing or addressing a bad essence usually have stronger spirits within them. Simon and Levi added;

**God shares information on herbs* through the visions, the visions. Yeah, God talk through the dreams. It's very amazing. Sometimes when you go in the wild, in the nature, you will see this rivers and birds and they will form a puzzle. And you have to figure it out by yourself (Simon, interview with author, 2021).*

... with all the herbs there's a spiritual part to it. So even for you to drink it or to decide you want to drink mphepho or buchu today. It's a spiritual connection, which brought you to this. So, you need to accept the spiritual calling as well (Levi, interview with author, 2021).

Mountain Doctors see the sackcloth as an important aid in the process of healing the bad essence. As already discussed, the sackcloth is a symbol of healing in the Bible. The Mountain Doctors store their herbs with or in the sackcloth because they believe this will heighten the healing potency of the herbs, while also creating an important barrier between themselves and the herbs. This is especially important when they are stressed or navigating difficulties or encounters that contaminate their own essence. Some believe if their essence is bad or threatened, the herbs will not work, and they might transfer that bad essence to their patients. The sackcloth and many other practices provide continuous healing and protection that they believe will shield them from exposure to bad essence that they believe might even come from clients who are experiencing extreme distress or illness. When their own challenges disrupt their essence in ways they believe are extreme and cannot be healed by the subtle healing powers of the sackcloth or the more common everyday rituals and practices, they might take a break to navigate their own difficulties. It is especially important for them to retreat and regroup, avoiding areas where they forage herbs when their essence is unbalanced or at risk. This is because they hold the same belief as the Zulu, that there is the risk of unintentionally transferring the bad essence to the area where they are picking herbs (Burton, 1979: 286). The risk for the Mountain Doctors is that the bad essence might also disconnect them from their ancestors, making it difficult for them to receive messages from ancestors that they receive through dreams or when they engage with nature.



Figure 7.3: Various herbs including, buchu, sweet root, wild carrot and garlic, matunga and many others displayed on sackcloth. The juxtaposition of the herbs with the sackcloth is important because the sackcloth is also an important healing symbol (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

The essence can disrupt the herbs and the space for those who pass and encounter it in the future. This is also why Mountain Doctors perform rituals and prayers when they arrive in the area they will be working to forage herbs in. At times they also drink certain herbs days before, on the buildup to the trot for herbs. They might also ingest some of these herbs at the site of the herb foraging, this helps to clear any unknown bad essence and cleanse the area where they will be working, to rid it of any negative essence of those who were in the area before they arrived. The rituals are also a way for them to pause and consider the ecology and the great, important sacrifice it makes by providing them a source of healing, and as a food source, as many of the herbs also can be taken as food and have high nutritional value. Through the rituals they consider and give thanks to nature for the source of income they will derive from it later. The rituals are also a way of strengthening their connection to the ancestors and ecology, which will guide them as they look for herbs. This is especially important when looking for herbs in a big and vast area of land or when they look for herbs that are rare, relatively unknown, or difficult to find. Sister G explained Mountain Doctor knowledge of ecology, how they revitalise it, especially when it comes to plant medicine and rituals that have been lost. She talked about many things, from elders passing down knowledge to books and research, but more interestingly she talked about the plants and ecology guiding and communicating with them through their senses and through visions and dreams too. Plants like weed, psychedelic mushrooms and *Kanna* are more commonly known for inducing

visions and messages from the cosmological world. But Sister G suggests that if one has a strong bond with nature, all types of plants communicate with one. In addition, ecology can provide one with the messages and visions needed to find or learn about the herbs one seeks. When asked where she gets knowledge of plant medicine, she adds;

*From the plants and from the people that work with the plants. They [points at the fruits, trees and plants close by] talk to you. When you put an orange in your mouth, and you chew it. All the fruit cells burst on your tongue [eats a piece of orange]. Ummm... And you just feel that getting into your system there, talking to your body. And so, the plants are the same. Once you start to connect to your food and your environment and stuff, then the plants start to talk to you... When I was still in sackcloth, so, I would just be in nature, and they would call me. Like, I'd be walking one direction and they just call me in this direction. And tell me to look there, look there [points in different directions] and I would dig or whatever. And later on, I would find the name *from other healers or scientists working with that herb* and other values for it. But at some point, it *the plant* would just tell me to collect it or do something. They protect you also because they're signs of other things. (Sister G, interview with author, 2021).*

Mowbray Mountain Doctors shared similar views when they discussed many customers' desires for an easier medicine administration process, especially when it comes to the bitter herbs. Some enquire about grinded herbs in capsule shells to avoid the sometimes-unfamiliar pungent smells and taste of the herb, especially when they have been brewed in water. The Mountain Doctors already have some herbs that are packaged in capsule form; herbs like *Kanna*, which are usually ingested in a grinded powder form and are relatively tasteless are easy to package into capsule form and prescribe dosage. But this practice is not common, and some Mountain Doctors caution against this being done for all herbs. They advise that the bitterness, sourness, earthiness, aromatics, strong smells, are part of the healing. They aid in awakening the senses and taste buds that are not commonly used because people steer away from certain kinds of food with certain smells and tastes. They suggested that sometimes it is less a matter of the body being sick and more an issue of certain important functions of the body (in this case taste and smell) being underutilised whilst still being needed for the proper functioning of the body. This is as many avoid tastes that are considered harsh on the taste buds, like bitter, chilli, or sour tastes, and lean more towards those considered pleasant, like sweet or salty (Masé, 2013: 84). The healing therefore requires a revival of these functions, so the bitterness becomes an important part of the healing, as well as the smells and earthiness. Bitter flavours often found in herbs are associated with liver detoxification, they stimulate the release of digestive juices, aid in low appetite, blood sugar levels and many other things (Masé, 2013: 115). An important part of the healing is lost when herbs are isolated into a capsule to be swallowed with water and the healing becomes less holistic as the body loses out on the healing taste experience.



Figure 7.4: Kanna prepared by Chief Kingsley has been dried and grinded into powder form and placed into capsule shells. Kanna is one of the herbs placed in capsule form, it is usually ingested in powered form (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

Herbs in capsule form, especially those frequently ingested as tea or in liquid form, often brewed in water, could also negatively impact dosage instructions. Patients might end up overdosing or not getting enough of the medicine needed. This is as the administration process changes drastically from liquid to powder in capsules. Many Mountain Doctors were taught by the elders to prepare and use most herbs as tea, and to reinvent this practice, especially for fresh herbs, would be no easy feat. The other concern is that this would also mean they have to dry up most of the herbs, which is labour-intensive. Herbs for tooth or gum problems typically must be placed near the gum/ cheek or affected tooth. Swallowing those herbs might stall progress as the medicine takes longer to heal the affected oral body part. Some herbs are placed under the tongue, also a common practice in Western biomedicine. This method of taking medicines is called sublingual (tongue) and buccal (cheek) medication administration. This method allows the medicine to quickly enter the bloodstream through the tissue in the mouth, allowing for faster relief and healing (Kim & De Jesus, 2022). Herbs like *Mlomomnandi* or Sweet Root are usually ingested this way, through chewing or by placing the dried powder version under the tongue. *Mlomomnandi* is believed to have many functions, from curing throat infections to allowing those who use it to be persuasive “sweet talkers”, as the Zulu word *Mlomomnandi* suggests. The direct translation of the

word means “sweet or nice mouth”. This herb is sweet and has been considered as a healthier sugar alternative by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), but the sweetness is also followed by an unexpected bitter aftertaste (Moloantwa, 2015). The bitterness of it is where the Mountain Doctors believe the healing potential of the root truly lies. Dried herbs also taste different; they usually do not taste as strong as the fresh version. While many herbs are dried up by Mountain Doctors, in part for preservation and to avoid them rotting, some herbs are best used fresh, and drying them up many negatively impact their potency, healing capabilities and their ability to speak to the individual, as Sister G suggested.

Sister G further discussed her belief that herbs like *Kanna* had ways of communicating with the Khoi and San ancestors. While the herb has some benefits, if not used the right way, it is very dangerous and can make a person very sick. Sister G believes that the herbs transferred this knowledge to *aboxan*, knowledge which they now use as Mountain Doctors. Sister G discussed the process by saying;

*... So, this one *Kanna* is mixed with Maca. Maca is from South America, Peru somewhere. So just have a nice finger pull of that... more, way more [instructing me to eat the concoction] ... So, this is... we dub it Bushman's ecstasy, and, in the snuff form, we call it coke *cocaine*... But it's a natural antidepressant, this medicine our people have been using for more than 20 000 years. But this medicine, you can't eat raw, you can't eat it fresh, and you can't eat it dry. It has to be prepared *a certain way* [pause]. So, how did my ancestors know that you need to prepare that before you can eat it? If you eat it unprepared you will have a heavy stomach problem for a very long time. So how did they know how to prepare it? The plants spoke to them. It's a probiotic, so it works in the gut but it's a natural antidepressant, it also gives you energy and also burns excess food supplies, so yeah. It burns excess fat and gives you energy so that you can... it keeps you awake. So, I'm giving it to you now, so that you can be nice and alert later on. And it's one of our hunting medicines, that's why our people could run for hours. Hunting something like a giraffe with the long legs, buck, and things like that. Yeah (Sister G, interview with author, 2021).*

Kanna is found in South Africa in the Eastern, Western and Northern Cape Provinces. *Kanna* is the Khoi name for the plant but the scientific name for *Kanna* is *Sceletium tortuosum*. It is also referred to as *Channa* or its Afrikaans name, *Kougoed*. It is a herb that was traditionally used by the Khoi and San (Tshitwamulomoni, 2011). It is one of the herbs sold by Mountain Doctors. The plant is a low-growing green shrub, usually with a white, yellow, or pale pink flower. Its seeds are brown or black (Gericke & Viljoen, 2008: 654). Dr Nigel Gericke, a South African doctor and medical ethnobotanist, ran a clinical trial in 2001 using *Kanna* to treat three patients with different mental health illnesses. He identified three patients, all with different kinds of psychological illnesses, but the common thread amongst all of them is that they all had varying levels of depression. Other outlining psychological illnesses the patients had included being suicidal, and a severe social anxiety disorder. They also all struggled with issues around sleep, either insomnia or hypersomnia, some had no appetite, while others struggled with over-eating or were overly reliant on alcohol as a coping mechanism. They all suffered from differing levels of anxiety (Gericke & Viljoen, 2008: 661-662).

They were put on a daily dose of 50mg to 100mg of *Sceletium*. All the patients reported some small changes within a week or two of being in the study. One of the patients noted increased

anxiety a few hours after taking the medicine, especially in the first week of being on the dosage. These side-effects went away after the first week and the patient started to notice a drastic shift in anxiety levels and a change in mood. The other patients noted minimal to no side-effects in the first two weeks, and started to notice improvements thereafter, including less social distance, less anxiety even around stressful periods like exams, a drop in suicidal thoughts, more balanced sleeping and eating habits and less reliance on alcohol (Gericke & Viljoen, 2008: 662). Sister G in her discussion on how herbs communicate and how sceletuim communicated with the *aboxan*, says that when the herbs heal the body, it is also one of the ways they communicate with the individual and the body. She suggested that people are not always open to hearing the message, especially when the illness is deeper than the sick physical body. This means for many, the illness will return, or will manifest itself in the body in a different way. The Mountain Doctors believe that the herbs often require a deeper evaluation of the self, a return to identity and cultural heritage. Some of the Mountain Doctors, as Levi narrates, believe this communication comes from some spiritual being, while others like Arthur believe it is the ancestors, and Sister G believes it is the herbs themselves. Whether it is one or all these things, what is clear is that their healing practices require the healer and the patient to be open to other forces in order to fully administer or receive healing.



Figure 7.5: Concoction of Kanna, Maca, Buchu, honey and other herbs (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

7.3.1 Communicating with and rehabilitating ecology through rituals

The Mountain Doctors usually perform a cleansing ritual when they are finished collecting the herbs to thank nature and God for the harvest, healing and potential income they will generate from selling the herbs. The ritual will once again clear the area of any possible bad essence and whatever ecological disturbance that was caused from picking the herbs. No matter how minimal

the ecological disruption is, they perform the ritual to avoid leaving the area wounded; the ritual acknowledges nature's sacrifice and is a way of encouraging the area to heal so that it can continue to provide and connect them to the *aboxan*. They also consider sustainability and rehabilitation by not picking roots or plants that are too small and have not had a chance to fully develop and positively contribute to the ecosystem within which they exist. Any roots that are too small and might have accidentally been dug up are replanted. Often Mountain Doctors avoid digging up small roots by feeling for their size, but sometimes the holes are deep, dark and surrounded by rocks, hardened soil and other organic elements that might lead one to believe the root is big. This replanting practice again pre-empts the fixing of any bad essence the environment might release because of any disruption it endured during the harvesting. The organic shrines and other signs of a ritual last quite a long time.

The remnants of the ritual also work as a message to other Mountain Doctors and healers who might come to the area in future. The signs of a ritual and harvest having taken place are some of the wet soil from below being visible on the top in heaps from whoever was there before trying to refill the holes. There might be rocks that were potentially used as part of a shrine being assembled a certain way. At times the more organic parts of a shrine are left behind as part of a ritual, but usually, the most visible sign that the area is healing and should not be used, is evidence of small fires that Mountain Doctors might have made while they were collecting herbs or right at the end of the process. These signs tell others that the site has recently been harvested and is still healing, so it should not be harvested for herbs. Mountain Doctors will move to another location; this encourages sustainability and avoids any bigger or permanent degradation to the ecology or the depletion of certain either scarce herbs or popular herbs that are in higher demand. This is a consideration made by many African Traditional Religious groups when they engage with ecology in the diverse ways different African cultures often do. Beyond nature being important for their survival, many believe God, ancestors, and spiritual beings reside in nature and use it to communicate with messages to people (Nana, 2016: 164). The image below depicts the process to the closing ritual and prayer after the herbs have been picked. While cleaning up, a shrine is simultaneously created. The clean-up includes ensuring that no small herbs or roots were taken. Anything that was not replanted as they were harvesting is replanted at the end. The holes are filled up and any other organic waste that can easily be buried is buried while the holes are being filled up. The herbs that were harvested are collected and placed by the shrine so that they can be blessed and cleansed during the closing ritual and prayer. The shrine has different objects of cultural and personal significance to the Mountain Doctors. This one includes various books on plant medicine, musical instruments which are used during the ritual, and a portrait of King Haile Selassie I is also depicted in the shrine.



Figure 7.6: A temporary shrine is created with all the herbs collected after a long day of harvesting (Shange, 2021, Cape Point).

The very little organic waste that remains is gathered, a small hole is dug up and the waste is burnt in the hole. The hole is dug to ensure the fire does not spread. The ritual is quite long as they avoid putting out the fire with sand or water. The ritual lasts the duration it takes to burn all the organic waste and for the fire to mostly die out. As the fire dies out, the ash is collected as part of the ritual and is smeared on the face. Some of the ash is collected for future use. As already mentioned, ash, especially when paired with the sackcloth, is also believed to possess healing powers (Singh & Bhagwan, 2020: 408). The fire is also symbolic of life and it is not just a way of disposing of waste, therefore it plays an important role in the ritual and the whole process as the herbs themselves also symbolise health, well-being, and life (Hardesty, Myers & Fulks, 2005: 78). Fire is also important to the Rastas and is represented by Gad in the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Gad (and fire) is also associated with the colour red and the trait of power. Fire is important as a survival tool for people for warmth and food. The Mountain Doctors focus on this positive aspect of fire rather than the often-negative association with danger and disruption, but they also respect its deadly power and are careful with how they use it. They often only using fire in ways they believe are sustainable. They use it to make medicine or food or during rituals, and avoid accelerants. They also see fire as a gift from nature and the spiritual world, one that plays a significant role in nature as natural veld fires are an important way of restoring the old and ushering in new life.



Figure 7.7 Starting a fire to mark the end of the trot for herbs and as a way of disposing of organic waste

7.4 Ethnomedicine perspective: Healing from social injustices

The ethnomedicine perspective is found in medical anthropology and focuses specifically on the environment and the uses of traditional medicine. Just like the healing practices of the Mountain Doctors, the role of healers, the patient, family and community are considered, where healing takes on a ritualistic form. The medicine and healing differ from context to context because the healing is heavily dependent on the social and cultural practices and herbs or medicines (often indigenous) available in the natural environment (Quinlan, 2011: 381). Ngubane's Zulu explorations also further found that healing is different because the symptoms are not what is being treated; it is the causation that the healer must look at and alter the medicine and ritual according to that. Here, Western forms of treatment cannot be used, because doctors lack the knowledge required to heal the patient and because Western healing relies predominantly on "universal" forms of healing, while the Zulu customise healing to the patient's experience (Foulks, 1982: 1726). Mountain Doctor healing practices derived from Nguni, Khoi and San indigenous knowledge adopt a similar approach to the one discussed by Ngubane. Another way in which medical anthropology goes further than biomedicine is how it takes on a more holistic approach, in a similar way to that of the Mountain Doctors (Wiley, 1992: 216).

Medical anthropology goes as far as looking into socio-economic factors when determining the causes of illness; it also considers other social phenomena such as racism, poverty, social standing, and so forth. Therefore, Mountain Doctor healing practices also rest on things like land occupations and ignoring privatisation of land. Not only do they do this because they need the land for herbs and rituals and because they believe proximity to the land also heals, they also do this in part to make a statement on the historical land theft from colonial settlers and to make a statement about the land still belonging to them. Therefore, as Sister G suggests in Chapter 5, one should not have to claim something that is already one's own. All one must do is continue to use their indigenous rights of ownership.

Mountain Doctors like Chief Kingsley and famous graffiti artist Mak1one take their healing beyond herbs and ecology and tackle some of the issues reproducing hurt, violence, or poverty. They do this work by pulling from art and hip-hop that communicates important empowering social messages and creates strong community networks. Chief Kingsley adds that there is healing in this process, especially for people like him who come from communities where gangs are dominant, poverty and inequality are high, and children are enticed or forced into gang activities at a very young age. For Chief Kingsley, hip-hop has the power to heal the community and individuals. He later adds it was created by Africans, popularised by African Americans, and comes back to Africans again through the sharing and *ubuntu* found in Rastafarianism as an African liberation and religious movement. He added;

And also because of growing up in the neighbourhoods, which we call the ghettos, as where we are sitting now. I grew up two ghettos away from this ghetto. It's either going to be in our gangs. I was lucky I was saved through hip-hop. And hip-hop was actually what we refer to as a black conscious[ness] movement. That was born out of America, but it's actually out of Africa. So, through that it basically just came back to us again, through the ubuntu. Today we realise the acronym for HIP HOP, which means; highly intelligent people having omnipotent powers. So, through that we are exercising th[ese] omnipotent powers (Chief Kingsley, interview with author, 2021).

Chief Kingsley also works closely with Mak1one in Mitchells Plain where they target wider social healing. I met Mak1one in Mitchells Plain where he was putting up a graffiti installation that is a masked-up portrait that looks like a fingerprint. He says the meaning is abstract and he wants people to debate it and decide what it means to them. The mask, he says, is a little more literal and it is a message or reminder to people to protect themselves and others from Covid-19 by masking up. The fingerprint technique is a reference to identity and he hopes it can inspire community discussions on their identities as a way of also healing and rediscovering the self. They work with the children in the community to beautify their townships while teaching them about Khoi and San practices through *Khoekhoegowab* songs and by teaching the importance of nature and connecting with *aboxan*.



Figure 7.8: Mak1one's graffiti installation in Mitchells Plain (Shange, 2021, Cape Town).

There are many other Mountain Doctors and Rastas who heal people and their community beyond the conventional ways. Before his flesh left this world, Papa P rescued and healed old or sick horses abandoned by farmers, horse breeders and horse racers in George. He used the horse to teach children how to ride and taught them responsibility by making them part of the process of healing and taking care of the horses. The programme is therapeutic for many children, some who are as young as 12 years old but have witnessed a lot of violence or have been targeted by gangs on the Cape Flats. The parents relocate them to George to live with extended family, for them to escape the gang activity in Cape Town. Learning to ride and connecting with the horses helps the children to heal from some of this trauma. This is a common and effective psychological healing practice used in different parts of the world. The belief is that horses have therapeutic effects (White-Lewis, 2020: 58). But Papa P was able to create mutual healing to heal the horses, the children and eventually their community. This is as the children grow up to be caring and strong people who want to better the world, nature, and their community. His passing threatened the programme, but his community has worked to keep it alive. In November 2021 the community used the riding club to celebrate its fourth birthday just months after Papa P's planting (Claassen, 2021).



Video 7.1: Rescue horses and community members that form part of Papa P's programme following cars as everyone makes their way to the planting site (Shange, 2021, George). (Click on [UFS Figshare link here](#) to watch video)

7.4.1 Healing social challenges through herbs: An encounter with the *Rapé* Ritual

Various indigenous groups all over the world have the belief that herbs and rituals have the power to heal individuals and the collective society from various social ills. The most common social ills they tackle manifest and affect the physiology in various ways, but the belief is that they come from external trauma, poverty, abuse, or an intergenerational history of oppression. This view is similar to that of Ngubane's discussion of negative, often external essence having a bad impact on the individual or their family. Some of these social ills at times present as drug addiction, depression and other mental health illnesses. Amazonian cultural groups like the Huni Kuin use herbs like *rapé* and *Ayahuasca* to tackle these kinds of illnesses. *Ayahuasca* has a lot in common with *rapé*, which will be discussed in more detail. The healing potential, ritualistic administration and side-effects of both herbs are similar. The main difference with administration is that *Ayahuasca* is taken as a tea, and while *rapé* can also be ingested as a tea, it is mostly used as a snuff. *Ayahuasca* is said to provide holistic neurological health, increasing brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF). BDNF is a protein that promotes nerve cell growth and survival (Dos Santos & Hallak, 2017). *Ayahuasca*, like *rapé*, is a psychedelic which makes the user hallucinate, and shamans and traditional healers believe these hallucinations are important visions and messages coming from spirits. These visions should be taken into this realm and implemented in various ways to improve the life or experiences of the user. Some of the more commonly known health benefits of *rapé* are that it clears mucous, increases concentration while providing clarity, cures headaches and many other things (McConnell, 2022). My first encounter with the *rapé* ritual took place during my first visit with the Kalk Bay Mountain Doctors. We were making our way to

Cape Point to look for a herb called Root of David. We were on these big sand dunes filled with different kinds of herbs and plants overlooking the sea, not too far from Cape Point. Chief Kingsley was leading the ritual; he asked me to put my devices and notepad down and asked me to be in the moment because he was about to perform a sacred ritual that should not be recorded. He advised that I could write about it later, that those reflections of my experience during the ritual would be an important insight, even for others. He took out a wooden L-shaped pipe and a small container with a brown powder/ snuff made from ground herbs and tobacco. The powder is called *rapé* and it is pronounced “rapay”. *Rapé* is from South America, and used by different cultural groups in the Amazon, namely the Yawanawa, Huni Kuin and Katukina (McConnell, 2022). Chief Kingsley got his snuff from his recent encounter with the Huni Kuin cultural group. They have had many exchanges in the past where the Huni Kuin have visited Cape Town to engage with different Khoi and San cultural groups and exchange herbs and life experiences. His more recent encounter with the Huni Kuin was in early 2020 at the start of lockdown, during what was later coined, *The last festival on Earth*²⁹.

Rapé is used for healing sickness or providing clarity, especially during important rituals. Chief Kingsley explained every step as he performed it and he started with Gad-fire to ease my nerves and assure me it was safe. He asked Gad-fire to kneel while he took a portion of the snuff and placed it on the short side of the pipe. He started to pray/chant in a combination of *Nama*, Xhosa, English and Afrikaans, mainly asking for blessings, healing and clarity. He placed the short side of the L-shaped pipe on the forehead and applied some pressure, leaving traces of the snuff on the skin. This is the third eye and is considered important for awareness or clarity and for spiritual communication in Eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism. He did the same thing for the sacral chakra which is just above the belly button, and for the heart chakra in the middle of the chest. While he was doing all of this, he was occasionally giving instructions on when to breathe in, when to hold and when to release, just like a guided meditation or breathing exercise. Finally, he asked Gad-fire to breathe in and hold the breath, he placed the short side of the pipe inside Gad-fire’s left nostril and blew the snuff in. Then he added more snuff into the pipe, but this time he only put pressure on the third eye chakra with the pipe, then he asked Gad-fire to breathe in and hold, then he blew into the right nostril. This ritual can also be self-administered with a smaller, V-shaped pipe. One side goes into the nostril and the other goes into the mouth.

²⁹ The Tribal Gathering Festival in Panama usually brings together different indigenous groups from all over the world for a week of knowledge-sharing, dancing, music, and relaxation by the beach. Panama went on lockdown on the same day the festival was scheduled to end on 15 March 2020 because Covid-19 cases had been detected from different travellers entering the country. All flights were grounded and festival goers were stranded on the beach for months with very little food, water and resources as different countries struggled to navigate how to get festival goers back to their respective countries with the limitations of the global lockdown. Chief Kingsley was amongst those who struggled to get back home (Vice, 2020).



Figure 7.9: Amazonian cultural group using rapé. The pipe Chief Kingsley used was a lot smaller and slightly different in shape, but this illustration gives a rough idea of the process and how the herb is administered <https://sacredelixir.wordpress.com/2015/09/13/what-is-rape/>

7.4.2 My first experience of the Rapé Ritual

Gad-fire's reaction to the rapé ritual was a little surprising, but not too concerning, he coughed a little and his eyes got watery, but he was fine for the most part. So, I expected the same. Still very nervous, I went to kneel in front of Chief Kingsley. We did longer breathing exercises just to help me relax and they worked, especially as we got into the main ritual. I really felt at ease. But even as Chief Kingsley pressed against my chakras, I found myself letting go and having faith that everything was going to be okay, especially when it comes to my fieldwork and research overall. I had been stressing about fieldwork, funding, ethics delays and challenges caused by the pandemic. I had started to lose faith in the academic journey, in myself and felt like I was losing grip, a feeling also exacerbated by other personal challenges. This is not to say this moment miraculously restored all my faith in myself, my research process and my capabilities, but this was a huge start. It made me feel a little emotional and overwhelmed, but partly in a good way, and in some respects in a bad way. Calm as I was, I was still a bag of mixed emotions even before we got into the main part of the ritual. Before he even blew into my first nostril I was already feeling so at ease and calm, even happy.

The shift from calm to what came next was very unexpected. I felt the sudden sting of rapé as it moved from my left nostril, to the left side of my forehead and my brain. It felt like my brain was

on fire, my body was hot, but I was shivering and screaming and I cried and still tried to apologise for my reaction. Chief Kingsley said not to apologise, that I must lean into all the feelings and emotions for the ritual to be successful. Still on my knees, my body just collapsed into itself like I was sinking, and I cried for what felt like forever. Chief Kingsley occasionally rubbed and brushed my third eye chakra, my temples and the top and back of my head, almost as if to brush the pain away. And every time he would do this, the pain seemed to subside, before coming back again. He would also snap his fingers from time to time and tell me not to get “too lost in it”; “it” perhaps being the pain, the sorrow or the trance itself. Every time he loudly snapped his fingers, I felt like I was coming out of this almost trance-like experience and back closer and closer to “normal” consciousness. He would also keep saying; “It is good”. He told me I had been carrying a lot of hurt and pain, I must release it and let the pain I was feeling at that moment help me deal with the emotional pain, and that soon enough joy and clarity would follow. He would tell me to let the pain out and leave it in nature and let the environment heal me. Still in pain and crying, he encouraged me to do the last nostril.

I managed to get up and we performed the last bit of the ritual. It was more tense this time because I feared the pain and in a way that ended up making the pain even worse. But before blowing the *rapé* in the second time, they tried to calm me as much as possible. When they realised I was as calm as I would get considering how much pain I was in, the last nostril was done, and all the pain came rushing back. This time it was more focused on the right side of my body, with the most pain being in my nostrils and head. My whole body felt like it was throbbing, and I lay there crying. After a while, phlegm started to build up in my throat and nose and they told me to spit it out because it would have *rapé* in it and if I swallowed it, I would get diarrhoea, hallucinations, a fever and vomiting. The phlegm is one of the ways the herb detoxes the body, so if I swallowed it, I would not be allowing the “sickness” to leave the body. They also explained that if at home and I ingested *rapé*, it would not be a cause for concern, as the symptoms are fleeting and that is how the *rapé* rids the body of illness. Through the ritual we did, the healing was coming mostly from the trance and phlegm leaving our bodies. I did also sweat and I was advised that these were also toxins leaving my body. There are different ways of using *rapé*, which will yield different reactions, but the outcome is the same, creating a path to healing and enlightenment.

When the phlegm started coming out, I slowly started to feel better. The on and off itchy throat that was being caused by the Cape Town winter went away and I thought it would come back again later, but it did not for the duration of my fieldwork trip. I do not think my breathing passage has ever felt that clear, the air felt crisp and almost energising. It literally felt like a load was slowly being lifted off my shoulders, all the stress I had about lockdown restrictions and fieldwork delays, family, finances, and personal struggles melted away in those moments. I struggle to put into words the feeling of pure joy and happiness I felt in the moment, especially because nothing particularly monumental had happened. Those few days after the ritual were the happiest I had been in a very long time. During the moments when the pain was subsiding, the euphoria that was taking over came with a kind of ease. It is really hard to explain because I have lived a really great life, I have travelled all over the world, seen some of the most beautiful and peaceful places in the world, been

to the best parties in phenomenal destinations and I have loved each and every single one of these experiences and they have brought me extreme joy. I have a very loving and supporting family who smother me with care. But those 30 minutes on the floor after the *rapé* ritual were the happiest I have felt in a long time, but it was not a loud happiness. It was a very peaceful, calm and at ease happiness.

The happiness was also followed by another difficult to explain feeling, I guess maybe this is the clarity Chief Kingsley kept referring to. The best way I can explain it is I felt enlightened, open, and almost aware and awake. It felt like waking up from a long, good sleep. The feeling of enlightenment or waking up felt like I had limitless possibilities and advantages and all I had to do was reach for them, it was the feeling that I was in control and empowered. It was hard to make sense of some of the experience after just the first ritual. I can only make some of these reflections based on doing the ritual several times, in different ways and sometimes even ingesting the powder rather than having it blown in my nostrils. The effects took longer when I ingested it instead of administering it through my nose. But the reason I could make sense of these unfamiliar experiences and the weird feelings they brought with them was because of the ethnographic path, where I could even discuss some things with the participants. I struggled to articulate some things but they guided me even through the articulation so I could better understand the process. Keyan Tomaselli (2003: 857) writes about this kind of process and self-reflexivity/ autoethnography being just as important as textualised theory when we conduct research. Another thing that helped me make sense of the feelings I had was partly reading and watching the experiences of tourists who had visited the Amazon and had similar experiences which they then blogged³⁰ or vlogged³¹ about. I could find some commonalities in some of the confusion at a particular point in the ritual, and seeing how they dealt with the confusion also helped me make sense of my own process.

In retrospect I realise this was a high, but it was different from “normal” highs from alcohol or weed (and maybe other drugs I have never tried); there was no sense of loss of control or the type of weirdness that comes from weed or alcohol. It was the opposite, I felt the most like myself, I felt an almost spiritual self-awareness I have never encountered. I say spiritual because it is hard to explain or make sense of, so much so that I conclude it must be a spiritual realm feeling. This might be intellectual laziness on my part, but it is the only way I can describe it. The other thing that made it different from a “normal” high, is while the moments afterwards are the most intense, the feeling or rather feelings last for days, at least that was my experience. There is no crash or low like how you would get from alcohol or other drugs, there were no “hangovers” for me to deal with the next day or even days later when the high had worn off. It is also hard to say when the high wore off or if it lasted as long as it did because of certain realisations I had during the ritual and how those shifted my outlook on life especially during that period of my life. But maybe that

³⁰ Samasati yoga and wellness retreat:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20230708064148/https://www.samasati.com/rape-ceremony/>

³¹ Fearless & far:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20230520213706/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BCwoAtW8Ak>

Blaha Ka: <https://web.archive.org/web/20230724174457/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9B5n6UTNe84>

is the benefit of *rapé*, maybe I could not have got to that place by myself or if I did, it would have taken longer. *Rapé* was perhaps the helping hand I needed.

7.4.3 Lessons from the *Rapé* Ritual Mountain Doctor Reflections

What stood out was the pluralism in the practice. This was not the first time I had this realisation about Mountain Doctors and it would not be the last time. As already mentioned, they are pluralistic with the way they draw from Rastafarian culture and their Coloured identity as well as from groups like the Zulu and Xhosa, while also tracing their Khoi and San origins. They reinvent and reinterpret Khoi and San practices and in so doing, disrupt the textualized might that this culture is homogenous and extinct. Their pluralistic nature is in part what helps to keep their cultural identity alive (Tomaselli, 2003: 856-857). But perhaps what is worth noting is their willingness to draw even from international cultural groups like the Huni Kuin group. This is quite rare, as many groups often believe that their culture has a unique or innate essence attached to it. This leads many cultural groups to “protect” what they believe to be their cultural essence and reject the view, ideologies or practices of outsiders (Foulks, 1982: 1726).

I did ask Chief Kingsley and others about why it is that the Mountain Doctors are so willing to accept external cultural influences. These questions were also addressed in more detail in Chapter 2, but the general feeling was that so much of Coloured identity in South Africa is rooted in oppressive apartheid and colonial legacy. Many have been alienated from their culture and traditions, and it is through the pluralism that they reconstruct them and reimagine them. I further questioned what they used before their encounters with the Huni Kuin group for rituals such as the one we had just performed. He mentioned one of the reasons they are willing to explore other cultural practices like those of the Huni Kuin is because of the oneness that they feel connects different Global South indigenous groups and some of the similarities in practices and spirituality he has seen even when they are spread out across the globe. He also further added that even when it comes to healing, they have a lot in common. He spoke in some detail about what he referred to as brother sister plants and herbs that could be used for different healing practices. He made an example with the *rapé*, saying that even though it is a mixture of South American herbs, South Africa has brother sister herbs that perform similar functions. One such example is the dream root which predominantly comes from Xhosa culture, but Mountain Doctors also frequently use it. The scientific name for dream root is *Silene capensis*. Dream root is referred to as *undlela zimhlophe* by Xhosa people, which literally refers to the “way or path of white things or symbols”. White here can be interpreted as clarity, for example the kind of clarity one might get after taking dream root and receiving dreams or visions from ancestors (Hirst, 1997: 236).

There is similarity to the clarity one gets from *rapé*, and the hallucinations one gets from *rapé* can also be important visions or messages from the spirit. And just like *rapé*, dream root also helps with different kinds of illness, but is holistic in some regards too because it promotes the general healthy function of the physical body and the spirit in the dream or ancestral realm. The belief is that your dreams are clear when you have consumed dream root, and they feel real to a point where

you have control and agency in the dream world. The belief is that the dream is not just happening to the individual, but they are an active participant in it. This is important in African cultures like Xhosas and Zulus because they believe things that happen in the dream world have an impact on everyday life, so if you can control the dream world, you can expect better outcomes in certain aspects of your life, especially the challenges. The Mountain Doctors have the same belief; through the *rapé* ritual, they might get visions that help them navigate “real-life” challenges while the ritual also heals known or unknown physical illnesses.

7.4.4 Lessons from the *Rapé* Ritual: Personal Reflections

There are many reflections or moments I had during the ritual and in the days after the ritual. It was also something Chief Kingsley and many of the other Mountain Doctors said. The way Chief Kingsley said it was the one that stuck with me the most. He said; “You get to witness our pain and joy through our rituals and storytelling”. Then he asked me if I was ready to experience their pain because they have experienced a lot of it. His remark almost encapsulates some of my reflections. In a lot of ways, I got to live life like a Mountain Doctor. There were moments when it was overwhelming or tiring because living simply and sustainably in nature without modern-day comforts was a challenge. The looming land risks often sparked fear when there were encounters with authorities who often approached interactions with us with aggression. The pain Chief Kingsley refers to could be these experiences as well as the historical and structural oppression. There are moments of feeling overwhelmed, especially with the dehumanising way outsiders treated us at times. The joy emerges in the healing, the connectedness with nature and the network of support they create with each other. Chief Kingsley’s statement is reminiscent of Max Weber’s *Verstehen*, a methodology and theory rooted in empathy rather than sympathy.

Classical sociologist, Max Weber’s discussion on *Verstehen* is based on a German term which means empathy and the ability to walk in someone else’s shoes. *Verstehen* is a very important approach, especially in decolonial discourse or when doing research on indigenous groups like the Khoi and San who have been historically depicted in inhumane ways in the name of “objective” truths which are often tainted with the researcher’s own prejudice. *Verstehen* challenges the researcher to discard their preconceived notions and represent the participants the way they would represent themselves. It also encourages sociologists to be active participants in their research (Tucker, 1965: 159). One of the best ways to do this is through ethnographic research which requires the researcher to constantly be with the participants for an extended period. This way one has first-hand experience of how participants live life on a day-to-day basis. One gets to learn about their history, social challenges, hopes and dreams, and many other things. And from Chief Kingsley’s perspective, the *rapé* ritual, through the pain/joy emotions it invoked, gives deeper cosmological insights; ones that *Verstehen* helps us understand, but that also go further by a kind of *Verstehen* that touches the spiritual, historical and even psychological experiences of the Mountain Doctors. *Verstehen* becomes more than a scholarly approach, it changes the researcher too; in this case, especially in relation to the first *rapé* ritual, it provided much needed physiological

and emotional healing and ease. It is also an important illustration of thick descriptions in anthropology. It helps to articulate elements of the relationships and experience created during the fieldwork. It also illustrates the intrinsic need to convey experiences to the reader.

The *rapé* ritual forced me to deal with the imposter syndrome I had dragged with me into the field and which was negatively impacting my study. There were a lot of challenges before entering the field, and when I came to the field I encountered even more delays. These were beyond my control and there was little I could do about them. But when I would come up with alternative strategies in the beginning and even those would fail, giving up entirely started to feel like a viable option. I was scared I would fail. I believed that when I failed, it would confirm to myself, my funders and the unsupportive structures of the institution that I am not good enough, that I do not know what I am doing. Something about the ritual, one of the many inexplicable things, made me have more grace towards myself, and in a strange way, it did heal me or allow me to start the process of healing. It did this by helping me deal with my mental health and insecurities in a big way. But, as I mentioned earlier, it was not a miracle herb that just “fixed” everything, these are things I still struggle with. On some days, weeks, and months I “win” and try to dispel and disprove these negative notions mostly to myself, but also to those around me. At other times I buy into these notions and I must fight again to come out of that space, this time without the helping hand of *rapé*. *Rapé* did build an important foundation to allow me to do this internal work on myself. Reminding myself of the experience is sometimes a useful tool in continuing to stay upbeat, productive and motivated, not just about my research, but my work as a whole and my overall wellbeing. *Rapé* is supposed to give you visions that lead you to clarity or peace, although for me it was not necessarily visions, it was more these reflections discussed above and many other personal ones. But maybe these reflections are in fact my visions and the two words possibly mean similar things to those who have used *rapé*. Maybe it is our descriptions or definitions of how we explain or narrate the experience that differs. Therefore, the narrating and storytelling is important. One gets to understand certain commonalities and differences and can represent a more diverse and holistic picture of the participants’ experiences rather than being limited by the reductionist notion of an objectivity or uniform healing or interaction with herbs.

7.5 Mountain Doctor challenges

The *rapé* ritual had a significant impact on me, but the experience was clouded by my first encounter with the types of institutions and individuals that Mountain Doctors say they receive the most repression from. Mountain Doctors say they frequently clash with police, landowners, environmental bodies, and business owners, especially in the city close to the places where they sell. On one occasion, as we were concluding the harvesting for the day, we were confronted by SANParks³² rangers who instructed that we put all the herbs back, some of which were leaves and stems and could not be replanted. Chief Kingsley tried to explain why we were there and the

³² South African National Parks

importance of the work. The conflict just continued to escalate, and the rangers threatened to call the police and have us arrested. It started to deescalate when the rangers, who were Xhosa-speaking questioned the rest of us and when I responded in Xhosa, they became more understanding. They questioned me in similar ways they had questioned Chief Kingsley and I gave the same responses. It is not clear if the interaction shifted because the rangers did not understand English well, though Chief Kingsley had responded in a mix of English and Xhosa, or if it was ethnic and racial tension. The exchange ended with the rangers apologising and asking more general questions, especially about the herbs. Many of them marvelled that they worked so close to these herbs that could have been helping them with various health and spiritual challenges. They told us when the White rangers would be doing their rounds and told us they would not be as understanding, and we must clear out soon.

There were many other similar challenging encounters, including a traffic police officer outside of George who accused me of having stolen my own car. He also interrogated us about being poachers but did not know what the endangered species looked like and still relied on us to explain what everything was. Even when he could not find anything incriminating, he still refused to let us leave and called his colleagues. He also wanted me to prove I was a researcher, which was impossible to do. He only finally let us go when I showed him my consent form which had my supervisor's details and stated I was affiliated with the UFS. Even though he had seen my ID card earlier, he panicked, thinking I was Prof. Sithole and immediately started apologising. He asked me not to look at the encounter as one coming from racism or malice, that he was worried about me because of the kind of company I had. He was just doing his job and was making sure I was not in any danger. I tried to question why he would think I was in danger and what about my company made him think that, but the Mountain Doctors diffused the situation and asked that we leave. The Mountain Doctors would also frequently ask me not to come to trots for herbs or focus on other aspects of my research when they were going to places that they knew were privately owned or where they or other friends had had violent encounters. Their concern was that, because I was not in sackcloth, I would not adequately camouflage to nature when danger was approaching. I also would not know the land well enough when everyone must run and hide, often in different directions. I also would not run fast enough and would generally expose the group to more danger. Many told me that they had lost friends this way. They allege that some were killed by farmers or the police themselves and that their bodies were disposed of in that land where they were caught harvesting. Others spend years in jail just for harvesting, and their herbs are confiscated and often destroyed or only released after paying a fine. The fines are sometimes close to the value of the herbs, meaning they might not make enough money to survive from that particular harvest or it might be cheaper to redo that harvest.

7.5.1 Mountain Doctors navigating external challenges

I happened to witness one of these chases at the end of a trot for herbs I had been asked to sit out. After working on other interviews and observations, I came to pick up the Mountain Doctors on a

road close to where they had been picking herbs. They had been running and hiding from people who had spotted them. As they came towards the car, one by one each of them seemed to leap out of the bush like magic. Jumping from an almost two-metre high cliff, they almost looked like Maasai people who are famous for their ability to jump very high. I would focus my eyes more on the spot they seemed to be coming out of, thinking I would spot the others, but I could not. When the first Mountain Doctor came into the car, he explained the situation and told me if the situation escalated, we might have to leave the others behind and wait somewhere else not too far from the area. The remaining Mountain Doctors would figure out how to get out of this difficulty and reach out to us to pick them up at the same or a different location. Luckily this did not happen. But they had to be cautious, waiting for those patrolling to get further away or look in a different direction before each of them sprung out of the bushes. After some time, all four of them were in the car and they narrated a cat-and-mouse encounter that had lasted hours, and they were almost caught several times. This negatively impacted their harvest and they also lost some of their equipment during the chase. Many of these challenges directed towards Mountain Doctors come from external individuals and institutions. Many of them revolve around issues of access and mobility caused in many ways by lack of access to land and the necessary resources and opportunities they need to do this kind of work. Some of these are already addressed in earlier discussions on historical and contemporary land struggles.

Other challenges Mountain Doctors experience from the external world are more covert, but their covertness does not make them any less harmful. One of these harmful practices is the simultaneous disregard and appropriation of indigenous knowledge, especially plant medicine. Much like other African plant medicines that have psychedelic or hallucinogenic effects, like weed and mushrooms, *Kanna* has also been vilified. A 2010 News24 article suggested it was addictive and dangerous (Ainslie, 2010). No other widely reported indigenous and biomedical benefits were mentioned in the article. Mountain Doctors say that these claims have not been convincingly refuted. They suggest there are dangers in using anything excessively, be it psychedelic or not, be it herbs or not. Their concern is how African herbs and knowledge in general tend to have the negative aspects highlighted. This is even if the concerns or claims are not true, or the healing potential of the herbs have not been falsified by the sceptics. It is not uncommon for African herbs to be presented as inferior. It is often when they have been whitewashed by Western exploration that the shift towards society embracing them takes place. Some of the more popular case studies are hoodia and weed. In both processes, the whitewashing of this plant medicine left indigenous communities without the right to use these herbs, which now require expensive permits to use and sell. The ownership shifted from the Khoi and San or different African groups who are cultural and historical custodians of this knowledge, to predominantly White-owned capitalist interests or pharmaceuticals.

Many of the efforts to explore indigenous medicine leave the main custodians out, knowledge is extracted from them, and researchers and different institutions make money off it. One more commonly known example is the hoodia plant. The Khoi and San shared the functions of this herb as an appetite suppressant that is packed with nutrients and healing properties. The Khoi and San

refer to hoodia as *!Xhoba*. It was used while hunting, where hunters could go for days without food. In 1998, South Africa's CSIR³³ partnered with Phytopharm, a United Kingdom-based biotechnology firm, Pfizer and Unilever, to develop *!Xhoba* for global commercialisation and sale as an anti-obesity product (Foster, 2016: 149). Today, Khoi and San communities are barred from using this herb because of patent laws that make it illegal for them to pick it from the desert and use it. Being found with these herbs without formal permits can lead to fines or even jail time, while some of the land they grow on is privatised, restricted, or marked as conservation areas to keep people out.

*Okay. Let's stick with it, the hoodia. Yeah. The lawyer that actually represented NKC *National Khoisan Council*, which was in an organisation set up by the ANC³⁴, mainly for the five big tribes... I had a personal encounter with him, actually, two or three times already. And then we clash with each other on representation and stuff like that. Because to me, as you see, from my point of view, as being the actual healer, in the Khoi and San Bushmen, community, you have this NKC, which is an organisation of a few people, that has got no links to plants or plant medicine or healing. They have been chosen for whatever reason of being representatives of the community. And as the South African Human Rights Commission, did a report in 2019, saying that the representation of the NKC is actually a big problem. Because they're really not representing the people. For whatever reasons they were put there. You wouldn't know but it's all political. Okay. Therefore, if you have an endorsement or registered IP *Intellectual Property* on hoodia, it can't be just for the NKC, because even if those people on the NKC [were] real legitimate leaders, they would have been representatives of the nations, of the Khoi and the Bushman people. So, you can cut off your people or your community or your nation from the resource and then claim it as an individual for a few individuals that it's now your IP? There's no proof that you actually do practice medicine or know what hoodia is being used for. You, see? That's my issue. But politically, that's a political ploy, why it happened, I don't know. But from my side as a healer. My challenges have been with government and government institutions. Because up to now, the environmental organisation that runs the whole Western Cape, Cape Nature. It used to be also in the Northern Cape. But now the Western Cape is the only... Cape Nature is the only custodian in the Western Cape for conservation. In 2006, we already started with Cape Nature engaging with them. We've been part of a community group, which we call the NRUG Natural Resource User Groups, with sangomas and inyangas³⁵ from all different cultures, all staying in the Western Cape. We've been fighting since whenever, since the declaration of Parks, to have access so that we can harvest medicine, up to now, it hasn't been done. The only point you'll find in Cape Nature, if you want to harvest anything is to have a research permit. That's the only thing that allows you, Nobody's allowed to take anything out of the conservation areas. And most of the conservation areas which they declared used to be old Bushman and Khoi kraals, *where* the communities used to stay. So, they removed the communities, the people out of the parks, put up fences, and then make laws to keep us out. And that's our biggest problem. Because even as we were as community staying in the park, with all the natural resources around it, we've been conserving it since more than 25 000 years. They weren't endangered. Those medicines are still there and available. So, if we weren't conscious about conservation, it wouldn't be there anymore. But now conservation use this law to say no, people are destroying everything, and especially people of colour (!Kora, interview with author, 2021).*

So many Western/ biomedical advances are already based on the cultural appropriation of these practices. As !Kora suggests, this is how herbs like hoodia came to be patented and only reserved for research or “scientific” use, with a tiny percentage of Khoi and San groups being allowed to

³³ Council for Scientific and Industrial Research

³⁴ African National Congress

³⁵ African herbalist

use it. NKC, founded in 1999, is made up of 25 members from five different Khoi and San cultural groups, while many others are left out or underrepresented. The NKC groups that make up part of the structure and would have access to things like *!Xhoba* intellectual property are the Griqua, Cape-Khoi, Korana; Nama; and San (SAHRC, 2018). The appropriation of African ideas is a manipulation that involves stealing African ideas, presenting them as Western, while convincing Africans that the same practices are inferior or are only useful in as far as Western science has contributed to them to make them more “advanced”. Discussions around cultural appropriation are often had around the arts and popular culture, but they are important to consider when analysing how even healthcare systems have been used in the past to extract scientific knowledge from Africans and pass it off as Western. This usually makes it harder for the true custodians of that knowledge to access it. Philosopher James Young (2005: 136) discusses the actors in cultural appropriation as insiders and outsiders. The insiders are the members of a cultural group from which something is being appropriated or extracted. It can also be the individual/s who are the inventors or original custodians of knowledge, art, or special methods that are being appropriated by the outsider. The outsiders are the non-members, they do not belong to the cultural group where knowledge is being appropriated.

Young makes a distinction between three different types of cultural appropriation: subject, content and object appropriation. Subject appropriation is when an outsider depicts members or aspects of another culture. Young makes the example of a painting or film that centres around the insiders’ lives or culture. Content appropriation is the use of an insider’s cultural product by the outsider in their own work or production. This category is very broad and can include musicians performing another culture’s songs or adopting a certain style or method from another culture. Object appropriation includes the extracting of tangible goods like sculptures (Young, 2005: 136). The appropriation of herbs like hoodia arguably falls under all three types of appropriation. The people (subject) themselves are appropriated through supporting marketing and media campaigns that present certain products as indigenous and more holistic. Adverts are often constructed with the “stereotypical” ancient, wise indigenous healer out in the dunes or forest or gazing deeply at the herb. These images are often used to prove that the products are “pure”, even when they are not. This is also in part done to address the growing scepticism towards Western biomedical interventions. This scepticism has even made its way to the West as people move more and more towards the wellness trends that pull from mainly Eastern medicine and rituals for healing. Content appropriation is through the research processes and explorations that take place with the support of insider groups like Khoi and San who freely share knowledge of the herbs. They believe the herbs can heal and should be used by anyone who wishes to use them and will frequently share their uses, even with tourists. Finally, the object appropriation is through the herb being removed and used especially in ways that alienate Khoi and San people from their own indigenous knowledge.

Some challenges arise when considering cultural appropriation of knowledge because knowledge can be an intangible and a fluid concept which is easily transferrable between individuals, communities, and borders. This can lead to the knowing or unknowing borrowing or imitation of

ideas. There are also ethical concerns on whether cultural knowledge should be protected, and if such protections inhibit the production of important or lifesaving knowledge and advancements (Bannister & Solomon, 2009: 140-141). Young's theorising on cultural appropriation is not so clear cut, especially not in a globalising world, where people have pluralistic identities and either belong to or draw inspiration from different cultures for various personal and social reasons. With deeper analysis one could argue that intention is also an important factor that determines whether an outsider is appropriating art, knowledge, or certain methods. It can be argued that if the intention of the outsider is to advance themselves and their agenda at the expense of another cultural group with no recognition of their contribution, and no consent from the cultural group (in the cases where consent can be given), then cultural appropriation has taken place. Another important consideration is finances and other direct and indirect social benefits; for example, if the outsider is a sole or major beneficiary of a product that belongs to another culture, then the outsider has engaged in cultural appropriation. Perhaps most importantly, Young and Susan Haley (2009: 268) say that; "nothing comes from nowhere", which means the outsider, artist or producer of knowledge is responsible for exploring the origins of their idea, even if it seemingly came to them randomly. Once they understand the origins of their idea, they can think about the best ways to present it, be it through seeking consent from the insiders, being intentional about naming the insiders as the inspiration for the idea, sharing the social or economic benefits that might follow, and so forth.

There are concerns that too much protection of cultural knowledge or ideas can limit the free flow of ideas that can lead to important research discoveries or inventions that advance society (Bannister & Solomon, 2009: 140). While these concerns are valid, practices like copyright and patent laws do far worse when it comes to limiting the free flow of ideas than what cultural appropriation regulatory observations or considerations might do. The recent refusal to allow African countries to produce their own Covid-19 vaccines is one such example of the danger of patents that put intellectual property over the more pressing needs of society like healthcare and general social wellbeing (Meredith, 2021). African countries ended up being the last in line in the global vaccine drive. Slow bureaucratic processes saw African countries receiving their vaccines close to their expiration date, which meant the vaccines then had to be destroyed (Mwai, 2021). The inequality in vaccine distribution is one of the many things that caused vaccine hesitancy as some wondered if Africans were receiving quality vaccines. This is also not the first time that Western medicine has placed profit and patents over healthcare and wellbeing. The HIV/Aids pandemic in the 90s was further exacerbated by American big pharmaceuticals' refusal to allow countries like South Africa (one of the hardest hit by the HIV/Aids pandemic at the time) to buy cheaper generic drugs from different countries producing them (Nocera, 2021). Africans are alienated from important lifesaving biomedicine because of the geopolitical challenges highlighted above and because it is expensive and inaccessible, especially for those living in remote rural areas. At the same time, they are dissuaded from tapping into to their own medical knowledge because of concerns it is unsafe or its uses are not scientifically verified. Those who continue down the

path of African plant medicine exploration are met with land and environmental restrictions, struggles with access and many other things.

7.5.2 Mountain Doctors navigating internal challenges

Many of the Mountain Doctors' internal challenges are linked to their cultural identity practices and ideologies. These include things like leaving school or professional workplaces to pursue these ways of life that require total devotion. Though this is an internal challenge, it also has resemblances of external challenges because of how they are often treated by the external world, as many Mountain Doctors believe they would not find employment or gain access to institutions like educational ones. As a result, it is usually when they are considering returning to school or the formal workforce that Mountain Doctors start to consider removing their sackcloth. Other internal challenges are linked to the decision not to wear shoes and wearing sackcloth which sometimes looks like a tunic. This exposes them to dangerous elements during their trots for herbs. They get deep cuts from thorns or twigs that some had said pierced their feet from one side to another. The process of collecting herbs is also a dangerous one, as they must climb steep dangerous mountains to forage things like wild carrot.

During the 2021 fieldwork trip, one of the participants, Dimitri, fell down a very high mountain during a trot for wild carrots. The carrots grow on the very edge of the mountains, and the Mountain Doctors have to get to the edge to get what they need. While picking the carrots, Dimitri slipped and fell. He was badly injured. We visited him and he was in bad shape but there are strictly no biomedical doctors allowed for many Mountain Doctors. This is a personal decision that some make in part to illustrate the strength of their herbs. Many will ask; "Why should I go to the doctor when I can heal myself?" They are also sceptical of biomedical doctors and facilities because of the lack of trust for Western medicine as discussed in different sections throughout the thesis. Some recount stories of loved ones who went to hospital for very standard or low-risk procedures but passed away while in hospital. Some blame this kind of thing on negligence and resource scarcity often found in townships and rural areas mostly occupied by people of colour. Other Mountain Doctors see this loss of life as deliberate. They believe it is a continuation of the colonial and apartheid genocide towards Coloureds, Khoi and San people in particular. They often even compare this loss of life in hospitals to the drugs and gangs on the Cape Flats. They see them as two sides of the same coin and a continuation of the apartheid agenda that tried to destroy their community by intentionally bringing guns and drugs into their communities. It is this distrust that made Dimitri opposed to going to the doctor or hospital, even for pain management which he struggled with the most. Even after his very quick recovery, one leg still remained painful. Dimitri joined us very quickly considering the shape he was in just days after his accident, he was back in action after about two weeks. Even though he was still limping, he had made a full recovery and the limp also started to go away very quickly after his return to the Mountain Doctor practices. Trots for herbs are very dangerous and many others have died in similar ways to how Dimitri was injured.

Perhaps one of the most difficult internal challenges they struggle with is not being around their family, and particularly their children. The work they have embarked on doing is very difficult and often sees them leave town or the province for weeks or months. They travel to other places looking for herbs or to learn from other Mountain Doctors or indigenous groups in the area still practising plant medicine. Rituals for themselves or their clients also sometimes take them away from their family. This challenge is further exacerbated by the relatively small income they make. The most popular herbs like *buchu* and *mpepho* only sell for R10 to R40 (0.60c to a little over \$2 in USD) per bunch. Weed is also very popular, especially amongst the students who often buy it from the Mountain Doctors, but they must be careful who they sell it to, out of fear they might be the police, meaning at times they have to risk potential new clients who enquire about the sale of weed. Other herbs cost quite a lot more, but also do not sell as quickly because they are highly specialised. Some herbs like wild garlic and mountain carrot do not grow as freely as *buchu* and *mpepho* in Cape Town. This means that when they need stock they often must plan for long journeys outside the city, often walking for hours or days, resting and sleeping in caves and bushes along the way. Sometimes they hitchhike or alternatively take the train or plan their trips around other Mountain Doctors or community members who have cars and might be headed in the same direction.

Many Mountain Doctors recorded drastic growths in clients during the Covid-19 pandemic, yet these increased numbers are still not enough. Additionally, the strict lockdown rules that limited vendors from selling on the street made it difficult for them to always meet the demand, especially in terms of potential new clients who did not know how to reach them. They would often hear about them after the fact from other vendors or the clients themselves who might find them weeks or months later at their usual spots in and around the city. Given how cheap many herbs are and because of the rising cost of living, the rise in clients did not make a significant enough improvement to the Mountain Doctors' socio-economic challenges. Even during my July to October 2021 and October 2022 fieldwork trips, the now slowly declining client numbers came up frequently as a topic of discussion. As many start to see the threat of Covid-19 drop, they pull away from their attempts to rediscover African medicine, a "trend" that was partly fuelled by Madagascar's President Andry Rajoelina alleging that Africans had the cure for Covid-19 in 2020. He was referring to an easily available African herb called *umhlonyane* (African wormwood), scientific name; *Artemisia afra*, a dark green or grey bitter herb which has been used by African healers for respiratory issues, to boost the immune system, and many other things (Laplante, 2015: 12; van der Walt, 2004). The news sent shock throughout the globe and the announcement was quickly declared unscientific because it had not been tested and verified. The World Health Organisation furthermore warned against its use (Loussouf, 2020).

Despite the warnings against the use of *umhlonyane* from the WHO, President Cyril Ramaphosa and his cabinet, many South Africans still rushed to use *umhlonyane* and other herbs especially when the major Covid-19 waves saw many deaths and threatened to cripple health institutions (Feni & Khoza, 2020). Unfortunately, the rise in patients did not fix many of the Mountain Doctors' socio-economic challenges, not even temporarily, and many struggle to take care of themselves and their families. Many see this as a punishment from the neo-liberal institutions

supported by the state. They often say that capitalism punishes them not only because they are people of colour, but because capitalism is built on their oppression and erasure. They dub it the new slavery or colonialism and say it punishes them further because they reject its rules and codes and find small ways to work outside of it. Mountain Doctors who live in nature permanently eat off the land as far as they can, rejecting grocery shops and expensive Western medicine. They revive old cultural sustainable practices that also avoid the over-consumption encouraged by capitalism. They also reject formal work and sometimes Western education as well, which they see as propaganda that moulds them to think and act like the “White man”. Most importantly they reclaim the land either short-term for rituals or long-term for occupation, whereas capitalism through the state retaliates time and time again with violence, pushing them deeper into poverty, imprisonment and sometimes even with threats to their safety.

7.6 Narrating Womanist Mountain Doctor experiences

The risk and danger attached to the work is in part why many Mountain Doctor women must pull back from their full devotion to the sackcloth when they start having children. Because there is no certainty in the work and some months yield little to no income, this becomes burdensome on the women and is a risk to the baby. Even in the sackcloth movement, as in modern society, the burden of raising children is placed heavily on women. Women in society are often expected to give up their sense of self and make sacrifices to be mothers, especially mothers society considers “good mothers”. Ann Ward (2008: 32) has this conversation in relation to women having to give up friendships when they become mothers. The difficulty is that friendships are important systems of support, but family pressure and the new stress of being a new mother might lead some to struggle to keep up with friendships. This conversation is applicable to womanist Mountain Doctors because while having cultural significance, the movement is also an important way for people to forge important friendships and bonds, especially when embarking on what some might perceive to be an unusual journey. The sackcloth movement offers a system of support of people who know exactly what someone is going through and who support them through it. Many womanist Mountain Doctors might still need the support that comes from being more closely linked to the group, but might struggle to access it because of the difficulties of adjusting to motherhood and because of the nature of work and the individuals who form part of it, they are always moving around, and there is very little stability. There is also no predictability in the work that they can plan their lives around, especially for something as difficult as motherhood. These are all things that a new mother and baby might need, but the sackcloth movement struggles to provide them. Many trade their journeys for formal work and more stable dwellings for the sake of the baby. They might still engage in certain sackcloth practices but for the most part they stop living in nature and do not engage as frequently with other Mountain Doctors. Trips for herbs are also reduced, they stop wearing sackcloth and walking barefoot and they reintegrate into greater society.

Most of the analysis adopts a narrative approach which is an important methodology and decolonial tool that allows the researcher to take a step back and for the participants to lead the

conversation. Because this section focuses on women of colour who experience marginalisation in society, while still often having to mark their space in cultural religious spaces, it becomes important to try to present their views as much as possible in the way they narrated them and to avoid over-interpreting them, even in ways that might unintentionally misrepresent them. This section depends more on the direct quotes from the women that were interviewed to give space to observations that are often overlooked or marginalised both by “in” and “out” groups. Narrative studies can be restorative for the self that has been oppressed or marginalised as they narrate their challenges and hurt (wa Thiong’o 1987: 18). The approach does have its setbacks, and because it is still a discussion, the experiences cannot be stated as they were narrated, but it goes further still. Narrative discussions and research methods also allow for the disruption of normalised images and the status quo which is sometimes harmful; this happens as the participants narrate their experiences (Ghorashi, 2021: 53).

7.6.1 Womanist Mountain Doctor experiences

Womanist Mountain Doctors in full sackcloth are rare for various reasons. As mentioned above, some of these reasons revolve around the social division of labour along gender roles, where the main caregiving role falls on women. Even when a male and female Mountain Doctor have a child, it is the woman that often gives up the sackcloth life to raise the children. Many of the Mountain Doctors encountered, both male and female, have been faced with a similar decision at some point in their sackcloth journey. Even with this, many male Mountain Doctors attribute the lack of women in the sackcloth movement to the work being too difficult for women, adding gender binaries that divide labour and cultural practices according to sex rather than strengths or desires of the group or individual. When explaining why she did not participate in all the sackcloth practices, especially selling herbs in the streets and city centres, Rosinna, Jesus’s wife says;

*I don't go there to the herbs and so, because I believe in what my king say. He says is not a woman's work this work. A woman work is to bring forth youths *birth and raise children*. Is not there to go there in the creation and pick herbs and do the maan work. That is not woman work (Rosinna, interview with author, 2021).*

This is a common belief in many African spiritual practices. Traditionally women were not permitted to burn *impepho*, only the male head of the family could, even though in many Nguni cultures *izangoma* are usually women, and this is considered one of the most important roles in society. In more traditional contexts, they are even considered the most important advisors to kings and various traditional leadership figures. *Izangoma* yield a lot of power and can influence many important decisions. But despite this and the fact many of the most powerful *izangoma* are women, the gifts and attributes that make them powerful are often attached to masculinity, or might be attached more to the ancestor or spirit they are possessed by, especially if that spirit is one that is male or masculine. Their own innovation and uniqueness in how they approach issues becomes secondary to the perceived male or masculine strength society sees them as possessing. Masculine personality traits and behaviours also end up being accepted or celebrated, even in contexts that

are strict about people sticking to their prescribed gender roles. Society is far more willing to accept it when female *izangoma* have relationships with other women because this is seen as a masculine act attached to their strength as healers. In fact, this kind of same-sex relationship is seen as the *sangoma* fulfilling the desires of the male ancestor or masculine spirit in them, an act that society believes they have little or no control over because defying the will of the ancestors can result in misfortune, illness, financial setbacks and other punishments (Stobie, 2011: 153). Any feminine traits are not afforded the same recognition as possible sources of strength. Often when the community or cultural context lesbian or gender-fluid *sangoma* belongs to a strong anti-LGBTQI+ community, the community fears expressing their sentiment to LGBTQI+ healers. This is because they fear the healer's power or possibly being cursed by the healer. Lesbian and gender-fluid *izangoma* are less likely to experience LGBTQI+ hate rape in a community where other lesbian women who are not healers face the constant risk of violence and rape. In a way they experience a lot more tolerance and are sometimes able to explore their gender unencumbered. But there is a form of erasure that takes place, especially for those who are feminine or have some feminine traits. This femininity is seen as a weakness (Nkabinde & Morgan, 2006: 10). When Mountain Doctors say that women are not strong enough to perform the kind of work they do, they exhibit similar sentiments that frame femininity as fragile and not able to endure hardship.

Even with this belief that women are not fully capable to do the work, many Mountain Doctors are drawn towards this life by their grandmothers and great-grandmothers. Chief Kingsley talks about drinking herbs being a post-dinner ritual-like activity when he was growing up, jokingly adding that his grandmother would not let them go to sleep without finishing the pots of herbs. She would lead them to the bushes and show them various herbs, explaining their functions and names as they explore. Arthur has similar recollections and adds his grandmother used a strange language when she did rituals or taught him the herbs. He later discovered that language was *Khoekhoe*, which he is now learning and rediscovering. Many other Mountain Doctors who moved toward the sackcloth life through visions and dreams mention that it was their grannies that brought the messages to them. !Kora talks about how his relationship with his grandmother steered him towards being a healer and how she still guides him in different ways long after her passing;

Well, like the scientists would say that DNA's got memory. You know, it just needs some incidents for somebody to awake that memory. And luckily, I had my grandma with me that was awakening that memory the whole time. Most of my knowledge I got from her from the plants, but even things that I, I would say I didn't know came from an ancestral calling. Yeah. Some even come through dreams and visions (!Kora, interview with author, 2021).

7.6.2 Women joining the sackcloth movement

Some women joining the sackcloth movement join with or because of their mostly male partners. Sister G also adds how her journey started off with her then-partner in 1999 and lasted four years;

What was quite mystic is the time when we decided to put on sackcloth. And we came to the dancehall, there was a lot of young couples that decided to also. It was like we planned this [laughs]. But we didn't, like you

*know? And everybody just arrived and everybody was like, the week before they were in plain clothing. And the next week we met and everybody, including us, were in sackcloth. And we were like wow! [laughs] So there was like about say 4 or 5 couples, that decided to put it on *sackcloth* at the same time (Sister G, interview with author, 2021).*

Carlton and many other Mountain Doctors also talked about how many of their girlfriends joined the sackcloth movement after meeting them or from noting the positive impacts it has had on the men's lives, and wanting to be a part of it. Carlton is one of the Mountain Doctors who did not wear sack, but still identifies with the sackcloth identity. He explains in relation to himself and his partner that even though they are no longer in sackcloth, they are still part of the movement;

*I'm still belong to the sackcloth. Because I'm part of it. Yeah, so well as my girlfriend, you see? The whole family... She *his girlfriend* does not wear the sackcloth anymore but she still part of the movement (Carlton, interview with author, 2021).*

Rosinna also adds that that she joined because of her husband, and that it was important for them to have the family united under the sackcloth way of life. At some point, the whole family was fully devoted to sackcloth. Her daughter has grown up and is in her early twenties with her own family now, but has rejected the sackcloth way of life she was raised in. This is a painful topic for Rosinna and she hopes her devotion to the sackcloth movement will bring her daughter back to the movement and also heal their fragile relationship. She adds;

*I was in the sack movement for 3 years from the age of 27... *I joined* because it's my husband and he also told me about [pause], we must be a family, a sackcloth family. And it's better to do together as one. And that made me, you know, I see it's real... And believe in it, and start believing and believing and believing, cause it's real, it's a real thing. Yeah. And when I was getting my child, she also wear sack, she was five years old when she was wearing sack. And she was also for three years with, till she was eight years... Yeah (Rosinna, interview with author, 2021).*

7.6.3 Womanist Mountain Doctor Challenges

Some of the challenges womanist Mountain Doctors face are unique to them because they are women. As already mentioned, some of these challenges are linked to gender roles, others are linked to the differences in men and women's bodies. The menstrual cycle is one of the uniquely feminine things that women must figure out how to navigate within the sackcloth, especially living almost fully in nature or handling cultural beliefs that women must be isolated, especially from healing practices when on their period. Rosinna adds that she struggled during her period because her already limited role was further reduced during her period;

*Yeah, because me, I mustn't be [stutters], when I got my, my woman things *period* [pause], yeah, like that you see? Then I must stay there *far*, I mustn't touch anything. I mustn't touch the herbs, I must stay in my room until I'm finished that thing (Rosinna, interview with author, 2021).*

The menstrual cycle in many African cultures is treated with shame and secrecy. It is not openly discussed, and when it is, it is often given coded euphemisms or discussed in veiled and sometimes confusing ways. This adds even further shame towards the period, especially for young girls going through it the first time (Maruapula, 2016). In cultural religious groups like the Shembe and Zionist

Church, menstrual blood is seen as polluting. As a result, a woman on her period cannot cook, shake the hand of the priest, or engage in other important cultural practices and rituals. These exclusions further add onto the shame women and girls feel when they are on their period (Browne, 2005: 99). While this shame is attached to the period, it also goes beyond it and is about the female body which women have little control over and which must be hidden or revealed only at the contradicting instruction of greater society. Menstrual taboos exist in most cultural contexts, but there are some that see the menstrual cycle as an important source of power. Many of these tend to have more gender equity and they see menstrual blood as an important source of healing, power and protection (Druet, 2021). Amongst these are traditional San Jul'hoansi and !Xam cultural groups who linked women's menstrual cycles to the moon. The moon, as mentioned earlier, is an important symbol which rituals are constructed around and also makes frequent significant appearance in ancient Khoi and San storytelling (Bieseke, 1993: 93; Bleek & Lloyd, 1911). The Mbuti cultural group in the Democratic Republic of the Congo reserves the biggest hut for young girls who get their period for the first time, where other young girls and family members accompany them and see this as an important sacred process, viewing the period as a gift from the moon (Druet, 2021).

Sangoma and scholar, Sinethemba “Nombala” Makanya offers a different perspective, suggesting that traditionally women on their menstrual cycle were seen as sacred and were taken care of as a result. Misinterpretation of this practice and the loss of meaning behind it resulted in this treatment of women being done in demeaning ways rather than uplifting ways, taking away the privileges and autonomy that were once afforded to women during their period. Makanya suggests the reason behind why women were traditionally not allowed to handle medicine or participate in spiritual processes was because women were considered very strong when they are on their period. During this cycle they draw their energy and power directly from the moon and other important natural and cosmological sources. A women's body temperature is also higher leading up to and during their period, which also is not advised for handling herbs because it is believed the temperature increase can affect the potency of the medicine. The belief was women handling medicine could make it too powerful which could have unintentional disadvantageous impacts; the limitation was not meant to disempower or make women feel inferior or experience shame around their menstrual cycle. As time went on, women's menstrual cycles started to be attached to being unclean, a source of shame that must be hidden (Moncho-Maripane, 2019); the contradiction also being that having and raising children is still a very important practice in many African cultures. A women's cycle is part and parcel of this process and symbolises their fertility. Women are simultaneously celebrated for bearing children and rejected and isolated for a natural menstrual cycle that their ability to have children hinges on. This menstrual discussion shows that the social evolution, even of cosmology and spirituality, can be both progressive and regressive.

Another challenge womanist Mountain Doctors experience is still linked to the menstrual cycle and how it affects the body's functioning. The body can feel very sensitive and tender during a women's menstrual cycle. This can reduce the pain threshold, making the experience of injuries or discomfort even more painful than “normal”. This can make the Mountain Doctor work even

more challenging. Injuries like falls, being cut or pierced by thorns or rocks can feel more painful than normal. The period can make the already painful and challenging work even more agonising. There is also some suggestion that a women's period can last slightly longer during winter. The cold also increases period pains. This is because cold weather can compress the blood vessels, leaving less space for blood to flow. The interruption of this blood flow can cause greater period pains during winter. Staying warm during winter menstrual cycles becomes very important, especially to reduce the pain experience (Ilic, 2021). Sister G talks about how she created solutions for some of these challenges;

*And then in winter, I would just take a piece *of sackcloth* and make like what looked like legwarmers, just to tie on for heat. It's really vital. It's very vital to keep your ankles and your kidneys warm. Because you're barefoot, it's very vital, especially for a woman you need to, because of that time of the month and all of those things... I just used to make myself a little makeshift sackcloth something when it was that time of the month... I just used to take expired garments that had too much hole and stuff. And I would just patch them together and make those [laughs], you know those Sumo wrestling thong looking things? Yeah, yeah. Then when you're done just bury everything. Done! Because you're mostly in nature, so you just bury it. Once you go back there like a month later, you won't even find the cloth, the cloth is gone. Yeah (Sister G, interview with author, 2021).*

7.6.4 Struggles with creating womanist support structures within the sackcloth movement

Other womanist Mountain Doctor challenges extend beyond the menstrual cycle, but even so they link to it. Even challenges like navigating the harsher cold during their period and adopting similar “hacks” to those Sister G came up with for staying warm or recreating organic sanitary towels. Rosinna talks about how difficult it was going through the sackcloth journey mostly with her husband who would not understand various uniquely womanist challenges, including challenges that extend beyond menstrual cycles or their specific sackcloth journey; challenges that might not directly impact their cultural religious practices but still require strong networks of people with similar beliefs to help them overcome them. Such challenges include issues around existing in a capitalist city, with all the challenges capitalism comes with, including arguably the most important for Mountain Doctors, which is being isolated from nature and as a result not being able to perform rituals and connect with God and ancestors. Rastafarians often refer to the city as Babylon but also attach the word to things they perceive as sins or wrongdoing, things like drinking alcohol, violence and many others. Mountain Doctors also adopt and use the word Babylon frequently;

Now we must be there in the creation, but for me it was too heavy. You see, now we are here in Babylon, you see? So, we must not do Babylon things, but we must live with these people, you see? But yeah, but me I got my own mind. But it was for me too heavy to do it somethings in sack because I'm a woman. And there's no strength from other womans who comes in sack. There was sack women but they live there... far over, so we don't have so strictly strength, you can't strengthen me in this battle (Rosinna, interview with author, 2021).

Even though it was challenging finding female Mountain Doctors, I asked many of the men about womanist Mountain Doctors in their lives. Many referred to their grandmothers, partners, sisters or friends. When enquiring about sack sisters, what seemed evident is many do not stay in

sackcloth for a long time and one of the reasons for this might be what Rosinna and Sister G referred to, namely the difficulty in creating sisterhoods and networks of support in similar ways to how the men create a strong important brotherhood of support. Some of these reasons have already been discussed. Even as they devote themselves to the sackcloth journey, many women remain more tied to their family and communities, especially when they have children. Many end up going through the full sackcloth journey for much shorter periods. Even though Rosinna was in sackcloth for three years, which is very long, her husband, Jesus, in comparison was in sack for almost a lifetime. He made the transition as a young man in his early twenties and said he did not even remember how old he was exactly. He remained in sack until his planting at the age of 63 in December 2021, just months after I had interviewed him. Many of the male Mountain Doctors also mention their partners being in sackcloth for a few years, some even a few months. Many withdraw because they find stable work and must consider their family needs, while others withdraw to start families or return to school and various other reasons. Many male Mountain Doctors I met reported staying in sack for roughly seven years, seven also being a significant biblical number. A lot more stay for decades or even devote themselves to be in sackcloth for the rest of their lives. The trend with male Mountain Doctors who stay in sackcloth for shorter periods like five years or less, is that many of them come back after a few years to re-devote themselves to the sackcloth and might stay longer the second time. Mountain Doctors usually operate in groups of anything from five to ten. Each of these groups have two or more elders who have decades or a lifetime of experience to transfer to the younger men who are new to the group or still learning. This means these young men have decades or even over a century of collective experience to pull from. For women, even when they are able to create networks amongst themselves, they are seldom ever this strong because they do not stay sack sisters as long as men do. Sister G has this conversation mainly in relation to having to teach and discover certain things herself as a sack sister;

*... it was a bit challenging, because there was a lot of things that you had to discover for yourself as a woman because, there wasn't anyone *women* who could tell you what to do, you know, or how to do it or whatever. So, you kinda had to like [pause], cut your own path and still try and keep to the value systems and those kinds of things, you know. So, for me, it was it was *challenging* but it was also very exciting, and it was also very rewarding. And enriching. Yeah, yeah. So, it was losses, but the gains and the wins are way more, so it's worth it in the end. Yeah! (Sister G, interview with author, 2021).*

She also highlights the difficulties of giving birth, where she later explained eventually having had to give up her birth plan and rush to hospital to ensure her own and her baby's safety. But she adds she learnt a lot from her first birth in sack and even though she was no longer fully in sack, she was able to have a more natural home birth with her other three children and could plan for the most likely complications. She also talks about setting the path for other sack people, sack sisters in particular. Even though it has been decades since she was in sackcloth, she still avails herself as a resource for sack sisters and healers in general to share and exchange knowledge, hardship and expertise;

... my first child I was I was still in sackcloth... a few weeks before giving birth and that was also quite interesting, having their own experience because most of the time our life was more outdoor based more like in nature, you know, getting in touch with the source. So, this was was [stuttering]. It was good like that, but

*like I say, challenging. Being a woman you had to make your own way... kinda also I can say in doing that I also set the kind of standard. Or a way, I just made a way open that this is possible. We *women* can do this, and because we've done it before, you know? Our ancestors have done it before they've done it better (Sister G, interview with author, 2021).*

Something about the two-world strain about the informality of sackclothness versus the “proper modern South Africanness” is more of a burden on sackcloth women. This is because they need to survive and function within the South African context. They are made informal because they are moving over boundaries that are privatised. Their lack of oneness as families, even if they are complex families, is not generated by their own lives and desires. The lives that they would love to live are mediated by SANParks guards, the police, the state, and private property laws, which informalise and illegalise them. Womanist Mountain Doctors in some ways are more affected because they must deal with families, schooling, sacrificing and giving to their communities, while pining to be out there, living their sackcloth life. The traditional chores associated with the home make it more pronounced that as a sackcloth person, one has an informalised life, an illegalised life. They lack the freedom that men have to remove themselves from this modernised “South Africanness” to be in nature, to connect with it and heal from it. They cannot create the same bond with each other as a sackcloth sisterhood in the ways that the men have fostered these important bonds and support structures with each other, within sackclothness.

7.7 Conclusion

The biomedical and indigenous definitions of health and illness differ, and at times even clash, but it is important to note that they are each relative to their context, as they are each based on certain cultural norms. The biomedical model is based mainly on a Western cultural way of life in dealing with illness. Indigenous approaches differ depending on the cultural group; the examples discussed above are based on Khoi and San and Mountain Doctor norms. Both views are acceptable for their own context and can also change and evolve over time to include other cultural models or methods. If “new” cultural ideas challenge the status quo too much, people can and do resist the change. The researcher’s role is not to classify or debate over which worldview is “correct”; instead, it is to present the culture the way the people perceive it (Cassidy, 1995: 20). This is what this chapter has done through its adoption of thick descriptions and *Verstehen*, which illustrate that there is possibly no other way of describing the uniqueness of the type of knowledge I experienced. Indeed, anthropologists as well have articulated the relationship with participant observations and thick descriptions to illustrate the need to show experience to the reader. Care was taken to vividly and clearly narrate my own and emic participants’ experiences, at times allowing that storytelling to dominate the discussion rather than rushing to academic analysis at the expense of connecting with the moment or experience. This has in part assisted in creating different types of knowledge or ways of presenting knowledge that disrupt conventional, often Western academic recording and documenting.

It must be acknowledged that the binary of Western versus indigenous can be challenged in the 21st century where globalisation has mainstreamed similarities in human culture generally. However, such a binary is used here both to track difference and diversity as expressed by a group and perhaps to track any analytical basis for even a vague binary. It is also clear that keeping the binary has served hegemonies that inform capitalism well, it is formalised into patent regimes that exclude the origin of stolen commoditised indigenous knowledge. A recurring theme in this chapter and throughout the thesis is the dangers of patent laws as formalised stealing of indigenous knowledge. This discussion was had mainly in relation to the violent erasure around hoodia.

This discussion has been a look at the multifaceted nature of sackcloth movement healing and healers. It shows how African healing intersections with the cosmological realm, ecology, culture and the self. The chapter narrates the various ways Mountain Doctors believe they receive knowledge on healing, from storytelling to the herbs and dreams and visions. All of these are things that Mountain Doctors believe God and ancestors can use to share important messages, especially those related to healing. This chapter also discussed the usefulness of indigenous herbs, while also considering the politics and conflict around them and the main custodians like Mountain Doctors, the Nguni, Khoi, San and even South American Huni Kuin. Some of the herbs discussed include *Kanna*, *Rapé*, buchu and several others.

This chapter further looked at the experiences of womanist Mountain Doctors, which is a continuation of a discussion on the challenges linked to Mountain Doctor experiences, many of which link to a lack of land and resources needed to fulfil these cultural religious practices. This discussion connects to the challenges that are faced specifically by women Mountain Doctors. Sack sisters face many challenges, the most significant ones raised were challenges around handling their menstrual cycles while doing challenging Mountain Doctor work which sometimes requires being out in nature for extended periods. Another big challenge is around the difficulty of creating much-needed sack sisterhoods and networks. Many womanist Mountain Doctors find themselves going through their journey mostly with men or experience more social pressure that draws them away from their journey. This is usually because care roles are placed far more on women in society and sack sisters feel the pressure more to leave their cultural religious journey to find work and to take care of their families or children when they start their own families. While womanist healers experience a lot of challenges, they have historically played a significant role, and continue to do so today. Many of the Mountain Doctors, even the male ones, came to the journey from guidance, usually from their grandmothers. The strong or prominent ancestral spirits they refer to when discussing where their healing strength comes from, is also usually feminine. Often it is their mothers, sister or grandmothers who have passed away who guide the Mountain Doctors through dreams and visions.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

There were some assumptions that were made when starting this study; one of the main ones is evident in the title of the thesis. This is the belief that Table Mountain is the most prominent or significant natural space for the Mountain Doctors. This assumption was partly based on the media's frequent portrayal of them as Table Mountain Doctors and many of the participants also refer to themselves as Table Mountain Doctors specifically. Even though this assumption is not entirely false, it does present a narrow perspective. Table Mountain is very important to the Mountain Doctors and efforts they have made to reclaim it also show this. But there are many other important natural spaces that are significant to Mountain Doctors. Sackclothness extends far beyond Table Mountain, Cape Town or the Western Cape. This study and many other similar ones typically focus on these areas or use terms like Table Mountain Doctors because they are most prominent in Cape Town and the Western Cape. But the presence of Mountain Doctors is all over South Africa and even those in Western Cape frequently travel to other provinces for extended periods to learn from other contexts and to bring Western Cape herbs to other provinces. Mountain Doctors are also spread out in different parts of the country, including the Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, and Free State being provinces with more prominent Mountain Doctor presence. Some participants even made mention of smaller Mountain Doctor groups in KwaZulu-Natal. Sackcloth groups in other provinces are also worth exploring and reviewing how their sackclothness functions, the similarities they have with Western Cape groups and any differences. Important decolonial research can come from similar studies being done in different provinces, comparative looks that track the possible emergence of sackclothness, or explorations that uncover if sackclothness differs based on ethnicity or religious affiliations and how rituals and plant medicine might differ based on things like geography, ecology, and cultural context.

8.1 Sackclothness as cross-cultural resistance

Sackclothness is an enlisting into a life of humility and balance with the universe, to the extent of being at odds with the forces that harm the environment and social justice. It is a movement of resistance against colonial hangovers that stifle their basic existence with politics, laws and developments that disrupt their connection to nature. They challenge the ideas around ownership of land and individual autonomy with quiet resistance through their desire to return to nature to be themselves, learn, explore, connect, and draw strength. Their presence threatens the officialdom of society, the capitalism modern façade we all take part in at the experience of everything important; our community, ecology, spiritual connections and even our sense of self. They offer solutions to the social erosion, greed, alienation, exploitation and decay that has been normalised. They agitate a return to the self; a journey they embark on through African spiritual ties to nature and community, both living and dead. These broader, grander categorisations are what connect them to other indigenous groups around the world, like the Huni Kuin who have been discussed in

detail throughout this thesis. They wrestle with the same challenges, being seen as “non-beings” in the colonial and in the current world order. They turn to the same places for solutions, even if contexts and approaches might differ.

Sackclothness is also connection to other indigenous groups, even across the globe. One of these has been discussed throughout the thesis, which is their link with the Huni Kuin. There are some commonalities between these groups, one prominent one that was dealt with is the importance of ecology and how it mirrors itself across the globe. This is in part why one finds commonalities even in spiritual practices, which are inextricably linked to the environment. The shared practices often revolve around individual and collective healing, which nature guides. The Mountain Doctors and the Huni Kuin have created bonds with each other and help to facilitate each other’s healing through lessons and even exchanging herbs. While these are important relationships, nature itself also mirrors this. This is clear in the examples shared, like that of dream root in Africa and *rapé* in South America. While the ways these two separate herbs are used in different ways and through different rituals and practices in the two contexts, the two herbs play very similar roles, as the earlier chapter on healing has shown. They both assist mainly with dreams and visions, and when the groups or individuals deal with complex challenges, for which they need ancestral and spiritual intervention.

Sackclothness is also salvation for Mountain Doctors, not just spiritual or religious salvation, but also socioeconomic salvation. Their work with herbs, and this way of life offers solutions to sometimes poor youth who have been dejected and rejected by modern day society. Selling herbs allows them to have an income to survive on for themselves and their families. This also saves them from the desperation that leads many to drugs, gangs or criminality to survive or escape their reality. Sackclothness also offers Mountain Doctors salvation from the burden of being colonised bodies, it encourages them to journey towards finding the self. The self is an important concept in Rastafarian ideals and African culture. The juxtaposing of *I-n-I* and *ubuntu* shows the self as an important element in the journey towards healing and salvation. Ramose (2005) and Masolo (2019) show the African understanding of self as a process rather than a standard fixed term or idea. It is a process of connecting with the pluralistic internal and external forces that make up the self; these include cosmology, the universe, ecology, community and even the most powerful force, God. Ancestors become an important vessel in the process of connecting with self and are also themselves an important link within the self.

Sackcloth identity is constructed around a perpetual creolisation which has allowed Mountain Doctors to survive even whilst being descendants of oppressed colonised bodies and cultures. It is this hybridity and fluidity that has allowed them to survive the harshness of modernity and that allows them to revitalise and reimagine lost or weakened Khoi and San traditions (Tomaselli, 2023: 1). Their creoleness pulls from Rastafarian practices, which lead them to the pathway of rediscovering their Khoi and San heritage, which they co-construct from various Nguni groups, mainly Xhosa, who once learned important aspects of their own cultural ideologies from Khoi and San groups during their centuries-long history of migrating to the Southern regions of Africa. Their

own journeys to self-discovery not only aid them, but also uncover important solutions to modern-day challenges linked to poverty, access to healthcare, climate change and sustainability, education, food security and many others. It shows that their resilience is important and necessary, even in the face of legalities that officials and society use to restrict them.

8.2 Pragmatic implications of the study

Mountain Doctors also add that similar groups exist as far as Namibia. It is worth diving deeper into some hypotheses and explorations made in this study, to consider if the emergence of Mountain Doctors is linked exclusively to Khoi and San groups and locations where they had a strong footprint historically, or if it also extended to other cultural identities. Similarly, it is worth exploring if similar groups exist beyond South Africa and Namibia, and to study if their emergence is an African revolutionary revivalist movement, like significant sub-identities like Rastafarianism. Alternatively, is it a continuation of Christian traditions that were discussed that present sackclothness as an important form of healing and humility? Studies like these might uncover important pluralist and identity-restoring findings in Namibia and perhaps even beyond. Beyond the African continent, the intercontinental links between herbs like African dream root and Amazonian *rapé* seem to have close links that are perhaps more than coincidental. Given colonial and precolonial migration patterns, there might be something to be said about historical knowledge transfer that resembles the trend and networks Mountain Doctor and Huni Kuin people have created between themselves today, or knowledge and skill transfer that may have taken place during migration, whether forced slave/colonial migration or not. This exploration could look like the earlier discussions that were had especially on the precolonial migration. These discussions went beyond geographical migration and looked at the origins, transfer and hybridisation of significant rituals from culture to culture. This kind of exploration and mainstreaming of knowledge can potentially add to much-needed African unification work, where countries and cultures can be united in the knowledge of their shared pain, identity, history, religion, and many other things.

As also discussed earlier, colonial influence resulted in many Khoi and San groups losing their origins and everything about their cultural identity entirely. Some people never knew that they had Khoi and San origins; they identify as Coloured or Nguni or other African cultures that are not as closely linked to the Khoi and San. The Duma family discussed earlier considers itself lucky that they know they once belonged to the San cultural group, but still have no sense of which subgroup, what language they spoke, cultural religious beliefs and where they came from. All of this was lost when they had to assimilate to Zulu culture to avoid the growing threat of British and Dutch colonial settlers. Similar illustrations exist in groups like Siddi Indians. They are examples of how ideas and cultural practices with different origins are spread across continents. The Siddis are Afro-Indians with Bantu origins. They were brought to India from East Africa as slaves by Arabs over 500 years ago (Somnath, Oza, & Nygaard, 2010: 179). They remain a small, mostly isolated group spread out in the Indian states of Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat, the city of Hyderabad, and

much smaller groups in Pakistan. They have assimilated to a lot of different Indian cultures, but many of their practices can still be traced to Africa, from their way of dance, to how they wear their hair and some cultural religious practices (Vallangi, 2016). The way they have kept their original historical identity alive, while also pulling from pluralistic Indian cultural identity is not something many groups can do. Explorations on how the Siddis were able to keep certain practices alive, while tracking what was lost could also prove significant for different African or global indigenous groups who lost their identity but seek to find or recreate it in similar ways to how Mountain Doctors do with their Khoi and San and other pluralistic identities. Lessons from Mountain Doctors and groups like the Siddi can also teach how to prevent similar erasure or loss of cultural practices and history people consider significant.

Deeper explorations that track origins and cultural identity of groups can also be significant for groups like Mountain Doctors who experience a lot of marginalisation and rejection, sometimes even from Khoi and San cultural groups they identify with. Tracing, recording and connecting their history and origins to the context of the country or continent could also be important for them being afforded certain rights and recognition. This is something they currently do not have enough of because the Khoi and San groups they most identify with have also struggled to enjoy the same or similar cultural recognition and rights that groups like amaZulu, amaXhosa and many others enjoy. Sackclothness exists as a kind of ambivalence that not only shows what a pluriversal decolonial world or community could look like, they also show us the dangers of failure to decolonise, while they themselves also tackle these dangers in their identity and work. The ambivalence sometimes places them at odds even with allies who fear or reject their radicalism in rejecting capitalism, modernity and other things that are associated with upward mobility that individuals and cultural collectives strive for as important social goods. Their rejection of the Amazon development in Cape Town is one such example; this places them at odds with Khoi and San factions who are in favour of the development. This potentially weakens important alliances and connections with groups like the Khoi and San, who sometimes perceive them as reckless angry youth halting important progress and development that they hope will eventually trickle down to them. This means whatever small rights the Khoi and San slowly start to enjoy seldom trickle down to Mountain Doctors.

The cultural and social recognition of groups like the Mountain Doctors is important, not just for the importance of preserving history and heritage, but also because their contribution to society is monumental. The recognition of their work during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic could have potentially helped many with immune system boosting herbs or herbs believed to aid in relieving some Covid-19 related symptoms. Harsh lockdown restrictions prevented them from offering accessible and cheap healthcare when South African hospitals were brought to breaking point by the pandemic. This would have also helped the Mountain Doctors' own socio-economic challenges as their client base expanded. Their knowledge of conservation and plant medicine is also important for tackling many other social challenges ranging from healthcare inequality, to addressing new illness and climate issues. Crucial, however, is for the trend of appropriating indigenous knowledge for profit and Western interest to stop. Any collaborations or specific

elevation and recognition of these African sciences should ensure these ideas are not appropriated and that the main cultural groups or contributors remain the main beneficiaries. Again, this should improve the lives of people of colour, while reinstalling the credit for certain knowledge that was either totally disregarded, appropriated or both.

The human rights and recognition of Mountain Doctors should also go beyond being for the benefit they can bring to society. They deserve this recognition just for being people. The notion that a person's importance and self-worth is only derived from the benefit they bring is a potentially harmful capitalistic notion. While African ideas like *ubuntu* ascribe personhood to an individual's ability to self-improve and support others, personhood is not stripped from the person when they are not able to contribute fully. Instead, it is considered the community's responsibility to help the individual reach their higher personhood. This is because the community and the individual, while distinct, are almost two sides of the same coin. They are connected and the individual is responsible for the betterment of the community and vice versa. The innate self or *okra* is also acknowledged. The *okra* in a way determines the nature of a person for the Akani culture, meaning the community understands the limitations and strengths of the individual. The community can improve the person within those parameters rather than trying to change the individual entirely. Capitalism, on the other hand, punishes those who cannot contribute to society in ways that it sees meaningful. Failure to conform to certain standards sees people being punished with poverty, resource and structural inequality, imprisonment, and alienation. The recognition and protection of individuals and cultural groups based on what society views as their useful contribution also risks perpetuating racist and sexist notions. Those with certain levels of privilege, historical resources and access to opportunities stemming from apartheid and colonialism may end up being perceived as superior or more meaningful social contributors (Gqola, 2010: 106). Mountain Doctor and Rastafarian views on identity and notion of *I-n-I* also remind society of the importance of accepting people's humanity and remembering our interconnectedness to each other and ecology.

The thesis also further went on to show how cultural identity, history and experiences are linked to knowledge and knowledge production. It pulls from scholars like Sithole and Foucault to challenge the idea of Western knowledge being seen as the only meaningful and "objective" knowledge or science. Instead, it proposes decolonial approaches and methodologies like grounded theory and ethnography that require the researcher to relinquish their power and control to the social actor. The social actor then guides the research based on their knowledge, needs, history and experiences. These approaches are not without their challenges; they are still Western and do not always align well with the African context. To remedy this and the challenges encountered from an over-reliance on Western approaches, I do my own theorising and introduce the African notion of *ukuthunywa*. This discourse fully places control on the participants and encourages a radical democratisation of knowledge production and sharing. It is in part inspired by fieldwork and how Mountain Doctors shared their knowledge with me through generosity, *ubuntu* and everyday practice. The practice of *ukuthunywa* is still active in many African households today, and my own upbringing and social life inspired the theorising around this practice. Finally, the discussion on *ukuthunywa* was based on the precolonial approach to schooling and education that

many Africans adopted. Knowledge was a communally owned and shared social good. It was always collectively shared and explored and was (and in some instances still is) more active, living and accessible than elitist Western education is.

This thesis addresses various social, cultural religious and historic topics in relation to Mountain Doctors, how they are influenced and how they influence the greater South African context. Many of these discussions have revolved around their revivalist traditions which are in part reactions and resistance to colonialism and Western domination. But these revivalist practices are also important cultural religious practices in their own right. Mountain Doctors revitalise them to protect and connect to ecology and to explore and rediscover African cosmology. Mountain Doctors see themselves as spiritual healers; for many, this is a gift they believe comes through ecology, ancestors and from Mother Earth and Father Sky. These are their dual, interconnected perceptions of God. They also revive these practices to provide support to their community in navigating complex social challenges like inaccessible healthcare or their general distrust towards Western systems. There is a lot of value that can be derived from these practices as part of the project to restore African knowledge. The value can extend beyond the healing practices, providing possible poverty alleviation strategies, addressing food insecurity through mainstreaming indigenous foods, conservation, and plant medicine. Many of these efforts are limited because of their lack of access to land, resources and social and structural support that can help Mountain Doctors reach their individual and cultural goals.

The main themes that these goals were discussed under were land, identity and healing. While these were the main topics, there is a lot of intersection and commonality between them. The land discussions looked at the long history of oppression and landlessness and how Mountain Doctors challenge it today. This is illustrated from case studies on how they reclaim important heritage sites like Table Mountain which Mountain Doctors and Khoi and San groups occupied and staged rituals at in January 2021. This act was part protest and also entailed important rituals they believed they were called to perform by their ancestors. Many Mountain Doctors also form part of the anti-Amazon development interest groups in Cape Town. Different environmental, cultural and community groups question the proposed development on the Two Rivers land. This land has important heritage and ecological significance, and many believe it should receive heritage and environmental conservation protection from the state. The discussions on identity are not far removed from land discussions; even discussions on Khoi and San language revitalisation show the important link between land and language.

The discussions on identity also show the importance of Mountain Doctors' aesthetic and how it connects to their pluralistic identities. These include different African identities, revolutionary and religious Rastafarian identity and even conflicting Christian identity. They both challenge Christianity for its colonial repression, while drawing strength from it as an important representation of healing and sack and ash. The healing discussions also continue the discussions that were prominent in the identity discussion, as Mountain Doctors attach many of their healing practices and rituals to their cultural identity. The healing is also inextricably linked to ecology

and land. While there were many discussions on African rituals and case studies on important plant medicine, the research also shows the importance of social healing. Mountain Doctors in various ways heal society through identity-reaffirming artistic projects or therapeutic initiatives that save and provide alternatives for youth faced with gang violence. The social and medicinal healing practices are rooted in restoring the once broken and colonised African self, rebuilding the self as important and valuable despite an almost 400 yearlong colonial history stating otherwise.

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