BLACK WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS AND THE MAKING OF URBAN
CULTURES IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CITY, C.1900-1994

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a history of Black African women's church associations (manyanos) in the South African city of East London during segregation and apartheid. Since the early twentieth century, manyanos have been the largest formal women's organizations in South Africa. This dissertation examines manyanos in the context of urban history, and asks: how did manyanos shape urban culture between the 1930s and 1990s, a period of rapid urbanization, violent enforcement of racial segregation, and urban protest that ultimately contributed to the fall of apartheid? To answer this question, this dissertation draws on 45 oral history interviews with manyano members from 10 different denominations; church and government archives; newspapers; photographs; and the untapped written records of one local manyano branch. My analysis focuses on the industrial port city of East London and its nearby township, Mdantsane, which by the late twentieth century was South Africa's second largest township and the urban center of the Ciskei Bantustan, one of apartheid's nominally independent ethno-states.

My analysis makes use of the concept of "public motherhood" developed by scholars of women and gender in Africa, arguing that manyano women debated and practiced changing definitions of Christian public motherhood over time. Their histories show how gendered religious culture has influenced, and been influenced by, the changing landscape of a segregated city. This dissertation argues that these carefully sustained networks fostered urban cultures of sociability between religious groups and across generational and geographical divides. As changes in the regime of urban segregation threatened the security of individual homes, manyanos channelled their members' home-making duties toward the construction of church buildings, which marked their right to the city. The history of manyanos also highlights new histories of mobility—both physical and social—across an urban landscape specifically designed

to limit Black women's movement. This dissertation's attention to manyanos from multiple denominations reveals a history of women's ecumenism that contributes to South African and African histories of Christianity. The focus of this dissertation on Mdantsane also contributes to growing scholarship on Bantustan social history, showing how ordinary people navigated illegitimate but powerful systems. Ultimately, this dissertation demonstrates the value of incorporating religious history into South African social history.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

On a Thursday morning in early March 2020, I accompanied two friends to a special event at St. Philip's Anglican Church in Gompo, a neighbourhood on the eastern edge of the industrial port city of East London. The event was *Zwelonke* ("all nations" in isiXhosa), an annual ecumenical day of prayer for women around the world, which in East London is attended by women's church groups (*manyanos*) from many Protestant denominations.[1] Attendees at this particular event included manyano members from the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, the Methodist Church in Africa, the Anglican church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Uniting Presbyterian Church, and the Congregational Church of Southern Africa. The event began on the street a block away, with women carrying banners and singing as we marched toward St. Philip's. Inside the church we settled into our seats for a program of prayers, scripture readings, and sermons, punctuated by hymn-singing, and culminating in the offertory, when the whole congregation of about one hundred filed forward to contribute to a collection.

This event was notable among the many church events I attended during a six-month period of research in East London in 2019 and 2020, and not only because it was the last public event I attended for several years; only a few days later I had to stop my research and leave South Africa because of the developing COVID-19 pandemic. The event was also notable for the representation of multiple Christian denominations; this ecumenical variety was made visible in the different manyano uniforms. The coming together of these women from different

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[1] The event is also known as the (Women's) World Day of Prayer, which was popularized by British and U.S. Protestant women in the interwar period. It was introduced to South African isiXhosa-speaking congregations around the same time; in 1943 the newspaper *Imvo Zabantsundu* began to report on it. Zwelonke continues to be a well-known and well-attended event among the Eastern Cape churches I have observed. Gale L. Kenny, "The World Day of Prayer: Ecumenical Churchwomen and Christian Cosmopolitanism, 1920–1946," *Religion and American Culture* 27, no. 2 (2017): 129–58. "Women's World Day of Prayer," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 12 March 1943; "World's Day of Prayer for Women," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 9 March 1946.

denominations highlights how manyanos are a unique and important form of Black South African women's religious practice in a country where, by the middle of the twentieth century, a strong majority of Black South Africans identified as Christian.[2]

The event was also notable because of the building in which it took place. The history of St. Philip's exemplifies the destructive effect of South Africa's system of apartheid (1948-1994) on Black African religious communities, and also how manyano women worked to reshape and reconstitute religious communities torn apart by urban racial segregation. The original St. Philip's had been located in the East Bank, the segregated urban enclave that was home to East London's Black residents in the early twentieth century. When apartheid ideals of racial separate development were implemented in the early 1960s, many East Bank residents were forced to move to the peri-urban township of Mdantsane, and St. Philip's was forced to sell its building. The small remainder of St. Philip's congregants who remained in the city met in a temporary structure for many years, and, in part through the determined small-scale fundraising efforts of its manyano branch, opened its current building in 1995.[3] The story of St. Philip's, like that of many other Black congregations, is one of a search for security and permanence in a fractured urban landscape.

This dissertation is a history of Black women's church prayer and service organizations (manyanos) in East London and the adjacent township of Mdantsane, from the origins of manyanos in the early twentieth century until 1994, when the formal advent of democracy changed manyano women's relationships to the state. The history of manyanos in East London reveals how women from a range of Christian denominations enacted the ideals of motherhood

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[2] Natasha Erlank, *Convening Black Intimacy: Christianity, Gender, and Tradition in Early Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2022), 5.

[3] Margaret Ngcayiya, "History of St Philip's Church," trans. Mazoe Nopece, n.d.; Margaret Ngcayiya and Mazoe Nopece, Interview at St Phillip's Church, Gompo, East London, trans. Phelisa Mtima, November 15, 2019.

and home-making that were central to the manyano movement, and how the definitions of motherhood and home changed over time. By defining manyanos broadly and studying these groups across denominations of different theological and historical backgrounds, this dissertation makes an argument for the importance of gender for understanding the popular practice of Christianity in South Africa and Africa. This dissertation focuses on a single city and attends to the shifting landscape of segregated spaces through which manyano women moved. East London's manyano members navigated a segregated city and tried (not always successfully) to build secure religious community spaces during a time when their individual homes were insecure. This history of an adult women's religious movement therefore contributes a new perspective to South African and African urban histories, whose protagonists have often been young, male, and self-consciously activist or rebellious. East London is representative of the history of urban segregation in South Africa in many ways, but its proximity to the Ciskei Bantustan was unlike many South African cities. East London's nearby township, Mdantsane, was technically within the Ciskei Bantustan. Bantustans (or homelands) were nominally independent ethno-states for Africans which existed from the 1970s through the early 1990s to enact the apartheid ideal of separate development. The history of manyanos in and between East London and Mdantsane contributes to an emerging historiographical conversation about how ordinary Bantustan citizens navigated systems that were widely as known to be illegitimate and yet had lasting effects on urban space and governance.

Defining the manyano movement

A manyano is a women's church prayer and service association. The word "manyano" has been adopted into common South African English use, but it derives from the isiXhosa verb *-manya*,

meaning "to marry, or join together."[4] The noun *umanyano* (pl. *iimanyano*) therefore means "a union," and can refer to many types of unions; for example, *umanyano lwabasebenzi* is a workers' union. However, the word "manyano" without any qualifier, was, by the 1930s, most often a reference to women's church unions—and in particular, the Methodist Women's Prayer and Service Union, which was the first women's prayer group to call itself a manyano (see Chapter 1). Across present-day South Africa, "manyano" continues to be a common term to refer to women's church groups, although the equivalent seSotho word (*kopano*) and isiZulu word (*umhlangano*) are also used in areas where these languages are predominantly spoken.[5]

Manyanos began as a grassroots initiative by Black women in the Methodist church in the early twentieth century. Over the next two decades, women of other denominations introduced similar organizations into their local churches (see Chapter 1). Sometimes the structure and forms popularized by the Methodists were grafted onto existing transnational denominational organizations, such as the Anglican Mothers' Union or the Catholic Sodality of St. Anne. In mission-established churches, white congregations often also had branches of the Mothers' Union or St. Anne, but on the whole manyanos were a phenomenon particular to Black African and some Coloured congregations. In a context where women were the majority in Black congregations, and yet were excluded from formal leadership and ordination in any denomination until the late twentieth century, manyanos became the primary realm of adult women's participation in the church. Their fundraising and organizing power made them indispensable to their congregations. Helen Scanlon has asserted in relation to the Western Cape

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[4] "-manya," *Oxford English School Dictionary* (Cape Town: Oxford, 2017), 139. Kropf's 1915 dictionary defines the verb -manya as "to unite in one; to splice two pieces of wood; to weld two pieces of iron; to unite a couple in marriage." "uku-Manya,"in Albert Kropf, *A Kafir-English Dictionary*, ed. Robert Godfrey (Alice: Lovedale, 1915).
[5] For example, see the Methodist Church of South Africa webpage on the "Women's Manyano": https://methodist.org.za/our-people/organisations/womens-manyano/. Thanks to Nomzamo Ntombela for an illuminating discussion of umhlangano.

province, that seventy percent of all Black women were affiliated with a manyano in the late twentieth century.[6] While this figure is given without any supporting evidence, and indeed detailed statistics about manyano membership nationally do not exist, it is true that these organizations were accessible and appealing to many Black women throughout the twentieth century. Local and regional manyano leadership positions were usually held by educated, better-off women (especially the minister's wife), but membership was open to all, regardless of education or income. Indeed, a woman with no formal education or social connections might excel in the oral skills of prayer, preaching, and singing that characterized manyano meetings.

Across the theological and institutional denominational divisions, manyanos in the twentieth century were recognizable by a few common attributes. The most visible was their uniform: each denomination had its own uniform, which generally comprised a close-fitting cap, a collared blouse in a particular color, a black skirt, and a lapel pin with the name or symbol of the manyano. Manyanos met weekly on Thursdays to pray, sing, preach, conduct their financial business, and plan for the many events they organized and supported. These weekly meetings were open only to members, and the primary qualification for membership was motherhood. The definition of motherhood was expansive, and changed over time, as this dissertation will show; maturity and responsibility for others were often more important than biological motherhood or marriage, although in theory marriage was required by most churches until the late twentieth century.[7] Their prayer and service were focused on their homes, husbands, and children. For instance, in 1907 the founder of a manyano in the Transvaal region desired her members to pray "for their families and for the common unity and for their sins," and also "that God should hold

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[6] Helen Scanlon, *Representation & Reality: Portraits of Women's Lives in the Western Cape 1948-1976* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 2007), 125.

[7] Lihle Ngcobozi, *Mothers of the Nation: Manyano Women in South Africa* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2020), 63.

the mine pillars so as not to fall on their husbands and sons."[8] The early focus of manyanos was

therefore on familial and domestic issues, and especially the strains caused by the interconnected

forces of land alienation, the migrant labor economy, and industrialization that characterized

South Africa's system of racial capitalism.[9] However, as this dissertation will demonstrate,

manyano members held an expansive view of the domestic sphere, one that extended well

beyond their individual homes and families. In this dissertation, I use the word "manyano" to

describe women's church groups that demonstrated the characteristics just described, as well as

two that diverge slightly: the Assemblies of God Mothers' Organisation (which did not have a

uniform) and the Catholic Women's League (which was open to unmarried women). This

dissertation therefore uses "manyano" to describe a wider range of women's church groups than

many previous studies, which have often focused on the manyanos of mission-established

denominations.

Manyanos in the history of Christianity, gender, and motherhood in (South) Africa

Given the fact that they were almost certainly the largest formal women's organizations in South

Africa during the twentieth century, manyanos have interested scholars seeking to understand

these distinctive Black women's religious organizations and their relationship to society. The

first academic research on manyanos was undertaken by the sociologist Mia Brandel-Syrier in

the 1950s "to evaluate the extent to which they [existing Black African women's organizations]

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[8] Quoted in Deborah Gaitskell, "Female Mission Initiatives: Black and White Women in Three Witwatersrand Churches, 1903-1939" (PhD dissertation, London, University of London, 1981), 144.

[9] For overviews of the connection between industrialization, dispossession and segregation, as well as detailed case studies of these processes in the early twentieth century, see William Beinart, Peter Delius, and Stanley Trapido, eds., *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850-1930* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986); William Beinart and Saul Dubow, eds., *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (London: Routledge, 1995); Luli Callinicos, "Testimonies and Transitions: Women Negotiating the Rural and Urban in the Mid-20th Century," in *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo / They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, ed. Nomboniso Gasa (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007), 152–84.

meet the needs of women."[10] Bandel-Syrier collected information about women's membership and activities from churches around Johannesburg. Her assessment of manyanos was resoundingly negative. Manyanos, she said, claimed to be trying to improve domestic standards, prevent premarital pregnancies, and reduce drunkenness in their communities. "Considering all this," she wrote scathingly, "one would expect them to have great significance in the wider social life of their society, and at first one dare not believe the evidence accumulating before one's eyes—evidence which finally mounts up to only one conclusion: that they have little or no significance except within the narrow domain of their own Church's affairs."[11] This criticism harmonized with the prevailing attitude of white academics toward Black innovations in Christian practice, which saw them as inward-looking, sectarian, and traditionalist.[12]

In the two decades after Brandel-Syrier published her work, scholarship on Christianity in southern Africa tended to focus on formal institutional aspects of church history, as well as the relationship between AICs, politics, and anti-colonial nationalism, which altogether tended to obscure the importance of women as agents of religious change in Africa.[13] By the middle of the 1980s and into the 1990s, however, historians became increasingly interested in social history as an approach that would allow them to understand what ordinary people got out of religion, and

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[10] Mia Brandel-Syrier, *Black Woman in Search of God* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1962), 16.

[11] Brandel-Syrier, 97.

[12] For instance, Bengt Sundkler described Zionist Independent churches as "the bridge over which Africans are brought back to the old heathenism from whence they came." Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 55; On the colonial origins of the academic study of African religions and its view of African religion as narrow and localist, see David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996).

[13] Norman Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in South East Africa, 1835-1880: African Communities in Natal, Pondoland & Zululand* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978); Terence O. Ranger, "Religious Movements and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa," *African Studies Review* 29, no. 2 (1986): 1; Wallace G. Mills, "The Roots of African Nationalism in the Cape Colony: Temperance, 1866-1898," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 13, no. 2 (1980): 197; C. C. Saunders, "Tile and the Thembu Church: Politics and Independency on the Cape Eastern Frontier in the Late Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of African History* 11, no. 4 (1970): 553–70; For an overview of these historiographical trends, including historians' general disinterest in religious topics in the 1970s and 1980s, see Norman Etherington, "Recent Trends in the Historiography of Christianity in Southern Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22, no. 2 (1996): 201–19.

what they put into it. In telling stories of how Christianity could be used in multiple ways to impose, to resist, and to transform colonialism, historians attended to changing gendered roles, and women's leadership in elaborating new religious practices.[14]

In keeping with these trends, Deborah Gaitskell and Marc Epprecht challenged any idea of the manyano movement as insignificant and inward-looking. Gaitskell's work on the manyanos of the Methodist, Anglican, and American Board Mission churches in Johannesburg and the Transvaal showed how Black and white women had struggled over the meanings of motherhood, family, and domesticity during a period of rapid industrialization when Black women were trapped between the conflicting "demands of God and gold."[15] In a study of women's church and cooperative societies in colonial Lesotho, Epprecht similarly explored the *kopanos* (manyanos) in the context of the economics of the migrant labor system, and argued that these prayer associations provided tangible assistance to impoverished communities.[16]

Since the 1990s, other historians have largely shared Gaitskell's and Epprecht's interpretation of manyanos (and comparable women's church groups across southern and eastern

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[14] Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Paul S. Landau, *Realm of the Word: Language, Gender and Politics in A South African Kingdom* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995); Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton, *Women of Fire and Spirit: History, Faith, and Gender in Roho Religion in Western Kenya* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Natasha Erlank, "Gender and Chrisianity Among Africans Attached to Scottish Mission Stations in Xhosaland in the Nineteenth Century" (Cambridge, Cambridge University, 1998); Greg Cuthbertson and Louise Kretzschmar, "'I Don't Sing for People Who Do Not See Me': Women, Gender and the Historiography of Christianity in South Africa," *Studies in Church History* 34 (1998): 487–507.

[15] Gaitskell, "Female Mission Initiatives," 199; Deborah Gaitskell, "'Wailing for Purity': Prayer Unions, African Mothers and Adolescent Daughters, 1912-1940," in *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness, 1870-1930*, ed. Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone (London: Longman, 1982), 338–57; Deborah Gaitskell, "Devout Domesticity? A Century of African Women's Christianity in South Africa," in *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, ed. Cherryl Walker (Cape Town: David Philip and James Currey, 1990), 251–72.

[16] Marc Epprecht, "Domesticity and Piety in Colonial Lesotho: The Private Politics of Basotho Women's Pious Associations," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19, no. 2 (1993): 202–24; Epprecht developed this argument further in a monograph, which focused more on home-making societies than on kopanos. Marc Epprecht, *"This Matter of Women Is Getting Very Bad": Gender, Development and Politics in Colonial Lesotho* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000).

Africa): that despite, or even because of, their political quiescence and preoccupation with prayer, they provided members with material, psychological, and spiritual resources to cope with hardship. Historians, theologians, and sociologists who have written about women's church groups have followed two broad approaches. Some focus on the interior, spiritual experiences through which manyano women have developed what Beverley Haddad calls "theologies of survival."[17] Philippe Denis, for instance, has explored manyano women's creative, sometimes conflicting strategies to reconcile African traditional religious beliefs with their understanding of Christianity.[18] Other scholars have taken a more institutional approach, studying how manyano women have navigated ecclesiastical systems within which they were often silenced and excluded from power.[19] For instance, Isabel Phiri's study of the Presbyterian church of Malawi focuses on women's struggles to gain equality and ordination.[20]

Both these approaches—focusing on interior spiritual lives and on institutional church politics—can confine the manyanos to a narrow realm of strictly religious history. This is especially possible when studies focus on a single denomination; an exception is Denis' study of

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[17] Beverley Gail Haddad, "African Women's Theologies of Survival : Intersecting Faith, Feminisms, and Development." (Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2000); Beverley Haddad, "The Manyano Movement in South Africa: Site of Struggle, Survival and Resistance," *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 61 (2004); To some extent, this is also the approach of Ngcobozi's study of contemporary Methodist manyano, which examines the spiritual and psychological dimensions of manayno membership: Ngcobozi, *Mothers of the Nation: Manyano Women in South Africa*.

[18] Philippe Denis, "African Traditional Religion and Christian Identity in a Group of Manyano Leaders," *Missionalia* 32, no. 2 (2004): 177–89.

[19] Philippe Denis and Isabel Phiri, "'There Is Also Apartheid in Our Homes': Interviewing Leaders of Black Women's Christian Organisations in KwaZulu-Natal" (University of KwaZulu Natal School of Religion and Theology: Sinomlando Centre, 1999); Elizabeth Prevost, *The Communion of Women: Missions and Gender in Colonial Africa and the British Metropole* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Phyllis M. Martin, *Catholic Women of Congo-Brazzaville: Mothers and Sisters in Troubled Times* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); K Rea et al., *Methodist Women for Christ: A Short History of the Ruwadzano/Manyano Movement of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe from 1891 to 1991* (Harare: Ruwadzano/Manyano History Committee, 1991); Farai David Murorewa, "Through Prayer to Action: The Rukwadzano Women of Rhodesia," in *Themes in the Christian History of Central Africa*, ed. Terence O. Ranger and John Weller (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 256–68.

[20] Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi. Updated Edition*, Third edition (Zomba, Malawi: Kachere Series, 2007).

manyano women in KwaZulu-Natal which includes broad range of manyano voices from mainline Protestant, African Independent, and Pentecostal churches.[21] A focus on the interior institutional life of a manyano can lead to neglecting the question of whether manyanos had "significance in the wider social life of their society," which of course Brandel-Syrier thought they did not. Epprecht, and most recently, sociologist Lihle Ngcobozi, have given attention to the position and activities of manyanos in relation to the state and wider society.[22] Ngcobozi theorizes the Methodist manyano as a voice of the "black counterpublic" during apartheid; their prayers and practical work gave them a moral authority in their communities that sustained the struggle against apartheid. As *oomama bomthandazo* (mothers of prayer), manyano members assumed responsibility for the children of the whole nation.[23]

Motherhood is therefore a central feature of manyano members' identity, but the meaning of motherhood has been debated in the historiography of gender in Africa. In the 1980s and 1990s, historians' focus on gender as a conceptual category—rather than treating women's history as a separate sub-field—allowed them to show how gender was an integral part of historical change.[24] In South Africa, missionaries and colonial governments tried to mold

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[21] Philippe Denis, "'We Also Had to Live with Apartheid in Our Homes': Stories of Women in Sobantu, South Africa," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 30, no. 1 (2004): 151–67; Denis and Phiri, "There Is Also Apartheid in Our Homes."

[22] Epprecht, "Domesticity and Piety in Colonial Lesotho"; Ngcobozi, *Mothers of the Nation: Manyano Women in South Africa*.

[23] Ngcobozi, *Mothers of the Nation: Manyano Women in South Africa*, 75–90.

[24] Kristin Mann, *Marrying Well: Marriage, Status and Social Change among the Educated Elite in Colonial Lagos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Susan Geiger, *TANU Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997); Nwando Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005); Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Some of the early arguments for gender history in the South African context are found in: Belinda Bozzoli, "Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 9, no. 2 (1983): 139–71; Helen Bradford, "Women, Gender and Colonialism: Rethinking the History of the British Cape Colony and Its Frontier Zones, C. 1806-70," *Journal of African History* 37 (1996): 351–70; Cherryl Walker, ed., *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990); Penelope Hetherington, "Women in South Africa: The Historiography in English," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26, no. 2 (1993): 241–69, https://doi.org/10.2307/219546.

colonial subjects' gender roles on middle-class nineteenth-century European lines, in order to

make compliant colonial subjects.[25] South African historians also, of course, recognized colonial

subjects' resistance to this gendered norming, and looked for ways that Black women had

stepped beyond the strictures of motherhood to engage in political activism.[26] The correlative of

this approach, however, was that women who identified themselves solely as mothers risked

reducing their politics to "motherism," which in Julia Wells' assessment was "limited in scope,

duration and success in achieving their goals."[27]

    Against this assessment of motherhood as an inherently conservative, limiting identity for

women, other scholars (many writing from and about West Africa), have argued that motherhood

in indigenous African cultures does not map neatly on to a colonial gender system based solely

on biological sex. Yoruba and Igbo societies, for instance, prioritized age and generational status

over biological sex in determining a person's social status, authority, and responsibilities.[28]

Historians of South Africa have drawn on these theoretical insights to show how women's

identification as mothers, and their interest in domestic matters, could be integrally connected to

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[25] Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy, and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900-1983* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991); Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, "Home-Made Hegemony: Modernity, Domesticity, and Colonialism in South Africa," in *African Encounters with Domesticity*, ed. Karen Tranberg-Hansen (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Landau, *Realm of the Word: Language, Gender and Politics in A South African Kingdom*; Erlank, "Gender and Chrisianity Among Africans Attached to Scottish Mission Stations in Xhosaland in the Nineteenth Century."

[26] Iris Berger, *Threads of Solidarity: Women in South African Industry, 1900-1980* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); For the specifically South African historiographical context, I am following Walker's analysis of the literature: Cherryl Walker, "Conceptualising Motherhood in Twentieth Century South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21, no. 3 (1995): 420.

[27] Julia Wells, "The Rise and Fall of Motherism as a Force in Black Women's Resistance Movements" (Women and Gender in Southern Africa Conference, University of Natal, 1991), 4–5; Julia C. Wells, *We Now Demand!: The History of Women's Resistance to Pass Laws in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993); Shireen Hassim, "Reinforcing Conservatism: An Analysis of the Politics of the Inkatha Women's Brigade," *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, no. 2 (1988): 3–16.

[28] Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands* (London: Zed Books, 1987); Nkiru Uwechia Nzegwu, *Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006); Nwando Achebe, *The Female King of Colonial Nigeria: Ahebi Ugbabe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí, *What Gender Is Motherhood?: Changing Yorùbá Ideals of Power, Procreation, and Identity in the Age of Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

wider political projects.[29] In particular, scholars of African and South African history have used the concept of "public motherhood" first introduced by the literary scholar Chikwenye Ogunyemi to show how African conceptions of motherhood predated and transcended any strict western distinction between the public (masculine) realm and the private (feminine) realm.[30]

Most of this literature on public motherhood has focused on mothers as actors in the realm of formal politics: how mothers harnessed indigenous repertoires of collective action and decision-making to make demands on the state, achieve economic independence, or advocate for decolonization. But if twentieth-century Black South African women were familiar with an indigenous southern African tradition of public motherhood, as Healy-Clancy argues, it is important to understand how they acted out their roles as mothers within a Christian religious idiom, since official church discourses about motherhood were influenced by western Christian conceptions of gendered roles.[31] Catherine Higgs and Hlengiwe Ndlovu have shown how Black Christian women could act as mothers in the public realm (even when they were young, unmarried women like the Catholic sisters Higgs describes).[32]

Most recently, Lihle Ngcobozi in her research on the Methodist manyano in contemporary society has shown how the private, intense, spiritual work that happens within the closed manyano group translates into authority and influence in their communities. Ngcobozi

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[29] Nomboniso Gasa, "Feminisms, Motherisms, Patriarchies and Women's Voices," in *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo / They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, ed. Nomboniso Gasa (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007), 207–29; Walker, "Conceptualising Motherhood in Twentieth Century South Africa."
[30] Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, *Africa Wo/Man Palava: The Nigerian Novel by Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Lorelle Semley, "Public Motherhood in West Africa as Theory and Practice," *Gender & History* 24, no. 3 (2012): 600–616; Meghan Healy-Clancy, "The Family Politics of the Federation of South African Women: A History of Public Motherhood in Women's Antiracist Activism," *Signs* 42, no. 4 (2017): 843–66; Elizabeth Jacob, "Militant Mothers: Gender and the Politics of Anticolonial Action in Côte d'Ivoire," *The Journal of African History* 63, no. 3 (2022): 1–20.
[31] Healy-Clancy, "The Family Politics of the Federation of South African Women."
[32] Catherine Higgs, "Silence, Disobedience, and African Catholic Sisters in Apartheid South Africa," *African Studies Review* 54, no. 2 (2011): 1–22; Hlengiwe Ndlovu, "Bodies That (Do Not) Matter? Black Sunday and Narratives of the Death of Sister Aidan Quinlan in Duncan Village Protest, 1952," *Agenda* 34, no. 1 (2020): 48–54.

argues that there is no single "public" sphere in South Africa within which manyano women have been public mothers. Instead, in what Mamdani calls the "customary" sphere of Black communities, manyano women are a dominant public force; their norms and values are accepted as authoritative (even if not actually followed). Within the "dominant civil society" of South Africa, however, Ngcobozi argues that manyano women have been part of the "black counterpublic," quietly resisting the norms and forces of the state, especially during apartheid. Thinking about manyano women as "public" figures, therefore, reveals that "the theoretical and political assumptions embedded within the [Western, Habermasian] concept of the public sphere do not, therefore capture the life experiences and narratives of the black women who are part of the Manyanos."[33]

Ngcobozi's argument that understanding contemporary manyano women's role in society requires seeing more than one type of "public sphere" is useful also for tracing manyano history. As this dissertation will show, there were some moments in the twentieth century when manyano women, by their participation in boycotts, marches, or rallies, took part in the kind of "public" activities that get newspaper coverage. But at other times, especially times of violent conflict at the end of apartheid, they often represented themselves as aloof from matters of national politics. For this reason, it is important to understand the historical background and changes over time in how manyano women have defined their authority and duties as Christian mothers. Examining the specifically gendered nature of religious cultures, as Alexis Wells-Oghoghomeh has recently shown in the case of the U.S. South, can reveal valuable insights about how Black women have practiced womanhood and motherhood over time.[34]

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[33] Ngcobozi, *Mothers of the Nation: Manyano Women in South Africa*, 35.
[34] Alexis Wells-Oghoghomeh, *The Souls of Womenfolk: The Religious Cultures of Enslaved Women in the Lower South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021).

Women's Religious and Social Organizations in Pre-colonial southern Africa

Collective organizing by adult women for religious and social purposes was not an innovation introduced by missionary Christianity. In isiXhosa-speaking societies, and elsewhere in southern Africa, there were indigenous gendered and religious traditions that institutionalized women's spiritual and maternal authority, provided a venue for cooperative communal work, and regulated changes in generational status and authority.[35] The evidence of these pre-colonial customs and practices demonstrates that African women brought to the manyano not only their knowledge of Christianity, but also their knowledge of indigenous women's social and religious institutions.

According to Gaitskell, "the appeal of 'praying and preaching' to Africans should be seen in the light of the indigenous traditions of oral expression in which women shared—oratory, folktales, and praise poems vigorously performed to a convivially responding group."[36] Evidence of this tradition of spontaneous, ecstatic expression can be found in the complaints of nineteenth-century missionaries about the unruliness of women converts. For example, an 1851 observer of a mission church attended by Khoisan and Xhosa people reported that "about the middle of the sermon a few old women would begin to cry aloud" and could only be silenced by the intervention of a deacon.[37] In isiXhosa-speaking societies, praise poems were another public way

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[35] By "isiXhosa-speaking societies" and "Xhosa people" I am referring broadly to the various political and ethnic groups (Xhosa, Thembu, Mfengu, Pondo, and others) in southern Africa which in the nineteenth century spoke closely-related languages that were ultimately standardized into modern isiXhosa. B.A. Pauw, *Christianity and Xhosa Tradition: Belief and Ritual among Xhosa-Speaking Christians* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1975), 4–5; Jochen S. Arndt, *Divided by the Word: Colonial Encounters and the Remaking of Zulu and Xhosa Identities* (University of Virginia Press, 2022).

[36] Deborah Gaitskell, "Power in prayer and service: Women's Christian organisations," in Richard Elphick and T.R.H. Davenport, eds., *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 261.

[37] John Green, *The Kat River Settlement in 1851, Containing the Substance of Evidence Given Before the Commission for Investigating the Rebellion* (Grahamstown [Makanda]: Godlonton, White & Co, 1853), xix.

to express feelings, and praises (like prayer and preaching in manyanos) could offer elements of moral rebuke or exhortation.[38]

Across southern Africa, women (both young and mature) also had special potential as ritual specialists or religious innovators. Barbara Moss and Sean Redding have argued in the cases of Zimbabwe and the Eastern Cape, respectively, that women's recognized abilities as mediators with the spiritual realm positioned them to engage creatively with the Christian teachings introduced by missionaries. Indeed, Moss goes so far as to say that Shona women converts to Methodism "continued in the role of spirit mediums, in this case intermediaries to the Christian Holy Spirit."[39] Similarly, the anthropologist Monica Wilson hypothesized that the passionate weeping which characterized Christian Pondo women's religious practice was a substitute for the "natural emotional outlet" of dancing at social and ritual events, which had been forbidden by missionaries. Wilson quotes a diviner who said of her divining dance: "I dance when I feel as the Christian women do when they begin to pray aloud and cry."[40]

In isiXhosa-speaking societies, the calling and work of *amagqirha* had particular similarities to manyano initiation. *Igqirha* (pl. *amagqirha*) is a doctor or diviner, specifically one who has gone through a particular initiatory illness that prepares them for the task of healing others.[41] This Xhosa healing profession, like others in southern, central and east Africa, involves "the movement of the individual from sufferer-novice to accomplished, singing, self-projecting

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[38] Monica (Hunter) Wilson, *Reaction to Conquest ; Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa* (London: H. Milford, 1936), 371; Leroy Vail and Landeg White, *Power and the Praise Poem: Southern African Voices in History* (Charlottesville : London: University of Virginia Press, 1991).

[39] Barbara A. Moss, "'And the Bones Come Together': Women's Religious Expectations in Southern Africa, c. 1900-1945," *Journal of Religious History* 23, no. 1 (1999): 117; Sean Redding, "Women as Diviners and as Christian Converts in Rural South Africa, C. 1880–1963," *The Journal of African History* 57, no. 3 (2016): 367–89.

[40] Wilson, *Reaction to Conquest*, 375–76.

[41] In modern isiXhosa, *ugqirha* is a doctor trained in biomedicine, while *igqirha* is a healer who has been initiated through *ukuthwasa*.

healer."[42] The initiatory illness is called *ukuthwasa*, and can take many forms, from physical pain

to psychological disturbance, but the only way to cure the illness is initiation under the tutelage

of an igqirha.[43] When the initiate graduates from training, they rejoice in their "spiritual and

emotional growth as well as the strength to overcome difficulties."[44] From this point on, the

ighirha is cured of their illness and qualified to advise others on cases of social or physical

illness. Monica Wilson noted in the 1930s that the vast majority of amagqirha in Pondoland were

women.[45] Recent research on amagqirha in the Transkei confirms that it remains a predominantly

female calling.[46] The initiatory process for amagqirha resembles some of the interests and

activities of manyano members. The initiation process for new manyano members also involves

confession (of sins rather than dreams). And like amagqirha, manyano members are concerned

with healing their own and others' illnesses. Indeed, in the present day, some women who

experience ukuthwasa may choose to join a manyano instead of, or in addition to, initiation as

igqirha.[47]

The institutionalized stages of initiation into full manyano membership also have

resemblances to women's coming-of-age and marriage traditions in pre-colonial Xhosa culture.

Writing about the women's manyano in the Anglican Church, Ngewu notes the parallels between

the stages of initiation into the manyano and the stages of initiation in the life of a girl in pre-

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[42] John M. Janzen, *Ngoma: Discourses of Healing in Central and Southern Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 109.

[43] Wilson, *Reaction to Conquest*, 320–23.

[44] Lily-Rose Nomfundo Mlisa, "Ukuthwasa Initiation of Amagqirha: Identity Construction and the Training of Xhosa Women as Traditional Healers" (Doctoral dissertation, Bloemfontein, University of the Free State, 2009), 229.

[45] Wilson, *Reaction to Conquest*, 320.

[46] Mlisa, "Ukuthwasa Initiation of Amagqirha: Identity Construction and the Training of Xhosa Women as Traditional Healers," 25.

[47] Mlisa prefaces her doctoral research with a personal account of navigating her call to spiritual healing, which took her from the Methodist manyano, to a position as a faith healer, and finally to initiation as igqirha. Mlisa, x–xii; Lubabalo L. Ngewu, *Listening to the Silent Voices of the MU: The Centenary History of the MU in the CPSA* (Lovedale: Mothers Union, 2004), 212.

colonial southern Africa. Ngewu speculates that the stages of Anglican girls' initiation, from the Guild of St. Agnes for young girls, to the Guild of St. Mary Magdalene for young women, to the Mother's Union for adult women, was a "cultural adaptation" of pre-colonial girls' initiation, which included ceremonies to mark puberty, betrothal, and marriage.[48] Lihle Ngcobozi's interviews with present-day Methodist manyano women also highlighted parallels between marriage and manyano membership. At their burial, manyano women ought to wear their uniform to show that they are a bride on their way to meet the bridegroom.[49]

In fact, is in the area of clothing that manyano initiation most resembles pre-colonial Xhosa marriage custom. In 1930s Pondoland, brides (both "pagan" and Christian women) spent much of the marriage ceremony covered in blankets and with their faces hidden. When officially married, they continued to wear a headscarf low on their foreheads as a sign of the humble, respectful demeanour (*ukuhlonipha*) that brides were expected to adopt towards their husband's family.[50] The importance of head-covering and correct clothing for a new wife may have some historical connection to the significance of uniforms for manyano members, which invariably include a collared blouse, long skirt, and hat. In many churches, the manyano initiation ceremony is known as "blousing," or *inkonzo yokunxiba* (literally: the service of being clothed) showing the focus on specific clothing as the marker of membership. Like new brides, new manyano members go through a period of trial (in the sense of probation and of hard duties). For example, new members of the Anglican Mothers' Union are expected to perform extra challenges to prove their fitness. Ngewu finds in this a close parallel to the Xhosa concept of *ukuhotisa*, the period of trial for *umakoti* (a new wife) when she enters her in-laws' homestead.[51] A full historical

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[48] Ngewu, *Listening to the Silent Voices of the MU: The Centenary History of the MU in the CPSA*, 24.
[49] Ngcobozi, *Mothers of the Nation: Manyano Women in South Africa*, 131.
[50] Wilson, *Reaction to Conquest*, 39, 214–20.
[51] Ngewu, *Listening to the Silent Voices of the MU: The Centenary History of the MU in the CPSA*, 24, 168–69.

overview of precolonial southern African gendered, generational, and religious cultures is beyond the scope of this brief overview. However, the examples cited above indicate some of the ways that Black Christian women in isiXhosa-speaking societies drew on indigenous traditions of public performance, religious technique, and age-related initiation as they developed their understanding of Christian public motherhood.

Urbanization, segregation, and social history in East London and South Africa

Racial segregation was a feature of South African cities from their origins in the colonial era. Cape Town and Durban were two of South Africa's oldest cities, and each had developed policies of racial segregation during the nineteenth century, which resulted in Black urbanites being restricted to residence in formally defined "locations" within the city, and often having to carry "passes" to justify their presence in the city. Location services and infrastructure were paid by taxes on residents rather than from the white municipality's budget, and residents could only rent, not own, property in the location.[52] These features of urban locations were replicated across South African cities, including East London.

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[52] Maynard W. Swanson, "'The Durban System': Roots of Urban Apartheid in Colonial Natal," *African Studies* 35, no. 3–4 (1976): 159–76; Maynard W. Swanson, "The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909," *The Journal of African History* 18, no. 3 (1977): 387–410; Paul Maylam, "The Rise and Decline of Urban Apartheid in South Africa," *African Affairs* 89, no. 354 (1990): 57–84.

Figure 1: East London in relation to the Eastern Cape province and the rest of South Africa[53]

The area that is now East London, on the Indian Ocean coast between the Buffalo and

Nahoon rivers, had been inhabited by Xhosa and Khoe-khoe people for many generations before

the arrival of British colonists in the nineteenth century. The city began as a military garrison

during the British conquest of independent Xhosa territory, and then became a hub of shipping

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[53] Map adapted from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:South_Africa_adm_location_map.svg. CC BY-SA 3.0 DE. Most of the Eastern Cape's territory was taken from independent isiXhosa speaking chiefdoms between the 1830s and 1870s. A significant part of the Eastern Cape became the "Native Reserves" of the Ciskei and Transkei, while during apartheid the white agricultural areas and towns were part of the Cape province.

and trade for the conquered hinterland territory. Black, Indian, and Coloured residents of the city lived in locations separate from, but not far away from, the growing white settler residential areas. By the 1930s, there were only two locations for black urbanites: the smaller West Bank location which also had a significant number of Coloured residents, and the larger centrally placed East Bank location, which by the early 1930s had an official population of 20,000.[54] The East Bank was contiguous with the North End, a racially mixed neighborhood that was home to Indian, Coloured, Black and white residents.[55] This residential segregation was codified and elaborated throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and was connected to debates within and between white and Black communities about respectability and racial purity.[56]

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[54] E. L. Nel, "Racial Segregation in East London, 1836–1948," *South African Geographical Journal* 73, no. 2 (1991): 64.

[55] Nel, 60–62; Cornelius C. Thomas and Kathy Thomas, *Dust in My Coffee: A Family Called North End Remembers*, First edition (East London, South Africa: Iqula Pub, 2008).

[56] Elizabeth Thornberry, "Rape, Race, and Respectability in a South African Port City: East London, 1870-1927," *Journal of Urban History* 42, no. 5 (2016): 863–80; Nel, "Racial Segregation in East London, 1836–1948," 60–62; For the comparative case of Cradock, see Jeffrey Butler, *Cradock: How Segregation and Apartheid Came to a South African Town*, ed. Richard Elphick and Jeannette Hopkins (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017), 126–40.
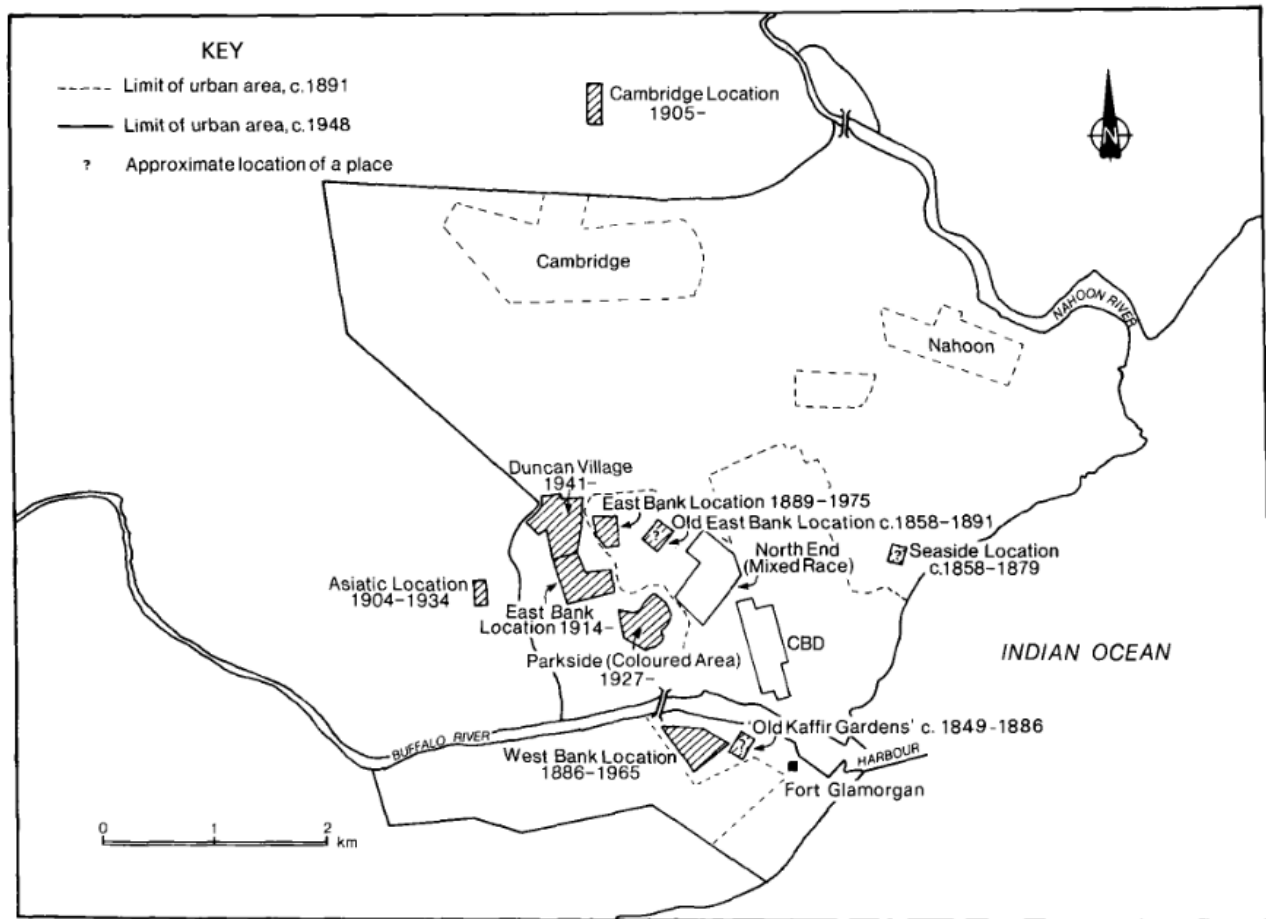
Figure 2: The development of East London's segregated locations, 1849- c.1950s[57]

The discovery of diamonds, and then gold, in the late nineteenth century initiated a new

phase of urbanization across South Africa, as the booming cities of Kimberley and Johannesburg

drew people from across southern Africa, and across the world.[58] But the pull of the urban wage

labor economy was inseparable from the forces that were pushing rural people off the land and

into poverty. The Natives' Land Act of 1913 had limited Black ownership of land to a defined

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[57] From Nel, "Racial Segregation in East London, 1836-1948," 61.
[58] T. Dunbar Moodie and Vivienne Ndatshe, *Going for Gold: Men, Mines, and Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity: Mozambican Migrant Labour in South Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992); Philip Bonner, "Desirable or Undesirable Sotho Women?' Liquor, Prostitution and the Migration of Sotho Women to the Rand, 1920-1945" (African Studies Seminar, University of the Witwatersrand, 1988).

seven percent of South Africa's territory (in 1936 these "Native Reserves" were expanded to comprise thirteen percent of the nation's territory); the result was that wage labor or tenancy on white-owned farms, work in the cities, or some combination of the two, was the only legal means of subsistence for many by the inter-war period.[59] Increasing Black urbanization in the 1930s and through the Second World War raised white South Africans' fears of being overpowered by the majority. The election of the National Party to government in 1948 was in many ways driven by white voters' desire to limit the number of Black people in cities, and more closely regulate the labor and movements of those who were in the city.[60]

In East London, like the rest of South Africa, experienced rapid urbanization during the inter-war and Second World War periods. Between 1936 and 1955 the population of the East Bank location doubled from 30,000 to approximately 60,000 people, but the municipality had constructed only about six hundred new houses to accommodate this growing population.[61] Unlike Johannesburg, where the mining industry drew migrant workers from across the southern continent, the majority of Black urbanites in East London had been born in local magisterial districts, which meant that East London's locations were unified by shared Xhosa language and culture.[62] The proximity of East London to the "Native Reserves" of the Ciskei also made it relatively easy for Black women and girls to migrate to the city, either to join family members or

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[59] Sol T. Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa Before and Since the European War and the Boer Rebellion* (London, 1916); Les Switzer, *Power and Resistance in an African Society: The Ciskei Xhosa and the Making of South Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); Beinart, Delius, and Trapido, *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850-1930*; Beinart and Dubow, *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa*.

[60] Rodney Davenport, "African Townsmen? South African Natives (Urban Areas) Legislation through the Years," *African Affairs* 68, no. 271 (1969): 95–109; Maylam, "The Rise and Decline of Urban Apartheid in South Africa"; Paul Maylam, "Explaining the Apartheid City: 20 Years of South African Urban Historiography," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21, no. 1 (1995): 19–38.

[61] D.H. Reader, *The Black Man's Portion: History, Demography and Living Conditions in the Native Locations of East London Cape Province* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1961), 106; Etienne Louis Nel, "Mdantsane, East London's Homeland Township: Municipal Neglect and Apartheid Planning 1949-1988," *GeoJournal* 22, no. 3 (1990): 307.

[62] Reader, *The Black Man's Portion*, 47.

look for work independently; the East Bank location around 1955 had slightly more women than men, which raised concerns by both municipal officials and Black men about the "breakdown" of gendered and generational order in the city.[63] The crisis of post-war urbanization in East London came in 1952, when a police attack on a political prayer meeting led to the deaths of two hundred East Bank residents and two white civilians (see Chapter 4). These events drew national attention to East London and spurred the government to further implement its plans for urban apartheid in this city.[64]

Across South Africa, urban apartheid policies began to be implemented to their full in the era of "high" apartheid which commenced in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The construction of massive, planned townships on the perimeter of cities allowed the state to closely control the movements and labor of Black urbanites, while the more thorough enforcement of pass laws made it difficult for people to move to the city from the countryside. Although planners hoped that townships would reproduce a population of compliant urban laborers—either male migrants housed in single-sex hostels, or a limited number of permanently urban nuclear families— townships became a key site of resistance to apartheid.[65] As Jacob Dlamini puts it, townships were the "metaphorical black home in whose living room the post-apartheid imaginary was largely conceived by a revolutionary movement that never really moved out of its urban base."[66] Despite the fact that the African National Congress (ANC) and other liberation organizations had been banned since 1960, popular township protest in the late 1970s and through the 1980s was a

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[63] Gary Minkley, "'I Shall Die Married to the Beer': Gender, 'Family' and Space in East London's Locations," *Kronos*, no. 23 (1996): 135–57; Anne Kelk Mager, *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan: A Social History of the Ciskei, 1945-1959* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999); For statistics on the East Bank location's age and gender demographics, see Reader, *The Black Man's Portion*, 42–46.

[64] Mignonne Breier, *Bloody Sunday: The Nun, the Defiance Campaign and South Africa's Secret Massacre* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2021); Doreen Atkinson, "Political Opposition in Patriarchal East London, 1950-1960: Dilemmas of Paternalism," *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa* 6, no. 1 (2010): 1–16.

[65] Maylam, "The Rise and Decline of Urban Apartheid in South Africa."

[66] Jacob Dlamini, *Native Nostalgia* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2009), 160–61.

perpetual and growing challenge to state control of Black urban areas.[67] By the 1980s, well

before the formal end of apartheid, the state had little control over who moved to the townships,

or where they built their homes, although the legacies of inequality and racial segregation in

cities persisted long after the end of legal segregation.

Again, East London's urban history largely followed this national pattern. In 1957, the

apartheid ideologue President H.F. Verwoerd personally intervened to select a plot of

undeveloped farmland about 15 miles outside East London, as the site for the new township of

Mdantsane.[68] By 1963, people classified as "African" under the government's system of racial

categorization were forcibly removed from their homes in the East Bank location and assigned to

new houses in Mdantsane. Mdantsane was a model of modernist apartheid planning, meant to

create a stable and compliant working class to supply East London's needs.[69] In actuality, the

violence of forced removal, the uniformity and anonymity of Mdantsane's housing, and the lack

of employment for its residents, resulted in a "torn social fabric" and increasing poverty.[70] As in

other townships of South Africa, the state could not control the rate of urbanization in

Mdantsane, or the growing popular protests through the 1970s against the injustices of urban

segregation.[71] By 1980, Mdantsane was, according to some estimates, the second largest

township in South Africa and the seventh largest urban area in the whole nation.[72] Moreover, as

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[67] Belinda Bozzoli, ed., *Labour, Townships and Protest: Studies in the Social History of the Witwatersrand* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1979); Patrick Bond, *Cities of Gold, Townships of Coal: Essays on South Africa's New Urban Crisis* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1999).
[68] Nel, "Mdantsane, East London's Homeland Township," 306–7.
[69] Leslie J. Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles : Contesting Power and Identity in a South African City* (London: Pluto Press, 2011).
[70] Philip Mayer and Iona Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen: Conservatism and the Process of Urbanization in a South African City*, 2nd ed. (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1971), 294–318.
[71] Nel, "Mdantsane, East London's Homeland Township"; Mark Swilling, "'The Buses Smell of Blood': The East London Boycott," *South African Labour Bulletin* 9, no. 5 (March 1984): 30.
[72] T.J. Gordon, "Mdantsane: Evolution of a Dependency," in Jeff Opland and Gillian Cook, eds., *Mdantsane: Transitional City* (Rhodes University, Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1980), 1; Nel, "Mdantsane, East London's Homeland Township," 305.

Leslie Bank and Lungisile Ntsebeza have shown in the case of East London, the old East Bank location was never completely destroyed, and continued to be a center of cultural creativity and vigorous youth-led protest.[73]
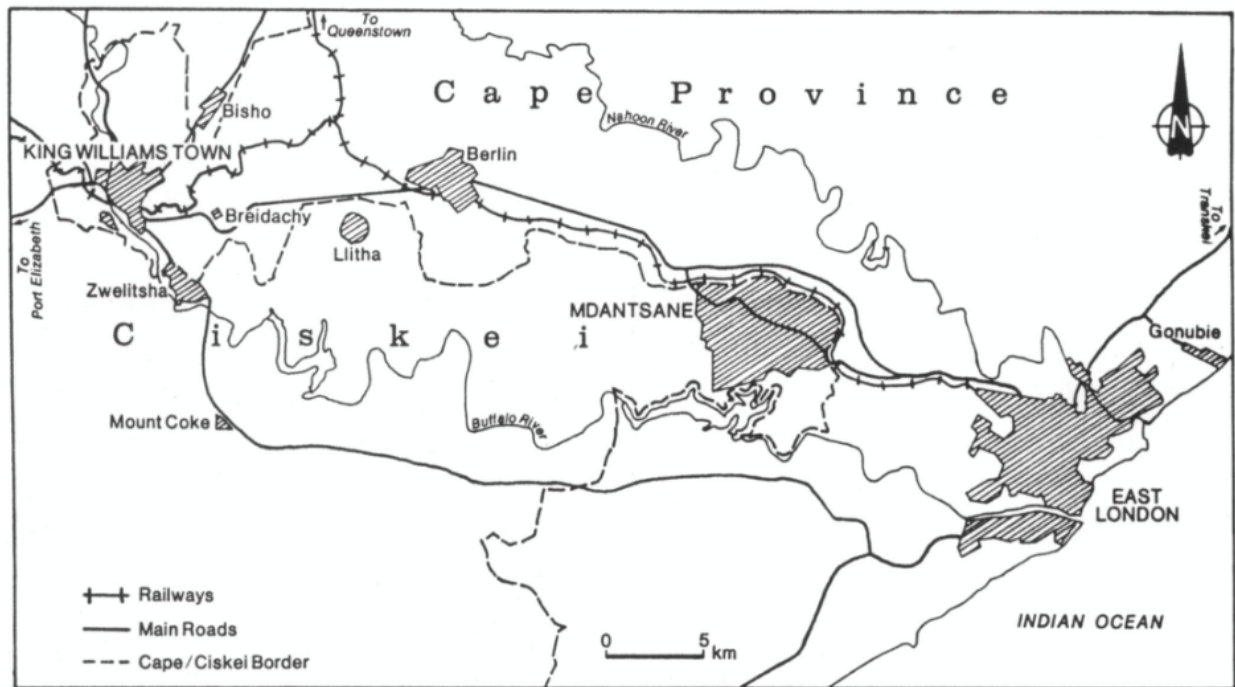
Figure 3: Mdantsane in relation to East London and the Ciskei in the early 1990s[74]

The scholarly literature about East London and Mdantsane has been shaped by historiographical trends in South African urban history. The first generations of South African urban historians focused on evolving policies of segregation and apartheid, and how these had shaped wealth and class formation among South Africans.[75] In the 1980s, however, this

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[73] Lungisile Ntsebeza, "Youth in Urban African Townships, 1945-1992: A Case Study of the East London Townships" (Master of Arts, Durban, University of Natal, 1993); Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles*.

[74] From Nel, "Mdantsane, East London's Homeland Township," 306.

[75] Davenport, "African Townsmen?"; Robert Bloch and Peter Wilkinson, "Urban Control and Popular Struggle: A Survey of State Urban Policy 1920-1970," *Africa Perspective* 20 (1982): 2–40; Doug Hindson, *Pass Controls and the Urban African Proletariat* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987); Deborah Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Not all of these histories were solely focused on policies and passes; Bozzoli and van Onselen both produced nuanced and detailed analyses of urban

structuralist approach to urban class formation was supplemented and challenged by the work of

social historians, who tried to understand Black urban cultural creativity and activity and present

these urban histories in engaging and accessible ways.[76] For East London, Gary Minkley and

Anne Mager examined how in the 1940s and 1950s youth and independent women had resisted

the strictures of "respectability."[77]

As Hilary Sapire notes, this historiographical trend towards grassroots social history was

inseparable from the contemporaneous township insurrections of the 1980s; scholars observing

the unprecedented resistance in townships wanted to understand the roots of that resistance,

including the roles played by women, students, and others who had been excluded from formal

politics.[78] These historians often used oral history to uncover stories that had been left out of the

official archive, but as Sapire also observes, primarily white scholars working at universities in

the 1980s often had a limited knowledge of contemporary events on the ground in townships

because of State of Emergency regulations and lack of access to official records.[79] Indeed,

although Mdantsane was one of the largest townships in the nation, it received relatively little

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working-class consciousness. Bozzoli, *Labour, Townships and Protest: Studies in the Social History of the Witwatersrand*; Charles Van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday Life on the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1982).

[76] Philip Bonner and Lauren Segal, *Soweto: A History* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 1998); Clive Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000); Philip Bonner and Noor Nieftagodien, *Kathorus: A History* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 2001); Belinda Bozzoli, *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004); Janet Cherry, "The Role of Women in the 1980s' Township Uprising in the Eastern Cape," in *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo / They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, ed. Nomboniso Gasa (HSRC Press, 2007).

[77] Anne Kelk Mager and Gary Minkley, "Reaping the Whirlwind: The East London Riots of 1952" (Johannesburg: Wits History Workshop, 1990), 1–27; Gary Minkley, "Class and Culture in the Workplace: East London, Industrialisation, and the Conflict Over Work, 1945-1957," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no. 4 (1992): 739–60; Mager, *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan*.

[78] Hilary Sapire, "Township Histories, Insurrection and Liberation in Late Apartheid South Africa," *South African Historical Journal* 65, no. 2 (2013): 167–98; Vivian Bickford-Smith, "Urban History in the New South Africa: Continuity and Innovation since the End of Apartheid," *Urban History* 35, no. 2 (2008): 288–315; For more on the historiographical differences between the social historians of the 1980s, the "radicals" and "liberals," see Christopher Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past: Major Historians on Race and Class* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988).

[79] Sapire, "Township Histories, Insurrection and Liberation in Late Apartheid South Africa," 174–77.

attention either from historians or social scientists in the 1980s; the exception was Swilling's

analysis of the 1983 bus boycott and repression by the Ciskei Bantustan regime (which will be

discussed below).[80]

By the 1990s, as South Africans looked forward to a post-apartheid urban future, scholars

were taking up Njabulo Ndebele's call for the "rediscovery of the ordinary," expanding beyond a

focus on "resistance" as the main theme of Black urban culture by attending to individuals and

organizations with complex or contradictory motives.[81] One of the trends in recent urban

histories of South Africa is an attention to the material dimension of the "ordinary"; the physical

objects and infrastructure that shaped how people lived in townships, cities, and informal

settlements. Studies of electricity infrastructure, of water and sanitation systems, and especially

of housing, have allowed historians and anthropologists to show how multiple interest groups

with complex motivations have contested the use and meaning of the physical structures that

continue to shape the experience of urban life in the post-apartheid present.[82] As Leslie Bank has

shown in the case of East London's East Bank location, changes in domestic architecture and

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[80] Swilling, "'The Buses Smell of Blood': The East London Boycott"; Jeffery McCarthy and Mark Swilling, "The Apartheid City and the Politics of Bus Transportation.," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 25, no. 99 (1985): 381–400; Opland and Cook, *Mdantsane: Transitional City*; Nel, "Mdantsane, East London's Homeland Township."
[81] Njabulo S. Ndebele, *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture* (Scottsville: University Of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 1991); David Goodhew, "Working-Class Respectability: The Example of the Western Areas of Johannesburg, 1930-55," *The Journal of African History* 41, no. 2 (2000): 241–66; Dlamini, *Native Nostalgia*; Wayne Dooling, "Poverty and Respectability in Early Twentieth-Century Cape Town," *The Journal of African History* 59, no. 3 (2018): 411–35.
[82] Meshack M. Khosa, "'The Travail of Travelling': Urban Transport in South Africa, 1930–1996," *Transport Reviews* 18, no. 1 (1998): 17–33; Antina von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure: Techno-Politics and Protest after Apartheid* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Marc Epprecht, *Welcome to Greater Edendale: Histories of Environment, Health, and Gender in an African City* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016); Jason Hickel, "Engineering the Township Home: Domestic Transformations and Urban Revolutionary Consciousness," in *Ekhaya: The Politics of Home in KwaZulu-Natal* (Pietermaritzburg: University Of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2014), 131–61; Leslie Bank, "City Slums, Rural Homesteads: Migrant Culture, Displaced Urbanism and the Citizenship of the Serviced House," in *South African Homelands as Frontiers: Apartheid's Loose Ends in the Postcolonial Era*, ed. Steffen Jensen and Olaf Zenker (London: Routledge, 2017), 131–61; Elliot James, "Sithutha Isizwe ('We Carry the Nation'): Dispossession, Displacement, and the Making of the Shared Minibus Taxi in Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa, 1930-Present" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2018).

space have, both during and after apartheid, continually been bound up with changes in gender roles and changes in the relationship between the urban poor and the state.[83]

The Ciskei and new histories of apartheid's Bantustans

While East London was representative of urban apartheid in South Africa in many ways, the fact that Mdantsane was part of the Ciskei Bantustan complicated the history of this township. South Africa's Bantustans were nominally independent ethno-states created, in part out of the "Native Reserves," to contain and divide all Black people whose labor was not needed in the cities.[84] Starting in the 1950s, the apartheid government began to grant greater powers to the "tribal authorities" in various reserves, who employed customary law to rule over their subjects.[85] From the late 1950s through the 1970s, 3.5 million people were forcibly removed from South African cities and white-owned farms and sent to one of the ten ethnically defined "homelands," or Bantustans, as their critics called them. South Africa, as Mahmood Mamdani puts it, was "a country artificially deurbanized."[86] Four of these Bantustans (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, Ciskei) were granted nominal independence between 1976 and 1981, while the other six remained "Territorial Authorities," but their systems were ultimately very similar: Bantustan citizens had no rights to land ownership or political representation outside their assigned

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[83] Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles*.

[84] This purpose is quite clearly stated in the government propaganda, which used the fiction of Bantustan "independence" to disclaim responsibility for the poverty and human rights abuses in the Bantustans: "The contribution expected of these [Bantustan] areas is (a) to put the problem of political associations between Black Africa and the European core into a proper framework of international relationships, and (b) to decentralise economic activity in order to prevent a further convergence of people on to the core area." J.A. Lombard, *Freedom, Welfare and Order: Thoughts on the Principles of Political Co-Operation in the Economy of Southern Africa* (Pretoria: Bureau for Economic Research, Bantu Development [Benbo], 1978), 22.

[85] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Wits History Workshop ; Makerere Institute of Social Research, 1996), 109–28; The use of customary law in indirect colonial rule had its roots, of course, much earlier in the nineteenth century: Leroy Vail, ed., *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1988); Lungisile Ntsebeza, *Democracy Compromised: Chiefs and the Politics of the Land in South Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2005).

[86] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 102; Laurine Platzky and Cherryl Walker, *The Surplus People: Forced Removals in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985).

homeland, and could only be absent from it on temporary work contracts. The Bantustans persisted despite popular protest and failure to achieve international recognition. Their systems of governance and administration were only dismantled on the eve of the transition to a unified democratic state of South Africa in 1994.[87]

The Ciskei Territorial Authority was created in 1961 out of the "Native Reserves" on the eastern side of the Kei River (hence the name Ciskei; the Transkei was the Xhosa homeland on the western side of the Kei).[88] In 1971, it became self-governing through a Legislative Assembly that was dominated by non-elected chiefs.[89] The Ciskei became nominally independent (although it had no control over foreign policy, currency, or immigration) in 1981, with Lennox Sebe as its first President and self-appointed Chief of the invented Khambashe chiefdom.[90] Sebe ruled over the Ciskei with the support of the South African government until 1990, when he was forced out in a military coup by Brigadier Oupa Gqozo, an apparent reformer who quickly dug in his heels and tried to prevent the incorporation of the Ciskei into a unified democratic South Africa.[91] Much of Sebe and Gqozo's power came from their control of the "surplus people" who had been forcibly relocated to the Ciskei from the 1960s through 1980s. In the 1980s about 15,000 people were forcibly moved to the Ciskei every year.[92] These impoverished Ciskei residents depended on loyalty to Sebe's Ciskei National Independence Party (CNIP) in order to gain access to the

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[87] For an overview of the demise of the Bantustans, see: Jason Robinson, "Fragments of the Past: Homeland Politics and the South African Transition, 1990–2014," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41, no. 5 (2015): 953–67; "Introduction," in Shireen A. Ally and Arianna Lissoni, eds., *New Histories of South Africa's Apartheid-Era Bantustans* (London: Routledge, 2017).

[88] Mager, *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan*, 221.

[89] F. Richings, "The Ciskei Constitution," in Nancy Charton, ed., *Ciskei: Economics and Politics of Dependence in a South African Homeland* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 61–64.

[90] Anonymous [Jeff Peires], "Ethnicity and Pseudo-Ethnicity in the Ciskei," in *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, ed. Leroy Vail (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 401.

[91] J.B. Peires, "The Implosion of the Ciskei and Transkei" (African Studies Centre, University of the Witwatersrand African Studies Seminar, May 4, 1992).

[92] Anonymous [Jeff Peires], "Ethnicity and Pseudo-Ethnicity in the Ciskei," 395.

land and jobs they needed to survive—although many suffered without land or income in the arid resettlement camps like Sada and Dimbaza.[93] The power of the Ciskei's leaders was therefore largely founded on their control over rural areas, which they controlled through CNIP and through their patronage of the "tribal authorities" who administered each village.[94]

In this context, Mdantsane was both integral to the purpose of the Ciskei, and a challenge to the hegemony of its leaders. From the beginning, Mdantsane was designed to be close enough to East London to provide a reliable labor force for that city's development, and yet administratively separate so that it could be governed through the homeland system. Mdantsane offered some of the few opportunities for employment for Ciskei residents. Through a combination of forced removals from East London, forced removals from Western Cape cities, and voluntary migration from the rural Ciskei, by 1976 Mdantsane had an official population of 115,628 (though the real population was likely much higher).[95] Together, Mdantsane and the nearby township of Zwelitsha (connected to the white town of King William's Town) were home to almost one-quarter of the Ciskei's population.[96] The Ciskei government rightly feared Mdantsane's potential as a center of resistance to the Bantustan, given residents' strong economic and personal links to East London. Mdantsane was not given any structures of municipal self-governance as laid out in the Ciskei constitution but was rather ruled directly by

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[93] Luvuyo Wotshela, "Homeland Consolidation, Resettlement and Local Politics in the Border and the Ciskei Region of the Eastern Cape, South Africa, 1960 to 1996" (Doctoral dissertation, Oxford, University of Oxford, 2001); Luvuyo Wotshela, "Asiyi ECiskei['We Are Not Going to the Ciskei']: Removals and Resistance in the 'Border' Region, 1972–1988," *South African Historical Journal* 52, no. 1 (2005): 140–69; Laura Evans, "Resettlement and the Making of the Ciskei Bantustan, South Africa, c.1960–1976," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, no. 1 (2014): 21–40; Laura Evans, *Survival in the "Dumping Grounds": A Social History of Apartheid Relocation* (Brill, 2019).

[94] Laura Evans, "The Bantustan State and the South African Transition: Militarisation, Patrimonialism and the Collapse of the Ciskei Regime, 1986–1994," *African Historical Review* 50, no. 1–2 (2018): 101–29.

[95] T.J. Gordon, "Mdantsane: Evolution of a dependency," in Opland and Cook, *Mdantsane: Transitional City*, 14.

[96] G.P. Cook, "Scattered Towns or an Urban System?" in Charton, *Ciskei: Economics and Politics of Dependence in a South African Homeland*, 36.

the Ciskei state.[97] Mdantsane was the largest urban center in the Ciskei, and integral to the

economic survival of the Bantustan, but it also had the potential to threaten the project of

Bantustan separate development.

As interesting and unique as Mdantsane is, as a Bantustan township, very little scholarly

historical work has been published about this township. This is true of Bantustans in general,

which for a long time were neglected in the study of the history of apartheid. One primary reason

for this neglect was that, from their founding in the late 1970s, the status of the Bantustans as

independent states made them difficult to access for outsider journalists and social scientists.

Most of the published work about the Ciskei in the 1980s, besides government propaganda, was

based on press reports or on fairly limited survey data. The primary preoccupation of published

scholarship about the Bantustans in this era was the question of their feasibility and

sustainability. On this question, the government propaganda was sanguine and the academic

research more or less scathingly dismissive.[98] For instance, a study of Mdantsane conducted by

the Rhodes University Institute of Social and Economic Research in the late 1970s (just before

the Ciskei's independence) was based largely on census data, newspapers, and surveys of

Mdantsane residents' economic activity. The report expressed muted skepticism about

Mdantsane's potential to develop into a "real" city in a future independent Ciskei.[99]

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[97] R. Fox, E. Nel, and C. Reintges, "East London," in *Homes Apart: South Africa's Segregated Cities*, ed. Anthony Lemon (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 66.
[98] For examples of government propaganda for Ciskei, see: R.G. Barry and Bureau for Economic Research, Bantu Development [Benbo], *Black Development in South Africa: The Economic Development of the Black People in the Homelands of the Republic of South Africa* (Pretoria: Benbo, 1976); Bureau for Economic Research re Bantu Development (Benbo), *Ciskei: Ekonomiese - Economic Review* (Pretoria: Bureau for Economic Research, Bantu Development [Benbo], 1975); For more critical assessments based on government statistics and survey data, see Charton, *Ciskei: Economics and Politics of Dependence in a South African Homeland*; Pippa Green and Alan Hirsch, "The Impact of Resettlement in the Ciskei: Three Case Studies," Saldru Working Papers (Cape Town: Southern Africa Labour & Development Research Institute, 1983); Simon Bekker, "Levels of Living in Ciskei: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis," in *Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa*, vol. 277 (Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa, Cape Town, 1984).
[99] Opland and Cook, *Mdantsane: Transitional City*.

After the end of apartheid, Bantustans were for some time not a fashionable subject of study. Rural areas of Bantustans had largely not been at the forefront of anti-apartheid resistance in the late 1980s, and the "petit bourgeoise" civil servants and middle classes of the Bantustan towns and townships were tainted by their participation in the structures of a discredited apartheid system.[100] But by the early 2000s, historians were becoming interested in "these apparent pseudo-states as historical realities."[101] In 2011 the Wits History Workshop hosted a conference titled "Let's Talk About Bantustans"; the title indicated the relative newness of Bantustans as a subject of scholarly conversation. In the past decade, historians have carefully probed how Bantustan elites and ordinary residents negotiated and shaped the systems of ethnicity, traditional authority, and development that the apartheid state tried to impose on them.[102]

One of the major barriers that historians of the Bantustans face is a lack of written sources. After Bantustan administrations were reincorporated into a unified nation of South Africa, many of their records were lost or destroyed. To understand the lived experience of Bantustan residents—especially non-elites who were not well represented in official documents—historians have relied greatly on oral history. Some scholars have examined the complex position of chiefs and other leaders who navigated between the expectations of the

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[100] As early as 1992 Peires had already critiqued what he saw as a tendency by other scholars to dismiss Bantustan civil servants and bourgeoisie as fully complicit and in agreement with the homeland system. Peires, "The Implosion of the Ciskei and Transkei," 40–42.

[101] Arianna Lissoni and Shireen Ally, "'Bantustan States,'" *African Historical Review* 50, no. 1–2 (2018): 1.

[102] Peris Sean Jones, "'To Come Together for Progress': Modernization and Nation-Building in South Africa's Bantustan Periphery - the Case of Bophuthatswana," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25, no. 4 (1999): 579–605; Wotshela, "Homeland Consolidation, Resettlement and Local Politics in the Border and the Ciskei Region of the Eastern Cape, South Africa, 1960 to 1996"; Sekibakiba Peter Lekgoathi, "'You Are Listening to Radio Lebowa of the South African Broadcasting Corporation': Vernacular Radio, Bantustan Identity and Listenership, 1960–1994," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 3 (2009): 575–94; Timothy Gibbs, *Mandela's Kinsmen: Nationalist Elites and Apartheid's First Bantustan* (Johannesburg: James Currey; Jacana, 2014); Jill E. Kelly, *To Swim with Crocodiles: Land, Violence, and Belonging in South Africa, 1800-1996* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2018); Laura Helen Phillips, "Below the Land Deals: The Making of Mineral Property in Ga-Mphahlele, South Africa, 1880–1994," *The Journal of African History* 63, no. 1 (2022): 4–18.

subjects and those of the state whose system of traditional authority supported them.[103] Others

have used oral history to reveal the actions and experiences of ordinary residents in the

Bantustans, who sometimes directly resisted, but most often worked creatively around, the

systems of separate development in which they had to operate.[104] These histories are particularly

significant because of the continuing effects of Bantustan politics, administration, and

infrastructure in present-day South Africa.

Sources and Methodology

In examining the history of manyanos, and their work of Christian public motherhood, in the

context of urban apartheid in East London and the Bantustan township of Mdantsane, this

dissertation draws on a wide range of sources, including oral history, church and government

archives, photographs, and newspaper evidence. However, not all of these sources are available

consistently for the period (approximately 1900 to 1994) covered in the dissertation. Moreover,

all these sources have gaps, biases, or problems of interpretation. The era of the Ciskei

Bantustan's nominal independence and its transition to democracy (approximately 1981 to 1994)

is particularly difficult to research because of gaps in official archives and silences in oral

historical testimony; these issues are discussed in more detail below, and in Chapter 6.

  To research the urban history of East London and its East Bank location, I relied on

government archives and newspapers. The Town Clerk Files for East London at the Cape Town

depot of South Africa's National Archives contain files related to the administration of the East

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[103] Sekibakiba Peter Lekgoathi, "Chiefs, Migrants and North Ndebele Ethnicity in the Context of Surrounding Homeland Politics, 1965-1978*," *African Studies* 62, no. 1 (2003): 53–77; Gibbs, *Mandela's Kinsmen: Nationalist Elites and Apartheid's First Bantustan*; Kelly, *To Swim with Crocodiles: Land, Violence, and Belonging in South Africa, 1800-1996*.

[104] Leslie Anne Hadfield, *Liberation and Development: Black Consciousness Community Programs in South Africa* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2016); Leslie Anne Hadfield, *A Bold Profession: African Nurses in Rural Apartheid South Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2021); Leslie J. Bank, "The Making of the Qwaqwa 'Mafia'? Patronage and Protection in the Migrant Taxi Business," *African Studies* 49, no. 1 (January 1, 1990): 71–93.

Bank location, including the minutes of the Location Advisory Board, to which leading Black

members of the East Bank were elected from the 1920s through 1950s. I also gained information

about the East Bank's popular culture and church events through local newspapers: the isiXhosa

papers *Izwi Lama Afrika* (1931-1932), *Umlindi we Nyanga* (1936-1941), and *Indaba Zase Monti*

(1958-60) provided local news and commentary from the East Bank community.[105] I consulted

the regional paper *Imvo Zabantsundu* and the national paper *Umteteli wa Bantu* for reporting on

social and church events in East London in the 1930s and 1940s.[106] The East London *Daily*

Dispatch (aimed mainly at a white English speaking audience) reported on developments in

segregation and forced removals, and its weekly "African Edition" (1950s-1965) section also

published news and photographs from the East Bank and Mdantsane.

Since Mdantsane was not part of the East London municipality during apartheid, it was

administrated through the Bantu Affairs Department in the 1960s and early 1970s. The Eastern

Cape Provincial Archives depot in Qonce (formerly King William's Town) holds the records of

the Mdantsane Local Committee, which oversaw the construction of the township's roads,

houses, and basic infrastructure. The National Archives at Pretoria also hold records related to

the administration of Mdantsane in the 1960s and 1970s, including application files for church

building plots. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, as administrative control of Mdantsane was

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[105] *Izwi* was published in East London and represented moderate African political views of the time. *Umlindi* was a commercial newspaper owned by an East London manufacturing firm; its editor was the politician R.H. Godlo. *Indaba* was a "community newsletter" printed in Duncan Village, carrying mostly news of social events and advertisements for local businesses. Les Switzer and Donna Switzer, *The Black Press in South Africa and Lesotho: A descriptive and bibliographic guide to African, Coloured and Indian newspapers, newsletters and magazines 1836-1976* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1979), 47, 106, 119.

[106] *Imvo* was founded in 1884 by John Tengo Jabavu and was one of the earliest independent Black newspapers in South Africa. In 1934 it was purchased by the commercial newspaper company Bantu Press, and after its editorial office was moved to Johannesburg in the 1940s the quality of its news coverage for the Eastern Cape declined. *Umteteli* was a commercial newspaper owned by the Chamber of Mines, and published social news in English and several indigenous South African languages. On the usefulness of *Umteteli* as a source for social history, see Natasha Erlank, "Umteteli Wa Bantu and the Constitution of Social Publics in the 1920s and 1930s," *Social Dynamics* 45, no. 1 (2019): 75–102.

gradually devolved to the Ciskei government, fewer records were sent to Pretoria. The fate of the Ciskei government's records is uncertain. These records should probably be in the provincial archives in Qonce, but the political turmoil and financial difficulties of the Eastern Cape provincial government after the transition to democracy means that many records of the Ciskei government are missing; they may have been accidentally or purposefully destroyed, or they may still remain uncatalogued and unavailable to researchers.[107] With the assistance of the archivists at the Eastern Cape provincial archives in Qonce, and using the printed finding aids there, I found records related to infrastructure planning and business licenses in Mdantsane, but no files dated after 1970.

Another valuable source for the history of East London and Mdantsane is the photography of Daniel Morolong. Morolong was a resident of the East Bank location and the best-known Black photographer in East London in the mid-twentieth century; he photographed birthday parties, stylish youth socializing in shops, rugby tournaments, beach parties, concerts, beauty pageants, and church events. Some of these photographs were commissioned for events, and some were taken spontaneously when Morolong observed people socializing in public.[108] In the early 2000s, Morolong allowed researchers from the University of Fort Hare to digitize several boxes of photographs and negatives that had been untouched since he retired from professional photography several decades earlier. Most of these photographs are from the 1950s through 1970s (a few appear to have been taken in Mdantsane in the 1980s) and provide a vivid portrait of social life in the East Bank, including weddings, beauty competitions, sporting events,

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[107] See the detailed discussion of the history of the Eastern Cape provincial archives in: Sean Morrow and Luvuyo Wotshela, "The State of the Archives and Access to Information," in *State of the Nation: South Africa 2004-2005*, ed. John Daniel, Roger Southall, and Jessica Lutchman (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2005), 313–35.

[108] Lipuo Morolong, Interview at Mdantsane City Mall, Mdantsane, February 19, 2020.

musical performances, church events, and casual street scenes.[109] I was given a copy of this

digitized collection, and permission from Morolong's daughter Lipuo Morolong to use the

photographs in my dissertation and published research. I brought copies of potentially interesting

church-related photographs to many of my interviews. These photographs were useful as

conversation starters, and occasionally interviewees were able to identify specific people and

buildings in the photos. With the permission of the Morolong family, I also gave copies of

photographs to any interviewees who wished to keep a copy.

Photographs of church events were particularly useful to my research; these are also

among the photographs that have received the least attention an analysis in the various

exhibitions and studies of Morolong's work, which have generally focused on his photographs of

youthful, modern, and playful subjects.[110] For instance, Bank and Qebeyi have praised

Morolong's photos as acts of "subversive humanism" that expressed a vibrant African

modernity.[111] However, other scholars caution against a strict dichotomy of value between

negative, "repressive" photography such as pass document photos, and the "honorific"

photography of the street or studio.[112] The social dynamics underlying popular photography are

often unknown, Minkley and Hayes argue, and scholars should not be too quick to assume that

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[109] These photos are the centerpiece of this popular pictorial social history of the East Bank: Leslie J. Bank and Mxolisi K. Qebeyi, *Imonti Modern: Picturing the Life and Times of a South African Location* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2017).

[110] Phindi Mnyaka, "The Profane and the Prophetic at a South African Beach," in Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley, eds., *Ambivalent: Photography and Visibility in African History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2019), 209–32; Phindezwa Mnyaka, "From Salons to the Native Reserve: Reformulating the 'Native Question' through Pictorial Photography in 1950s South Africa," *Social Dynamics* 40, no. 1 (2014): 106–21; Kylie Thomas, "Glimpses into the History of Street Photography in South Africa," *Daily Dispatch*, October 15, 2020, https://www.dispatchlive.co.za/news/opinion/2020-10-15-glimpses-into-the-history-of-street-photography-in-south-africa/; "Snaps: The Photographs of Daniel 'Kgomo' Morolong," Everard Read Gallery, accessed February 22, 2023, https://www.everard-read-capetown.co.za/exhibition/145/press_release/.

[111] Bank and Qebeyi, *Imonti Modern: Picturing the Life and Times of a South African Location*, 12.

[112] Indeed, Morolong himself sometimes worked as a pass photographer, creating the images that would be used to confirm the subordinate status of people classified "African." Morolong believed that, with his help as a sympathetic photographer, these pass photographs could contain humour, hope, and self-assertion. Gary Minkley, "The Pass Photograph and the Intimate Photographic Event in South Africa," in Hayes and Minkley, *Ambivalent*, 105–25.

the subject of a spontaneous street photograph found the experience empowering.[113] While studio portraits and "lounge" photography lend themselves easily to an interpretation of photography as an empowering mode of self-realization, photographs of church events permit more ambivalent interpretations.[114] In my analysis of these photographs, I pay attention to Morolong's position as a community insider as well as his place as a Black man commissioned to take photographs of women's church events.[115]

In addition to Daniel Morolong's photographs of church events (such as the beauty competitions discussed in Chapter 3), I made use of church archives to understand the history of the manyano movement in the Eastern Cape region. A few interviewees also shared with me unpublished documents from their personal collection about the history of their local church or manyano branch.[116] The Anglican church collection at the University of Witwatersrand Historical Papers contained some information about the Mothers' Union (the Anglican manyano), as did the Lovedale Pamphlet collection at Rhodes University's Cory Library. I corresponded with archivists at the Catholic Diocese of Port Elizabeth, who informed me they did not have any material related to women's church organizations. The Methodist Church of Southern Africa collection at the Cory Library was invaluable to my research. For the most part, the Methodist church, like other churches, did not collect and preserve records from local manyano branches.

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[113] Gary Minkley and Patricia Hayes, "Introduction," in Hayes and Minkley, 12–13.

[114] For a definition of the genre of "lounge photography" see Sophie Feyder, "Lounge Photography and the Politics of Township Interiors: The Representation of the Black South African Home in the Ngilima Photographic Collection, East Rand, 1950s," *Kronos* 38, no. 1 (2012): 131–53; Sophie Feyder, "A Space of One's Own: Studio Photography and the Making of Black Urban Femininities in the 1950s East Rand," *Safundi* 15, no. 2–3 (2014): 227–54.

[115] For a similar discussion of a Black photographer's positionality and its influenced on photographs, see Donald L. Donham with Santu Mofokeng, *Violence in a Time of Liberation: Murder and Ethnicity at a South African Gold Mine, 1994* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

[116] "History and Constitution of Mother's Organisation of the Assemblies of God," undated, c 1960, typescript in the personal collection of Nokwanda Mlomzale; Ngcayiya, "History of St Philip's Church"; Rosie Manene, "History of Nxaruni society," trans. Phelisa Mtima, 2019, Typescript in the personal collection of Rosie Manene; Benedicta Flatela, "Amagqabantshintshi Ngembali Nemvelaphi Yomanyano Lwamanina [A Brief History of the Origins of the Women's Manyano]," trans. Phelisa Mtima and Katie Carline, n.d., Typescript in the author's collection.

An exception is the Queenstown Methodist women's manyano. Minute books exist for the Girls' Manyano (*umanyano lwentombazana*) for 1933-34, and for the Women's Manyano for 1907-1917 and most of the years between 1938 and 1965.These granular records of what manyano women prayed about, the scriptural texts they read, the money the raised, and how they spent it, provide valuable detailed information about Black women's popular religious practice. I use the Queenstown manyano records to generalize about trends in manyano membership and fundraising practices in the Eastern Cape between the 1930s and 1960s.

Finally, oral history constitutes a major source for my telling of manyano history, and how manyanos changed over time in East London and Mdantsane. I lived in East London for six months in 2019 and 2020 (an original plan to do 12 months of research was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic). Over these six months, and during a brief visit in 2022, I conducted 45 oral history interviews with individuals and groups who were manyano members or were involved in church-related organizations and women's organizations in East London, Mdantsane, and the surrounding Eastern Cape region. I was often referred to people in senior leadership positions, who tended to be well educated and relatively well-off; although I interviewed people from many backgrounds, from nurses and teachers to domestic workers and those without formal employment. The majority of these interviews were conducted in person, though I did interview six people by Whatsapp audio call, when the pandemic prevented us from meeting in person. A phone interview was an adequate way to ask follow-up questions of someone I already knew, but it was difficult to establish trust and rapport, or even hear information correctly, when we had not met in person before.

The selection of interviewees was shaped by my own network of acquaintances. Zuko Blauw, historian at the East London Museum, connected me to many people in the local Catholic

community, while other acquaintances from the Anglican and Assemblies of God churches

provided introductions to potential interviewees. My research assistant Phelisa Mtima also

introduced me to potential interviewees from among her social networks. I accepted as many

invitations to church services as I could and was introduced to a few interviewees that way. In

other instances, I approached ministers of particular congregations, explained my research

project, and asked for their assistance in contacting elderly manyano members from their

congregation. Finally, I also conducted a few brief interviews in Bell Village, a rural area about

40 miles outside East London (many of whose residents had previously lived in East London and

Mdantsane), with the assistance of Nolovuyo Wonci, a resident of Bell Village who introduced

me to elderly manyano members of her acquaintance. In all, I interviewed members of ten

different denominations, among which mission-established churches and older Pentecostal

churches dominated, while smaller AICs are less well represented.[117]

Most of these interviews were conducted at the interviewee's home. On two occasions I

was invited to interview an entire manyano branch before their weekly Thursday meeting; the

formal atmosphere of these group interviews meant that they were less useful for collecting

detailed historical information. For approximately half the interviews, I was accompanied by my

research assistant Phelisa Mtima. While I speak isiXhosa at an intermediate level and can

understand more, my language skills were not advanced enough to conduct interviews alone in

isiXhosa. Phelisa's presence allowed interviewees to speak in whichever language they

preferred; some interviewees switched back and forth between the two. Phelisa translated and

transcribed the recordings of those interviews that were primarily in isiXhosa, while I transcribed

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[117] These denominations are: the Anglican church (Church of the Province of Southern Africa); the African Methodist Episcopal church; the "Zion" church (unspecified); the Baptist Union of Southern Africa; the Methodist Church of Southern Africa; the Assemblies of God; the Roman Catholic church; the Apostolic Faith Mission; the National Baptist church; the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa.

those primarily in English. Before each interview began, I obtained oral consent from the interviewees to record and use their statements in my research. I recorded most interviews on a digital audio recorder; a few people asked not to be recorded for all or part of the conversation but agreed that I could take hand-written notes.

I began each interview by explaining that I was researching the history of manyanos in East London and Mdantsane, and then asked the interviewee to tell us about her family background, childhood, and how she had come to join a manyano. If her mother had been a manyano member, I also asked about her memories of her mother's manyano activity. I then transitioned to questions about the interviewee's own experiences as a manyano member: her personal life and activities, as well as the history of her local congregation and manyano branch. For this main portion of the interview, I allowed the interviewee to guide the focus: some women were most interested in telling the history of their local branch, while others gravitated towards speaking of their own lives and personal experiences of manyano membership. To avoid generalized statements or a focus on the very recent past, I asked follow-up questions anchored to important moments that the interviewee had experienced: for instance, the forced removals from the East Bank in the 1960s; the Mdantsane bus boycotts of the 1970s and 1980s; or the 1990 coup in the Ciskei.

My reception by interviewees, and the things they were willing to tell me about, were undoubtedly influenced by my position as a young, white, foreign woman in South Africa, accompanied by a young local Black woman. People were curious about our religious affiliations and were often visibly reassured to hear that Phelisa and I were both church members ourselves, she in the Methodist church and I in the Anglican. We were perceived as being very young, which in some instances seemed to please interviewees who were glad to teach us about the

history of their church. In other situations, our youth underscored the fact that we were not manyano members ourselves (I was thirty years old at the time, married, and expecting a child, which might have made me eligible in some people's estimation). Our perceived youth may have made some interviewees hesitant to tell us about matters they saw as only appropriate for discussion by adult mothers. Only once did someone decline to be interviewed because I was too young. "They have sent me a child," was the memorable statement with which Phelisa and I were dismissed from the room on this occasion.

In interpreting these oral histories, I was conscious of the problems of historical memory and the influence of the contemporary context in South Africa. While my status as an outsider and student researcher may have encouraged interviewees to teach me about history, they also had an incentive to represent their churches and manyanos in a positive light. In general, manyano members portrayed their organizations as having been beneficial to themselves and the wider community. In this dissertation, I often write of a "congregation" or "religious community" as a unified whole, but I am aware that these communities likely had their own internal divisions that interviewees chose not to tell me about. In addition to the problem of selective memory, there is also the problem of dating memories. Interviewees who joined a manyano in the 1970s or 1980s have been members of their organizations for forty or fifty years now, and their most detailed memories were often of the recent past. It was not always easy for me to tell what era an interviewee was telling me about, as she described her manyano's activities. It was, however, useful to my interpretation to observe this strong sense of continuity and unbroken tradition that was communicated by many of my interviewees. But there were also particular memories that interviewees chose not to speak about. The late apartheid and transition era, from the mid-1980s until 1994, was a time of violence and uncertainty in the Ciskei, as in

the rest of South Africa. Chapter 6 discusses the hesitancy and silences in oral historical testimony about this era.

Nevertheless, oral history is necessary and valuable to telling a history of manyanos during urban apartheid. Oral history allows manyano history to move beyond a list of branch presidents, an official rule book, membership statistics, or annual reports. Oral histories show how individuals who were navigating changing systems of urban segregation found meaning and support in the manyano movement. The stories of individual lives show how the work of building and maintaining religious communities was shaped by – and shaped – the major political and economic forces of urban apartheid.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation begins by tracing the origins of manyanos in the rural Eastern Cape in the early twentieth century. Chapter One shows how manyano practices of prayer, maternal solidarity, and concern for the needs of a whole community were informed by indigenous Xhosa (and more broadly southern African) gendered roles and religious culture. The emergence of the manyano movement within mission-established churches was also related to contemporary economic and social strains caused by war, colonial conquest, land dispossession, and South Africa's mineral revolution. In this context, Black Christian women in the Eastern Cape region developed multiple definitions of Christian motherhood. The home improvement (or *Zenzele)* movement emphasized women's practical duties within a defined nuclear family home, the short-lived Amafelandawonye movement was focused on women's economic needs, while the manyano movement defined home and family in a broader sense. These visions of Christian motherhood were in conversation and in subtle competition with one another, though by the 1940s manyanos were the largest and best-known Black Christian women's organization in the region.

Chapter Two shifts focus to the city of East London, where by the 1930s the Black urban population was growing quickly as the city's industry, and the increasing poverty in the rural reserves around East London, brought more men and women to the city in search of a livelihood. Indeed, the presence of many Black women in the city (especially single mothers) was notable, and alarming, to contemporary observers. This chapter traces the early history of manyanos and other women's organizations in the segregated East Bank location of East London and explores how they functioned within the location community during a time of economic change, population growth, and political innovation. Manyanos shaped an emerging Black urban culture by providing a link between rural and urban communities and contributing, through their fundraising efforts, to a culture of religious ecumenism and financial reciprocity at a time when Black urbanites' entrepreneurial activity was highly restricted by white authorities.

In the 1950s, the East Bank location was in a state of suspended crisis. Rapid urbanization and municipal neglect had led to a severe housing shortage in the East Bank location. Chapter Three begins in 1952, when a police massacre of approximately two hundred East Bank residents and the killing of two white civilians by East Bank protestors, strengthened the government's resolve to implement new policies of urban apartheid, and remove Black urbanites from the city to a distant township. But while this threat of removal hung over the East Bank, the location was also experiencing a religious revival that led to the construction of at least four new church buildings in the 1950s, one of them claiming to be the largest church building in southern Africa. Manyano women were central to these religious revivals and building projects. This chapter argues, using evidence from oral histories and photographs, that church buildings allowed manyano women to stake their claim to urban belonging at a time when their homes in the city were threatened.

Chapter Four begins in 1963, when the government began its long-anticipated plan to forcibly remove people classified as "African" from East London and send them to the newly built planned township of Mdantsane, fifteen miles from the city. The forced removals were deeply disruptive and damaging to individuals, families, and religious communities. In Mdantsane people had to rebuild their lives in a landscape that was influenced by the government's notions of ideal, stable, families and religious communities. In this context, churches struggled to navigate bureaucratic controls to gain access to church land. They often relied on wide-reaching national and international networks in order to gain the financial support and institutional legitimacy to make a new religious home in the township, despite the fact that Mdantsane, as a Bantustan township, was in many ways cut off from the wider world. Manyano women continued to invest in church buildings as sites of home-making, both through furnishing their minister's house in a suitably respectable style, and through constructing new church buildings in areas that had been neglected by official urban planning.

Chapter Five focuses on a particular theme of manyano women's work in Mdantsane and East London during the 1970s and 1980s: traveling. Township transportation infrastructure severely challenged the work of many community organizations, but manyanos in the 1970s innovated new structures and practices of mobility that allowed them to grow their membership. But manyanos were also challenged in the 1970s and 1980s by commuter boycotts that bankrupted the state-subsidized bus system and ushered in a new system of informal minibus taxis. Manyano women's oral history testimony about the era of the bus boycotts demonstrates that these events were not a simple victory for commuters over the apartheid transportation system. The taxis opened up new possibilities for travel, but also posed new problems of safety and expense. Manyano members' histories of traveling reveal how these popular religious groups

evolved over time, and also highlight the often-neglected role of commuters in shaping transportation culture and practices in cities across Africa.

The final narrative chapter of the dissertation examines how churches and manyanos navigated the collapse of the apartheid system in the late 1980s, the demise of the Ciskei Bantustan, and the transitional period before the first democratic elections in 1994. Manyano women were involved in the struggle against apartheid, but sometimes avoided identifying their activities as political. The silences and hesitancy that surround manyano members' memories of the late apartheid and transition era point to the unresolved legacy of this turbulent time. Yet while manyano members often represented themselves as aloof from politics, they were active participants in the economic and spatial transformations of East London at the end of apartheid. In poorer urban areas on the margins of the township and the city, Pentecostal and AIC manyanos gave women the opportunity to become respected public mothers through the long-standing manyano practices of prayer and preaching. For a different cohort of manyano members who were part of the small and growing Black middle class, church activities took them into formerly white parts of the city, where they focused more on practical charitable work. Changes in the meaning of manyano motherhood at the end of apartheid were thus revealing of widening urban inequality at the end of apartheid.

In the Conclusion, I note how *oomama bomthandazo* (mothers of prayer) continue to occupy an important place in South African popular culture, even as changing religious trends mean that manyanos are no longer the primary form of Black women's engagement in churches. In the Conclusion, I summarize the themes of motherhood and home-making that emerge through this study of manyanos in East London and Mdantsane. Practices of public motherhood and strategies for making religious homes changed throughout the twentieth century and were

bound up in changes in the urban landscape. This dissertation therefore contributes to a greater historical understanding of the role of gender and popular religious practice in shaping South Africa's urban landscapes.

CHAPTER 1:

Defining the Domestic Sphere: Ordinary and Elite Women and the Emergence of Manyanos in the Eastern Cape, c.1900-1939

The formal organizational history of manyanos in South Africa begins in the early twentieth century. Women's prayer and service organizations affiliated with church denominations quickly spread across the country, including within the Eastern Cape. By the middle of the twentieth century, most Black congregations had a women's manyano with its own uniform, regular Thursday afternoon meetings, and defined duties of prayer, service, and fundraising. For Black Christian women in the Eastern Cape, manyano membership was central to their identity as church members, women, and mothers with authority in the community. This chapter traces the origins of manyanos and related women's organizations in the isiXhosa speaking Ciskei and Transkei regions of the Cape Province, or what would later become the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, Black, Christian, mainly isiXhosa-speaking women in the Eastern Cape developed multiple definitions of Christian womanhood and women's authority at a time when family relationships were increasingly strained by male labor migration and deepening rural poverty.

By reconstructing an Eastern Cape history of manyanos, this chapter expands the scope of manyano history beyond the single denominational studies that have characterized most manyano histories. It builds on the work of Gaitskell, Haddad, and others, which argued that manyano members offered one another solidarity in their common problems of ruptured familial bonds and economic insecurity, problems that were becoming increasingly urgent in industrializing South Africa in the early twentieth

century.[1] Although manyanos were part of patriarchal and racial church hierarchies, Black women took control of the manyano movement. They infused these prayer groups with indigenous religious styles and gendered practices, in spite of white church leaders' attempts to focus them on "devout domesticity."[2]

While the Methodist manyano is the earliest and best documented and provides the bulk of evidence for manyano history in the Eastern Cape, it was closely connected to similar women's movements in other churches. From its earliest days, the manyano movement was informed by ideas and problems that were common to Black Christian women in early twentieth century South Africa. Indeed, the official church manyanos were not the only place where women addressed these problems; manyanos were connected to other women's movements outside the church. The most striking, although singular, example of such a movement is the 1922 women's strike in Herschel, where Christian women mounted a successful boycott of shops. This movement is discussed later in this chapter.[3] A longer-lasting and more politically quiescent movement to which manyanos were connected was the *zenzeles*, or home improvement societies. Catherine Higgs' research has shown that these home improvement societies, like the manyanos, sought to address the needs of Xhosa Christian women during a time of economic

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[1] Beverley Haddad, "The Manyano Movement in South Africa: Site of Struggle, Survival and Resistance," *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 61 (2004); Deborah Gaitskell, "Power in Prayer and Service: Women's Christian Organizations," in *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History*, ed. Richard Elphick and T.R.H. Davenport (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 253–67.

[2] Deborah Gaitskell, "Devout Domesticity? A Century of African Women's Christianity in South Africa," in *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, ed. Cherryl Walker (Cape Town: David Philip and James Currey, 1990), 251–72; Philippe Denis and Isabel Phiri, "'There Is Also Apartheid in Our Homes': Interviewing Leaders of Black Women's Christian Organisations in KwaZulu-Natal" (University of KwaZulu Natal School of Religion and Theology: Sinomlando Centre, 1999); Haddad, "The Manyano Movement in South Africa: Site of Struggle, Survival and Resistance."

[3] Colin Bundy and William Beinart, "Amafelandawonye (the Die Hards): Popular Protest and Women's Movements in Herschel District in the 1920s," in *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: Politics & Popular Movements in the Transkei & Eastern Cape 1890-1930* (London: James Currey, 1987), 222–69.

hardship and social change. The home improvement groups were smaller than the church manyanos and were strongly influenced by a leadership of educated black women who distinguished themselves from the rural, uneducated women whom they wanted to "uplift."[4] Nevertheless, the home improvement groups shared with the church manyanos a common concern to define the sphere of Black women's domestic and community authority at a time when these women's social and economic positions were endangered.

The existence of these overlapping women's movements in the early twentieth century in the Eastern Cape indicates the importance of attending to multiple possible definitions of womanhood, and the related categories of domesticity and motherhood. One of these definitions of Christian womanhood and authority was articulated in the official church manyano groups, which fostered intense spiritual solidarity between women and upheld their authority within a wide church community. The other definition of Christian womanhood was expressed in the zenzele, or home improvement, movement, which emphasized the authority of mothers within individual rural homesteads. Both movements were shaped by outside forces, from white female church leaders to African American missionaries, but they also emerged from conversations and concerns among Xhosa Christian women.

Early Manyano Activity in South Africa

Deborah Gaitskell's research on Methodist manyanos in the Transvaal and the Witwatersrand suggests that these areas were the birthplace of the manyano concept. As early as the 1830s, Methodist missionary wives in the Transvaal started sewing schools to

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[4] Catherine Higgs, "Helping Ourselves: Black Women and Grassroots Activism in Segregated South Africa, 1922-1952," in *Stepping Forward: Black Women in Africa and the Americas*, ed. Barbara A. Moss, Earline Rae Ferguson, and Catherine Higgs (Ohio University Press, 2002), 59–72; Catherine Higgs, "Zenzele: African Women's Self-Help Organizations in South Africa, 1927–1998," *African Studies Review* 47, no. 03 (2004): 119–41.

teach converts to dress themselves in the European-style clothing that they considered suitable for Christians.[5] Across South Africa in the nineteenth century, conversion to Christianity was associated with being "dressed", especially for women.[6] This early connection between clothing and women's church membership may explain why manyanos adopted uniforms early on, and attached much significance to details of uniforms.[7] But nineteenth-century mission station sewing schools did not develop into lasting institutions, perhaps because missionaries saw them as a one-time preparatory course for marriage rather than a long-term association.

Some of earliest documentary evidence of a formal women's prayer and service organization in the Transvaal is from 1907. In this year, a Mrs. Gqosho, the wife of a Methodist minister in Potchefstroom, attended a women's convention in Natal and was inspired to start a permanent prayer group. The purpose was to pray "for their families and for the common unity and for their sins" as well as for protection against injury for men working in the mines.[8] Other branches sprang up in imitation of the Potchefstroom group. In 1910 the Transvaal Methodist synod decided that these groups needed official church supervision. They were given the title of the Native Women's Prayer Union, and

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[5] Changing Africans' clothing was integral to colonial projects across the continent, although colonizers never monopolized the meanings of Western-style dress. Jean Allman, ed., *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Hildi Hendrickson, ed., *Clothing and Difference: Embodied Identities in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Natasha Erlank, "The White Wedding: Affect and Economy in South Africa in the Early Twentieth Century," *African Studies Review* 57, no. 2 (2014): 29–50.

[6] This association between dress and women's religious status had some connection to indigenous religious culture. For example, see the earlier discussion of initiation and weddings. But it was also a connection imposed by missionaries. In the 1830s Scottish missionaries in Xhosa territory spoke of "rais[ing] if possible, those poor degraded females by giving them education and supplying... pieces of cheap European dress." Natasha Erlank, "Gender and Chrisianity Among Africans Attached to Scottish Mission Stations in Xhosaland in the Nineteenth Century" (Cambridge, Cambridge University, 1998), 220.

[7] Gaitskell, "Devout Domesticity? A Century of African Women's Christianity in South Africa," 255.

[8] Deborah Gaitskell, "Female Mission Initiatives: Black and White Women in Three Witwatersrand Churches, 1903-1939" (PhD dissertation, London, University of London, 1981), 144.

the wife of a white minister was appointed as the President of the organization.[9] By 1920 the organization had spread outside the Transvaal, and the annual conference of the NWPU drew 600 representatives from across the country.[10]

The white churchwomen who were given leadership of the Prayer Union tried unsuccessfully to re-focus the aims of the group towards practical domestic respectability rather than prayer alone. Gaitskell quotes from the earliest NWPU constitution, written by its first white woman president, which instructed members to "sweep and clean the house every day," to "keep your things and your family clean and good," and "if you have children teach them the Christian faith. Do not let them run naked."[11] This emphasis on practical housekeeping, cleanliness, and clothing would be repeated in the early twentieth century manyano rule books of several denominations.

White women leaders' focus on practical domestic training did not distract rank-and-file members of the manyano from pursuing their own understanding of the purpose of the Prayer Union. Reports from early conferences make it clear that Black members of the Prayer Union wanted autonomy within Methodist church organization. This desire for autonomy from white religious leaders should be seen in the context of the growth of African Independent Churches (AICs) in the early twentieth century; new churches labelled "Ethiopian" (by supporters and critics) proclaimed that Black Africans could interpret Christian doctrines and organize church life without missionary supervision.[12]

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[9] Gaitskell, 145.

[10] Gaitskell, "Devout Domesticity? A Century of African Women's Christianity in South Africa," 265.

[11] Gaitskell, "Female Mission Initiatives," 146.

[12] Scholars have also debated the causal links between separatist churches and nationalist politics, but Campbell and Edgar, among other recent scholars, conclude that while separatism or "Ethiopianism" may have had political applications, its origins cannot be reduced to African nationalism. C. C. Saunders, "Tile and the Thembu Church: Politics and Independency on the Cape Eastern Frontier in the Late Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of African History* 11, no. 4 (1970): 553–70; James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Espiscopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (Chapel Hill: University of

Black manyano women's desire for control over their organization is a reminder that the spirit of independency was present even among those who remained members of mission-established churches.[13]

Black women's desire for autonomy in the Prayer Union manifested in several ways. They were concerned with the frequency and accessibility of Prayer Union meetings. Debates in early conferences centred on how many delegates could attend from each branch, and lower-ranking members were keen for more frequent public meetings.[14] The manyano also had a more intense, emotional spirituality than white church leaders thought appropriate. The "wailing" prayers of manyano women in early twentieth century Johannesburg were puzzling to outside observers.[15] Gaitskell's research shows that Black women guided the principles and practices of the manyano from the beginning, despite the nominal authority of white Presidents. This is perhaps most clear from the fact that by the early 1920s the NWPU (later officially named the Methodist Women's Prayer and Service Union) became known as the manyano, an isiXhosa term rather than an English one.[16] The common acceptance of the term "manyano" for the women's organization can be seen in D.D.T. Jabavu's 1923 pamphlet about Methodism, in which he praises the

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North Carolina Press, 1998); Robert R. Edgar, *The Finger of God: Enoch Mgijima, the Israelites, and the Bulhoek Massacre in South Africa* (Charlottesville : London: University of Virginia Press, 2018); Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

[13] Robert J Houle, "Mbiya Kuzwayo's Christianity: Revival, Reformation and the Surprising Viability of Mainline Churches in South Africa," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 38 (2008): 141–70.

[14] Gaitskell, "Female Mission Initiatives," 146–49.

[15] Deborah Gaitskell, "'Wailing for Purity': Prayer Unions, African Mothers and Adolescent Daughters, 1912-1940," in *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness, 1870-1930,* ed. Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone (London: Longman, 1982), 338–57.

[16] Gaitskell, "Female Mission Initiatives," 146. "umanyano" is the isiXhosa word for "union," from the verb –manya meaning to marry or join together. It is not clear why an isiXhosa word became the common term for the Methodist women's group if the organization was still centred in the Transvaal and Witwatersrand. Certainly there were many isiXhosa-speaking migrants in that region in the 1920s.

women who "have done important work under their Manyano organisation especially in propaganda, and in the spiritual work of the Church generally."[17]

The manyano began in the Methodist church, but women of other denominational affiliations were quick to realise its potential and to adopt such groups in their own churches. Where other denominations had a pre-existing institutional form for a women's group, these groups became known as manyanos. For example, Anglican women in England had established a Mothers' Union (MU) in the late nineteenth century, and in 1904 white South African women inaugurated a Cape Town branch. But within two decades the MU had become a predominantly Black organization.[18] The MU adopted a uniform similar to the Methodist manyano uniform (but in different colors), and also met on Thursdays for prayer and preaching.[19] The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church in the United States created a Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society in 1893.[20] AME missionary wives brought the organization with them to South Africa and photographs from the 1920s and 1930s attest that local members had introduced a special uniform to the organization.[21] A similar transformation of international or foreign women's church groups into manyanos took place in the Catholic church. In the 1930s white Catholic priests introduced the Catholic Women's League and the Sodality of St.

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[17] D.D.T. Jabavu, *What Methodism Has Done for the Natives* (Lovedale: Lovedale Institution Press, 1923), 5.

[18] White women continued to hold the most senior positions in the MU. Bishops' wives were often the diocesan MU presidents. The first black diocesan presidents were elected in the 1960s. Lubabalo L. Ngewu, *Listening to the Silent Voices of the MU: The Centenary History of the MU in the CPSA* (Lovedale: Mothers Union, 2004), 155–59, 180.

[19] Ngewu, 49, 66.

[20] Dennis C. Dickerson, *The African Methodist Episcopal Church: A History* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 219.

[21] Cooke argues that the uniforms and caps of the AME manyano were an imposition on converts, meant to mark them off as inferior to their American co-religionists. This interpretation ignores the similarities between AME uniforms and other manyano uniforms, and the fact that uniforms were an established feature of Black women's Christianity in South Africa before AME missionaries introduced the WHFMS. Claire Cooke, "Capping Power? Clothing and the Female Body in African Methodist Episcopal Mission Photographs," *Mission Studies* 31, no. 3 (2014): 418–42.

Anne to South African congregations.[22] Both organizations became popular among Black and Coloured Catholics.[23]

AICs also adopted the manyano. The Bantu Methodist Church, founded by Rev. J. Mdelwa Hlongwane after he left the Methodist Church in the 1920s, soon had its own manyano. A 1950s pamphlet by the church describes Mrs. Nellie Hlongwane as "The Lady Founder President of the Bantu Methodist Church Women's Manyano, and inventor of the Maroon Bloused Women's Prayer Union uniform." The Women's Manyano is the only specific group within the Bantu Methodist Church that receives specific mention in this pamphlet.[24] This suggests the manyano was more important than the other common associations (choirs, youth groups, men's groups) that the Bantu Methodist Church likely had. The evidence is clear, then, that within the first three decades of the twentieth century, the manyano had become the standard women's organization within both mission-established churches and AICs.

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[22] Catholic women's organizations had existed in Lesotho since the late nineteenth century, but although there were several Catholic mission stations in the nineteenth-century Eastern Cape, there is no evidence that Catholic sodalities were organized in this region until the early or mid twentieth century. Marc Epprecht, "Domesticity and Piety in Colonial Lesotho: The Private Politics of Basotho Women's Pious Associations," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19, no. 2 (1993): 202–24; Marc Epprecht, *"This Matter of Women Is Getting Very Bad": Gender, Development and Politics in Colonial Lesotho* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000).

[23] Besides Epprecht's research on Catholic women's associations in Lesotho, little academic research has been published on Catholic women's organizations, although as Alan Henriques notes the women's manyano constitutes the largest group of laity in the church. Henriques' work addresses the Catholic Women's Union specifically in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Joy Brain gives a brief mention of black Catholic women's groups in her overview of Catholic history in South Africa. Alan Henriques, "The Catholic Church in the Culture of Apartheid: The Case of the Catholic Laity in Natal (1948-1965)" (Master of Theology, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal, 1996), https://ukzn-dspace.ukzn.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10413/17649/Henriques_Alan_Charles_1996.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y; Joy Brain, "The Roman Catholic Church," in *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 195–210; Nontle Kombele, Interview in Gompo, East London, December 16, 2019.

[24] "A Short Biographic Sketch of the life of the Founder President and General Overseer Bantu Methodist Church the Right Reverend J Mdelwa Hlongwane," 1952. Box 468, Church Applications for Government Recognition, Eastern Cape Provincial Archives King Williams Town.

Despite different denominational affiliations, all manyanos shared some basic practices and characteristics. Each had a uniform, which usually consisted of a skirt and blouse of a specific color, and a distinctive cap. Thursday was the manyano meeting day. The meetings were run by women, with the minister's wife often acting as the President (*uMongamelikazi*) or Chair (*uSihlalo*).[25] Male church leaders did not usually attend meetings. Prayer, hymn-singing, and preaching were the main activities of the meeting, although these spiritual activities were interwoven in the meeting agendas with financial reports, fundraising, and bureaucratic business.[26] By the 1930s, manyanos had become the standard form through which adult women participated in the their local congregation. The similarities in dress, meeting format, and the use of the term "manyano" indicate currents of interdenominational communication between Black Christian women. For example, the fact that a British Anglican institution like the Mothers' Union was so quickly transformed into a uniformed manyano suggests close contact between Anglican and Methodist women.[27] The appearance of manyanos in multiple denominations in the early twentieth century affirms the argument of this chapter that Black African women were the initiators of this movement.

However, official leadership of manyanos at the national level remained in white missionary women's hands.[28] Rule books from the Anglican and Methodist manyanos of this period show that the official focus of the manyano was a program of practical

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[25] When Nomfundo Luswazi's mother married an Anglican priest in 1929 she became the leader of the parish Mothers' Union and was addressed by the respectful term "Mama" even though she was younger than most of the members. Luswazi, email communication, 15 July 2020.

[26] See the minutes of the Queenstown Methodist Women's Manyano, 1938-1987. Methodist Church Collection, Cory Library.

[27] For example, it was common for women to join their husband's church after marriage. When Mercy Bekwa married in the Eastern Cape in the 1930s she left the Anglican manyano and joined the Methodist manyano in her husband's family's church. Lorraine Bekwa, Phone interview, February 25, 2021.

[28] Except in AICs, of course, or in the AME church where the missionary wives who held institutional power were African American. On AME missionary women, see Cooke, "Capping Power."

domesticity and family duty. For example, an isiXhosa service book for the Mothers'

Union produced by the Anglican Diocese of Grahamstown in the 1930s included set

prayers on three topics: "abazali" (parents), "abantwana" (children), and "owe-manyano"

(for the manyano). This was in accordance with the "three objects" of the Mothers'

Union, which were to uphold the sanctity of marriage, train children, and to be united in

prayer.[29] A Methodist manyano rulebook in isiZulu from 1933 was much more specific in

its instructions to members, and reflects the highly practical and patronizing attitude of

the white women who led the Methodist organization at the time. Of the six rules that

members were required to follow, three were devoted to a detailed prohibition of beer-

brewing, beer-drinking, dancing, and swearing.[30] These rulebooks are evidence of the

growing popularity and institutionalization of manyanos among black Christian women,

and that at the official level, the manyanos were focused on a simplistic program of moral

behaviour and domestic duty.

However, the official church organizations did not absorb all of Black Christian

women's energy. Other groups for prayer and preaching existed outside the church, or

parallel to it, and perhaps indicate currents of women's religious organization that pre-

date manyanos. The best documented of these groups is Thapelo ea Sephiri (meaning

"secret prayer" in seSotho), which was active in Johannesburg, and likely elsewhere in

the country, during the twentieth century. It was a secret group that promised its members

spiritual attainments beyond those available to ordinary churchgoers. In interviews

conducted in 1970, elderly Thapelo ea Sephiri members traced the organization back to

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[29] Diocese of Grahamstown of the Church of the Province of South Africa, *Inkonzo Zo Manyano Lwa Manina: Kwi Dayosis Yase Rini. Lovedale Press* (Lovedale: Lovedale Institution Press, 1930).
[30] African Women's Prayer and Service Union, *Ibandla Lama Methodist Le Ningizimu Ne Afrika. Isimiso so Manyano Lwa Makosikazi Omtandazo* (Cape Town: Methodist Book Depot, 1933).

"old times" in rural areas, when Christians who lived far from a church building met together for prayer.[31] Thapelo members remained outwardly affiliated to various denominations. They declared that the prayer group was not "outside" the church but "next to" it; at the same time, they believed that true salvation was found only through their secret teachings.[32] Membership in the group was often precipitated by a "calling" sickness, and like Xhosa *amagqirha*, most members were women. Like manyanos, local branches of Thapelo wore uniforms (only donned indoors at secret night meetings), and structured their meetings around prayers. Like manyanos, Thapelo branches recognized Thursday as a special day.[33] The similarity of these groups to official manyanos meant that they were perceived as a threat by church leaders.[34]

The secret nature of this organization makes it impossible to know its exact historical relationship to manyanos, or the overlap of membership between official manyanos and Thapelo at any point in time. However, its existence as a female-dominated, uniformed prayer group with a following of Black women from many denominations is another indication that the manyano movement came from below. Official manyano organizations were sanctioned and institutionalized by church hierarchies, but the desire for such prayer groups came from ordinary women, who expressed their priorities both inside and outside official structures.

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[31] A. G. Schutte and E. Moloantoa, "Thapelo Ya Sephiri a Study of Secret Prayer Groups in Soweto," *African Studies* 31, no. 4 (1972): 248.
[32] Schutte and Moloantoa, 246.
[33] Schutte and Moloantoa, 248, 251–54.
[34] Schutte and Moloantoa, 252; Ngewu, *Listening to the Silent Voices of the MU: The Centenary History of the MU in the CPSA*, 145–46.

Origins of Manyanos in the Eastern Cape: Prayer and Claiming Public Space

Gaitskell's research shows that manyanos in the Transvaal emerged very early in the twentieth century, but the limited documentary evidence from the Eastern Cape suggests that the manyanos in this region are at least as old, and perhaps even older. In the Eastern Cape, manyanos do not have a single moment of origin, but rather emerged gradually in the early twentieth century in a context where Christianity, colonialism, and industrialization were inseparably linked. For Black Christian women in the Eastern Cape in the early twentieth century, manyanos were a place of intense spiritual solidarity in suffering, a place where women could take leadership in spiritual matters, and a way for them to secure a physical, permanent space in which to act out their Christian motherhood.

The earliest converts to Christianity in the Eastern Cape were women. A long series of frontier wars initiated by British colonial forces, often with the support of European missionaries eager to advance the civilizing mission, culminated in the Cattle Killing movement of 1856-57 and the destruction of Xhosa political and economic autonomy.[35] By the 1860s, increasing numbers of Xhosa people, and especially women, joined churches and sought baptism, education, and the accompanying features of a Christian life. As in other parts of the British empire, church affiliation and education (mostly provided by missionary-run schools) were inextricably bound up in the process of becoming colonial subjects.[36] But, as elsewhere in the British empire, new Christian

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[35] J.B. Peires, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-57* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Richard Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[36] Erlank, "Gender and Chrisianity Among Africans Attached to Scottish Mission Stations in Xhosaland in the Nineteenth Century," 239; A full account of the Cattle Killing and the division it produced in Xhosa

communities of colonial subjects also defined and developed new understandings and practices that served local needs.[37] The geographic distribution of mission stations and their schools, as well the geographic distribution of colonial towns, correlated with the rate of conversion. In areas with a high concentration of mission stations, such as the Keiskamma river valley, many people joined churches, while in other areas (for instance, Pondoland in the eastern Transkei) the rate of Christian affiliation was lower.[38] Christian affiliation was also associated with different ethnic identities among isiXhosa-speaking people; Mfengu and Thembu people had made Christianity part of their political and ethnic identity in the nineteenth century, and used this to leverage benefits from the colonial state.[39] While women did not hold official positions of authority in churches, either in mission churches or in the AICs that emerged after the 1890s, they were the backbone of congregational membership.

In the early twentieth century, two related events drastically altered the economic and social lives of all people in the Eastern Cape, whether Christians or not. The first event was the Natives' Land Act of 1913, which restricted black land ownership to a mere seven per cent of the nation's land. This Act consolidated the piecemeal colonial legislation around land ownership such as the Glen Grey Act of 1894, and confirmed the government's intention that black subjects should reside on "reserves" where communal

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society between "red" traditionalists and "school" converts can be found in the work of Peires: Peires, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-57.*

[37] Brian L. Moore and Michelle A. Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven: Contesting British Cultural Imperialism in Jamaica, 1865-1920* (Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2004); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[38] See the map of nineteenth century mission stations in Richard Elphick and T.R.H. Davenport, eds., *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), vi–vii.

[39] Janet Hodgson, "A Battle for Sacred Power: Christian Beginnings Among the Xhosa," in *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History*, ed. Richard Elphick and T.R.H. Davenport (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 68–88; Saunders, "Tile and the Thembu Church."

land was controlled by appointed chiefs under a system of traditional law that made women perpetual minors.[40] After 1913, peasant farmers on reserves faced increased overcrowding and overgrazing, and those who lived outside the reserves became tenant farmers or wage laborers on white-owned farms.[41] The Land Act of 1913 (a second Act of 1936 increased the size of reserves by a few percent but confirmed the principle of the legislation) facilitated the second event that altered the economic and social lives of Xhosa people. The 1913 Land Act was "the lynchpin in the migrant labor system."[42] Xhosa laborers, mainly men, had been migrating to the mines of the Witwatersrand since the late nineteenth century, and the restriction of land access after 1913 made migrating to earn wages more necessary. Switzer estimates that in 1910, the majority of able-bodied adult men in certain Ciskei districts were already working part of the year on the Witwatersrand or in German South West Africa. After 1913, mine recruiters were able to persuade men to go for even longer contracts, meaning that they were away from home fore more than half of the year.[43]

The restriction of land ownership and increase in migrant labor had drastic effects on the economic competence of most households, and placed particular new burdens on women. With men away from homesteads, women became responsible for more

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[40] Les Switzer, *Power and Resistance in an African Society: The Ciskei Xhosa and the Making of South Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 195–96; Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Wits History Workshop ; Makerere Institute of Social Research, 1996).

[41] Switzer, *Power and Resistance in an African Society*, 107.

[42] Switzer, 197; The first person to explain the link between the Land Act, migrant labor, and the economic and cultural destruction of African societies was Sol Plaatje. Scholars continue to debate the questions Plaatje raised. Sol T. Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa Before and Since the European War and the Boer Rebellion* (London, 1916); William Beinart, Peter Delius, and Stanley Trapido, eds., *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850-1930* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986); William Beinart and Saul Dubow, eds., *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[43] Switzer, *Power and Resistance in an African Society*, 204.

agricultural work; traditionally, men had been responsible for clearing and ploughing the land before women planted each season.[44] Legal segregation in land ownership and the absence of many men of working age had negative consequences for Xhosa economic independence. For example, in the Herschel district reserve, average incomes of households dropped by 62 per cent between 1873 and 1929. Migrant labor wages were not high enough to supply most families' needs, driving many into debt with local storekeepers.[45] Those living as tenants on white farms faced similar problems, as agricultural production combined with migrant wages did not keep up with the cost of living. These factors meant that women in the first decades of the twentieth century were faced with increasing economic responsibilities in rural areas, as well as sole responsibility for the supervision and socialization of young men and women. Contemporary observers often interpreted these changes as a "breakdown" in family and social order.[46]

However, women did not only stay behind on impoverished reserves. They also migrated to find work. Some followed their husbands, brothers, or fathers to the towns. Others migrated independently. Johannesburg certainly attracted many Xhosa migrants, but many also travelled to the small towns and cities of the Eastern Cape, where there were growing employment opportunities for women as domestic workers. By 1946,

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[44] Monica (Hunter) Wilson, *Reaction to Conquest ; Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa* (London: H. Milford, 1936), 73–74.
[45] Colin Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (London: Heinemann, 1979); Switzer, *Power and Resistance in an African Society*, 208.
[46] Anne Kelk Mager, *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan: A Social History of the Ciskei, 1945-1959* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999), 127–28.

fourteen per cent of adult women who were supposedly permanent residents of the Ciskei reserves were "absent."[47]

This brief sketch of economic conditions in the Eastern Cape in the early twentieth century demonstrates the intense economic pressure that Black rural dwellers were facing, whether their families were educated, Christian, and "dressed," or not. White missionaries had sometimes hoped that converts would, by their civilizational achievements, earn citizenship and political equality in colonial society, but mission education by the later nineteenth century had increasingly focused on practical rather than academic instruction. The established mission denominations did not challenge the dire implications of the 1913 Natives' Land Act for rural Black communities.[48] There was a small, and vocal, Black elite of teachers and clergy who continued to embrace the nineteenth century British liberal ideal of racial equality through hard work and progress; its most prominent member was D.D.T. Jabavu.[49] But for the majority of Black South Africans, those who attended a church were no better off, from a material standpoint, than those who did not.[50] The Xhosa women who dominated church membership in the

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[47] Mager, 142; This was a national trend, not confined to Xhosa communities, as shown in the life histories told in Luli Callinicos, "Testimonies and Transitions: Women Negotiating the Rural and Urban in the Mid-20th Century," in *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo / They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, ed. Nomboniso Gasa (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007), 152–84; Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy, and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900-1983* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991); Deborah James, *Songs of the Women Migrants: Performance and Identity in South Africa*, 22 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

[48] Richard Elphick, *The Equality of Believers: Protestant Missions and the Racial Politics of South Africa* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012); Andrew Bank, "Losing Faith in the Civilizing Mission: The Premature Decline of Humanitarian Liberalism at the Cape, 1840-60," in *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous People, 1600-1850*, ed. Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 364–83.

[49] Catherine Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality: The Public Lives of D.D.T. Jabavu of South Africa, 1885-1959* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996).

[50] The poet Nontsizi Mgqwetho makes this point in a number of poems that skewer the pretensions of "school" people. In "The Nation's Wailings," she writes: "Our homes and kingdoms all plundered; / Reds and Christians need passes to travel; / when we saw you Christians no better off / we in Ngqikaland wanted

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early twentieth century had a profound personal experience of the effects of the Land Act and increasing migration on their lives, families, and communities.

The emergence of women's manyanos in the Eastern Cape took place in this context. The possibility of a formal women's organization had clear appeal for rural women. Membership of the manyano was not restricted by education or income, was open to all adult women, and provided a place of solidarity for the challenges that women had in common. The organic, gradual evolution of the manyano organizational style is suggested by Methodist manyano records from Queenstown, a town 200 kilometres north of East London. In the early twentieth century, Queenstown was a small urban area, the commercial hub of a rural area dominated by white-owned sheep farms. The earliest records of the Queenstown Methodist women's manyano date from 1907, and consist of a small bound notebook labelled on the inner cover "Minute Book for Women's Manyano Komani, 1907-1917." Interestingly, however, the actual minutes themselves do not use the word "manyano" to describe the weekly meetings of prayer, hymn-singing, and preaching. The heading for the minutes in 1907 and several years following is "Izinto ngezinto zenKonzo zabafazi BaseWesile eKomani" (Matters of the service of Queenstown Methodist women). By 1917, the notes for one meeting are titled, "Intlanganiso Yabafazi base Wesile" (the Methodist women's meeting), while another meeting from the same year is headed "Intlanganiso yamakosikazi" (the married women's meeting).[51] All of these meeting minutes follow a similar formulaic style, opening with the phrase "Intlanganiso ivuliwe…" (the meeting was opened), and going

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to quit." Nontsizi Mgqwetho, *The Nation's Bounty: The Xhosa Poetry of Nontsizi Mgqwetho*, trans. Jeff Opland, African Treasury Series 22 (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2007), 184–86.

[51] Minute Book for Women's Manyano Komani, 1907-1917. Minutes of the Women's Manyano, Queenstown and Lesseyton Circuit, MCSA Collection, Cory Library. Trans. Katie Carline.

on to list the leader, the hymn, and the scriptural text for the meeting. The evolving name of the meeting (a service, then a meeting; for women and for specifically married women), suggests that during these early decades of the twentieth century, the Queenstown women's prayer meeting was a local organization, not closely tied to national church structures.

Other historical evidence from the Eastern Cape also supports the idea the manyano in the Methodist church was a local, organic innovation by rural Black women. There is one version of the Methodist manyano that traces its origins to a local revival in Mgwali in the Transkei. During my research in East London in 2019, Mandisa Nguza, a member of the Methodist manyano, gave me a copy of a document in isiXhosa about the history of the Methodist manyano. The document is the text of a speech delivered at a manyano conference. I was not able to locate Benedicta Flatela, the author whose name appears on the document. However, it is worth quoting at length from this unofficial history. It begins by describing the challenges of life in the late nineteenth century: the migrant labor system, the South African war, and oppression within the church by white missionaries. Around the year 1900, Flatela says:

> women experienced a strong desire to repent, hoping to show their gratitude to God for the peace and forgiveness that they received from him…This was in the area of Mgwali in Ngubengcuka, during the term of Rev. Davis, known as Debese. Four women had a strange feeling that made them want to pray so hard to God; it caught them individually in their respective homes, each couldn't resist going immediately to pray at church in the early hours of the morning. They were all surprised to see each other there; they thought to themselves that 'we must all have had the same strange pleasant feeling, hence we are all here at this very hour'…These women decided to consult the church to ask for permission to conduct their prayer services during the day at church, but church

leaders refused… They decided to gather under the trees and pray. They also used people's houses.[52]

News of the movement in Mgwali soon spread across the countryside: "women took it upon themselves to go [to Mgwali] to inquire of Mrs. Davis… They went back home and appointed a day that they will use every week as their praying day, whereby they will go around houses praying and helping those in need."[53] Of special importance to Flatela is the manyano branch that formed under royal leadership of the AmaMpondo royal house of Western Pondoland:

> At Buntingville in Faku location during this time, a small group of women started the manyano amongst them… They felt incomplete without their Queen Mother, Queen Maria Ngangelizwe who was mother to King Victor Poto Ndamase. They then went to the Palace at Nyandeni to ask for the Queen Mother to join them, and the King honoured their request; the Queen Mother was officially a member of the women's manyano.[54]

This history goes on to detail the adoption of a uniform in 1920 by the various manyano groups scattered across the rural Transkei, and suggests that it was only in the 1920s that white women took leadership at regional and national conferences.[55] Flatela's history of the Methodist manyano differs from all other published histories because it gives Xhosa women in Mgwali (Clarkebury) and the Transkei full credit for conceiving the idea of the manyano and setting the pattern of meetings, prayers, and acts of service on a particular day of the week.

Flatela's narrative does not contain any precise dates, except for a general assertion that the manyano began "around the year 1900", which approximates the date

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[52] Benedicta Flatela, "Amagqabantshintshi Ngembali Nemvelaphi Yomanyano Lwamanina [A Brief History of the Origins of the Women's Manyano]," trans. Phelisa Mtima and Katie Carline, n.d., Typescript in the author's collection.
[53] Flatela.
[54] Flatela.
[55] Flatela.

that Gaitskell gives for the beginning of the manyano in the Transvaal. Some of the people whom Flatela mentions appear in other historical records. This evidence bears out her assertion that the Transkei manyano began very early in the twentieth century. The Methodist church at Clarkebury (Mgwali) was one of the largest Methodist mission stations in the Transkei. It had a number of ministers named Davis in the late nineteenth century, including William Shaw Davis who was minister from 1886-1895 and whose wife was noted, in a history of the mission station, for her interest in women's education. No other Davises were ministers at Clarkebury after that date.[56] If it is William Shaw Davis and his wife who are referred to in Flatela's narrative, then the Clarkebury prayer group was almost certainly the first manyano in South Africa, and evidence that the organization was an entirely original effort of indigenous women's Christianity.[57]

Even if the Clarkebury manyano was not the very first such group in South Africa, the Methodist manyano was certainly well established in the Transkei region of the Eastern Cape by the 1920s. Over Easter weekend in 1922, the quarterly session of the "Manyano lwa Makosikazi" of the Buntingville Circuit met in the village of Nyandeni, and featured multiple services attended by 400 people each.[58] Similarly, after 1923 visit to a Methodist event in Herschel (an agriculturally productive area in the northern region of the Eastern Cape),[59] the newspaper editor D.D.T. Jabavu reported that "the church

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[56] Arthur J. Lennard, "A Brief History of Clarkebury," in *The Deathless Years: A Centenary Souvenir of Clarkebury Mission, 1830-1930* (n.p., 1930), 19; George G. Findlay and William West Holdsworth, *The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, vol. Vol. 4 (London: Epworth, 1922), 36.

[57] Another indication that Clarkebury may have been the origin of the manyano concept is that its membership was comparatively very large in the early twentieth century. In 1940, the Clarkebury district manyano had 10,568 members, while the districts of Kimberley & Bloemfontein and Transvaal, which were geographically and demographically larger, had 10,278 and 6,699 members, respectively. Gaitskell, "Female Mission Initiatives," 155.

[58] "ENyandeni," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, May 30, 1922.

[59] Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*.

women enjoyed themselves… making the whole world seem red with their jackets."[60]

Crucially, the manyano women in the Eastern Cape had effective control over their organizations, despite the titular authority of male church leaders and white women presidents. Manyano women in the Eastern Cape used their organizations to express their conception of Christian womanhood and motherhood.

The earliest and most striking—but also singular—evidence of how manyano women understood their role as Christian mothers is the "women's strike" that took place in Herschel district. In 1922, 3,000 Black women gathered in the town of Sterkspruit to initiate a boycott of white-owned shops that were charging high prices. The newspaper *Imvo Zabantsundu* followed the story:

> We have seen something that has never happened here in Herschel. All the Christian [amagqoboka] women have made a big strike… there were 3,000 women who all met together at that place—Basotho, Amamfengu, and Abathembu. At this meeting they agreed to stop buying at the stores in Herschel until the white people of the stores reduced the prices of items, and until grain would be bought at good prices.[61]

The women formed a "Committee of Management" and sent representatives to the magistrate, who advised them to "devote your attention to the care of your homes which is your proper province."[62] The women refused; the matters of shop prices and grain prices were precisely within their "proper province" as mothers and household economic decision makers. Ultimately, the local shops did lower their prices, but the group of

[60] Jabavu, *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 23 January 1923. Quoted in Colin Bundy and William Beinart, *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: Politics & Popular Movements in the Transkei & Eastern Cape 1890-1930* (London: James Currey, 1987), 233–39.

[61] "Abafazi e Herschel," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, April 18, 1922. This *Imvo* article was a reprinting of the coverage by *Umteteli wa Bantu*, a Johannesburg newspaper aimed at black readers and published by the Chamber of Mines. It is interesting that *Umteteli*, a newspaper controlled by white business interests, should apparently be the first to cover these events. D.D.T. Jabavu, editor of *Imvo,* became interested in the strike and *Imvo* later published its own independent coverage of the events in Herschel.

[62] Quoted in Bundy and Beinart, "Amafelandawonye (the Die Hards): Popular Protest and Women's Movements in Herschel District in the 1920s," 236.

women continued to protest community problems; they later initiated a school boycott. *Imvo Zabantsundu* expressed guarded admiration of this movement, and explicitly noted its connection to the manyanos: ""The people with insight here are the women…The women have their unions [banomanyano] where they discuss their affairs; they keep these to themselves and do not reveal the finances to the men."[63] The newspaper reports do not name any specific denomination to which the protesting women belonged, and the general descriptor "*amagqoboka*" (Christian or convert) suggests that the protesting women came from different churches, and perhaps did not protest in their official capacity as manyano members. Nevertheless, the newspaper reporting does suggest that the protesting women were Christians, mothers, and members of manyanos.

In fact, the poet Nontsizi Mgqwetho saw a clear connection between the church manyanos and the women's protest movement in Herschel (eventually known as *Amafelandawonye* – the Die-Hards, or those who will die as one). Mgqwetho herself was a manyano member, possibly in the Moravian church.[64] She composed a poem to Amafelandawonye in 1924, which includes these stanzas:

> Manyano and Die-hard!
> Why look askance at each other?
> You each command a flank in battle,
> Break rank only when victory's yours.
> Peace!
> …
> Manyano's for you a mighty stem,
> Roots in the earth, touching the sky;
> Right from the start, Manyano's the shield
> To ward off the white man's arrows.[65]

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[63] *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 2 June 1923. Quoted in Bundy and Beinart, 239.
[64] Duncan Brown, "My Pen Is the Tongue of a Skilful Poet: African-Christian Identity and the Poetry of Nontsizi Mgqwetho," *English in Africa* 31, no. 1 (2004): 23–58.
[65] "Umanyano! Nomafela Ndawonye!!" in Mgqwetho, *The Nation's Bounty*, 162–64.

Mgqwetho's poem indicates that the church manyanos and the Amafelandawonye movement, while closely connected, were not perfectly synonymous, as they looked "askance" at each other. However, Mgqwetho also believed that the principles of the manyano movement were in harmony with the goals of the Herschel protestors. Manyanos were a weapon in the fight against racial and economic oppression—"the white man's arrows." The Herschel boycott was successful in lowering shop prices, at least in the short term, but after 1926 Amafelandawonye was overtaken by other local political movements, and the striking women dropped out of public political life.[66] These events are an exceptional example of how Black Christian women defined their duties as women and mothers in a way that included taking public action to protect their economic interests, and to ensure their children's schooling. However, the activities and ideals of everyday manyano activity do have some parallels to how the Herschel women enacted their duties as women and mothers.

The best evidence of the ordinary activities of manyanos in the Eastern Cape is from the minute books of the Methodist women's manyano in Queenstown. These minute books are unique as records of what happened in manyano meetings. They show that Black Methodist women had rejected the simplistic, patronising program of domesticity and cleanliness that white Methodist leaders promoted in the rulebooks of the 1920s and 1930s. Instead, at manyano meetings women offered one another intimate spiritual support, and together worked to cultivate the manyano's position of authority in the church and community.

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[66] Bundy and Beinart, "Amafelandawonye (the Die Hards): Popular Protest and Women's Movements in Herschel District in the 1920s."

The meeting minutes follow a formulaic structure that attests to the importance of procedure and hierarchy for manyano members. Each meeting began with a welcome and a prayer by the chair, and the approval of the minutes of the previous meeting. Over decades, each meeting was recorded with slight variations of the same opening phrase: "Intlanganiso ivulwe ngumcini sihlalo ngeculo nomtandazo...."[67] Members then gave reports (*iingxelo*) about official activities. The chair then introduced a scriptural theme for the day, and opened the floor to members to freely share prayers, exhortations, or songs on that theme. Members cared deeply about these procedural forms, and were quick to point out deviations.[68] However, the repetitive structure of the meetings did not mean that their content was dull or predictable. The breathless, stream-of-consciousness writing style of the secretary (*unobhala)* conveys a sense of urgency and intimacy in these meetings, where speakers followed each other in rapid succession, each expanding on the theme of the previous speaker. This process was facilitated through democratic, participatory, meeting structure; although each meeting was opened and closed by the chairperson, individual members spent most of the meeting in a free-form dialog with one another, offering prayers, hymns, and speeches of exhortation.

The minute books reveal the centrality of prayer, confession, exhortation, and impassioned singing in manyano meetings. Manyano members built close relationships with one another as they related hymns and Biblical texts to the intimate struggles of their personal lives. At a 1933 meeting of the Girls' Manyano, for example, Sister Matiti stood up to pray and said: "I want to pray because I feel like the faith and grace I am receiving

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[67] "The meeting was opened by the chair with a hymn and a prayer…"

[68] 19 January 1933; 21 February 1933, Minutes of the Girls' Manyano, Queenstown and Lesseyton Circuit, Methodist Church of Southern Africa Collection, Cory Library (hereafter abbreviated as MCSA). Trans. Phelisa Mtima and Katie Carline.

does not allow me to sit down, I am touched, I hope and pray that my faith to God is enough." Her fellow members joined her in standing to pray, and then another member offered an interpretation of a hymn that complemented Matiti's statements.[69] At a 1940 meeting of the Women's Manyano, the chair opened the meeting by reading Luke 8:4, which describes the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. Members stood up in turn to expound on the verse and relate it to their lives. Sister Xakana related the verse to her own problem of feeling anxious. Sister Walana compared Jesus' temptation and suffering to her inability to sleep at night.[70] This evidence demonstrates that manyano women saw direct connections between the texts they read and their personal lives.

The exposition of these connections was often emotionally intense. When Sister Nkaba confessed to the group that she had almost despaired and left the manyano because of a conflict with her child, she prompted a wave of emotional confessions from the other group members: "all the women instantly gathered in prayer and also cried their lungs out, sharing their burdens while they prayed for each other."[71] Even the formulaic, abbreviated writing style of the minutes cannot disguise the close bonds of spiritual solidarity that manyano women formed. As historian Deborah Gaitskell says of manyano women in the Transvaal, this "wailing for purity" allowed women to bond over intimate personal and familial problems that were common to them all.[72]

The minute books also reveal the practical activities of manyanos, through which they upheld their public authority as mothers and built the church. The apparent lack of practical achievements by manyanos troubled the anthropologist Brandel-Syrier in the

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[69] 21 March 1933, Minutes of the Girls' Manyano, Queenstown and Lesseyton Circuit, MCSA.
[70] 7 March 1940, Minutes of the Women's Manyano, Queenstown and Lesseyton Circuit, MCSA.
[71] 2 June 1940, Minutes of the Women's Manyano, Queenstown and Lesseyton Circuit, MCSA Collection, Cory Library. Trans. Phelisa Mtima and Katie Carline.
[72] Gaitskell, "'Wailing for Purity.'"

1950s.[73] Gaitskell's discussion of manyano fundraising and charitable activities concludes that manyanos were a place where women learned "managerial skills."[74] The Queenstown manyano minute books supply specific historical detail about the practical, charitable, "managerial" work to which Gaitskell alludes. The activities of the Queenstown manyano members in the 1930s through 1940s demonstrate their financial contribution to the building of churches. The records also demonstrate how manyano members, through their attention to bureaucratic details, cultivated their authority as Christian mothers.

The Queenstown manyano minutes show that rules of procedure and uniform were vastly important to manyano members. Uniforms were a frequent topic of detailed discussion. At both the Girls' and the Women's manyano, the chairperson gave frequent reminders of correct uniform rules; for example, a reminder that hats must have six side-panels rather than five.[75] Or, the chair of the Girls' Manyano on one occasion insisted that a new member, whose previous church had allowed her to wear a green collar on her blouse, must wear the red collar of the Methodist manyano.[76]

This strict attention to dress mattered to manyano women because their uniform was a symbol of their authority in the church community. Manyano women, even the unmarried women of the Girls' Manyano, could perform tasks that were usually reserved for male, older church leaders. Members of the girls' group were allowed to carry

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[73] "Considering all this, one would expect them to have great significance in the wider social life of their society, and at first one dare not believe the evidence accumulating before one's eyes -- evidence which finally mounts up to only one conclusion: that they have little or no significance except within the narrow domain of their own Church's affairs." Mia Brandel-Syrier, *Black Woman in Search of God* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1962), 97.

[74] Gaitskell, "Devout Domesticity? A Century of African Women's Christianity in South Africa," 268.

[75] 24 November 1952, Minutes of the Women's Manyano, Queenstown and Lesseyton Circuit, MCSA Collection, Cory Library. Trans. Phelisa Mtima and Katie Carline.

[76] 14 March 1933, Minutes of the Girls' Manyano, Queenstown and Lesseyton Circuit, Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) Collection, Cory Library. Trans. Phelisa Mtima and Katie Carline.

communion to the homes of sick church members. They were allowed to administer the

bread and wine whose distribution was usually supervised by male ministers during

church services.[77] Manyano members' visits to the sick and grieving also placed them in a

position of authority that was usually occupied by male ministers. The Queenstown Girls'

Manyano recognized this in 1933, when they visited the local minister to console him

after the death of his mother. At their next meeting, the chair congratulated the members

for their service to the minister, and reminded them that no one—not even the most

senior church leaders—could do without the assistance of the manyano in times of need.[78]

These visits to the sick and grieving occurred frequently. The Women's Manyano minute

book of 1940 begins almost every entry with a list of the families whose homes had been

visited in the previous week. The close attention to details of uniform can be seen as one

way that manyano women signified their special abilities to minister to others.

The history of manyanos in the Eastern Cape, as demonstrated in Flatela's

narrative and the minutes of the Queenstown manyanos, show that Black women had

taken charge of manyanos. The official denominational rule books published by

Methodists and Anglicans set out a simple program of prayer for husbands and children,

and rules for cleanliness and domestic propriety. Manyano women of the Eastern Cape in

the early twentieth century were indeed concerned with the intimate problems of family

life, and with matters of proper dress. However, their interest in these topics was not

confined to their own individual homes. Rather, their status as manyano members made

them *abafazi*, mothers with authority to care for the community as a whole. Their concern

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[77] 21 Feburary 1933, Minutes of the Girls' Manyano, Queenstown and Lesseyton Circuit, Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) Collection, Cory Library. Trans. Phelisa Mtima and Katie Carline.

[78] 28 February 1933, Minutes of the Girls' Manyano, Queenstown and Lesseyton Circuit, Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) Collection, Cory Library. Trans. Phelisa Mtima and Katie Carline.

was for the wellbeing of many families, as evidenced by the visits that members made to the homes of the sick and bereaved. These minute books show the interpretation that Methodist manyano women had of Christian women's domesticity, which focused less on individual domesticity and more on their authority within the church community.

Zenzeles as an Alternative Vision of Practical Domesticity and "Uplift"

The growth of manyanos in the Eastern Cape coincided with, and was connected to, the emergence of an alternative expression of Christian women's domestic and social duty. These were the home improvement clubs, later known as zenzele clubs. *Zenzele* means "do it yourself" in isiXhosa.[79] These home improvement clubs were formed in the Eastern Cape by educated, Christian women to improve the lives of poor rural women. Historians of the zenzele movement have developed a nuanced understanding of the gender, race, and class dynamics that complicated the lives of the elite leaders of the movement. They have also explored the movement's fascinating connections to African American examples of progress. However, this scholarship has not explored the connections between zenzeles and manyanos in the pre-apartheid era. This is an important intersection to explore because many zenzele leaders in the Eastern Cape saw their organization as fulfilling a similar function to the manyano. The home improvement clubs provided black sisterly solidarity, were concerned with correct dress, and defined a sphere of authority for women as mothers. Zenzeles and manyanos emerged around the same time from a similar milieu, used some of the same terminology, and offered complementary, sometimes competing, definitions of Christian women's authority and responsibilities.

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[79] The name "zenzele" did not become the standard name for all the various home and self-improvement associations until the 1940s or 1950s. To avoid overuse of the wordy term "home and self-improvement associations" I have been slightly anachronistic and have sometimes used the term "zenzele" to refer to these groups in the 1920s and 1930s.

The first home improvement society was founded in 1922 in Peddie, a small town

40 miles (70 kilometers) east of East London. Rita Marambana was a teacher and the

wife of Knight Marambana, a prominent teacher and Methodist leader.[80] She founded the

Peddie Home Improvement Association.[81] Within the next few years, other well-educated

women in the Eastern Cape had followed Marambana's lead. In 1927, Florence Jabavu

founded the African Women's Self-Improvement Society in Alice. The group's motto,

"zenzele," or "do it yourself," eventually became the common term for Black women's

home and self-improvement societies. Jabavu's group likely attracted members from the

staff and students at the South African Native College in Alice, where her husband was a

lecturer. The founding members were thus educated women, likely from families

connected with mission stations and mission schools, who saw themselves as the natural

leaders of uneducated rural dwellers.[82] Jabavu's society wanted to teach basic farming,

cooking, and health care skills to rural women. As Higgs points out, this was a

continuation of the practical training that mission stations had offered since the early

nineteenth century, and was perhaps also influenced by inspirational stories of African

American "uplift." These stories of black progress through hard work, especially those

associated with Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute, were well known by

educated black South Africans at the time.[83]

In fact, African American women in South Africa did import some of their ideas

about women's self-help groups. Susie Yergan, along with her husband Max, arrived in

South Africa in 1916. They soon moved to Alice and became members of the small Black

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[80] Swazi Marambana, Phone interview, January 27, 2021; Swazi Marambana, "The Life of Knight Marambana," n.d., Personal collection of Swazi Marambana.
[81] "Mrs. Marambana of Peddie," *Umlindi we Nyanga*, 15 July 1939.
[82] Higgs, "Zenzele," 121–22.
[83] Higgs, 122–23.

elite of the Eastern Cape. In 1935, probably inspired by the success of Marambana and

Jabavu, Yergan founded her own group: the Bantu Women's Home Improvement

Association.[84] Similarly, in 1940, shortly after she arrived in the country to marry Dr.

A.B. Xuma of the African National Congress, Madie Hall founded a network of clubs

called Zenzele in Johannesburg, through which educated Black women encouraged

handcrafts and home-making skills among urban women. Madie Hall Xuma almost

certainly borrowed the name of her clubs from Jabavu, with whom she was acquainted.[85]

Both Yergan and Xuma received criticism from their contemporaries for their exclusivity,

disinterest in learning local languages, and the elitism of the groups they founded.[86]

Florence Jabavu was particularly critical of Yergan's group, arguing that Yergan was

overly dismissive of the benefits of traditional Xhosa culture.[87] The idea that African

Americans could show progressive Black South Africans the way to success was an

influential, and contentious, idea within the zenzele movement.

By the middle of the 1930s, the zenzeles were well known and entrenched across

the rural Eastern Cape. Unsurprisingly, there was a dense cluster of zenzele branches in

the Alice-Peddie region where the zenzele concept had originated, but there were also

branches hundreds of miles away in the eastern reaches of the Transkei. For instance, the

town of Qumbu in the eastern Transkei had formed a zenzele branch in 1930, and within

two years was hosting an elaborate annual meeting with a public concert and an

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[84] Higgs, 123; Brandy Thomas Wells, "No Less a Pioneer: Susie Wiseman Yergan and the Black Freedom Struggle in South Africa and the United States," *The Journal of African American History* 107, no. 4 (2022): 523–47.

[85] Berger incorrectly credits Madie Hall Xuma with "initiating the Zenzele clubs for African women." Higgs' research published a few years after this makes it clear that Xuma imported the concept from the Eastern Cape to Johannesburg. Iris Berger, "An African American 'Mother of the Nation': Madie Hall Xuma in South Africa, 1940-1963," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27, no. 3 (2001): 559.

[86] Higgs, "Helping Ourselves: Black Women and Grassroots Activism in Segregated South Africa, 1922-1952"; Berger, "An African American 'Mother of the Nation.'"

[87] Higgs, "Zenzele," 125.

appearance by the "chief of Qumbu."[88] By the end of the 1930s, Jabavu's organization

had fifteen branches, while Yergan's had about two thousand members across sixty-three

branches.[89]

In addition to dues-paying full members, zenzele leaders also invited participation

by "the backward masses" (in the words of the 1940s president of the Grahamstown

Home Improvement Association.[90] Lorraine Bekwa, recalling the zenzele run by her

mother in law in Peddie in the 1950s, remembers that non-members were welcome to

attend meetings, although it was clear that they were there to be taught by the zenzele

members in charge.[91] Formal education was not a requirement for membership, but

members were expected to pay dues and to have teachable skills that they could

contribute to the community.[92] Therefore, there was some built-in class tension with the

home improvement associations; they wanted to attract poor and rural women to their

meetings, but the criteria for leadership in the organization favored women who had

formal education.

However, the dynamics of the zenzele movement cannot be reduced to a

transatlantic dialogue between African Americans and elite Black Africans or to the

tensions between the elite "uplifters" and "backward masses." The home and self-

improvement societies founded in the Eastern Cape were equally in dialogue with the

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[88] I.L. Tungata, "Um-Hlati wama Ledi - Ku Qumbu," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 15 November 1932.
[89] Higgs, "Zenzele," 124.
[90] Quoted in Higgs, 126.
[91] Bekwa, Phone interview, February 25 2021.
[92] Of course, rural Xhosa women without formal education had many valuable skills, for example in basket-weaving, indigenous herbal medicine, and agriculture. The value of traditional knowledge was not completely disregarded by the zenzeles. Yergan's 1936 pamphlet proclaims an emphasis "upon ways of preserving indigenous culture by keeping alive folklore and old handcrafts." However, records from the 1930s and my interviews with those who remember zenzeles in the 1960s indicates that the emphasis in teaching was on skills acquired through formal education: using a sewing machine, making soap, making bleach, and modern farming methods.

burgeoning local manyano movement. This close relationship between manyanos and zenzeles is most obviously illustrated by the fact that in its early days, the home improvement societies sometimes referred to themselves as "manyanos." This is a natural ambiguity, because the word "manyano" in isiXhosa simply means "union." One might speak of "umanyano lwabalimi" (a farmers' union)[93] or "umanyano lwamadodana" (the Methodist Young Men's union).[94] However, evidence from isiXhosa newspapers shows that in the 1930s, the term "manyano," unmodified by other adjectives, was coming to refer specifically to women's groups. Other types of unions usually had a qualifying adjective. *Imvo Zabantsundu*, the leading isiXhosa newspaper of the period, provides the clearest evidence of this. In the early 1930s the newspaper reported frequently on Methodist church activities, especially the Young Men's Manyano and the Women's Manyano. The titles of articles about the Young Men's Manyano always included the qualifier "lwamadodana" (of the young men).[95] On the other hand, the women's church groups are frequently referred to in *Imvo* simply by the name "manyano."[96] For example, in 1933 Mrs. W.P. Malgas wrote an article in defense of the social usefulness of women's church manyanos, titled simply "Umanyano."[97]

Therefore, it is significant that the Eastern Cape home improvement groups in the 1930s sometimes used the term "manyano" to refer to themselves. Rita Marambana, the founder of the very first zenzele, the Peddie Home Improvement Club, referred to her organization as a "manyano." She used a testimonial advertisement for Ambrosia Tea as

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[93] "Ngaba limi Base Xesi," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 8 April 1930.
[94] "Ingqungqutela Yomanyano lwama Dodana," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 23 July 1931.
[95] For example, see *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 31 May 1932, 7 June 1932.
[96] A. Somaza, "Queenstown District of Manyano," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 25 November 1930; M. Conjwa, "Umanyano lwase Clarkebury," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 17 January 1933; M. Conjwa, "Umanyano lwase Clarkebury," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 10 January 1933.
[97] W.P. Malgas, "Umanyano," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 23 May 1933.

a space to promote home improvement clubs. The advertisement title proclaims that "Mrs. Marambana is the President of the Peddie Home Improvement Association." In her testimonial, Marambana writes: "The upkeep of the home means taking care of things such as health, cleanliness, economics, love: all these things are done for the welfare of the home to make it united [yeyomanyano] and joyful. And this is what the manyanos [iimanyano] are doing themselves to improve the homes that are connected to them."[98] Marambana is evidently writing about her home improvement club, and refers to it as a manyano. Similarly, when Florence Jabavu gave a speech to residents of the Crown Mines location in Johannesburg, she promoted "manyanos" which would help children to learn useful skills and through which people would care for community needs; in this context it is not clear whether Jabavu was referring to women's church manyanos, home improvement associations, or both.[99] In the 1930s the word "manyano" in isiXhosa was used to refer to a range of home improvement and practical skills organizations, but the term "manyano" without qualifying adjectives had a connotation with specifically women's work. This is significant because the leaders of home improvement associations were concerned with the same issues as the church manyanos, issues relating to the duties and authority of a Christian woman as a mother.

The home improvement clubs, like the church manyanos, promoted a Christian type of sisterly solidarity. In a 1936 handbook for home improvement clubs, Susie Yergan stated that: "In harmony with the large purpose of the Association, emphasis is

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[98] Rita Marambana, "Mrs. Marambana of Peddie," *Umlindi we Nyanga*, 15 July 1939.
[99] J. Foxo, "UMrs. Pro. Jabavu e Crown Mines," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 29 July 1930. "Watsho esiti kufaneka sizenzele imanyano zokunceda njengesizwe, njengokuba seluko olwabalimi selunceda apo kuko indlala kona, ngokutengisa tshipu ukudla." [She said that we must form unions to help ourselves as a nation, in the same way that farmers work together to alleviate famine by selling cheap food].

placed upon Christian standards as the foundation of Home Making."[100] Home

improvement associations were to open and close with a prayer (the Lord's Prayer: a

common prayer that would be acceptable to women of any denomination).[101] Florence

Jabavu offered biblical models for her ideal of community self-help; she cited the

example of Jesus and his disciples who shared a meal as equals together.[102] But although

the zenzeles were explicitly Christian, they eschewed the intense and emotional

spirituality of the church manyanos. Zenzele meetings were for sharing practical home-

making skills rather than scriptural interpretations.

Like the Methodist church manyanos, the home improvement societies were also

concerned with correct dress. An early conflict between Jabavu's and Yergan's

organizations was over the question of traditional Xhosa dress. Jabavu believed that it

was appropriate for zenzele members to wear traditional dress, while Yergan did not.[103]

The purpose of this debate about dress, however, was not to define a uniform for zenzele

members, but to establish a standard of respectable dress. This respectable dress is

illustrated in the photographs that accompany testimonial advertisements by two home

improvement society leaders. Janet Ntisana and Rita Marambana were both leaders of

zenzeles, and each participated in testimonial advertisements for Ambrosia Tea in the

newspaper *Umlindi we Nyanga*, which was printed by an East London firm in order to

promote its products. In their photographs, Ntisana and Marambana are both wearing

blouses and skirts, and carrying small handbags. They are well dressed but not flashy. In

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[100] Susie Yergan, *Home Improvement: Suggestions for Promoting the Work of the Women's Home Improvement Association* (Alice: n.p., 1936), 8.
[101] Yergan, 19.
[102] J. Foxo, "UMrs. Pro. Jabavu e Crown Mines."
[103] Higgs, "Zenzele," 125.

comparison to the contemporaneous photographs of beauty contest entrants in *Bantu World*, for example, Ntisana and Marambana's clothing is more subdued and matronly.[104]

Figure 4: Detail of Ambrosia Tea advertisement featuring Rita Marambana, Umlindi we Nyanga, *15 July 1939*

For the home improvement societies, proper dress was only one aspect of Christian women's duty to their home. If church manyano members were marked out by

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[104] Lynn Thomas, "The Modern Girl and Racial Respectability in 1930s South Africa," *Journal of African History* 47, no. 3 (2006): 461–90.

their six-panelled hats and blouses of certain colors, home improvement society members were marked out by the cleanliness of their homes, their culinary skills, and their resourceful gardening and hand craft skills. These marks of membership were supposed to be available to any woman, regardless of social status. Ntisana writes: "There is an idea that manyanos [i.e., home improvement associations] are only good for people who have money, but by them a poor person is taught to live simply, to have a house that is healthy, clean, and happy, because this clean and well-kept house brings joy to their branch."[105] At the most basic level, home improvement society members were supposed to have clean homes. Cleanliness is the trait most frequently mentioned in Ntisana and Marambana's newspaper testimonials, and in Yergan's 1936 *Home Improvement* pamphlet. Statements calling for women to "move our African people to understand the beauty and joy that happens with a clean home"[106] are resonant of the simple rules for cleanliness that white Methodist manyano leaders had published in the 1920s. However, cleanliness was only the beginning of a zenzele woman's practical duties, which extended to "sanitation, hygiene, mother-craft, needlework, household decoration, cookery, preservation of fruits and vegetables, gardening, poultry raising, dairying, and other features of home making."[107]

These home making skills afforded women a rare and therefore valuable opportunity to acquire social honor and enhance authority, according to zenzele leaders. However, unlike the authority that manyano members secured from building churches

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[105] Janet A.B. Ntisana, "Ikhaya Elicocekileyo Neligcinwe," *Umlindi we Nyanga*, 15 November 1939. "Kukho ukucingelwa uba ezimanyano zilunge kubantu abanemali, ukanti oyena ulilhlwempu ufundiswa ukuphila lula, ikhaya libe nempilo nococeko nokonwaba, kuba likhaya elicocokileyo neligcinwe kakhule elonwabisayo elusatsheni."

[106] Rita Marambana, "Mrs. Marambana of Peddie," *Umlindi we Nyanga*, 15 July 1939." Masibashukumise abantu bakowethu e-Afrika babuqonde ubuhle nokonwaba okubakhoyo kwikhaya elicocekileyo."

[107] Yergan, *Home Improvement*, 7.

and ministering to the wider community, the authority of zenzele members was within the sphere of their individual homestead. In the context of the 1920s and 1930s, as men were increasingly absent from rural households, the zenzele articulation of women's authority had a particular appeal. Rural Xhosa women had already been saddled with extra economic burdens on the homestead, while the calcified codification of "Native law" on the reserves kept them perpetual minors in legal affairs. The claim of the zenzele was that Black women could still acquire power and contribute to their communities, by focusing on their own homesteads and squeezing economic productivity out of every daily activity. The potential for the zenzele to bolster women's power in the rural homestead is most clearly illustrated in Janet Ntisana's Ambrosia Tea advertisement. In the foregrounded photograph Ntisana is seated outdoors, surrounded by three children. One child carries a tray (perhaps holding the Ambrosia Tea of the advertisement), the second holds a rake, and the other tips a watering can towards a plant in the garden. This image illustrates the Ntisana's authority over her family within the space of the family homestead. No husband or patriarchal figure appears in the photographs. The headline of the advertisement refers the happiness that is brought to the family by a clean home;[108] the photographs suggest that the person in charge of this family is Janet Ntisana. The message of the home improvement societies, then, was to offer rural women a chance not only to improve the physical conditions of their homes but also to enhance their authority as matriarchs in the home.

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[108] "Ikhaya elicocekileyo neligcinwe kakuhle liya lonwabisa usapho." (A home that is clean and well-kept brings joy to the family)

Figure 5: Detail of Ambrosia Tea advertisement featuring Janet A.B. Ntisana, Umlindi we Nyanga, *15 November 1939*

Florence Jabavu also argued that home improvement societies restored to Black women an authority which had been wrongly taken away from them by colonialism and an incorrect interpretation of Christian gendered roles. Jabavu, in an article intended for a white missionary audience, argued that for all its incompatibility with Christianity, the precolonial "system of polygamy was such that each woman had to be the executive

manager of her household... [She had] complete self-accountability without having to appeal to her spouse for the provision of multifarious minor needs."[109] Jabavu called for a revival of this household economic independence for Xhosa Christian women. She asserted that while the church had encouraged "such wide movements as the Women's Manyano which owe their origin to the initiative of the Native women themselves," there was a lack of practical training for women. Practical training in domestic skills would "advance the race" through "self-confidence that can be engendered only by the mother in the home."[110] Home improvement societies and girls' clubs were the road to the restoration of black women's domestic authority, Jabavu concluded. Jabavu provides a clear statement of the differences in womanly authority as defined by the church manyanos and the zenzele movement. Jabavu noted the prevalence of manyanos as a forum for Black women, but believed that these groups did not provide enough practical training. For Jabavu and the leaders of the zenzele movement, Christian women's authority was supposed to be exercised from within the nuclear family home, rather than within the church community, as the manyanos had it.

Conclusion

In the early twentieth century Black women in the Eastern Cape faced challenges of land alienation and the strain on households caused by the migrant labor system. In this context, Black Christian women innovated new forms of prayer and organization within their churches to share these burdens in solidarity. While missionary leaders had introduced Christian women's organizations to South Africa before and during this era, evidence from the Eastern Cape shows that the forms and practices of manyanos were

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[109] Florence Jabavu, "Bantu Home Life," in *A Year-Book of South African Missions*, ed. James Dexter Taylor (Lovedale, SA: Lovedale Institution Press, 1929), 167.
[110] Jabavu, 173.

largely developed by Black women, and that manyanos were widespread in the Methodist church, in particular, by the 1930s. Written evidence from the Queenstown Methodist manyano records shows a strong focus on prayer, preaching, and internal organizational business. But this form of the practice of Christian motherhood was part of a larger conversation in the Eastern Cape about Black women's responsibilities and authority. Other approaches to Black Christian women's public motherhood were also present in the early twentieth century. The movement called Amafelandawonye mounted a shop boycott in the Herschel district in the early 1920s to protect women's economic interests as the leaders of homes, while the widespread and popular zenzele movement taught practical domestic skills in order to improve material conditions for women. Through the rest of the twentieth century, the manyano movement remained in conversation—and sometimes in tension—with more activist, or more domestically-focused, understandings of motherhood.

CHAPTER 2:

Manyanos, Women's Organizations, and Urban Culture in Segregation-Era East London, 1930s-1951

Manyanos began in rural areas in the Eastern Cape. The previous chapter argued that

manyanos appealed to the specific needs and experiences of rural Christian women, who

often had connections to long-established mission station churches, and who were

experiencing the impoverishment of the rural reserves in the aftermath of the 1913

Natives' Land Act. As the South African economy industrialized and grew during the

1930s and through the 1940s, more Black Africans moved to cities; many of these

migrants became permanent urbanites living in densely settled, poorly serviced and

segregated "Native locations." In major urban centers including Cape Town,

Johannesburg, Pretoria, and Durban, the Black urban population was predominantly

male, but East London (along with a few other smaller cities including Port Elizabeth and

Bloemfontein) had approximately equal numbers of male and female Black residents by

1946.[1] The proximity of East London to the "Native Reserves" that would later become

the Ciskei, the availability of domestic service work for women, and the absence of a

large male-only industry like the mining industry, are likely the factors that shaped the

gendered demographics of East London's Black population.[2] An increase in the number

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[1] Department of Native Affairs, "Report of the Native Laws Commission 1946-1948" (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1948), 10.

[2] D.H. Reader, *The Black Man's Portion: History, Demography and Living Conditions in the Native Locations of East London Cape Province* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1961), 38–52; Department of Native Affairs, "Report of the Native Laws Commission 1946-1948," 10–11; Thornberry's evidence shows that East London was unlike other South African cities in that Black women worked as domestic servants in white households in the early twentieth century. In other cities, these jobs were the preserve of Black men and lower-class white women until the 1920s. Elizabeth Thornberry, "Rape, Race, and Respectability in a South African Port City: East London, 1870-1927," *Journal of Urban History* 42, no. 5 (2016): 863–80; On the gendered and racial dynamics of domestic service in early twentieth century Johannesburg, see Charles Van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday Life on the Witwatersrand,*

of single, financially independent Black women in East London in the 1940s generated

intense local debates about women's respectability and status.

In this context, manyanos were a significant force in the Black urban community

in East London. This chapter examines why and how manyanos formed in East London,

who their members were, and the role these women's religious organizations in the

broader Black urban community. The history of manyanos in the East Bank location

illustrates the "worlds of possibilities" that hovered in front of Black urbanites in the

1940s; during this decade some urban reformers and politicians imagined alternative

futures for South Africa that involved greater social services and less racial segregation.

Many of these possibilities were foreclosed after the election of the Afrikaner nationalist

National Party in 1948 on a platform of segregation and white economic protection.[3] The

chapter ends in 1951, when East London was poised on the brink of a violent transition

from a segregated city to an apartheid city.

This chapter argues that manyanos and related Christian women's organizations

helped to shape the culture of urban life in the East Bank, East London's primary

location. Although their formal membership was relatively small in comparison to the

total population, manyanos were not an insular group of only the "respectable" women;

indeed, the category of "respectability" for Black women in 1930s and 1940s South

Africa was salient precisely because it was slippery, shifting, and therefore difficult to pin

down. Urban growth and social change in the inter-war period generated anxious public

debate (particularly in the Black press) over the status and respectability of Black women

1886-1914 (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1982), 266–67; Deborah Gaitskell, "'Christian Compounds for Girls': Church Hostels for African Women in Johannesburg, 1907-1970," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 6, no. 1 (1979): 44–69.

[3] Saul Dubow and Alan Jeeves, *South Africa's 1940s: Worlds of Possibilities* (Cape Town: Double Storey Press, 2005).

in towns.[4] Manyano women's activities touched a wide circle of people, from children and family members to neighbors and friends. Manyanos, as well as other women's religious and social service groups, provided a link between rural and urban communities, as well as a forum for women to express their concerns about lost and wayward children. In the city, manyanos facilitated an urban culture of socialization through their fundraising; this fundraising was part of a widely networked economy of reciprocity. This fundraising work took on a particularly important meaning in segregated Black locations, where the white municipality tightly regulated and constrained Black commercial activity.

To make this argument, this chapter draws on archival records, local histories and anthropological studies of East London, as well as the newspapers *Imvo Zabantsundu, Umlindi we Nyanga, Izwi Lama Afrika,* and *Umteteli wa Bantu* that reported on the doings of prominent people and events. Evidence about the specific membership and ordinary activities of local manyano branches in East London is less readily available. However, this chapter draws on the detailed and intimate records of the Queenstown Methodist manyano to provide comparative evidence of the internal workings of local manyano branches in the Eastern Cape.

Elite Women's Groups in the East Bank, 1925-1940

East London's urban development correlates with its economic development as an industrial port and the regional hub of the Ciskei hinterland. In the nineteenth century East London had been a minor port while King William's Town was the centre of commerce and colonial government for the territories called "British Kaffraria,"

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[4] Lynn Thomas, "The Modern Girl and Racial Respectability in 1930s South Africa," *Journal of African History* 47, no. 3 (2006): 461–90; David Goodhew, *Respectability and Resistance: A History of Sophiatown* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2004).

"Emigrant Thembuland," and "Griqualand East" that British colonial forces had conquered from independent isiXhosa-speaking chiefdoms.[5] By 1900, improvements to the port and the construction of a railway link to the gold-producing Transvaal region made East London the economic center of the Eastern Cape's "Border" area (the territory bounded by present-day Makhanda in the west, to Lesotho and the Orange Free State in the north, to Mthatha and the Transkei in the east).[6] East London's industries focused on the production of commodities for domestic consumption, especially food, textiles, and, by the 1940s, automobiles for the South African and international market.[7] These industries grew gradually in the first decades of the twentieth century, and then rapidly in the inter-war years and during the Second World War.

As the city grew, more isiXhosa speakers from the rural Eastern Cape came to the town to look for work, to join family members, or simply to experience city life. Most of the city's Indian, Coloured, and Black residents lived in one of the city's two "locations," which had been established by the municipality at the city's founding in the 1850s.[8] The West Bank location was on the western side of the Buffalo River, separated by a bridge

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[5] J.B. Peires, *The House of Phalo: A History of the Xhosa People in the Days of Their Independence* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981); Richard Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Clifton Crais, *The Making of the Colonial Order: White Supremacy and Black Resistance in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1992).

[6] See the map on pg. 3 of East London's "economic hinterland": J.P. Barker, "Industrial Development in a Border Area: Facts and Figures from East London," Occasional Paper Number Seven (Rhodes University: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1966), 17–20; Although the Eastern Cape region was administratively part of the Cape province until 1994, the predominantly isiXhosa speaking territory east of Port Elizabeth had since the nineteenth century been seen as a distinct region. Basil LeCordeur, *The Politics of Eastern Cape Separatism, 1820-1854* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

[7] Gary Minkley, "Class and Culture in the Workplace: East London, Industrialisation, and the Conflict Over Work, 1945-1957," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no. 4 (1992): 743–44; Barker, "Industrial Development in a Border Area: Facts and Figures from East London," 103–4; Leslie J. Bank, *City of Broken Dreams: Myth-Making, Nationalism, and the University in an African Motor City* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2019).

[8] Keith Tankard, "Urban Segregation: William Mvalo's 'Celebrated Stick Case,'" *South African Historical Journal*, no. 34 (1996): 29; Thornberry, "Rape, Race, and Respectability in a South African Port City," 865.

from the commercial center of town. The larger location was the East Bank location (sometimes called Palo or Gompo), which abutted the city center and the industrial area of Arcardia. Both the East and West Bank locations were home to Coloured, Indian, and Black people, although Black Africans formed the vast majority of residents, especially in the East Bank (see Fig. 1.2 in Introduction). As the city expanded, the East Bank location became increasingly dense and was closely surrounded by white and mixed-race commercial and residential areas. According to government statistics, the Black population of East London was 7,638 in 1911; 24,388 in 1936; and 32,568 in 1946. Official statistics were notoriously imprecise and prone to underestimate Black urban populations, but these nevertheless indicate a growing Black community in the city.[9]

As mentioned above, the East Bank and West Bank locations were home to an equal number of men and women, a different demographic trend than the major South African urban centers. The majority of Black women in East London identified as "school" people: they wore Western-style clothes and endorsed Christianity, temperance, and formal education (even if they did not personally attend church or school). "School" identity was a cultural style that had emerged among some Xhosa people during the process of colonial conquest, in contrast to the "Red" people (or *amaqaba*; literally, smeared with red ochre) who intentionally maintained Xhosa dress and religious custom.[10] According to the 1911 census, 2,970 "Non-European" women in East London

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[9] The corresponding (and more accurately enumerated) statistics for the white population were 14,899 in 1911; 31,311 in 1936; 40,118 in 1946. *Census of the Union of South Africa, 1911, Report and Annexures*, vol. 2 (Cape Town: Government Print. and Stationery Office, 1912), clxxxii; Department of Native Affairs, *Report of the Native Laws Commission 1946-1948* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1948), 10. A. J. Christopher, "The Union of South Africa Censuses 1911-1960: An Incomplete Record," *Historia* 56, no. 2 (2011): 01–18

[10] Philip Mayer and Iona Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen: Conservatism and the Process of Urbanization in a South African City*, 2nd ed. (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1971), 3–4; Leslie J. Bank, *Home*

identified as Christian, 68 practiced a religion other than Christianity, while 1,113 reported "no religion."[11]

The fact that the locations (especially East Bank) were small and segregated meant that houses were cramped together. In her 1936 anthropological study of the East Bank, Monica Wilson described "raw tribesmen jostled together in the location with sophisticated townsfolk."[12] While educated, professional, or well-off location residents could mark their social status by their personal dress or the quality of the construction of their house, they could not mark it by physical distance from their neighbors. According to Wilson, "the worst slum, 'Gomora,' (Gomorrah) merges into the quarter where the best-known men in the location live."[13] This high population density and consequent "squeezing together" of social ranks was similar to many other Black locations in South Africa at the time.[14]

In these conditions, the leading Black women of the location formed organizations to improve the lives of their fellow location residents. Some of these leading women were professionals themselves (nurses, teachers, or social workers), and others were wives or family members of clergy, doctors, intellectuals, and other

Spaces, Street Styles : Contesting Power and Identity in a South African City (London: Pluto Press, 2011); See also Zakes Mda, *The Heart of Redness* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[11] Women's adherence to Christianity was markedly higher than men's. The corresponding figures for "Non-European" men were 2,887 Christian, 402 non-Christian, and 2,254 "no religion." While it is unknown how the census enumerators defined "no religion," this category probably includes "Red" people who practiced Xhosa traditional religion. It is also important to note that the "Non-European" category includes approximately 2,000 Coloured and Indian residents of the city. *Census of the Union of South Africa, 1911, Report and Annexures*, vol. 2 (Cape Town: Government Print. and Stationery Office, 1912), 954–55.

[12] Monica (Hunter) Wilson, *Reaction to Conquest ; Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa* (London: H. Milford, 1936), 437.

[13] Wilson, 445.

[14] Ellen Hellmann, *Rooiyard: A Sociological Study of an Urban Native Slum Yard*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers 13 (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1948); Monica Wilson and Archie Mafeje, *Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963); Goodhew, *Respectability and Resistance*.

professional men.[15] The East Bank's leading women of the 1930s and 1940s occupied a

contradictory position similar to that described by Kuper in his study of Durban's Black

bourgeoisie. This contradiction, as Kuper frames it, was between the middle-class ideal

of individual achievement and the perception that all success or failure reflected on their

race in general.[16] The leading women of the East Bank wished to improve the material

and moral condition of fellow location residents, but also distanced themselves, as

respectable women, from those who they saw as unfit for city life.

To further their goals of improving the location, Black women in East London

formed a number of societies. An East London branch of the Bantu Women's League

(BWL) appears briefly in the records of the Location Advisory Board (LAB) in 1925. Its

president was Florence M. Siyo, the wife of W. Siyo, a local community leader and

member of the LAB.[17] The BWL was founded by Charlotte Maxeke, the first Black South

African woman university graduate and an influential figure in the South African Native

National Congress.[18] The BWL was active in cities in the 1920s and 30s in opposing

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[15] The occupations and activities of East London's Black bourgeoisie in the 1930s and 1940s are similar to those of the Durban bourgeoisie described by Kuper in the 1950s: Leo Kuper, *An African Bourgeosie: Race, Class, and Politics in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).

[16] Kuper, 6–7.

[17] Western Cape Archives (hereafter KAB), 3/ELN Vol. 934, Minutes of Location Advisory Board, 12 February 1925.

[18] Maxeke was present at the founding of the SANNC but was not a member, as women did not have membership status in the organization. Her political legacy to the ANC Women's League has been the subject of recent debate by South African feminist scholars. Zubeida Jaffer, *Beauty of the Heart: The Life and Times of Charlotte Mannya Maxeke* (Sun Press, 2016), 113; Thozama April, "Charlotte Maxeke: A Celebrated and Neglected Figure," in *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Histories Today* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2012), 97–110; Panashe Chigumadzi, "Our Debt to Charlotte Maxeke: 150 Years after Her Birth, She's Still Our Mother," *Sunday Times*, April 18, 2021, https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/opinion-and-analysis/2021-04-18-our-debt-to-charlotte-maxeke-150-years-after-her-birth-shes-still-our-mother/; Athambile Masola, "ANC Can't Co-Opt Maxeke," *Sunday Times*, May 2, 2021, https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/opinion-and-analysis/2021-05-02-anc-cant-co-opt-maxeke/.

passes for women.[19] The East London branch of the BWL, in its fleeting archival appearances, expressed women's concerns about hygiene in the locations, rather than anti-pass sentiments.[20] In 1931 the local newspaper *Izwi Lama Afrika* reported that the ladies of "Palo Township" (the East Bank) had created the Bantu Social Service League in order to "help those in need and encourage the youth toward progress."[21] The group's leadership included a nurse (one of the few professional roles open to Black women), a member of W.B. Rubusana's family, and women who were active in other church and temperance organizations.[22] The Bantu Social Service League's activities included serving a Christmas meal to the poor and elderly in the location.[23]

Like the BWL before it, the Bantu Social Service League appears to have been a short-lived organization, and was perhaps absorbed by a group called the East London Council of Women, which claimed in 1938 to represent the "women's associations" of the location.[24] These "women's associations" may have included zenzeles (home improvement associations), which had formed their first East London branch the previous year in 1937. The founder of this first zenzele was Hilda Godlo, a social worker and the

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[19] Jaffer, *Beauty of the Heart*, 115–20; On passes and women's anti-pass campaigns, see Julia C. Wells, *We Now Demand!: The History of Women's Resistance to Pass Laws in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993); Doug Hindson, *Pass Controls and the Urban African Proletariat* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987).

[20] I have not found direct evidence of women's anti-pass protests in East London in the 1920s and 1930s, but there are a few critiques of women's passes by male leaders and writers: Minutes of LAB, 4 April 1929; "East London Native Women Still Carrying Passes," *Izwi Lama Afrika*, 19 June 1931.

[21] 28 August 1931, *Izwi Lama Afrika*. "Kuyo lenyanga amanenekazi ase Palo Township aqale olumanyano lungentla ngenjongo yokuba ancedisane nabantu abafuna uncedo nokwenza izinto zokupempbelela ulutsha kwizinto zenqubela."

[22] 28 August 1931; 12 February 1932; 22 May 1931, *Izwi Lama Afrika*.

[23] 12 February 1932, *Izwi Lama Afrika*. This newspaper ceased publication at the end of February 1932, and the Bantu Social Service League does not appear in any other newspaper or archival records.

[24] KAB 3/ELN Vol. 935, Minutes of Location Advisory Board, 10 February 1938. This group may be a branch of the National Council of African Women, also founded by Maxeke, which superseded the BWL. Gasa, "Let them build more gaols," in Nomboniso Gasa, ed., *Women in South African History: They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007), 148–49.

wife of a prominent local politician.[25] Godlo was typical of elite Black women in East

London, as being a professional and well-connected within circles of moderate Black

politics.[26]

The East Bank women with the most voice in public urban affairs were the two

women who were elected multiple times to the Location Advisory Board in the 1930s.

Florence Siyo, formerly of the BWL and of the East London Joint Council, was elected to

the LAB in 1932, and was joined in 1934 by Mrs D.B.B. Peter Mlanjana.[27] From their

position on the LAB, which was intended to allow location residents to offer advice to the

white Location Superintendent, these two women advocated for improvements to

location domestic life.[28] Their contributions to LAB meetings focused on practical issues

of health and hygiene, housekeeping, education, and childcare. Siyo and Mlanjana

several times brought forward complaints about the state of the public, shared lavatories

in the location.[29] The ethos of elite women's groups and of the women who sat on the

LAB are similar to that of the zenzele movement in the rural areas. They saw the

practical work of home improvement as a way that women could "uplift" the nation. At

the same time, the ethos of these groups was about charity to the deserving poor, which

implied a distinction of status between the givers and the recipients of the charity.

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[25] E.D. Xotyeni, "Umbulelo Ovela Koo Zenzele Kwa Gompo," *Umlindi we Nyanga*, 15 November 1937.
[26] For a discussion of Hilda Godlo among her contemporaries, see Athambile Masola, "'Bantu Women on the Move': Black Women and the Politics of Mobility in The Bantu World," *Historia* 63, no. 1 (2018): 93–111.
[27] KAB 3/ELN Vol. 937, Minutes of Location Advisory Board.
[28] On the origins of the Location Advisory Boards and their evolution into other forms of racist patriarchal urban governance during apartheid in East London and other cities, see Doreen Atkinson, "Cities and Citizenship: Towards a Normative Analysis of the Urban Order in South Africa, with Special Reference to East London, 1950-1986" (Doctoral dissertation, Durban, University of Natal, 1991); Paul B. Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience: Racial Segregation and South African Liberalism, 1921-60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983); Saul Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919–36* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989).
[29] KAB 3/ELN Vol. 937, Minutes of Location Advisory Board, 11 March 1936; 10 June 1936.

Urbanization in the 1940s, the Question of Black Women's Respectability, and the Growth of Manyanos

During the Second World War and in the years immediately following, the Black population of East London increased even more rapidly than it had during the inter-war years. Many of these new urbanites were women, and especially single or economically independent women. In this context, manyanos were an appealing organization for women who wanted to build social ties in the city and cultivate the image of respectability that was expected of them. The limited documentary evidence about East London manyanos in the 1940s demonstrates their appeal to a wide range of women of different denominations.

The period during the Second World War and the immediate post-war period were a time of rapid population growth in South Africa's cities. This population growth was primarily driven by rural Black residents moving from the increasingly impoverished reserves and farm tenancies to work in the expanding urban industries.[30] According to government statistics, which were likely underestimates, the Black population of East London was 24,388 in 1936 and 32,568 in 1946.[31] More accurate research by the Border Regional Survey project in 1955 calculated the population of all the East London locations (East and West Bank, as well as the small Cambridge location) at between 51,000 and 62,000 people.[32]

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[30] Nicoli Nattrass, "Economic Growth and Transformation in the 1940s," in Dubow and Jeeves, *South Africa's 1940: Worlds of Possibilities*, 25–26.

[31] The comparable (and probably more accurately enumerated) statistics for the white population were 31,311 in 1936 and 40,118 in 1946. Department of Native Affairs, "Report of the Native Laws Commission 1946-1948," 10.

[32] Reader, *The Black Man's Portion*, 150.

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As the location grew, the number of Black women, especially single or independent women and young girls also grew. Data from 1955, for instance, suggested that residents of the East and West Bank locations were evenly divided between men and women.[33] Given the fact that many female domestic workers lived on their employer's property, the number of Black women in East London was likely even greater. Indeed, growing white prosperity during and after the Second World War may have increased the demand for domestic servants and encouraged even more Black women from surrounding rural areas to move to East London.[34]

The attraction of wage labor in the city was complemented by increasing rural impoverishment in the "Native Reserves" through the 1940s, including a devastating drought that affected the Eastern Cape in 1949.[35] These economic factors were bound up in rural social changes that also encouraged women to move to the cities. In rural Xhosa society, women who had children out of wedlock and did not marry the father or another man became *amankazana* (single mothers or mistresses; in short, mothers who were permanently unmarriageable). These women might come to the city to escape stigma from their families or make a living independently of their father's household.[36] In the estimation of the anthropologist Philip Mayer, working the 1950s, many teenaged girls from "school" families arrived in town in their late teens to seek work or follow a lover

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[33] Reader, 150.

[34] On East London's industrial expansion and increasing white prosperity in the late 1940s and early 1950s, see Barker, "Industrial Development in a Border Area: Facts and Figures from East London," 47–50.

[35] Lungisile Ntsebeza, "Youth in Urban African Townships, 1945-1992: A Case Study of the East London Townships" (Master of Arts, Durban, University of Natal, 1993), 26.

[36] Anne Kelk Mager, *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan: A Social History of the Ciskei, 1945-1959* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999), 158–59; Mayer and Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 236.

who had made them pregnant. A significant number of women in their 20s and 30s also came to the city after being widowed or having a child out of wedlock.[37]

The status of women in the town had long been a concern of the white city government and the Location Advisory Board, and these concerns increased after 1940 when the municipally-appointed Welsh Commission reported an alarming increase in the rate of single mothers in the East Bank Location.[38] Moreover, by the late 1930s the definition of respectability for Black women in the city became a matter of debate within the Black community as well. One of the issues which the East London Council of Women brought before the LAB, for example, was the problem of "immorality in the Locations, especially among girls who came into town from the country to seek employment." The deputation from the Council of Women suggested "the establishment of "Girls' Hostels" which would at least enable those girls to have some protection."[39] Such hostels had been established in Johannesburg, organized by missionaries as a way to protect the women whom they had trained and encouraged to enter domestic service.[40]

One of the central problems that contributed to the cultural debate over Black urban women's respectability was the tension between the ideal of maternal domesticity and the demand that Black women be employed to serve the needs of white residents.[41] East London's white location superintendents were skeptical of Black women's claims to the middle-class respectable status of a housewife, as an incident in 1929 showed. W.B. Rubusana, the East Bank's most respected and famous resident, complained at a LAB

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[37] Mayer and Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 235–44; Mager, *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan*, 146–70.
[38] Ntsebeza, "Youth in Urban African Townships," 33.
[39] KAB 3/ELN Vol. 937, Minutes of Location Advisory Board, 10 February 1938.
[40] Gaitskell, "'Christian Compounds for Girls.'"
[41] Deborah Gaitskell, "Housewives, Maids or Mothers: Some Contradictions of Domesticity for Christian Women in Johannesburg, 1903-39," *The Journal of African History* 24, no. 2 (1983): 241–56.

meeting that women were being harassed when they went to the location office to apply for passes. The location Superintendent replied "that there was no difficulty when a Female registered herself as long as they produced an employers' note, the trouble arose when a girl wanted to get registered as doing domestic duties to her husband, it was then that the clerks had to satisfy themselves that the person making the application was legally married."[42] In any case, economic necessity forced most women, married or not, to find some source of income. In 1948 Black man in East London earned about £5 monthly in an unskilled industrial job, and this was far short of the £7.14.6 that the 1948 Smit Report estimated as necessary for the food, rent, and basic expenses of an urban household.[43] Domestic service was the primary employment open to Black women. For those who were not domestic servants, washing laundry and brewing beer were the most common occupations.[44] For those who owned a house (and women were the majority of home owners in the East Bank location), renting out rooms was another highly profitable activity.[45]

The Black press, which was controlled almost entirely by men, reveals the same concerns about women in towns, concerns both that women would become corrupted themselves, and that they would foster immorality in the city. The women whose behaviour was most scrutinized were those termed "girls," particularly those in domestic service, as well as women who made and consumed alcohol. One theme of complaint was against women who were too consumerist and modern, who degraded the nation by

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[42] KAB 3/ELN Vol. 935, Minutes of Location Advisory Board, 4 April 1929.
[43] Department of Native Affairs, "Report of the Native Laws Commission 1946-1948," 2–3.
[44] On the business structure of East London's beer-brewing women, see Gary Minkley, "'I Shall Die Married to the Beer': Gender, 'Family' and Space in East London's Locations," *Kronos*, no. 23 (1996): 149–50; Although textile production, often women's work, was a major industry in East London, the owners of Good Hope Textiles, the largest factory, employed only men. Mager, *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan*, 56.
[45] Reader, *The Black Man's Portion*, 110.

wearing makeup, smoking cigarettes, and drinking alcohol.[46] Moreover, according to the "Editress" of the *Imvo* women's section, when urban parents had to work all day, mothers had no time to devote to the home life of their families.[47]

On the other hand, some letters to the editors express an acceptance of urban life for women. A letter to the editor in *Imvo* titled "MaZifundiswe Iintombi" (Let us educate girls) noted that if young men were going to be praised for seeking work in the mines, young women should also be encouraged to find gainful, productive outlets for their energy.[48] The "Editress" of the women's section in *Imvo* admitted that the "craziness" of girls in town, "many of whom are in domestic service," was no worse than the behaviour of their male counterparts.[49] A writer using the pseudonym "Krobemnyango" (crack-open-the-door) argued that churches were too harsh with wayward girls, and that parents and the church should reconcile with them.[50] During the 1948 elections for the Location Advisory Board in Port Elizabeth (present-day Gqeberha), one writer hoped for more female candidates, as women were better at getting business done without arguing.[51] In all, the Black press was decidedly concerned about the reputations of women in town, particularly those who were classified as girls, who worked in domestic service, and any women connected with the manufacture or sale of alcohol.

In this context of close scrutiny of urban Black women's activities and livelihoods, the limited documentary evidence suggests that manyanos were a popular

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[46] Erasmus Ngcabetsha, "Cigarettes Smoking by Women," *Umlindi we Nyanga*, 15 February 1939; Sgt. Archie G. Makgoko, "The African Eve and Bacchus," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 30 March 1946.

[47] "Editress," "To the African Girl, Wife and Mother," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 24 April 1943. It is quite likely that the "Editress" was the writer and columnist R.R.H. Dhlomo, who was the "Editress" of the *Bantu World* women's page; by the 1940s both *Imvo* and *Bantu World* were owned by the Bantu Press.

[48] Jno. Pat Ncaca, "MaZifundiswe Iintombi," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 6 April 1946.

[49] "Editress," "To the African Girl, Wife and Mother: Some Causes of Craziness," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 10 April 1943.

[50] "Krobemnyango," "Ma Kulungiswe Ezonakalayo," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 17 August 1946.

[51] J. Maxela, "Ma Kunyulwe Abafazi," *Imvo Zabantsundu* 24 April 1948.

organizational form for both elite and ordinary women. The official limitation of manyanos to married women, and the official manyano rules about temperance, did not necessarily make these organizations marginal in an urban community where many women earned money by brewing alcohol. In fact, the image of respectability that came with manyano membership was perhaps especially appealing for women who knew themselves to be under close scrutiny, both by the state and by Black male public opinion.

Manyanos had been formed in Black East London congregations in the early twentieth century, but few written records of them remain. The official history of the Anglican Mother's Union reports that a branch was opened at St Phillip's church in the West Bank location in 1912.[52] Some of the earliest newspaper evidence of church manyanos in East London dates from 1931. In that year, *Imvo Zabantsundu* published a lengthy report of a conference of "Amanina ase Tiyopiya" (the women's manyano of the Order of Ethiopia), which had recently occurred in East London.[53] The conference brought together women from this denomination from across the Eastern Cape, as well as

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[52] According to Margaret Ngcayiya, a long-standing MU member at St. Phillip's, the church was originally located in the West Bank location and was moved to the Tsolo section of the East Bank location in 1957. Lubabalo L. Ngewu, *Listening to the Silent Voices of the MU: The Centenary History of the MU in the CPSA* (Lovedale: Mothers Union, 2004), 66; Margaret Ngcayiya, "History of St Philip's Church," trans. Mazoe Nopece, n.d.

[53] The Order of Ethiopia was a semi-autonomous order within the Anglican Church, founded by James Dwane in 1900 after his independent African church failed in its merger with the African Methodist Episcopal church. It is possible that "Amanina ase Tiyopiya" refers to the women's manyano of a different "Ethiopian" church; however, the Order of Ethiopia was the most institutionalized of the "Ethiopian" churches and certainly had a congregation (St Barnabas) in East London by at least the 1940s. For a discussion of the origins of the Order of Ethiopia, its relation to the AME and to African Independent Churches, see: Stephen Hayes, "Orthodox Ecclesiology in Africa: A Study of the 'Ethiopian' Churches of South Africa," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 8, no. 4 (2008): 337–54; James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 194, 203–4; For evidence of the Order of Ethiopia in East London in the 1940s, see Stephen Hayes, "Hopa, Ephraim Langton Mzamo," in *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, accessed November 19, 2021, https://dacb.org/stories/southafrica/hopa-ephraim/.

visiting representatives from the Methodist and Bantu Presbyterian manyanos. The conference proceedings included reports on the membership and funds of various branches. The East London branch of Amanina ase Tiyopiya reported 46 members and a total of £62 in the bank; these figures suggest that this particular manyano was well established in the city.[54] Also in 1931, "Amakosikazi ase Rabe" (the manyano of the Congregational Union of South Africa) announced a fundraising concert in East London.[55] The Methodist manyano was also evidently active in East London, as in 1949 they hosted a regional conference.[56] By 1950, the locations had an Anglican, a Catholic, a Methodist, a Bantu Presbyterian, an Order of Ethiopia, a Congregational, and an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church (and probably many more), all of which likely had organized women's groups.[57]

These brief notices of large meetings and events are among the few extant records of specific manyano activity in East London before the 1950s. Newspapers reported on the social activities of the location elite, as well as on sports (rugby and boxing were particularly popular in East London) and the activities of home improvement societies.[58] Although manyanos had larger memberships than home improvement societies and social service groups, they did not attract the same attention from the press.[59] Manyano membership depended on a woman's maturity and commitment to the church rather than

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[54] "Amanina ase Tiyopiya," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 24 February 1931.

[55] "Ikonsati Yamakosikazi ase Rabe," *Izwi Lama Afrika*, 15 May 1931.

[56] Cory Library (hereafter CL), Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 19 November 1949.

[57] For evidence of the existence of these denominations: *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 13 January 1940; *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 24 February 1931; *Izwi Lama Afrika*, 15 May 1931;

[58] On the popularity of rugby in East London rather than football (soccer), see Ntsebeza, "Youth in Urban African Townships," 41.

[59] If Amanina ase Tiyopiya, from a relatively small church, had 46 members in East London in 1931, the manyano memberships of the larger Methodist and Anglican congregations were likely comparable or higher. The Bantu Social Service League, on the other hand, reported only 15 members in 1931 (KAB 3/ELN Vol. 934, Minutes of Location Advisory Board, 13 April 1932).

education or income. Manyanos therefore were likely to attract a membership of poorer women with fewer social connections. This is likely the reason manyanos appear infrequently in the written record of East London's history, even though occasional notices of large events demonstrate their existence.

Manyano women occupied, or could occupy, some of the categories that were most in question for Black urban women of the 1930s and 1940s. The official rhetoric of manyanos expressed in rulebooks written by church leaders emphasized the duty of Christian women to their husbands and children, forbade the brewing or drinking of alcohol, and often tacitly assumed that the ideal manyano member was a full-time housewife. However, the realities of urban life meant that manyano women, like all women except for the elite, would have had to work to support their families.[60] Gaitskell's research on manyano women in early twentieth century Johannesburg demonstrates that many of its members were domestic servants, washerwomen, or beer brewers, all occupations that would have brought them into the categories of Black women whose respectability was most frequently questioned.[61] One Johannesburg woman in the 1920s stated: "It's almost impossible for us to live decently… The temptation to sell this stuff [beer] is too strong… Because I am a Christian and try to go

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[60] Gaitskell quotes a white Methodist manyano leader of 1916, who believed that her white friends "whose acquaintance with the native 'girl' does not extend beyond the kitchen-girl or washer-woman," would have been surprised at the intelligent piety of manyano women. Gaitskell points out that the manyano women in question at this particular conference almost certainly included washerwomen and domestic workers. Deborah Gaitskell, "Female Mission Initiatives: Black and White Women in Three Witwatersrand Churches, 1903-1939" (PhD dissertation, London, University of London, 1981), 154.

[61] "Prayer-union members, no less than other women, had to work to supplement male earnings, and even when this was done at home to make some simultaneous child-care possible, beer-brewing and laundry-work made time-consuming demands on the "queen of the home." Deborah Gaitskell, "'Wailing for Purity': Prayer Unions, African Mothers and Adolescent Daughters, 1912-1940," in *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness, 1870-1930*, ed. Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone (London: Longman, 1982), 348.

straight, I have to stand here day after day and kill myself washing [clothes]."[62] But not every manyano woman so scrupulously avoided association with alcohol.

Even for relatively well-off women who had formal employment, manyano membership was not incompatible with (and could even profitably harmonize with) the alcohol industry. For instance, one East Bank resident who was a teacher and a high-ranking manyano member derived most of her income selling hard liquor to a select group of clients, who included "teachers, preachers, and other decent people who are afraid of being known as people who drink." This woman and her neighbor, also a manyano member and a liquor seller, affirmed that selling and drinking alcohol were not incompatible with church membership, as long as privacy and decorum were observed.[63] Another example is that of Elda B. Ntsonkota. Ntsonkota was the wife of a headman and a member of St. Luke's Anglican church in Nxaruni, a village on the outskirts of East London.[64] She worked as a teacher in King William's Town, and this, combined with her church and family connections, placed her among East London's Black elite.[65] In 1938 a local tea manufacturer made Mrs. Ntsonkota the subject of an advertisement and gave her a prize of a tea set as part of a marketing campaign.[66] Soon after winning the prize, however, she was arrested for running a shebeen in the East Bank location.[67] Mrs. Ntsonkota's involvement in both church activities and the sale of alcohol demonstrate that the distinction between respectable Christian women and disreputable city women

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[62] Ray Phillips, *The Bantu Are Coming,* (Lovedale, 1930), 136. Quoted in Gaitskell, 138.
[63] Mayer and Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 223.
[64] "Izinganeko Nezinye eMonti," *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 7 May 1938.
[65] "Ezingabantu, Njalo njalo kwa Gompo," *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 27 January 1940. Mrs. Ntsonkota's arrest in 1938 for beer-brewing does not appear to have damaged her social position, as this 1940 article includes her teaching activities and the news of her recent illness among its general East London social gossip.
[66] *Umlindi we Nyanga*, 16 January 1939; Katie Carline, "Wise Mothers and Wise Buyers: Marketing Tea and Home Improvement in 1930s South Africa," *The Journal of African History* 63, no. 3 (2022): 291–308.
[67] Minkley, "I Shall Die Married to the Beer," 137.

was not so clear-cut as church leaders, white officials, or newspaper editorials liked to portray; indeed, the anxiety of press discussions of Black women's respectability is a sign of how difficult this category was to define.

Bridging Geographical and Generational Divisions

The evidence of the Queenstown Methodist Manyano demonstrates how manyanos responded to increasing urban migration and the accompanying strain on family life. First, the Methodist manyano was a point of connection for women who migrated to new places. The specifically Methodist system of "removal" certificates allowed a woman to take her manyano credentials with her when she travelled, so that she could maintain her status in the organization even when she did not have any personal connections to the group. In 1941, for example, "two foreign sisters" from Barkley and the Witwatersrand attended the Queenstown manyano meeting and presented their "Removes" (certificates confirming their good standing in a previous Methodist manyano branch).[68] These "Removes" were one concrete way that the manyano facilitated women's migration within South Africa.

The frequency of women's migration, both temporary and long-term, is evident from the prayers for travel in the Queenstown manyano meetings. At most meetings in the 1940s, at least one member asked for prayer for a personal journey or reported on the journey of a family member. Members who could not attend a particular meeting sent in excuses for their absence; the most frequent excuse was sickness, followed by travelling. The manyano meeting was a place where women could look for sympathy and solidarity in the difficulties of travel. Sister Mene, for example, returned from East London to

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[68] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Queenstown Women's Manyano, 6 February 1941. Trans. PM.

Queenstown and told the group about the difficulties of her experience. Her journey to East London had been an "unplanned removal," and in East London she had been "forced to live in an unpleasant environment." She asked the Queenstown sisters to continue to pray for her, which suggests that she would need to return to East London to live, despite her dislike of the city.[69] Travel was so much a part of manyano women's experience as Xhosa women in industrializing South Africa that it was integrated into the spiritual expression of the group.[70] When Sister Nxasana committed herself to the manyano in 1941, she expressed her wish "to travel with the herd."[71] This was a powerful image that drew both on biblical idiom and on Xhosa pastoralist culture. Cattle were central to precolonial Xhosa society and economy; cattle were the subject of praise poems, and were also a common metaphor in praise poems about great people.[72] isiXhosa-speaking Christian writers therefore found the image of flocks and herds particularly apt for describing their new community of God's people.[73] In Sister Nxasana's case, the image of God's people as a spiritual flock or herd is enhanced into the specific image of a

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[69] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Queenstown Women's Manyano, 16 May 1940. Trans. PM.

[70] For example: "Sister Mcingane raised the name of Elizabeth Njokwana who wanted to journey with us." CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Queenstown Women's Manyano, 8 May 1941. Trans. PM.

[71] "Dade Nxasana ejoyina efuna ukuhamba nomhlambi." CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Queenstown Women's Manyano, 27 March 1941. Trans. KC.

[72] Jeff Opland, *Xhosa Poets and Poetry* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1998).

[73] For instance, the "Great Hymn" of Ntsikana composed around 1815 describes God as *Ulohlonganis' imihlamb' eyalanayo* (He who amalgamates flocks rejecting each other). The poet Nontsizi Mgqwetho, writing in the 1920s, uses similar imagery, for instance of God who even before the coming of the missionaries *ubanyusa nase matambekeni njengayo imihlambi yase Giliyadi* (tended [our fathers] on the slopes like flocks on Mount Gilead). "The stream of despair," in Nontsizi Mgqwetho, *The Nation's Bounty: The Xhosa Poetry of Nontsizi Mgqwetho*, trans. Jeff Opland, African Treasury Series 22 (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2007), 212–13; Janet Hodgson, "The 'Great Hymn' of the Xhosa Prophet, Ntsikana an African Expression of Christianity, 1815 - 1821," *Religion in Southern Africa* 1, no. 2 (1980): 40, 47; See also: Duncan Brown, "'Modern Prophets, Produce a New Bible': Christianity, Africanness and the Poetry of Nontsizi Mgqwetho," *Current Writing* 20, no. 2 (2008): 77–91.

migratory herd, a group of followers on a journey. In the case of the women of the Queenstown manyano, their journey was both spiritual and temporal.

Manyanos not only allowed women to maintain organizational affiliation when they migrated to new parts of the country, but were also a forum to discuss worries about their children's travel, as well as a mechanism by which older women maintained authority over young men and women within the church. The adult manyano members of the 1940s would have been the mothers of the "hordes of young girls" from "school" families who were arriving in East London.[74] Manyano women worried about their sons and daughters, and the manyano was the place where they could share their burden. The emotional intensity of women's concern for absent or wayward children is evident in the Queenstown manyano minutes through the frequency of the word "pain" (*ubuhlungu*). The secretary often used this term to characterize the meeting as a whole, or as an adjective to describe a confession given by a member.[75]

Many of the "painful" confessions of the members relate to missing or wayward children. For example, after listening to John 15:4,[76] Sister Mankai "trembled under these painful words because of the children. Her child had left her, had said they were going out, and went out."[77] The "loss" of children could be literal or figurative. On another occasion, a member "spoke up painfully because she has lost her child, who does not

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[74] Mayer and Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 240.

[75] For example, the secretary concluded the minutes of one meeting: "the painful service closed with a grace." ("…yavalwa inkonzo ebuhlungu nofefe pezu"). CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Queenstown Women's Manyano, 6 February 1941. Trans. KC.

[76] "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." John 15:4, New International Version.

[77] "Makai ejoyina bezaudlala pantsi kwamazwi esebuhlungwini ngenxa yabantwana. Lomntana wake abashiyayo. Waye esiti uyahamba uya puma uyangaphandle." Minutes of the Queenstown Methodist Manyano, 1 May 1941. I have translated "bezaudlala" as "tremble." The common meaning of –dlala in modern isiXhosa is "to play." But Kropf's 1915 dictionary gives an alternate meaning of –dlala as "to put the whole body into a shiver as women do at the marriage dance and as girls in imitation thereof." Albert Kropf and Robert Godfrey, *A Kafir-English Dictionary*, (Lovedale: Lovedale Institution Press, 1915), 517.

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want to see her, and therefore there is fighting in her home."[78] This statement suggests

that the "lost" child was within reach, perhaps still physically close, but emotionally

estranged.

"Wailing" for lost and wayward children was a common feature of manyano

meetings across denominations from the 1910s through the 1940s.[79] Gaitskell interprets

the weeping, emotional confessional format of these meetings as Black women's

response to the impossible demands of Christian motherhood in industrializing South

Africa. Churches demanded that women supervise the morals of their daughters, and

specifically that they prevent premarital pregnancy, but the need for women to work in

the cities made this supervision impossible. As Gaitskell puts it, "the demands of both

God and gold removed key supports from the African woman while pressuring her to

assume new responsibilities."[80]

The evidence from the Queenstown manyano minutes supports Gaitskell's

argument, but also suggests a greater degree of activity than simply "wailing." For

example, manyano women attributed reconciliations with their children to the prayers and

support of the manyano.[81] The manyano did not only mourn their children who "fell."[82]

The manyano was also a mechanism for controlling young people who were church

members. The women's manyano, predictably, supervised the Young Women's Manyano

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[78] "S. Hlati ejoina esebuhlungwini kuba ulahlwe nangu mntana wake akamfuni nokumbona kwaye kusilwa kumzi ahlala kuwo." CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Queenstown Women's Manyano, 9 June 1949. Trans. KC.

[79] The name of the women's prayer group in the American Board Mission church was "Isililo," which means "wailing" in isiZulu. Zulu women insisted on keeping this name for their organization despite missionaries' attempts to rename it the "Women's Welfare Group." Gaitskell, "'Wailing for Purity,'" 343.

[80] Gaitskell, "Female Mission Initiatives," 199; Gaitskell, "'Wailing for Purity.'"

[81] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Queenstown Women's Manyano, 23 January 1941; 26 May 1949. Trans. KC.

[82] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 30 October 1941. Trans. KC.

(the *iintombi*, or girls). A senior member of the women's manyano chaired the meetings of the iintombi, and the funds that the iintombi raised were channelled into the general manyano funds.[83] The members of the Young Women's Manyano (YWM) were not necessarily the daughters of the members of the Women's manyano—a comparison of the records of the Queenstown girls' and women's manyanos show few shared surnames—but supervision of these girls allowed manyano women to fulfil their duties of raising Christian girls. As Gaitskell notes, the membership of the Methodist YWM was never very large. The meetings of the YWM were supposed to substitute for young people's night-time dancing and socializing, but in rural areas as well as urban, these serious meetings about moral purity never attracted a large membership.[84]

The power of the women's manyano extended to their control over the Young Men's Guild (or *amadodana*). Gaitskell's study of the Methodist manyano in the Transvaal and Witwatersrand does not mention any relationship between the women's and the young men's groups.[85] The Queenstown Methodist manyano records, however, suggest that in this region, at least, the women's manyano had oversight of the Young Men's Guild, which had a much larger membership than the Girls' Manyano. Beginning in 1944, the quarterly financial reports of the women's manyano include a record of the funds received from amadodana. In that year, the women's manyano and young men jointly organized a concert at the annual Methodist Synod, and the proceeds of the

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[83] For evidence of the funds collected from iintombi, see the minutes of the Queenstown Manyano Quarterly Sessions.

[84] The membership figures for the Queenstown women's and girls' manyanos support Gaitskell's argument. For example, in 1940 the Queenstown girls' group had 15 full members and 5 "on trial," while the women's group had 87 full members and 7 "on trial." Gaitskell, "'Wailing for Purity,'" 347–49.

[85] She mentions the YMG only in passing, as a popular movement of the 1920s. Gaitskell, "Female Mission Initiatives," 190.

concert were received by the women's manyano.[86] In 1947, the chair of the women's manyano noted in the financial report that they were still waiting to receive *amatikiti* (the tickets, or annual membership dues) from amadodana.[87] Most of the time, the amadodana were not behind in their financial contributions. Their contributions were tallied in the quarterly financial reports along with those of the iintombi. The women's manyano did not record membership statistics of the Young Men's Guild, nor did any representative from the amadodana make statements at the quarterly sessions. However, the financial contributions from the amadodana were considerable, and much larger than those of the iintombi. In the first quarter of 1948, for example, the amadodana contributed £1, while the iintombi brought 10 shillings.[88]

The position of the amadodana in the Queenstown Methodist church shows one possible outcome of the skewed gender demographics in the mid-twentieth century Ciskei. Mager, in her research on gender roles in the Ciskei, shows that women were handed a heavy burden of supervising young people when many adult men were away working. With court cases as her primary source of evidence, Mager's analysis necessarily focuses on the many instances in which mothers could not control their sons' actions. The amadodana records show another possible outcome of the same circumstances; women supervised the fundraising of the young men in a church

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[86] "ESynod yaseTsomo: Imali yeConcert yamadodana eyayidibene namanina yafuma £7.15 kwelamanina icala." CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 7 September 1944. Trans. KC.

[87] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 27 November 1947. Trans. KC.

[88] There are 20 shillings in a pound. In the first quarter of the following year, the amadodana brought £1.8 and the iintombi 12/-. CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 12 April 1948; 4 April 1949. The relative importance of the Young Men's Guild compared to the Young Women's Manyano can also be inferred by the greater coverage that the amadodana received in *Imvo Zabantsundu*. For example: 23 July 1931; 7 June 1932.

community where there were few adult men. Supervision of young male church members

allowed manyano women to demonstrate their maternal authority.[89]

Fundraising and Mutual Aid in an Urban Context

The Young Men's Guild contributions to the women's manyano funds is only one

indication of the financial growth of the manyano during the 1940s. The records of the

Queenstown manyano suggest significant growth in funds raised, especially in the latter

half of the decade, after the end of the Second World War. The increased financial clout

of the manyano was partly due to the increase in membership (and therefore in amatikiti)

described earlier. It was also due to the entrenchment of fundraising techniques based in a

culture of reciprocity and sharing-in-turn, which were also likely taking place in East

London, where manyanos were linked to a wide network of fundraising and social service

organizations.

The financial growth of the Queenstown women's manyano is most evident in its

quarterly business meetings (Nyangantatu), at which were collected the quarterly

contributions of each manyano branch, the contributions of the girls' and young men's

groups, income from special events, gifts from visiting manyanos of other denominations,

and the proceeds of a small collection taken at the quarterly meeting. Once the money

had been totalled, some was deducted to pay for regular expenses like hosting an event or

paying delegates' travel expenses to conferences. The remainder was transferred to the

manyano bank account. These *iingxelo yemali*, or financial reports, depict an organization

that was growing not only in its membership, but also in the vigour of its fundraising

efforts.

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[89] Shireen Hassim makes a similar point about the women's control over young men in the Zulu nationalist organization Inkatha in the late twentieth century. Shireen Hassim, "Family, Motherhood and Zulu Nationalism: The Politics of the Inkatha Women's Brigade," *Feminist Review*, no. 43 (1993): 1–25.

In the late 1930s, the main source of income for the manyano was the regular dues

of members in the two branches of Komani (Queenstown proper) and Lesseyton (an

outlying town), which usually totalled slightly above £1 each quarter, most of which was

spent on expenses.[90] In the early 1940s, the manyano had £10 in savings in their bank

account.[91] By 1944, when the contributions from the Young Men's Guild begin to be

included in the financial report, the quarterly totals (after deductions for expenses) are

approximately £2.[92] Some of this income came from the contributions of other manyanos,

for example the contributions of "Amanina ase Sirayeli" (the Mothers of Israel) and

"Amanina ase St. Saviour's" who contributed several shillings to the £2.3.9 income

reported in the second quarter of 1946.[93] In the remaining years of the decade,

contributions from fundraising events and from visiting manyanos continued to bolster

the Queenstown Methodist women's bank account. For example, in 1947 an *umjikelo*

fundraiser brought £20 into the bank account (this type of fundraiser will be defined in

detail below).[94] Regular membership dues as well as gifts from visiting manyanos of

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[90] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 13 October 1938; 30 October 1941.
[91] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 29 April 1943.
[92] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 7 September 1944; 4 October 1945.
[93] The minutes do not make clear whether these other manyanos were present at the Nyangatatu meeting, or (more likely) that these funds were contributed during other special events earlier in the quarter. I am not sure of the denominational affiliation of the "Amanina ase St. Saviour's." St. Saviour's is a common church name among Anglican churches, but there is none of this name currently in Queenstown. The "Amanina ase Sirayeli" most likely refers to the women's manyano of the Church of God and Saints in Christ, or the Israelites, whose millenarian community at Bulhoek had been destroyed by a government massacre in 1921, but who continued to operate in the Queenstown area. On the Israelites, see Robert Edgar, *The Finger of God: Enoch Mgijima, the Israelites, and the Bulhoek Massacre in South Africa* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018). For an insider's description of the "Daughters of Jerusalem" in the present-day Israelite church, see Richman Mzuxolile Ngwanya, "An Ecclesiological Analysis of the Church of God and Saints in Christ and Its Impact on Bulhoek Massacre," Doctoral dissertation, (University of South Africa, 2005), 253-57.
[94] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano,, 16 October 1947. Trans. KC.

other denominations meant that by 1949, the manyano bank account had £64.[95] During a time when Black wages were rising slowly in comparison with burgeoning white prosperity, such a bank account total represented an impressive savings, and was approximately equal to the yearly income of a full-time industrial worker in East London.[96] The Queenstown financial reports do not consistently report the same categories of income and expenditure, and only occasionally report the total in the bank account. The general trend, however, was an increase in the regular branch contributions from amatikiti, as well as consistent gifts from visiting groups of other churches. These trends were likely true also of East London, whose economy and demographics were similar to Queenstown.

The manyano certainly depended on the small, regular contributions of its members, usually paid in instalments of one or two shillings.[97] Contributions from fundraising events, however, were essential to the manyano. For example, when the quarterly session met to plan an upcoming church Convention, the manyano president advised the members that a concert would be necessary to raise the money to host the Convention.[98] Fundraising events like concerts, bazaars, tea parties, and imijikelo (sing. umjikelo) were attended by other church members, neighbors and acquaintances, and the

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[95] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 4 April 1949. Trans. KC.

[96] 5 pounds 14 shillings was the "recommended" monthly wage for Black men in East London in 1946. Department of Native Affairs, "Report of the Native Laws Commission 1946-1948," 3.

[97] I have not been able to determine a fixed amount required for a manyano membership "ticket." When women contributed during a meeting, the amount contributed was always different, ranging from a few pence to a shilling or two. This suggests that members contributed according to their ability, rather than at a fixed rate. For example, at one meeting "the names of those who have paid were read and those who have not were pleaded." Evidently there was social pressure to pay, but also a "plea deal" for those who could not. CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Queenstown Women's Manyano, 17 April 1941. Trans. PM.

[98] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 2 May 1946.

manyano branches of other denominations. Other manyano branches were an important

constituency of attendees at these events. The Queenstown Methodist manyano regularly

received invitations from the manyanos of other denominations to attend tea parties or

concerts, something that was likely also true for East London manyanos.[99] Those who

went as paying guests to another group's event could expect the hosts to reciprocate by

attending the guest's next fundraiser.[100] The reciprocal nature of these events is implied in

the name of one popular church event, the umjikelo. At an umjikelo, guests paid an

entrance fee in order to attend a meal accompanied by speeches, music, and

entertainment.[101] The verb –*jika* in isiXhosa means "to turn around," and the term

umjikelo can also refer to the winding of a woman's headscarf, or *iqhiya*.[102] As applied to

a fundraising event, therefore, "umjikelo" implies the circular movement of money:

money is collected from the guests at the event (perhaps going round in a circle), and the

circulation of this money brings the expectation that the host will return the favour to the

guests.

The ubiquity of these women's church fundraisers is evident in an advertisement

by the Tea Market Expansion Bureau which emphasized the practicality of tea as the

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[99] For example, the Baptist manyano sent an invitation to an unnamed event (Minutes of the Women's Manyano, 22 February 1940); The Moravian church and the "Africa" church (likely the Presbyterian Church of Africa, founded by James Mzimba in 1898) each held tea parties in June 1949 (Minutes of the Women's Manyano, 2 June 1949).

[100] The records of the Queenstown manyano are not detailed enough to determine whether the Methodist manyano attended and gave money at all the other denominations' events to which they were invited. But occasionally another group sent a letter of thanks for the attendance of the Methodist manyano: CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Queenstown Women's Manyano 25 January 1940; 9 June 1949.

[101] There are no detailed descriptions of umjikelo from the 1940s, so this definition is based partly on Nontle Kombele's recollections of umjikelo in Duncan Village in the 1960s and 70s. Kombele, Interview in Gompo, East London, 16 December 2019.

[102] "Uku-jike" and "Um-Jikelo," in Albert Kropf and Robert Godfrey, *A Kafir-English Dictionary* (Lovedale: Lovedale Institution Press, 1915), 170–71.

centerpiece of a fundraiser.[103] The advertisement depicts "Mrs. Dyira" in conversation

with "Rev. Faba" at a concert, where she praises the economic efficiency of selling tea. In

the background, well-dressed men and women listen to a singer in an evening gown

accompanied on a grand piano. "Just think," Mrs. Dyira says, "tea for 50 people costs

only a few pence to make. My tea counter will make a nice profit for the church!"

Notably, Mrs. Dyira wears modern western-style clothing and a hat, rather than a

manyano uniform. This perhaps reflects the advertisers' attempts to place tea within a

popular women's church activity while also connecting it to aspirations of wealth and

refinement. The tea parties, concerts, and bazaars held by manyano women in East

London may not have looked exactly like the event depicted in this advertisement, but the

advertisement does reflect the association between churchwomen and fundraising events.

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[103] Tea Market Expansion Bureau, "Tea for Hospitality!," *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 3 February 1940.

Figure 6: "Tea for Hospitality!" advertisement by the Tea Market Expansion Bureau, Umteteli wa Bantu, *3 February 1940*

While the Queenstown Methodist records do not describe imijikelo in detail, besides reporting on the funds spent and earned, the minutes of a different meeting convey the spirit of this type of fundraiser, at which oratory and socialization were mixed with competitive giving. In 1949, the Queenstown manyano hosted an event to thank a visiting female evangelist, Mvangelikazi Yiba.[104] The event was attended not only by the

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[104] The title Mvangelikazi (lit., female evangelist) is probably synonymous with the "Biblewomen" who were employed by the Methodist church in the Transkei and Transvaal. Gaitskell, "Female Mission Initiatives," 231.

Methodist manyano, but also by manyanos of other denominations, a representative from

the Methodist amadodana, and the local Methodist minister. After prayer and the

discussion of a biblical text, a representative from each group gave a speech and

presented a gift of thanks to the evangelist, ranging from a few shillings to £3 from the

Methodist manyano.[105]

This meeting is evidence of how manyanos acquired the money that they gave

toward the needs of their church (the uses of these funds, especially in the construction of

church buildings, is the subject of the next chapter). Additionally, records of these events

suggest two significant aspects of Black Christian urban culture in segregation-era South

Africa, namely women's ecumenical cooperation and a financial culture of fundraising

that defied the tight commercial controls of the segregated city.

First, the records of the Queenstown Methodist manyano demonstrate frequent

associations between the Methodists and women of other denominations, from both

mission-established churches like the Moravian church and AICs like the Israelites. In

rural areas of the Eastern Cape, where church buildings were separated by long distances

and historic mission stations claimed long-standing generational loyalties, the average

churchgoer might associate primarily with their own congregation.[106] In towns and cities,

however, churches of many types proliferated, and as the example of Queenstown

demonstrates, manyano branches interacted. White scholars of African Christianity in the

twentieth century often deplored the divisiveness that they inferred from the explosion of

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[105] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Queenstown Women's Manyano, 2 June 1949. Trans. KC.

[106] For example, see the clustering of Methodist mission stations in Eastern Cape in the map in Richard Elphick and T.R.H. Davenport, eds., *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), vi–vii.

independent churches in the early twentieth century.[107] "The City is the breeding ground

of sects," wrote Bengt Sundkler in his comprehensive survey of African Independent

Churches in the 1940s.[108] Sundkler's careful tabulation of the names of hundreds of AICs

supported his characterization of these churches as sectarian and exclusive. However, as

Natasha Erlank has noted, ecumenism flourished in inter-war South Africa. Erlank

demonstrates the growth of dialog between white English and Afrikaans-speaking

churches, and shows how Black church leaders were excluded from national-level

ecumenism even as they were welcomed into international ecumenical organizations.[109]

The activities of manyano women are evidence of a third aspect of South African

ecumenism that is absent from discussions of Black international ecumenism: ecumenism

within local Black South African churches.[110]

This ecumenism happened at the grassroots, and was not self-conscious in its

inter-denominational dialog. Rather, I suggest that women entered into a spontaneous

ecumenical dialog through their shared, distinctive identity as manyano mothers: the

uniforms, the Thursday meetings, and most importantly the shared style of fervent prayer

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[107] This subtly negative perspective on AICs is evident in the scholarship on African churches in the nineteenth-century. Because they are searching for the roots of a unified African nationalism, Saunders and Mills see denominational proliferation as a weakening of national unity. However, Mills does note that in the temperance movement, missionaries were the source of denominational exclusivity. C. C. Saunders, "Tile and the Thembu Church: Politics and Independency on the Cape Eastern Frontier in the Late Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of African History* 11, no. 4 (1970): 553–70; Wallace G. Mills, "The Roots of African Nationalism in the Cape Colony: Temperance, 1866-1898," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 13, no. 2 (1980): 197; More recent scholarship, however, has a more nuanced take on the relationship between religious and political independency. Robert R. Edgar, *The Finger of God: Enoch Mgijima, the Israelites, and the Bulhoek Massacre in South Africa* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018); Lauren V. Jarvis, "In a Time of Prophets: Healing, Gender, and Politics in the Nazareth Baptist Church of South Africa, c.1870-1939" (Ph.D., Stanford, Calif, Stanford University, 2012).
[108] Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 93.
[109] Natasha Erlank, "'God's Family in the World': Transnational and Local Ecumenism's Impact on Inter-Church and Inter-Racial Dialogue in South Africa in the 1920s and 1930s," *South African Historical Journal* 61, no. 2 (2009): 278–97.
[110] As Cabrita and Erlank point out, many mission-established and independent churches share common Protestant ideas about individual salvation and textual revelation that are arguably more significant than their differences of name. Joel Cabrita and Natasha Erlank, "New Histories of Christianity in South Africa: Review and Introduction," *South African Historical Journal* 70, no. 2 (2018): 307–23.

and exhortation. Through this style of prayer and preaching, women affirmed to one another their shared authority as mothers in their communities. At the thanksgiving service for Mvangelikazi Yiba mentioned above, an evangelist from the "Africa" church stood up to praise the Methodist evangelist, noting the endurance and the hard work by which she "kept her little children."[111] While this speaker emphasized the long-standing manyano value of care for children and family, another attendee at the same meeting made clear that the work of "keeping little children" was compatible with great public authority. The president of the visiting St. Saviour's manyano presented Mvangelikazi Yiba with a staff, which "resembled the very staff given by God to ancient Moses in order to do his work."[112] By this symbolic gift, the St. Saviour's manyano linked the Methodist evangelist with biblical figure of Moses, who delivered the Israelites out of slavery and brought them through a perilous journey to the Promised Land. At events like this thanksgiving service, or the imijikelo and bazaars that they hosted, manyano women from a wide range of mission and AICs affirmed their shared leadership role as women of prayer.

The second suggestive feature of manyano activity for urban culture is the simple fact that manyanos were earning money, even if the money was set aside only for church purposes. Events such as imijikelo or tea parties were a small window of commercial activity in the otherwise tightly regulated location. The straitjacketing of Black

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[111] These "little children" might refer to the spiritual charges of the evangelist, or to her own biological children, although this seems unlikely from the context, or perhaps collectively to the children of all manyano women. "Kupakame uMvangelikazi wase eAfrica esi ukupumpla bakupiwe. Wati umsebenzi wako wawenze kakuhle wetu wada kwangoku ke. Ivasi yako, nesidima sako noku Tembeka kwako silapa namhlanje sizokubulisa wena uze ungahlali hlali pantsi ke, uze usebenze ugcine lomtwana wenu mncinci." CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Queenstown Women's Manyano, 2 June 1949. Trans. KC.

[112] "[i]ntonga evela ku Nkosikazi wase St Saviour awathi umama lowo ukuze ifane nentonga eyakhe yanikelwa uMoses wakudala ngu Thixo ukuba asebenze ngayo." CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 13 October 1949. Trans. KC.

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entrepreneurship was an early feature of segregation in South African cities, where white

business interests controlled city councils and thereby facilitated their own control of

cheap Black labor.[113] By-laws varied by city, but usually forbade Black residents any

commercial ventures besides hawking fruit or operating a prepared food and drink stall.

In East London, for example, W.B. Rubusana supported a long and fruitless campaign to

persuade the City Council to allow a bioscope in the East Bank.[114] Throughout the 1930s,

the City Council refused even to allow "General Dealers" (grocers) in the locations,

something that was allowed in other South African cities.[115] The East London Location

Advisory Board (LAB) frequently heard complaints about the economic injustice of

licensing rules and petitions to grant exceptions.[116] Through the 1940s, these petitions

were resolutely refused by the City Council.

The conflict between this commercial racist regulation and women's fundraising

events became clearly visible at one moment in 1938. Florence Siyo, a member of the

LAB, asked the Board why the East Bank location recreation hall "was not obtainable for

Sunday afternoon teas." In reply, the Location Superintendent pointed to the underlying

contradiction between location licensing rules and common church and social fundraising

events. "There was no objection," he said, "to the hiring of the Hall on Sunday afternoons

for the purpose of having tea. What was objected to, was people hiring the Hall then

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[113] The exceptional case of Evaton, a freehold township on the outskirts of Johannesburg, demonstrates the importance of trading to Black success in the city. Evaton residents, as freehold owners of their land, built wealth by trading and strenuously resisted the curtailment of these retail rights in the 1940s. Vusumuzi Khumalo, "Evaton and a Quest for Economic Independence: A New Dimension to Entrepreneurship," *New Contree* 77 (2016): 23–45.
[114] KAB 3/ELN Vol. 1/60, Correspondence Files of the Town Clerk, 28 February 1921, 27 June 1921.
[115] See for example, the 1932 petition of 47 business-owners in the North End neighbourhood that adjoined the East Bank location. The issuing of General Dealer's licenses to "Natives in the Location… will spell ruination to us, as our trade is entirely native." KAB 3/ELN 11-80/8, Trading and Shop License Applications in East Bank Location, 2 May 1932.
[116] KAB 3/ELN Vol. 934, Minutes of Location Advisory Board.

selling tea to others, as such was illegal."[117] This regulation was likely part of the reason

that zenzeles and women's social service groups held their events in church halls rather

than the larger public recreation hall.[118] Florence Siyo's query is the only archival

instance of women's church fundraising teas being interfered with because of the

municipality's commercial regulation. Teas, bazaars, and imijikelo were single events

rather than independent businesses, and therefore were not in serious competition with

established businesses. There is no evidence that church fundraisers experienced regular

interference from scrupulous Superintendents or jealous white business owners.

However, this incident in the LAB records does highlight the fact that social fundraisers

were one of the few opportunities for Black urbanites to spend their money inside the

location.

At the same time, the nature of these events fostered a culture of sociable

reciprocity rather than profit-seeking. Manyano fundraising events had many similarities

to the *stokvel* and *mahodisana* groups that were popular across South African cities in the

mid-twentieth century. A stokvel was a rotating savings association, in which members

regularly contributed to a general fund, and then took turns receiving the combined total.

To augment their funds, stokvels held fundraising parties that resembled imijikelo, where

guests paid entrance fees and then expected the hosts to reciprocate.[119] In their 1944 study

of stokvel in Johannesburg's Western Native Townships, Kuper and Kaplan show that

the necessity of reciprocity, and the expense in hosting parties, meant that most people

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[117] KAB 3/ELN Vol. 934, Minutes of Location Advisory Board 13 January 1938.

[118] For example, a zenzele event was held at the Bantu Presbyterian Church: Nosayini Xotyeni, "UNkosk. Ntutu KwaGompo," *Umteteli Wa Bantu*, July 2, 1938.

[119] Kuper and Kaplan define mahodisana as a similar type of association, but with a smaller and less complex structure. Hilda Kuper and Selma Kaplan, "Voluntary Associations in an Urban Township," *African Studies* 3, no. 4 (1944): 178–86.

did not save money by being members of a stokvel.[120] Rather, people joined these associations because of the prestige of membership.[121] Manyano fundraising events have some parallels to the savings association parties that Kuper and Kaplan describe, in that guests and hosts shared an understanding of their mutual obligations to give money. Some of the money that manyanos earned at their events was probably spent in attending others' tea parties or concerts. At the same time, manyano fundraising events had a clear mandate to be profitable, as church budgets depended on them.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the arrival of manyanos in East London, and has situated them within the physical context of the city's segregated location, and in the social context of the location and the other, elite women's social service organizations. Comparative evidence from Queenstown shows marked growth in manyano membership and fundraising during the 1940s, especially after the end of the war. Manyanos were valuable for urban women because members kept their organizational status as they migrated. At a time when adults and authorities worried about wayward youth, manyano members gathered to share their maternal grief and also to supervise the young women and men who fell under their authority within the church.

Their activities also contributed to a distinctive urban culture in the segregated locations. The second half of this chapter highlighted two aspects of manyano fundraising practice that were significant in the context of 1940s East London. Interdenominational

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[120] Kuper and Kaplan, 184.

[121] Deborah James analyzes the attraction of savings clubs that do not create savings, and links their popularity in present-day South Africa to increasing inequality, especially in the former Bantustans. Deborah James, "'Women Use Their Strength in the House': Savings Clubs in an Mpumalanga Village," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41, no. 5 (2015): 1035–52; Deborah James, *Money from Nothing: Indebtedness and Aspiration in South Africa* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015).

cooperation between manyanos belied the notion of sectarian competition among the churches that proliferated in urban areas. The tea parties, concerts, and imijikelo at which different manyanos and church members met were part of a range of reciprocal fundraising ventures (including stokvels) which were—in a limited sense—a rebuke of the commercial controls of the segregated city. This chapter has argued, therefore, that although manyano members were a numerically small group in the city (but still easily the largest Black women's organization) their histories are significant not only as a branch of church history but also as part of the history of urban culture in South Africa.

The history of manyano women in the city does not mean a history of respectable women to counterbalance histories of beer-brewers and shebeen queens.[122] Rather, this chapter suggests that manyano membership was just one of the associations women might join in order to establish themselves in town. As the example of Mrs. Ntsonkota shows, church membership did not preclude women's participation in the lucrative alcohol trade. Manyano women who arrived in cities like East London in the 1930s and 1940s had to navigate the economic challenges of living in the city while being subjected to the scrutiny that white officials and the Black press directed at domestic workers and independent women.

Manyano history adds nuance and fluidity to the concepts of "respectable" and "disreputable" women in town, while at the same time highlighting Black Christian women's role in public life. South African histories of beer-brewing women have yielded

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[122] As other historians have argued for other South African cities in the early twentieth century, "respectability" was not the ambition only of a narrow set of petit bourgeois black urbanites; the appearance of education, temperance, and piety were sought after by many poor or working-class urban people who made their living in extra-legal ways. David Goodhew, "Working-Class Respectability: The Example of the Western Areas of Johannesburg, 1930-55," *The Journal of African History* 41, no. 2 (2000): 241–66; Wayne Dooling, "Poverty and Respectability in Early Twentieth-Century Cape Town," *The Journal of African History* 59, no. 3 (2018): 411–35.

valuable insights about the changing definitions of home and of gender relations within homes.[123] The home-based occupations of beer-brewing, laundering, selling alcohol, and renting rooms undoubtedly affected the cultural meanings of domestic space in South Africa's townships and locations. On the other hand, manyanos' mission of Christian motherhood did not confine them to the home. Rather, as the following chapter shows, manyano women put their money and efforts to work in building public, highly visible corporate "homes" for their churches.

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[123] This trend in research is, perhaps, a result of the particular limitations of white researchers in segregated locations. Hellman's seminal study of Rooiyard focused on women's beer-brewing because this was the activity she could witness during daylight visits. Beer-brewing as a women's activity is also relatively well documented because it was illegal, and people were arrested for it. Hellmann, *Rooiyard: A Sociological Study of an Urban Native Slum Yard*; Minkley, "I Shall Die Married to the Beer"; Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles*.

CHAPTER 3:

"Ukuthunga ii-tent" [Sewing the revival tents]: Manyanos and the Public Duties of Home-Making in Early Apartheid East London, 1952-1963

Prologue: Bloody Sunday

On the afternoon of November 9, 1952, a crowd of 1,500 people gathered in Bantu Square in East London's East Bank location. They were there for a prayer meeting organized by the African National Congress (ANC) Youth League leader Skei Gwentshe, who obtained permission for the meeting on the condition that it be purely religious.[1] Authorities were nervous because of recent violence in Port Elizabeth and because 52 members of the ANC in the Eastern Cape had recently been arrested in connection with the Defiance Campaign that had begun a few months earlier.[2] Supporters of the Defiance Campaign wanted to protest the arrests, and a prayer meeting was a way to gather in solidarity in the absence of the leaders.

On November 9, then, many attendees at the meeting were careful to mark themselves by their church affiliation. Some, like teenager Joyce Mohapi, were there as enthusiastic Youth League supporters, and were dressed in their ordinary clothing.[3] But older church women also recognized the symbolic importance of the meeting. According to one witness: "The youth was all over the community. But I remember three more

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[1] Anne Kelk Mager and Gary Minkley, "Reaping the Whirlwind: The East London Riots of 1952" (Johannesburg: Wits History Workshop, 1990), 1.

[2] Mignonne Breier, "The Death That Dare(d) Not Speak Its Name: The Killing of Sister Aidan Quinlan in the East London Riots of 1952," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41, no. 6 (2015): 1153; For a discussion of the Defiance Campaign, which was particularly successful in attracting new members to the ANC in the Eastern Cape, see Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (New York: Little, Brown, 2008), 121–30; Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983), 33–66.

[3] Leslie J. Bank and Andrew Bank, "Untangling the Lion's Tale: Violent Masculinity and the Ethics of Biography in the 'Curious' Case of the Apartheid-Era Policeman Donald Card," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 39, no. 1 (2013): 19.

womxn after each other coming at home to tell my mother that as *omama boManyano* [the mothers of the manyano] we must all go out. Things were really bad."[4] Another woman recalled that there were "more than a thousand of us. We were all dressed up in our manyano uniforms."[5]

Only a few minutes after the meeting began, the police units standing on one side of the square told the crowd to disperse. When the attendees did not move, the police charged with bayonets and people in the crowd began to throw stones. The police then opened fire.[6] In the words of sergeant Donald Card (who was present in the aftermath but not at the actual massacre), the police "pumped hundreds of rounds of live ammo into running rioters over a period of several hours."[7] Bodies of killed and injured people covered the ground of Bantu Square. According to another witness interviewed in 2017, "Bodies of womxn were all over the ground. I saw them, I was scared. I ran over them because there was nothing that I could do. They were women of church in their uniforms."[8]

As the crowd fled and told others what had happened, some residents of the East Bank location began to retaliate by attacking symbols of white authority. St. Peter Claver Roman Catholic church was burned to the ground, as well as a dairy, a hostel for teachers, and an orphanage.[9] A group of people attacked and killed Sr. Aidan Quinlan, a Dominican sister and medical doctor and resident of the St. Peter Claver convent. Another group killed a white insurance salesman who had been going door-to-door in the

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[4] Unnamed interviewee, quoted in Hlengiwe Ndlovu, "Bodies That (Do Not) Matter? Black Sunday and Narratives of the Death of Sister Aidan Quinlan in Duncan Village Protest, 1952," *Agenda* 34, no. 1 (2020): 53.
[5] Unnamed interviewee, quoted in Ndlovu, 53.
[6] Mager and Minkley, "Reaping the Whirlwind."
[7] Donald Card, quoted in Breier, "The Death That Dare(d) Not Speak Its Name," 1156.
[8] Unnamed interviewee, quoted in Ndlovu, "Bodies That (Do Not) Matter?," 53.
[9] Breier, "The Death That Dare(d) Not Speak Its Name."

location.[10] Throughout the evening and into the next day, location residents continued to attack buildings as police pursued and shot at them. On the following day, November 10, the Methodist and Anglican churches in the West Bank location were also burnt.[11]

The official death toll was nine people: seven Black and two white. However, the real death toll was much higher. Donald Card, the infamous East London detective, believed that families of the dead avoided the city morgues so that they would not be arrested in connection with the riots.[12] Recent scholarship suggests that police killed as many as 200 people.[13]

"Bloody Sunday," as this day became known, has recently been the subject of considerable scholarly attention. Yet Mignonne Breier is not wrong to call it South Africa's "secret massacre."[14] The events of November 9, 1952 did not enter the national and international public memory of anti-apartheid struggle in the same way as the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, at which 69 unarmed protesters were killed by police.[15] One reason for this is simply the chronological boundaries of public memory projects. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was charged with investigating human rights abuses that occurred between 1960 and 1994, and so the events of 1952 in East London were

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[10] Leslie J. Bank and Benedict Carton, "Forgetting Apartheid: History, Culture, and the Body of a Nun," *Africa* 86, no. 03 (2016): 481.

[11] Breier, "The Death That Dare(d) Not Speak Its Name."

[12] After a career as a police detective, Card became deputy Mayor of East London and cultivated a friendly relationship with the ANC during the transition to democracy. But Leslie and Andrew Bank present evidence of Card's human rights abuses during his time in the police, and cast doubt on the reliability of his historical testimony. Bank and Bank, "Untangling the Lion's Tale."

[13] Bank and Carton note that one witness, Malcolm Dyani, considers 200 to be an overestimate. Bank and Carton, "Forgetting Apartheid," 482; Mignonne Breier, *Bloody Sunday: The Nun, the Defiance Campaign and South Africa's Secret Massacre* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2021), 208–9.

[14] Breier, *Bloody Sunday*.

[15] Philip Frankel, *An Ordinary Atrocity: Sharpeville and Its Massacre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Tom Lodge, *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and Its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

excluded from investigation in that forum.[16] Similarly, the *Road to Democracy* volumes produced by the South Africa Democracy Education Trust begin their narrative in 1960, and so skim over the history of earlier anti-apartheid conflicts in a single introductory chapter that does not mention the East London massacre.[17] Moreover, within the East Bank's popular memory, Bloody Sunday lay uneasily below the surface, and was not discussed openly. In the immediate aftermath of the massacre, Skei Gwentshe and other ANC leaders were quick to dissociate themselves from the violence, especially because of the evidence that Sr. Aidan's body had been dismembered and either eaten or used to make *muthi* (medicine).[18] The "lasting shame" of the death of this well-known and respected woman made the ANC and many East Bank residents reluctant to memorialize the police massacre on Bloody Sunday.[19]

It was only after 2010 that local historians and academics began to discuss the massacre and the killing of the nun and the meaning of these events in the history of the city. The important precursor to this scholarship was a 1990 seminar paper by Minkley and Mager, which analyzed the trial of those accused of Sr. Aidan's murder. They explored the violence in terms of class conflict within the East Bank community, especially the growing antagonism between the disaffected *tsotsi* and *amatsotsikazi* (gangsters and their girlfriends) who were accused of the murder, and the middle-class respectability of the Youth League (and the ANC as a whole) which had briefly allied

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[16] Mary Ingouville Burton, *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Ohio University Press, 2017); Ndlovu, "Bodies That (Do Not) Matter?," 52.
[17] Bernard Magubane, ed., *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, 1960-1970*, vol. 1 (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004).
[18] Breier, *Bloody Sunday*, 176–91.
[19] Bank and Carton, "Forgetting Apartheid."

with the tsotsis but shunned them during the trial.[20] Fuller discussion of the massacre

itself, however, did not begin until the fiftieth anniversary of Bloody Sunday. In 2002, the

city and the Catholic church cooperated in a ceremony to unveil a memorial statue to Sr.

Aidan on the grounds of St. Peter Claver.[21] In 2011, city councilor Mxolisi Qebeyi

produced a documentary, *Dark Cloud*, in which he interviewed survivors of the massacre

and reflected on the spiritual "dark cloud" that haunted the East Bank because of Sr.

Aidan's murder.[22] The documentary, and the sixtieth anniversary of Bloody Sunday, drew

the attention of even more people, including local historian Zuko Blauw and the literary

scholar Njabulo Ndebele.[23] Blauw, in a pamphlet written for the Dominican Sisters,

wished for "closure" to the debate about her death.[24] Others, however, wished to bring

more clarity to what had usually been described as "senseless" brutality and "mob"

violence. For example, Breier probes the meaning of her death within a specifically

Catholic context, and hints at the complicated tension between the missionary charity of

the Catholic sisters and the dire poverty of the surrounding location.[25] Bank and Carton,

on the other hand, have tried to make sense of the actions of those who took Sr. Aidan's

body for muthi, arguing that the ritual use of her body parts reveal East Bank residents'

understanding of a powerful spiritual conflict against white domination.[26]

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[20] Mager and Minkley, "Reaping the Whirlwind"; For a discussion of the origins of the tsotsi youth subculture and an analysis of its interaction with ANC politics in this era, see Clive Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 78–91.

[21] Breier, "The Death That Dare(d) Not Speak Its Name," 1161.

[22] I have not been able to access a copy of the documentary. My description relies on Breier, *Bloody Sunday*; Ndlovu, "Bodies That (Do Not) Matter?"

[23] Njabulo S. Ndebele, "Love and Politics: Sister Quinlan and the Future We Have Desired," November 9, 2012, Speech delivered at the East London City Hall on the sixtieth anniversary of Bloody Sunday.

[24] Blauw, quoted in Breier, "The Death That Dare(d) Not Speak Its Name," 1161.

[25] Breier, "The Death That Dare(d) Not Speak Its Name."

[26] Bank and Carton, "Forgetting Apartheid."

What is largely missing from all of these accounts is an assessment of how the police killing of 200 people affected survivors and residents of the East Bank location. Ndlovu draws attention to this question in her recent contribution to the Bloody Sunday literature. While emphasizing that she does not wish to ignore the significance of Sr. Aidan's death, Ndlovu asks: "Where are the voices of womxn (dead or alive) who were sacrificed at the battlefront of Bantu Square?"[27] Indeed, Ndlovu is the first to investigate who exactly attended the meeting in Bantu Square on November 9, 1952. Earlier scholarly narrations of the event described simply "a crowd" or "ANC congregants" who assembled for the prayer meeting, and implied that the attendees of the meeting were the same tsotsis who rioted afterwards.[28] Ndlovu's interviews with eyewitnesses reveal the significant participation of older women, and particularly manyano women, at the prayer meeting.[29] While Bank and Carton hypothesize that the title of "prayer meeting" was a thin guise for the meeting's real purpose as an ANC protest, Ndlovu's interviewees suggest something different. "Those were difficult times, we needed womxn of prayer to stand up," one person recalled.[30] Another recalled someone telling her on the morning of November 9 that "as *omama boManyano* we must all go out."[31] Another local historian noted that the women at the prayer meeting had been "seated on the ground in their Manyano uniforms," which would have put them at a particular disadvantage when the

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[27] Ndlovu, "Bodies That (Do Not) Matter?," 52.
[28] Mager and Minkley, "Reaping the Whirlwind"; Bank and Carton describe the attendees as "ANC congregants" without defining what they mean by the term. Bank and Carton, "Forgetting Apartheid," 472.
[29] Ndlovu's conclusions are confirmed by the oral history evidence in Ntsebeza's unpublished MA dissertation. In an interview with Ntsebeza, Donald Card stated that the main participants in Defiance Campaign activity in East London were "elderly people…There were youngsters in the vicinity of 25 years of age. But there were no kids. Only oomama, the old ladies, and old men, there were lots of them arrested." Lungisile Ntsebeza, "Youth in Urban African Townships, 1945-1992: A Case Study of the East London Townships" (Master of Arts, Durban, University of Natal, 1993), 44.
[30] Unnamed interviewee quoted in Ndlovu, "Bodies That (Do Not) Matter?," 53.
[31] Unnamed interviewee, quoted in Ndlovu, 53.

police began to fire.[32] Taken together, these testimonies suggest that church women of the East Bank came to the prayer meeting to support the Defiance Campaign precisely in their capacity as women of prayer. Prayer and protest were not contradictory purposes, in their eyes.

Bloody Sunday, therefore, is one historical moment when manyano women enacted their public motherhood in a way that was highly visible (in the moment, even if historians later overlooked them). An earlier example church women's public protest was in Herschel in 1922, when Christian women calling themselves *Amafelandawonye* (the "die-hards") successfully protested the monopolistic practices of white shop-owners (see Chapter 1). These highly visible enactments of their duties of public motherhood were not an aberration from the basic principles of the manyano movement in the Eastern Cape. While manyano women's activities usually flew under the radar of newspaper reporting, and rarely made news as "political" events, their conception of the duties of public motherhood sometimes brought them into the spotlight of publicity. The prayer meeting in Bantu Square was one such instance.

This chapter begins from Hlengiwe Ndlovu's call to recover the voices of the women who survived Bloody Sunday.[33] If manyano women were central participants in the Youth League-sponsored prayer meeting and were especially vulnerable victims during the police shooting, what did they do in the aftermath of the massacre and

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[32] Pumza Mkonqo, quoted in Ndlovu, 53.

[33] Nomboniso Gasa, "Feminisms, Motherisms, Patriarchies and Women's Voices," in *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo / They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, ed. Nomboniso Gasa (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007), 207–29; Meghan Healy-Clancy, "The Family Politics of the Federation of South African Women: A History of Public Motherhood in Women's Antiracist Activism," *Signs* 42, no. 4 (2017): 843–66; Meghan Healy-Clancy, "Women and the Problem of Family in Early African Nationalist History and Historiography," *South African Historical Journal* 64, no. 3 (2012): 450–71; Catherine Higgs, "Silence, Disobedience, and African Catholic Sisters in Apartheid South Africa," *African Studies Review* 54, no. 2 (2011): 1–22.

uprising? From the point of view of organized African nationalist politics, or of formal resistance to encroaching apartheid removals, they did little. After the disastrous prayer meeting in Bantu Square in 1952, the ANC in East London struggled to regain the trust of the location residents.[34] Elsewhere in the country, manyano women sometimes appeared on the public stage, for example, as crucial participants in the famous 1956 women's anti-pass demonstration organized by the Federation of South African Women's (FEDSAW).[35] But neither archival evidence nor local oral histories suggest that East London church women were notably active in political organizing in the 1950s.[36] Instead, the dominant theme of their activities in this decade was construction.

For the members of St. Peter Claver Catholic church which had been burned down, the answer to the question of what to do after Bloody Sunday was simple: they had to rebuild the church. Theresia Ndlovu, who was a pupil at the Catholic primary school on the church grounds, says that she and her fellow students returned to the church the very next day (Monday) after it had been torched. The roof was gone, and the brick walls had largely fallen down.[37] Only the crucifix behind the altar remained intact. The congregants interpreted the survival of the crucifix as a sign of the spiritual power of their church, and as an encouragement to rebuild it.[38] The students at the school were immediately put to work picking up fallen bricks, and helping to prop up damaged

[34] Doreen Atkinson, "Political Opposition in Patriarchal East London, 1950-1960: Dilemmas of Paternalism," *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa* 6, no. 1 (2010): 1–16.
[35] Healy-Clancy, "The Family Politics of the Federation of South African Women," 862; Fatima Meer, "Women in the Apartheid Society," *United Nations Centre Against Apartheid*, 1985, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/98226.
[36] Though some manyano women certainly were involved in formal political protest, including the many uniformed manyano women who participated in the march of 22,000 women to Pretoria in 1956. Meer, "Women in the Apartheid Society," 22.
[37] Theresia Ndlovu, Interview in Mdantsane NU13, trans. Phelisa Mtima, December 16, 2019.
[38] Frances John and Rachel Doans, Interview at Sister Aidan Memorial Centre, St. Peter Claver Church, Duncan Village, East London, November 28, 2019.

walls.[39] According to one of the Dominican sisters who taught at the school, brick-

cleaning conveniently filled the requirement for daily "hand-work" lessons recently

introduced under the Bantu Education Act (1953).[40] Even before the church was fully

rebuilt (it was rededicated in 1956), the congregation continued to hold services there.[41]

The palpable pride Ndlovu and John took in recounting the rebuilding effort is testament

not only to their personal attachments to this piece of land, but also indicates the wider

significance of church buildings in urban Black communities the precarious decade of the

1950s.

After 1952: Apartheid and the Threat of Forced Removals

During the 1950s the recently elected National Party began introducing legislation to

enable more complete racial segregation and the fuller subordination of Black labor and

lives to white economic growth. The Population Registration Act of 1950 assigned a

fixed racial category to all South Africans, while in the same year the Immorality

Amendment and Group Areas acts criminalized interracial relationships and assigned

particular areas for the exclusive residence of each racial group. These laws enabled the

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[39] Ndlovu, Interview in Mdantsane NU13.
[40] The sister writes of "a funny incident [that] took place one morning… I was busy with my class when a gentleman of a quiet demeanor approached me and introduced himself as the Inspector of Hand-Work. I knew then that I was to pull the lion by its tail into the ditch or I was to be crushed between its heavy jaws." The Inspector doubts that the children are really doing the work, but after a skilled demonstration from the children he goes away satisfied. "St. Peter Claver's – East London," anonymous manuscript (28/358 6). King Williams Town Dominican Archives, St. Vincent School, Johannesburg. The Bantu Education system wrested control of Black education from mission institutions and crafted new curricula, emphasizing manual skills, that would prepare Black students to be submissive workers. However, this emphasis on training Black learners for a subservient place in society was not a complete break with mission education, which had also emphasized "industrial training." On Bantu Education, its ideological goals, and its promotion of "handwork" and "crafts" see Ivan Wills, "The Politics of Bantu Education in South Africa: 1948-1994," *Political Crossroads* 19, no. 1 (2012): 5–24; Andre Kraak, "Discursive Shifts and Strucutral Continuities in South African Vocational Education and Training: 1981-1999," in *The History of Education Under Apartheid: The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall Be Opened*, ed. Peter Kallaway (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 74–93; Daniel R. Magaziner, *The Art of Life in South Africa* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2016).
[41] John and Doans, Interview at Sister Aidan Memorial Centre, St. Peter Claver Church, Duncan Village, East London.

government to override municipalities' existing piecemeal segregation laws, and by "proclaiming" certain urban areas for certain racial groups, to remove Black urbanites from locations in the city center to newly built townships on the urban periphery.

This containment and control of Black urbanites was further facilitated by the 1952 Abolition of Passes and Documents Act (which did not in fact abolish passes, or identity and work documents). This law strictly distinguished between those who had been born in town or who had worked for a single employer for many years, who would be given rights of permanent residence in the townships. All other Black Africans had no place in the city unless they were employed.[42] The implications of the 1952 pass legislation were made explicit with the 1959 Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, which allowed for the creation of ethnically defined "homelands" whose borders and separate governments would contain the majority of Black South Africans far away from white areas. Not all of this legislation was implemented immediately—the projects of township construction and of "homeland" consolidation were not in full swing until the 1960s. But in the 1950s it became increasingly clear that Black people's homes and already-limited rights to live in the city might be swept away from them.

In East London, then, the 1950s were a decade of tension and suspended judgment. In the aftermath of the 1952 Bloody Sunday massacre and the widely-reported killing of Sister Aidan Quinlan, East London drew the state's attention as a city in need of intervention. However, as Deborah Posel has pointed out, in the early years of apartheid the new pass laws were not fully implemented and enforced.[43] While the

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[42] Philip Bonner and Noor Nieftagodien, *Alexandra: A History* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008), 105.

[43] Deborah Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Deborah Posel, "Influx Control and urban labour markets in the 1950s," in Philip

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Department of Native Affairs (DNA) in the 1950s was transforming itself into "a state within a state," it could not accomplish much until it had wrested control of urban locations from reluctant municipalities.[44] In the 1950s, the DNA and municipalities often ended up in jurisdictional and financial quarrels over the implementation of pass laws, the removal of old locations, and the construction of new townships, for example in 1955 when the Johannesburg municipality quarreled with the DNA over the removal of Sophiatown.[45]

In the 1950s, the DNA under the leadership of the apartheid idealogue Hendrik Verwoerd began to interfere in what it saw as East London's haphazard, lenient segregated urban planning.[46] After the rapid population growth of the 1940s, the city council had decided to extend the East Bank location with a new section called "Duncan Village," which would allow moderately well-off people to purchase their own home (though not the land it stood on). The approximately 550 houses of this section became available for occupation between 1952 and 1954, but this hardly addressed the housing shortage and dire poverty of the overall East Bank location. At this point the DNA stepped in and forbade any further expansion of the location. In 1955 "Duncan Village" became the official name for the entire East Bank location—hinting at the emerging plan to clear the old sections of the East Bank of the residents and remove them to a new township far outside the city.[47] This government plan came into sharp focus in 1957,

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Bonner, Deborah Posel, and Peter Delius, eds., *Apartheid's Genesis* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993), 411–30.

[44] Ivan Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race* (University of California Press, 1997), 2.

[45] On Johannesburg city council's wrangle with the DNA about Sophiatown, see Paul Maylam, "The Rise and Decline of Urban Apartheid in South Africa," *African Affairs* 89, no. 354 (1990): 68.

[46] For a discussion of the differences in segregation ideology between municipal councillors and the Native Affairs bureaucrats, see Atkinson, "Political Opposition in Patriarchal East London."

[47] D.H. Reader, *The Black Man's Portion: History, Demography and Living Conditions in the Native Locations of East London Cape Province* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1961), 24–31.

when Verwoerd, on a visit to East London, made a surprise announcement that most of the East Bank would be destroyed and its residents moved to a new township on what was as yet only an undeveloped patch of farmland fifteen miles from the city.[48] Building in Mdantsane did not begin until 1962, and the first wave of removals from the old urban location did not begin until 1963 (these events are the subject of the next chapter). Therefore, the shortage of housing and grossly overstretched infrastructure of the East Bank location continued throughout the 1950s with very little intervention.

This chapter draws on oral testimonies of East Bank residents, as well as archival records and Daniel Morolong's photographs, to show how manyano women responded to the extended crisis of the 1950s. Between 1952 and the middle of the 1960s, the East Bank location experienced a period of cultural creativity that was linked to religious revival; manyano women were key actors in this religious revival. In a context of urban housing insecurity, manyano women staked their claim to urban belonging by investing in church buildings, thereby making a tangible "home" for the church community.

This argument begins with a case study of one church, the Assemblies of God, and the 1950-52 revival that led to the construction of largest church in the location. The example of the Assemblies of God women's manyano shows that for church women, contributing to church building funds had a particularly significant meaning at a time when urban housing was scarce and threatened by impending removals. The chapter next analyses photographs of teas, special events, and beauty pageants in the 1950s and 1960s. It argues that these photographs are unique in the ways that they emphasize the corporate identity of the female subjects, and display their position of authority within the church

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[48] Etienne Louis Nel, "Mdantsane, East London's Homeland Township: Municipal Neglect and Apartheid Planning 1949-1988," *GeoJournal* 22, no. 3 (1990): 308.

building. The chapter concludes by placing these East London histories in the context of urbanization and religious revival across colonial Africa in the 1950s, where Christian movements often left a lasting physical impact on the urban geography of the city.

Sewing the Tents and Building "the Room": The Assemblies of God

The Assemblies of God congregation founded by Nicholas Bhengu in the early 1950s was a new religious phenomenon in East London. It was the first Pentecostal church with a significant membership in the location, and therefore introduced Pentecostal ideas about charismatic gifts, personal conversion experiences, and membership in a global multi-racial community of believers.[49] The Back to God Crusade through which Bhengu attracted the church's membership was also a unprecedented sensational event in East London. The crusade emphasized cleansing from moral corruption in a way that resonated with widely held concerns of location residents. It also attracted converts from among "Red" people who had no previous church connections.

Bhengu was born 1909 in what is now KwaZulu-Natal and was educated at several mission schools. As a young man he worked as a court interpreter and became a member of the Communist party. But a conversion experience convinced him that Christ was more important than Communism.[50] He was ordained into the Assemblies of God, a Pentecostal denomination that originated in the United States in the late nineteenth

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[49] Cabrita, in her study of Zionist churches, argues that the existence of many different denominations within the Pentecostal and Zionist tradition should not obscure their unifying belief in a global, non-racial or multi-racial community of believers. Joel Cabrita, *The People's Zion: Southern Africa, the United States, and a Transatlantic Faith-Healing Movement* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2018).

[50] Christianity did not contradict his earlier political beliefs, according to Bhengu, but simply superseded them. He said: "Jesus Christ was a socialist because he didn't want the multitude to be sent away without something to eat… Although the disciples were not aware of his style because they were capitalists, Jesus had to tell them the correct thing. Christians should be socialists because Jesus in them is a socialist." Bhengu, quoted in Anthony Balcomb, "Nicholas Bhengu — The Impact of an African Pentecostal on South African Society," *Exchange* 34, no. 4 (2005): 347.

century.[51] He travelled to North America in the 1940s to attend seminary and to raise money for an evangelistic crusade. When he returned to South Africa, he organized moderately successful crusades in Port Elizabeth; after a permanent congregation was established there, it provided financial support for a more elaborate campaign, which Bhengu called the Back to God Crusade.[52]

The first place Bhengu took the Back to God crusade was East London. He arrived in the East Bank location in October 1950 with a large tent, several vehicles, a loudspeaker system, and a generator to power the loudspeakers. The evidently well-funded and organized campaign attracted attention immediately, especially because of its incongruous placement at the edge of the municipal garbage dump.[53] Bhengu's skill in preaching drew crowds of several thousand to nightly meetings. The two most impressive aspects of the campaign, in the eyes of East Bank residents, were Bhengu's ability to stir the consciences of "tsotsis" and the miraculous healings that took place when he prayed. According to some converts who claimed previously to have been tsotsis, they attended the crusade to see the spectacle, but found themselves so caught up in Bhengu's preaching so that they "raised up a hand for Christ" and publicly declared their conversion. Bhengu encouraged converts to hand over stolen goods and weapons. According to one convert:

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[51] The Assemblies of God (AOG) is in fact less a denomination, and more a voluntary association of independent Pentecostal congregations. Like the early twentieth-century Zionist churches of the Transvaal described by Cabrita, the AOG was theoretically non-racial but in practice white and black congregations met separately. The national council of the South African AOG included both white and black ministers in the 1950s. Allie A. Dubb, *Community of the Saved* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1976), 9, 14–15; J.A. Millard, "Bhengu, Nicholas," in *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1999, https://dacb.org/stories/southafrica/bhengu-nicholas/.

[52] Dubb, *Community of the Saved*; Daniel Simon Billy Lephoko, "The Mission of Nicholas B H Bhengu in a Divided and Polarised Society" (Master of Arts, University of Pretoria, 2005), 42.

[53] Dubb, *Community of the Saved*, 4, 11.

> Bhengu preached vigorously that night until all the people were moved, and I heard terrible noises made by them. Praying, crying, beating their chests, some women jumping up and down waving their kerchiefs, some taking clothing, knives, plates, mugs, weapons and other stolen articles to the platform.[54]

While some came to the Back to God Crusade out of curiosity at such scenes, others came because of reports of Bhengu's healing abilities. Healing was a particularly strong attraction for the many attendees who had no previous connection to Christianity. One woman, for example, travelled from her rural home to East London because of reports of a powerful healer. "When I arrived in the city," she said, "I learnt that this man was a preacher. I was then reluctant to go to him as I did not want to be a convert." But in her desperation at her illness, she went to a meeting and was converted. She then remained in East London as a permanent member of the Assemblies of God congregation.[55] This woman was not alone in experiencing a sudden conversion. Throughout the early 1950s Bhengu conducted mass baptisms in rivers and streams; in early June 1952, just before the opening of the Defiance Campaign in East London, Bhengu baptized 2,000 people in a public outdoor ceremony.[56]

It was this unprecedented number of converts that prompted Bhengu to turn the East London crusade into a permanent congregation. By the middle of 1951, the East London Assemblies of God met in an East Bank recreation hall, and had a membership of 1,500 people.[57] As in other churches, women formed the backbone of the congregation: in 1957, women counted for over 70 percent of the membership.[58] However, the Assemblies

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[54] Quoted in Dubb, 6.
[55] Quoted in Dubb, 31.
[56] Leslie J. Bank, *City of Broken Dreams: Myth-Making, Nationalism, and the University in an African Motor City* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2019), 14.
[57] Dubb, *Community of the Saved*, 2.
[58] Dubb, 166.

of God was unlike other churches because it attracted members, especially women, with no previous connection to a church. While most churches had a negligible number of members from a Red background (that is, who had no family history of church affiliation), 22 percent of the members of the Assemblies of God reported that they had been Red before their conversion. Approximately two-thirds of these converts were women.[59]

The oral tradition of the Assemblies of God concurs that women's enthusiasm was the key to the successful revival in East London, and that their financial contributions underpinned the long-term stability of both the East London congregation and the Back to God Crusade, which continued to travel around South Africa. The centrality of women's work, especially in fundraising, is evident in a story about Bhengu that has become canonical within the Assemblies of God in the Eastern Cape.[60] This is the story as told by Beatrice Tyesi, a member of the Port Elizabeth Assemblies of God congregation in the early 1950s:

> Nicholas Bhengu went to the church [in America] looking for funds, and looking for sponsorships. And when he was there he had this night vision... And a voice asked him: "what are you doing here?" And he said, "I am here looking for funds." And the voice said to him, "you have no business looking for funds in America. You have left your funds back home" … And he was shown a vision of an African lady wearing a *doek* or headscarf... And he was told, "your funds are with such people…The funds you are looking for are with those *iqhiyas*."[61]

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[59] Dubb, 44–46.

[60] This story of the vision of a Black woman wearing a headscarf, with money tucked away in her headscarf, was told to me by two interviewees. Lephoko cites an undated document from the AOG Mothers' Organization that tells the same story. Nokwanda Mlomzale, Interview in Amalinda, East London, January 14, 2020; Beatrice Tyesi and Ndileka Tyesi, Interview in Cambridge, East London, November 25, 2019; Dan S.B. Lephoko, *Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu's Lasting Legacy*, vol. 4, Religion & Society Series (Cape Town: AOSIS, 2018), 160.

[61] *Iqhiya* is the isiXhosa equivalent of the Afrikaans *doek* or headscarf. Tyesi and Tyesi, Interview in Cambridge, East London.

The story of this "night vision" emphasizes the role of women in the founding and building of the Assemblies of God church. Tyesi explained that at this time, women often kept their money tucked in their headscarf, or in the waistband of their skirt. The meaning of Bhengu's vision, then, was that ordinary married women (in Xhosa society, unmarried girls did not usually cover their heads) would use the small change of their daily spending money to fuel his revival movement.

In fact, women's enthusiasm for the Back to God Crusade was initially so strong that they threatened to wrest the movement out of Bhengu's control. According to Nokwanda Mlomzale, early converts in the East Bank location were so eager to share their experience of salvation that they abandoned their families. Women refused to sleep with their husbands, for example, in order to comply with the church's recommendation to fast, which the women applied to sex as well as to food. This uncontrolled enthusiasm, in Mlomzale's telling, allowed women and children to roam freely in public: "Hey, those mothers they were so excited they did not even care for their children. Their children were just wandering outside. Mothers were preaching, going from home to home, telling about this wonderful thing in their lives."[62] This narrative of women's revivalist enthusiasm propelling them to travel around in public, and sometimes in conflict with church leaders, has similarities with the foundational narrative of the Clarkebury Methodist Manyano in the early twentieth century (see Chapter 2). In both cases, women's spontaneous religious energy threatened established church conventions, but was eventually codified within an official manyano organization. In East London, Bhengu had apparently been reluctant to organize a formal women's manyano in the

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[62] Mlomzale, Interview in Amalinda, East London.

early stages of his church-planting.[63] The manyano was only started as a means to control these unruly revival enthusiasts. According to Mlomzale:

> Then papa Bhengu saw this, there's something of a chaos in this thing. He called mothers, a few mothers, and told them that they must form this mothers' organization… He sat down with them and told them that what is done by women is not what he wants… He didn't want them to be loose in growing their children. So he told them 'you must start a Thursday meeting where these women are going to be taught how to raise their children, how to obey their husbands, and how to keep their households clean.' That's how the organization started.[64]

Thus, the manyano of the Assemblies of God church was created in order to restrain women's public displays of enthusiasm and to contain their authority as Christian mothers within their own homes. This focus on husband, children, and household cleanliness was precisely the same definition of Christian motherhood laid out by the white ecclesiastical leadership in Methodist and Anglican churches in the early twentieth century (see Chapter 2). However, like the Anglican and Methodist manyanos in the early twentieth-century Eastern Cape, the mothering roles of manyano women in the Assemblies of God were not contained purely within their own homes.

One way in which Assemblies of God manyano women influenced the world outside their homes was through the financial contributions which, in confirmation of Bhengu's vision, flowed from their headscarves and skirt pockets. Income derived, in part, from the manyano women's fundraising allowed the Assemblies of God to build the largest church building in the location. Between 1951, when the church began meeting in the location's cinema hall, and the opening of the new church building in 1957, the

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[63] Dubb, *Community of the Saved*, 110.
[64] Mlomzale, Interview in Amalinda, East London.

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congregation had grown to approximately three thousand members.[65] This necessitated a

permanent home for the congregation, which was built in the new Duncan Village section

on the edge of the East Bank. The building, still in use today, is a one-story cross-shaped

brick construction that could easily hold the one thousand members who attended the

average service in the 1950s. It was nicknamed *Ginyazonke* ("swallow them all") by

locals. Supporters of Bhengu claimed that it was the largest church building in southern

Africa.[66] Aside from the cross-shaped construction the building did not advertise its

function as a church: it had no steeple, no decorative elements in the construction, and the

windows were small and unornamented.[67] This austere design did not reflect any

stinginess, however. The structure was meant to last, and its construction cost £27,000.[68]

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[65] If the East Bank location population was approximately 60,000 (of whom about half were women) in the mid-1950s, this meant that 1 in 20 people were members of the Assemblies of God. Dubb, *Community of the Saved*, 2; Reader, *The Black Man's Portion*, 150.

[66] Lephoko, "The Mission of Nicholas B H Bhengu in a Divided and Polarised Society," 44.

[67] When I visited in 2019, there was also no sign outside the church, which is unusual in comparison to other township churches that prominently advertise their name and denomination.

[68] Dubb, *Community of the Saved*, 3. This was at a time when the average weekly wage for an African man in East London was less than £3 (approximately £140 a year). Mayer and Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 137.
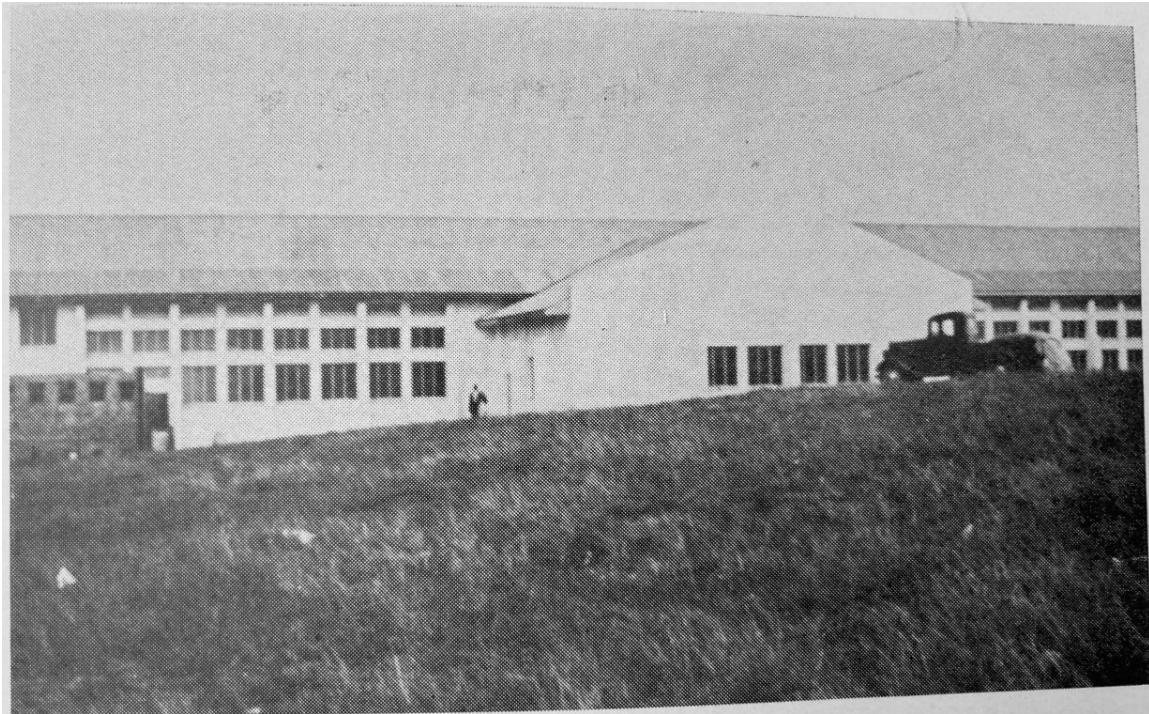
Figure 7: The Assemblies of God church in 1957[69]

The manyano could take pride in the church it had funded. They could also take pride in the Back to God Crusade which their contributions continued to fund.[70] This pride was expressed by Mlomzale:

> You know what we are doing at these weekly, monthly, and quarterly meetings, we are collecting money, so that there can be tents where Jesus is going to be preached so people can be saved. You know people say that mothers are the people who *uthunga ii-tent* [sew the tents]. So even if we're not going to preach in the tent, but the tents they come from our hands.[71]

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[69] From Dubb, *Community of the Saved*, Plate 7.

[70] By 1959, according to a "conservative estimate" the Back to God Crusade had established 50 congregations across South Africa with a membership of 15,000 people. As the largest of all these congregations, and the one in which the Mothers' Organization began, the manyano women of East London could justifiably claim to have "birthed" this network of AOG congregations through their contributions to the Back to God Crusade. Dubb, *Community of the Saved*, 12.

[71] Mlomzale, Interview in Amalinda, East London.

This saying, that the mothers sew the tents, conveys manyano women's sense of ownership over religious buildings: not only the revival tents, but also the permanent church structures.

The permanent church building provided a space for women to meet outside of their own homes. If going around on the streets, preaching "from home to home" was inappropriate for women, then they needed a proper indoor space to preach. The new Assemblies of God church in East London provided such a space, which Tyesi called simply "the room." In response to questions about the usual activities of the manyano, Ndileka Tyesi emphasized the intimate, indoor setting of their meetings by her frequent references to "the room." "In the room," she said, "what they teach each other is what do you do as a married woman who is a born-again Christian."[72] Tyesi drew a connection between "the room" and the private, confidential nature of manyano discussions, which were suitable only for married women: "When they are in the room they will share a number of things. And then before they go home someone has to share the word of God. But they are not general sermon... they are specific to married women at home."[73] The new Assemblies of God church building, therefore, provided women with a private place to join in solidarity as mothers, and share the trials of their homes.

Urban Housing Crisis, Religious Revival, and the Meaning of Church Buildings

The urban segregation legislation introduced by the National Party put South Africa, by the 1960s, on a very different political path from the newly-independent African nation states. In the 1950s, however, National Party urban segregation policy had commonalities with post-war colonial governments' attempts to limit Black urbanization and urban

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[72] Tyesi and Tyesi, Interview in Cambridge, East London.
[73] Tyesi and Tyesi.

economic power and remove undesirable people, especially young men, from cities

where anti-colonial nationalist movements flourished.[74] This post-war moment of

urbanization and anti-colonial nationalism in many parts of Africa was linked, I suggest,

to religious revivals in many cities, and the growth of women's church organizations.

Adrian Hastings argues that in the 1950s, women's church organizations "emerged in full

confidence to provide something not far short of the central core of public Christian

life."[75]

In these circumstances, African women harnessed indigenous repertoires of

female healing power and prophecy to address pressing social concerns that arose from

urbanization, industrialization, and anti-colonial struggle.[76] One clear example of this

phenomenon is Mai Chaza, who founded the Guta re Jehova (City of God) outside

Salisbury (now Harare, Zimbabwe) in 1954. She not only healed her followers'

individual illnesses, but also healed the social illnesses of the city by building a new

"city" for her followers that replicated and improved upon the urban planning of

Salisbury's townships.[77] But women did not only start new religious movements in late-

colonial Africa; they also revitalized existing institutions at moments of change and

crisis. The period of turmoil immediately before and after independence in Congo-

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[74] Judith A. Byfield, *The Great Upheaval: Women and Nation in Postwar Nigeria* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2022); Paul Ocobock, *An Uncertain Age: The Politics of Manhood in Kenya* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017); Phyllis M. Martin, *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Frederick Cooper, *On the African Waterfront: Urban Disorder and the Transformation of Work in Colonial Mombasa* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987).
[75] Adrian Hastings, *A History of African Christianity 1950-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 114–15.
[76] Philomena Njeri Mwaura, "Gender and Power in African Christianity: African Instituted Churches and Pentecostal Churches," in *African Christianity: An African Story*, ed. Ogbu U. Kalu (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007), 410–43.
[77] Timothy Scarnecchia, "Mai Chaza's Guta Re Jehova (City of God): Gender, Healing and Urban Identity in an African Independent Church," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 23, no. 1 (1997): 87–105.

Brazzaville saw a significant increase in the numbers of Catholic lay women's groups.[78] And to the south, in Belgian Congo (later the Democratic Republic of Congo), the prophetic movement of Simon Kimbangu was kept alive during his imprisonment in the 1950s by his wife, Marie Muilu.[79]

These female-led religious revivals were not exclusive to cities, but many of them flourished particularly in urban areas. According to Scarnecchia, Mai Chaza's movement was not simply a new religious community, but a new urban community.[80] In many urban situations in late-colonial Africa, new arrivals adapted to and transformed the city through religious practices. In Salisbury, migrant workers from Nyasaland (Malawi) built connections with fellow migrants by establishing new churches.[81] And in late-colonial Nairobi, groups of female sex workers converted to Islam in order to build a new kin network and pass on their property to fellow converts.[82] The religious revival and wave of church constructions that took place in the East and West Bank locations in the 1950s should be seen, I argue, in this broader African context of urban social and political crisis in the post-war era.

The Back to God Crusade and the establishment of a permanent Assemblies of God congregation took place in a context of great anxiety in the East Bank location. Many adults perceived a breakdown of generational and gendered order in the location,

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[78] Phyllis M. Martin, *Catholic Women of Congo-Brazzaville: Mothers and Sisters in Troubled Times* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

[79] Aurélien Mokoko Gampiot, *Kimbanguism : An African Understanding of the Bible* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2017), 76–77; On the role of smaller local women prophets, who were eclipsed by the centralizing popularity of the Kimbanguist church, see Yolanda Covington-Ward, "'Your Name Is Written in the Sky': Unearthing the Stories of Kongo Female Prophets in Colonial Belgian Congo, 1921–1960," *Journal of Africana Religions* 2, no. 3 (2014): 317–46.

[80] Scarnecchia, "Mai Chaza's Guta Re Jehova (City of God)."

[81] Zoe Groves, "Urban Migrants and Religious Networks: Malawians in Colonial Salisbury, 1920 to 1970," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38, no. 3 (2012): 491–511.

[82] Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 61–64.

especially as the shortage of housing and the high number of single mothers created

domestic arrangements without any patriarchal figure. These concerns about moral

corruption, housing shortages, and the impending threat of the destruction of the East

Bank location, were the context that provided meaning to the Back to God Crusade,

which began in 1950.

According to Dubb, who carried out anthropological research in East London in

1957, "informants both within and outside the Assembly say that by the time Bhengu

opened his campaign, there was a tremendous wave of anti-White feeling, an alarming

rise in the Location crime rate and a general feeling of apprehension for the future."[83]

According to Dubb's informants, these fears for the future were one reason why residents

of the East London location were receptive to the crusade. Bhengu recognized the

existence of discrimination against Black Africans, but proclaimed that the path of

redemption for the "African nation" was belief in Christ and a "clean life."[84] In his

preaching, Bhengu located the source of moral corruption not outwards, in the repressive

laws being introduced by the government, but within the urban community of the East

Bank. The Assemblies of God church became known for its stringent rules that not only

prohibited alcohol consumption, extramarital sex, and theft (as other churches did), but

actively demanded certain standards of domestic cleanliness, neat dress, and the

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[83] Dubb, *Community of the Saved*, 26–27.

[84] Bhengu, in similar language to some nineteenth-century British liberal imperialists, argued that Africans would only achieve political equality in South Africa when they earned it by their upright lives and productive labours. While this ethic of hard work may seem at odds with the "prosperity gospel" associated with later generations of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, "luck" and "work" can be closely related in a theology of prosperity, as van Wyk shows in a case study of a contemporary prosperity church. In such a theology, the believer's spiritual and material work earns the "luck" of God's miraculous intervention. This was the belief of some of Bhengu's followers, who believed that joining the church allowed them to get better jobs. Dubb, 27, 115–20; Ilana van Wyk, "Prosperity and the Work of Luck in the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, South Africa," *Critical African Studies* 7, no. 3 (2015): 262–79.

education of children.[85] The Assemblies of God promised its members, in more explicit terms than most other churches, that success in life was within their own control.

This drive to purify individual and corporate life from moral corruption was not confined to those who joined Bhengu's church. In the aftermath of the Bloody Sunday massacre and the ensuing uprising in the location, both city authorities and adult residents of the location targeted tsotsis and "boys" as the source of corruption in the East Bank, and attempted to remove them from the city. The term "tsotsi" for young male gangsters had first emerged in the Johannesburg area in the late 1940s, and by the early 1950s became a popular Black youth subculture in cities across the nation.[86] In the months that followed November 1952, police arrested thousands of people who they believed to be tsotsis. By the middle of 1953, police reported that they had "deported" 5,400 young men from the city, most because they did not have correct passes.[87] The police claimed that while the East Bank had previously been plagued by 6,000 tsotsis, there were now only 600 left.[88] To deal with this remnant of wayward youths, the city held a commission on juvenile delinquency in 1953, although it did not implement any specific programs.[89]

Residents of the East Bank location, especially older men, also saw tsotsis and young men as threatening, and attempted to remove those who did not belong.[90] While the teenagers charged with Aidan Quinlan's death received support from a minority of

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[85] Dubb, *Community of the Saved*; Mlomzale, Interview in Amalinda, East London.

[86] Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976*, 51.

[87] Similarly, when police in Alexandra decided to enforce new pass laws more strictly in 1955, young men were first to be targeted. Bonner and Nieftagodien, *Alexandra*, 111.

[88] If Reader's figure of 60,000 is a correct estimate of the location population in 1955, this meant that during the "clean-up" slightly less than one percent of location residents were "endorsed out" or deported from the city. Mager and Minkley, "Reaping the Whirlwind," 2.

[89] Ntsebeza, "Youth in Urban African Townships," 53.

[90] Other urban black communities, especially in Johannesburg, experienced the "scourge" of tsotis in a similar way. Older residents complained of the menace of non-working young men, but offered many different definitions of "tsotsis." Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976*, 51–52, 59–60.

the location (especially independent, beer-brewing women), the general opinion was in favor of strict measures against those whom they saw as tsotsis.[91] The problem was how to define who was really a tsotsi. Different sections of the East Bank community saw different young men as more or less dangerous. Everyone agreed that despite the mass deportations of youth in 1953, crime in the location only increased throughout the 1950s.[92] According to some, newly arrived rural migrants were the main problem; they did not understand the local honor code of knife-fighting, and used violence indiscriminately. Some attributed a rise in crime in early 1958 to the arrival of a cohort of rural boys from the Queenstown area.[93] But others believed that the truly troublesome youth were those born in the city. According to older migrant working men, the flashily dressed, undisciplined *oobrighty* boys, sons of single urban women, were the cause of crime.[94] In any case, young men without stable employment were seen as suspect, undesirable, or unnecessary by many location residents. This generational conflict, especially between young men and fathers, is a recurring theme in South African historiography, fueled as it was by the forces of colonialism, industrialization, and proletarianization.[95] In the East Bank in the 1950s, the emergence of the tsotsi identity,

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[91] Mager and Minkley, "Reaping the Whirlwind."

[92] Philip Mayer and Iona Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen: Conservatism and the Process of Urbanization in a South African City*, 2nd ed. (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1971), 82; Mager and Minkley, "Reaping the Whirlwind."

[93] Ntsebeza, "Youth in Urban African Townships," 54–65.

[94] The Mayers (who interviewed migrant men in the late 1950s) and Ntsebeza (who collected oral histories of long-time East Bank residents in the early 1990s) present almost entirely opposite views of tsotsis, crime, and the 1958 "beating of the boys" incident. This is indicative of divisions of opinion between urban-rooted and rurally-focused people. What unified all these conflicting theories of the origin of tsotsis was a conviction that superfluous "bad" young men were the cause of problems, and should not simply be reformed but in fact removed from the city altogether. Mayer and Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 83; Leslie J. Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles : Contesting Power and Identity in a South African City* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 115–16.

[95] Benedict Carton, *Blood from Your Children: The Colonial Origins of Generational Conflict in South Africa* (Charlottesville : London: University Press of Virginia, 2000); Belinda Bozzoli, *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004).

generational tensions, and the threat of forced removals all contributed to a heightened fear of criminality and disorder.

By 1958, an older generation of men, some married with families in town, and some migrants in the city without their families, were desperate to act. At a meeting of the Headman of the Cambridge location (contiguous to the East Bank), a group of men agreed that "boys" who were out in public without good reason should be beaten. Armed with sticks, and with the tacit support of the police, men began to discipline "boys," by which they meant any teenager or young man who had not undergone circumcision.[96] After several days, and rising complaints from mothers that the wrong boys were being targeted, the police intervened.[97] Significantly, the purpose of "the beating of the boys" was to remove the offenders from the city. Success in the "beating" project, according to some, was in driving unwanted people out of the city. Donald Card believed that the "beating of the boys" was successful because "These people [the older men and migrant workers] beat up these youngsters. In fact there were no youngsters left in East London. They cleaned up the town, there was no crime for quite some time."[98]

Reforming the location from crime was thus equated with removing undesirable people from the city. This was connected to the increasing scarcity of housing in the location in the 1950s. From the 1930s until the early 1950s, the number of official dwellings and plots in the East Bank location had not changed at all. As the number of residents in the location increased, plot holders increased the number of tenants in each room, and also built new rooms in the "yards" at the back of the house. In 1936, when the official East Bank location population was 19,180, the average informal "wood and iron"

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[96] Ntsebeza, "Youth in Urban African Townships," 64–65.
[97] Mayer and Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 88.
[98] Ntsebeza, "Youth in Urban African Townships," 66.

house had 4.2 rooms. By 1955, the total Black population of the East Bank was estimated at 55,020 people.[99] The average dwelling had 6.3 rooms.[100] These statistics indicate that plot holders were adding new rooms or backyard shacks to dwellings to accommodate the population increase, but also that more people also needed to crowd into a single room.

For a small number of people who lived in the more solidly-constructed brick "municipal" houses, the front verandah provided a space for socialization. Bank has analyzed the meaning of the space of the verandah in 1950s East London, and argues that it "was a space from which urban mothers and matriarchs created solidarities and extended their influence beyond the home."[101] For women who faced threats of sexual violence in the streets, and whose tasks such as child-minding, beer-brewing, or taking in washing kept them at home, the verandah was a place to socialize without leaving the safety of home. However, only a small proportion of location residents had the use of their own verandah. Each house, after all, had only one verandah, but might have between 6 and 10 rooms, each of which was often occupied by one "household" (a family or, in the case of male migrant workers, a group of roommates).

This condition of housing shortage and lack of recreational space was true of South African cities generally during the first decade of apartheid.[102] During this decade urban populations grew since, according to Posel, the government declined to fully

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[99] The Border Regional Survey project run by Rhodes University conducted a one-in-ten survey of houses in the East and West Bank locations. They estimated the total Black population of East London at 78,000 (including the small West Bank and Cambridge locations, and the 10,000 or so people living at employers' residences.) These statistics challenged the official census findings of 1951, which recorded only 39,727 "Bantu" in East London. Reader, *The Black Man's Portion*, 42.

[100] Reader, 106.

[101] Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles*, 52.

[102] On shortages of recreation space, in particular, see Peter Alegi, *Laduma: Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa, from Its Origins to 2010* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010); Christopher Merrett, *Sport, Space and Segregation: Politics and Society in Pietermaritzburg* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2009); Ashwin Desai, *Wentworth: The Beautiful Game and the Making of Place* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2020).

enforce its "influx control" policies.[103] The shortage of housing, and increasingly tighter

domestic quarters, were true of centrally located urban locations in other South African

cities in this period. For example, the three townships of the Western Areas in

Johannesburg (the most famous of which was Sophiatown) were crowded in the 1930s,

when they held a population of 40,000. By the middle of the 1950s, that population had

doubled, without any additional land being added to the location boundaries.[104] Similar

strain on housing resources occurred in other centrally located Black neighborhoods,

which were often surrounded by white commercial, industrial, or residential areas, for

example Cato Manor in Durban or District Six in Cape Town.[105]

In this context, church buildings brought manyano women access to what Tyesi

called simply "the room": a place that was public in the sense that it was not domestic,

but private in the sense that it was intimate and reserved for group members. From one

perspective, women's commitment to building these church buildings and rooms could be

seen as evidence of manyanos' lack of social significance "except within the narrow

domain of their own Church's affairs."[106] It is true that even with their own church's

affairs, the role of the women's manyano was often confined to raising money rather than

to making spending decisions. Black women in South African churches certainly had few

opportunities for leadership. Even leadership within the manyano was not necessarily a

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[103] Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948-1961*, 76, 106–7.

[104] David Goodhew, "Working-Class Respectability: The Example of the Western Areas of Johannesburg, 1930-55," *The Journal of African History* 41, no. 2 (2000): 244, 252.

[105] On Cato Manor, see A Manson, "From Cato Manor to Kwa Mashu," *Reality*, 1981, 10–15; Iain Edwards, "Cato Manor: Cruel Past, Pivotal Future," *Review of African Political Economy* 21, no. 61 (1994): 415–27; On District Six, see Shamil Jeppie and Crain Soudien, eds., *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present* (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1990); See also: Bill Freund, *Outsiders and Insiders: The Indian Working Class of Durban, 1910-1990* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995); Bonner and Nieftagodien, *Alexandra*; David Goodhew, *Respectability and Resistance: A History of Sophiatown* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2004).

[106] Mia Brandel-Syrier, *Black Woman in Search of God* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1962), 97.

stepping-stone to other ecclesiastical positions of authority.[107] However, church buildings did provide manyano women with a space for recreation and socialization, and a (literally) concrete home in a context where domestic security was fragile. In their discussion of leisure and socialization in the East Bank, the Mayers noted that "the churches organize more spare-time activity than any other category of associations in East London, and for more people."[108] Manyanos' contributions to church buildings, then, were a contribution to the most common form of socialization in the location.

The East Bank Assemblies of God was not the only church building project that depended on manyano women's contributions. The detailed financial records of the Queenstown Methodist manyano again provide comparative evidence that can be applied to East London. In Queenstown, growing urban manyano membership allowed for the construction of local and far-distant church buildings. Between 1950 and 1960, almost every single quarterly meeting of the Queenstown district manyanos included *inkonzo yonxibo* (the robing service) during which probationary members were given the clothing of *abalingwa* (those who wait) and graduating probationers were given the complete uniform of the Methodist manyano. In the 1940s, these inkonzo yonxibo had happened only once or twice a year, and usually involved fewer than ten new members. In the 1950s, however, these ceremonies occurred every three months, and sometimes welcomed as many as twenty new members. By late 1959, the twelve manyano branches

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[107] For example, Mmabatho Montsho's 2020 short film *Joko Ya Hao* [Your Load] dramatizes the experiences of a Methodist manyano woman (loosely based on young Winnie Madikizela Mandela) whose disappointment with patriarchal church leaders prompts her to organize against forced removals in an urban location. Denis' oral histories from KwaZulu-Natal also illustrate the frustrations faced by manyano women who experienced gender-based discrimination within the church. Philippe Denis, "'We Also Had to Live with Apartheid in Our Homes': Stories of Women in Sobantu, South Africa," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 30, no. 1 (2004): 151–67.

[108] Mayer and Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 220.

of the Queenstown region had 404 members.[109] Significantly, although ten new branches

had been created in small villages in the late 1940s, these rural branches hardly grew at

all. By the end of the 1950s, most of the rural branches had only about ten members. The

growth in membership and income in the Methodist manyano was entirely in the single,

urban branch in Queenstown proper. In 1959, this branch accounted for 291 of the 404

total members in the region.[110] This growth in membership was reflected in a growth in

income. At the first meeting of 1950, the quarterly session collected £16 from the

regional branches.[111] At the final meeting of 1960, the same branches contributed £41, of

which more than half came from the central Queenstown branch.[112]

In addition to funding conferences and conventions, and paying travelling

evangelists, the manyano used its growing bank balance to fund new church buildings for

the Methodist church. In 1952, for instance, the Queenstown manyano branch had

accumulated £122 in its bank account.[113] They were approached by church leaders, who

asked the women to donate to two building projects, one for an unnamed local church in

the Queenstown area, and the other for a church building several hundred miles away in

Lusikisiki, in the far eastern Transkei. The members agreed, and voted £20 for the

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[109] Cory Library (hereafter CL), Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 3 October 1959.

[110] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 27 August 1959.

[111] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 7 January 1950.

[112] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 17 September 1960.

[113] This sum was comparable to the annual income of an African man employed in East London. In 1946, the "recommended" monthly wage for Black men in East London was £5.14 (£68.8 annually). By the later 1950s, the Mayers estimated average working men's wages to be less than £3 per week, or approximately £140 a year. Department of Native Affairs, "Report of the Native Laws Commission 1946-1948," 3. Mayer and Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 137.

Lusikisiki church, and £15 for the Queenstown building.[114] The minutes do not reveal

why the Queenstown Methodists were willing to give such a large donation to a far-away

sister congregation. The expenditures do demonstrate, however, the focus of manyano

spending power on construction projects.

Similarly, at a quarterly manyano meeting in 1960, a male church leader made a

special request for money "for the opening of the Komani [Queenstown] church." The

minister expressed his wish that each *umbutho* (group or guild) within the church

contribute something to this construction project. He promised the women's manyano

that "the delegates would see what is done with the money," which possibly referred to

delegates from the manyano supervising the use of their funds. He concluded by stating

that the building fund had only £23, but that a further £25 were required. The manyano

immediately voted to give more than requested, and set aside £35 for *Umvulo Wendlu*

("the opening of the house").[115] Thus, the women's manyano contributed more than half

the total budget of the building project. Church leaders evidently depended on them and

likely expected this level of contribution. However, the church leaders also couched their

requests in language that made it clear that manyano women were in charge of their own

money. For their part, by giving £35 towards the opening of the Komani church (more

than all the other church guilds had given combined), the Queenstown Methodist

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[114] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Queenstown Women's Manyano, 24 November 1952. Trans. PM

[115] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 17 September 1960. The isiXhosa terms related to church are significant because they distinctly define a church building as a dwelling. In English "church" can refer to either a building, a congregation, or the overall institution. Kropf and Godfrey's older Xhosa dictionary defines *ibandla* as the congregation, *icawa* as the institution, and *indlu yecawa* as the building, literally the "house of church/Sunday." *Indlu* is the same term used for a domestic dwelling. See "i-cawa" and "i-ndlu," in Albert Kropf and Robert Godfrey, *A Kafir-English Dictionary* (Lovedale: Lovedale Institution Press, 1915), 23, 57. More modern isiXhosa, such as the *Oxford School Dictionary* (2017) gives *ibandla* as the congregation and *icawa* as the institution or building.

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manyano women expressed their interest in the construction of new church buildings. The numerical and financial growth of the Queenstown Methodist manyano was likely not an exception in the 1950s; the urbanization that brought new members to the manyano in Queenstown was also occurring in East London.

While there are no extant written records of East London manyanos to show how they spent their money, it is likely that their fundraising was also directed towards the construction of church buildings, particularly the smaller denominations whose original structures may have been informal wood-and-iron constructions.[116] Between 1952 and 1959, at least four new churches were constructed or rebuilt in the East Bank and West Bank locations. The construction of the Assemblies of God and the rebuilding of St. Peter Claver have already been discussed above. Additionally, the West Bank's St. James Anglican church was rebuilt in 1956 after its destruction during the 1952 uprising.[117] The Old Apostolic Church (an independent church with some Pentecostal leanings, and a significant Black and Coloured following in the western and eastern Cape regions) also began an impressive new building in the East Bank in 1954. This new building, which replaced a house that was the congregation's former meeting place, was designed to seat over one thousand.[118]

Church Space and Photography in the 1950s East Bank

The photographs of Daniel Morolong reveal how women used and valued the church buildings that were built by their contributions. Morolong was an active member of the Methodist church and took photos of events at that church, but was also often asked to

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[116] For a list of 24 East Bank churches in existence in 1957 (which was not a complete list), see Dubb, *Community of the Saved*, 19.

[117] "Last Service Hled in West Bank Church," *Daily Dispatch* (African Edition), August 31, 1965.

[118] B.A. Pauw, *Christianity and Xhosa Tradition: Belief and Ritual among Xhosa-Speaking Christians* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1975), 296–97.

attend other churches' events as a photographer.[119] His photos of formal church events depict church spaces in ways that defy typical scholarly categorizations of photographs as public or private, sacred or secular. The photographs reveal the many uses to which church buildings could be put, and the place of authority that manyano women held in those buildings.

Figure 8: Members of the Anglican Mothers' Union in the East Bank location, c.1950[120]

One way that manyano women used church spaces was for socialization. Figure 8 shows four women dressed in the uniform of the Anglican Mothers' Union (identifiable especially because of the shape of their lapel pin). They are seated, and three are holding teacups and saucers. The textured, undecorated panels behind them resemble materials

[119] Lipuo Morolong, Interview at Mdantsane City Mall, Mdantsane, February 19, 2020.
[120] Photograph by Daniel Morolong, used by permission of the estate of Daniel Morolong. Unless otherwise indicated, all images are by Daniel Morolong.

used in institutional rather than domestic spaces, which suggests that this photo was taken in the hall attached to St. Philip's Anglican Church in the East Bank. In church repertoires of fundraising, manyano women were usually supposed to prepare and serve tea. Chapter 3, for example, discusses a tea advertisement that depicts a church woman in just such a role. In this photograph, however, the women are seated and are enjoying rather than serving the tea. While their facial expressions could be described as guarded, oral historical testimony emphasizes the enjoyment and close camaraderie that manyano women experienced at such events. Jiki Lebetloane, whose mother was also a manyano member, relished the good food that appeared after her mother attended special events: "There was bazaar on Saturdays. They used to sell jelly and custard… Oh, we used to enjoy when my mother is going to church and will bring us jelly and custard from the bazaar."[121] "Bazaars" could also have singing and dancing performances and competitions. Nongenile Nyongo recalled that in the 1960s in the AME church, jiving was the popular dance style, and people "jived" at every event they could.[122] Nontle Kombele, whose mother was a member of the Catholic Sodality of St. Anne in the 1950s, laughed as she recalled her mother disappearing from the house on the day of a special event: "If she goes to church in the morning, she will be gone the whole day!" Kombele asserted that the women in St. Anne had to be close friends because they spent so much time together.[123]

These friendships were built around mutual confidences about difficult, intimate topics, which is perhaps why the Mothers' Union members in Morolong's photograph do

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[121] Jiki Lebetloane, Interview in Dorchester Heights, East London, March 2, 2020.
[122] Nongenile Nyongo, Interview in Bell Village, Eastern Cape, trans. Nolovuyo Wonci, November 13, 2019.
[123] Nontle Kombele, Interview in Gompo, East London, December 16, 2019.

not appear to be socializing with the photographer. While a male photographer might be invited to commemorate a special event with a photo, the substance of ordinary manyano meetings was too private to share with anyone outside the group. Family problems were one frequent topic, especially the burden of unfaithful or abusive husbands. Beatrice Tyesi joined the Assemblies of God manyano in the 1950s. She and her daughter Ndileka concurred that the main burden shared by manyano women was their husbands' behavior. Manyanos, they said "afford the opportunity for the... especially the younger women... to share their problems, especially with their marriage."[124] The lessons that women learned from each other were often hard and bitter lessons. At the manyano, Ndileka said, members could observe that even church leaders' wives suffered:

> Even the fathers who are in the church, they also expect women to be... [Beatrice interjects: "a doormat"] ... you have to be subservient to him... Because they know the scriptures, you see. They take advantage... They know what is being taught in the room. Because my mother used to tell me, when the ministry was being started... She would ask them [manyano leaders], ok, I hear what you are saying, your husbands are pastors in the church so they are good men... And they would say, listen a man is a man is a man whether he is in the church or not. He will remain a man. That selfish streak will remain there... And so it becomes even harder for them, whose husbands [are in the church].[125]

Wayward sons and daughters were the cause of manyano women's anxiety in the early twentieth century, as young people left rural areas to find jobs in the towns (see Chapter 3).[126] Once this generation of urban immigrants had established families in the city, then, perhaps, conflict between husbands and wives supplanted that between mothers and

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[124] Tyesi and Tyesi, Interview in Cambridge, East London.
[125] Tyesi and Tyesi.
[126] Deborah Gaitskell, "'Wailing for Purity': Prayer Unions, African Mothers and Adolescent Daughters, 1912-1940," in *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness, 1870-1930*, ed. Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone (London: Longman, 1982), 338–57.

children.[127] Conflict with their husband or their husband's family was the reason for other women to join the manyano.[128] Across denominations and decades, manyanos instructed their members to submit patiently to their husbands, which would earn them a heavenly reward.[129] In a situation of generational and gendered conflict within families, and within the wider Black urban community in the 1950s, manyano women adhered to a culturally conservative understanding of maternal and wifely duties, and formed their bonds of solidarity on the basis of this shared identity. As Tyesi's statement about women being "doormats" and subservient indicates, the bonds of solidarity within the private space of the manyano "room" allowed women to voice critiques of the patriarchal religious system, albeit privately.

Therefore, the experiences and the instructions that manyano women shared with one another were very personal and sensitive, and fostered a close emotional bond between women. This bond could, paradoxically, be expressed through playful or teasing interactions. Jiki Lebetloane, who joined the Mothers' Union after a traumatic family event, recalled fondly the teasing relationship that she established with fellow members. They would joke that one member had insulted another, and then tell the offender to bring a gift of Coke, or chicken, as recompense: "It was so nice, those days… And the other one will say, 'Oh you've brought Coke. I don't drink Coke'… you cook a chicken and 'Oh, what's this?' 'It's a chicken.' It was so nice, but you can't do those games now

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[127] This very imprecise hypothesis is partly supported by the minutes of the Queenstown Methodist manyano, which in the 1940s has many references to conflicts between women and their children (similar in tone to the "wailings" about which Gaitskell writes. In the 1950s, these prayers for wayward children disappear from the Queenstown manyano minutes.

[128] Mlomzale, Interview in Amalinda, East London; Lebetloane, Interview in Dorchester Heights, East London.

[129] For example, I asked one interviewee, in the presence of her husband: "How has the manyano benefited you?" She hesitated and her husband stepped in to say that the manyano teaches women how to be respectful (*ukuhlonipha*) to their husbands, and not to argue or gossip or speak loudly at home. Sylvia Gcezangana, Interview in Bell Village, Eastern Cape, trans. Nolovuyo Wonci, November 13, 2019.

these days with these people…"[130] Manyano women's camaraderie was built on mutual confidences about their private lives, and therefore their formal photographs only reveal one aspect of their relationships.

Figure 9: Members of the Sodality of St. Anne at St. Peter Claver Catholic Church, c.1960[131]

Morolong's photographs of church women's events challenge some of the established interpretive categories in the history of photography in Africa, particularly the association of church photography with missionary imperialism, and the emphasis on individual self-fashioning in portraiture by Black African photographers. Morolong's manyano photos are unlike missionary photography in that they were commissioned by

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[130] Lebetloane, Interview in Dorchester Heights, East London.
[131] Image by Daniel Morolong

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Black women themselves, but unlike studio portraits they represent not individual self-expression but rather corporate identity and loyalty, not just to the group, but also to the physical space of the church in which they are photographed.

When scholars have discussed Christianity in the history of photography in Africa, their sources have usually been photographs of converts taken by missionaries or ethnographers. Such photographs are ripe for analysis of the othering gaze of missionaries, who took photographs of "their" converts in ways that emphasized the possessive relationship between the photographer and the subject.[132] It is possible to analyse missionary photographs as a kind of visual inventory of Africa's wealth, spiritual and material, collected during the era of imperial expansion. Like missionary texts, these photographic records can also be read against the grain to explore how Africans understood their own representation on film.[133] Morolong's photographs of church events do not fit this genre of Christian missionary photography. He was an insider in the East Bank location community, and his photos of women's church events were almost all certainly commissioned for particular occasions.[134]

At the same time, Morolong's photographs of women's church events are not easily interpretable by the categories of "studio" or "portrait" photography, which is the category most often used to analyze photographs of twentieth-century African women. Several scholars have argued that in portrait photography, women craft individualized

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[132] This could be true even when the photographers were African American missionaries, who shared black South Africans' experience of racial discrimination. Elisabeth Engel, "Southern Looks? A History of African American Missionary Photography of Africa, 1890s–1930s," *Journal of American Studies* 52, no. 2 (2018): 390–417; Paul Landau and Deborah Kaspin, eds., *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

[133] T. Jack Thompson, *Light on Darkness?: Missionary Photography of Africa in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012).

[134] For example, in 1952 the Queenstown women's manyano commissioned a group photograph of its members. CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Queenstown Women's Manyano, 30 October 1952. Trans. PM

social personas. Mustafa, for example, argues that in portrait photography, Senegalese women have appropriated the colonial insistence on respectability and modernity, and transcended these categories by their lavish self-presentation.[135] Similarly, Feyder argues that in Johannesburg's Benoni location in the 1950s women cultivated their individual images by being photographed against the backdrop of a carefully-decorated lounge.[136] However, as Candace Keller has shown in relation to Malian popular photography, portrait photography is often part of much more complex cultural expressions than simply individual self-assertion, and the relationship between photographer and subject is a complex one.[137]

Likewise, an understanding of women's portrait photography as straightforwardly about the individual does not do justice to Morolong's photographs of church women's events. One reason is that popular photography in 1950s and 1960s East London was not a straightforwardly positive activity for the participants. Mnyaka highlights the dissonances of African popular photography in a discussion of Morolong's photos of East London beach-goers. In the 1950s the municipality was trying to restrict access to the beachfront areas previously set aside for Black recreation, and the subjects of Morolong's beach photos would have been aware of these encroaching apartheid restrictions.[138] Social photography, even of simple leisure events, should not be assumed to be purely about

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[135] Hudita Nura Mustafa, "Portraits of Modernity: Fashioning Selves in Darakois Popular Photography," in Landau and Kaspin, *Images and Empires*, 173.

[136] Sophie Feyder, "Lounge Photography and the Politics of Township Interiors: The Representation of the Black South African Home in the Ngilima Photographic Collection, East Rand, 1950s," *Kronos* 38, no. 1 (2012): 131–53.

[137] Candace M. Keller, *Imaging Culture: Photography in Mali, West Africa* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2021).

[138] Phindi Mnyaka, "The Profane and the Prophetic at a South African Beach," in Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley, eds., *Ambivalent: Photography and Visibility in African History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2019), 227.

individual self-affirmation for the subject.[139] Mnyaka's observations complement other

recent scholarship on media in Africa, which argues that religious media sometimes

intentionally obscures rather than reveals. Popular photography can be intentionally

opaque or generic, rather than celebrating individual self-actualization.[140] As a non-

member and a man, Morolong was only an observer at East Bank women's church

events. His photographs of rows of straight-faced women looking at the camera do not

capture the intimate friendships that women shared with one another in their private

meetings, and perhaps they intended it to be that way.

What Morolong's photographs do reveal is the importance of church buildings to

women, and the ownership they took of those buildings. Figure 9, above, shows a group

of women in the uniform of the Sodality of St. Anne at St. Peter Claver Catholic church,

which had been rebuilt after the fire of 1952. A branch of St. Anne was first established

in this congregation in 1961, so the photo was taken some time after this date.

I argue that the fact of the women's being photographed inside the church

building, rather than outdoors or in one of the classrooms on the church compound, is

significant. By being photographed at the front of the church (the photographer was

probably standing on the altar steps), these women emphasized their ownership of the

building which they had recently helped to rebuild after a destructive fire. The

anonymous Dominican sister who wrote an account of the re-building of St. Peter Claver

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[139] "Introduction," in Hayes and Minkley, *Ambivalent*.

[140] For example, in contemporary reform Islam on the East African coast, pious women may veil themselves in photographs, or keep their wedding portraits carefully hidden, to be viewed only by certain people. Images of individuals can also be intentionally non-specific: at a Nigerian church, stock photos are displayed to encourage believers to visualize the life they want. Asonzeh Ukah, "Charisma as Spectacle: Photographs and the Construction of a Pentecostal Urban Piety in Nigeria," in *Religion, Media, and Marginality in Modern Africa*, ed. Felicitas Becker, Joel Cabrita, and Marie Rodet (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2018), 175–201; Heike Behrend, "Photography as Unveiling: Muslim Discourses and Practices on the Kenyan Coast," in *Religion, Media, and Marginality in Modern Africa*, ed. Felicitas Becker, Joel Cabrita, and Marie Rodet (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2018), 112–32.

emphasized the distress caused by the destruction of the old building. She wrote of "mothers kneeling or sitting down on the black soot… [as] the faithful waited to patiently to receive the Eucharistic Lord." The consolation to this apocalyptic scene was the "vigour and apostolic zeal" of the congregants, "men and women… [who] come back late from their occupations to go round and beg for a widow's mite from their neighbours for a new church." The sister particularly noted Catholic women's care for the interior space of the church, as it was being rebuilt: "It is consoling to say that the women are very keen on keeping the church scrupulously clean."[141] As those who had figuratively "sewed the tents" and funded the physical infrastructure of their churches (whether the revival tents of the Assemblies of God, the Queenstown Methodist building, or the rebuilt St. Peter Claver), manyano women had a particular sense of ownership of church buildings.

[141] "St. Peter Claver's—East London." Anonymous manuscript, King Williams Town Dominican Archives.

Figure 10: Priest, manyano members, and congregants of a church in the East Bank, c.1960[142]

This same point is also illustrated by another of Morolong's church photos, which judging by the style of the manyano uniforms may be the Order of Ethiopia (Figure 10). The Order of Ethiopia was one of the smaller, although long-established, African Independent Churches of the East Bank.[143] This photograph was taken inside the church building, and includes members of the congregation from children to adult men, to choir members, and of course manyano women. Possibly this photograph was taken to

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[142] Image by Daniel Morolong.

[143] On the complicated history of the Order of Ethiopia and its relationship to both the AME and Anglican churches, see Pauw, *Christianity and Xhosa Tradition: Belief and Ritual among Xhosa-Speaking Christians*, 26; James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 218–20.

commemorate a special occasion, such as an anniversary of the church's founding. Manyano women, in their purple blouses and black caps, dominate the foreground of the image. They fill the first two or three rows of seating, and the priest shares the front row with the oldest women.

The older adult women who formed the core of manyano membership were not the only ones who found church spaces a valuable place to socialize in a location where space for recreation was limited. Girls and young women, whose movement on the public streets was more circumscribed, also found the church to be a place to socialize with friends (especially if their parents or guardians monitored their movements closely). One type of church social event was the beauty pageant. "They were the highlight," recalled Thoko Mbekela; "they were the only entertainment we had."[144] Photographs of church beauty pageants reveal how the church building hosted secular as well as sacred rituals.

[144] Thoko Mbekela, Interview in Southernwood, East London, February 18, 2020.

Figure 11: Nomthandazo wearing a "Miss Diocese" sash, standing in front of the altar of St. Philips Anglican church, c.1960s[145]

That South African churches would host beauty pageants for young women congregants is not necessarily surprising, in a country where pageants are a standard form of promotion and recreation in many industries. Companies host pageants in order to advertise their products, and employers have held pageants as a form of recreation for

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[145] Image by Daniel Morlong. Jiki Lebetloane identified this woman as Nomthandazo, or Thandi, and believes that she later married a priest in the Eastern Cape. I have not been able to identify her surname or any other information about her.

their employees.[146] While many of these beauty pageants were corporately sponsored, contestants could derive their own value through "the emancipatory power of fun."[147] In the case of unionized garment workers in the Western Cape's Spring Queen pageant in the late twentieth century, "the emotional capital generated by the contest could be subtly mobilized in the service of workplace struggles."[148]

Besides negotiating employer or sponsor relationships, pageant contestants have also had to negotiate changing meanings of beauty in South African society, where light skin was often valued, but efforts at achieving it also came in for critique by Black writers.[149] One element of South Africa's complex beauty culture was a strong influence from African American fashions.[150] This influence can be detected in Figure 11, where the winner of the Anglican Miss Diocese competition wears her hair in an afro, a style that was associated with the Black Consciousness movement South Africa and with Black Power in the United States.[151] This kind of attention to fashion and personal appearance might seem at odds with the modesty, motherhood, and domesticity that were themes of church discourse about women. However, stylish dress and scrupulous attention to the body can also be used by women to "project honor, virtue and status."[152] And religious performance can be combined with the performance of femininities, as

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[146] Peter Alegi, "Rewriting Patriarchal Scripts: Women, Labor, and Popular Culture in South African Clothing Industry Beauty Contests, 1970s-2005," *Journal of Social History* 42, no. 1 (2008): 31–56.

[147] Alegi, 38.

[148] Alegi, 41.

[149] Lynn Thomas, "The Modern Girl and Racial Respectability in 1930s South Africa," *Journal of African History* 47, no. 3 (2006): 461–90; Lynn M. Thomas, *Beneath the Surface: A Transnational History of Skin Lighteners*, Illustrated edition (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

[150] Nakedi Ribane, *Beauty: A Black Perspective* (Scottsville: University Of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2006), 16–17.

[151] Jennifer Thomas gives a fascinating account of the political repercussions when Robin Gregory, the Howard homecoming Queen of 1966, chose to wear an afro: Jennifer C. Thomas, "Pageantry & Politics: Miss Howard University from Civil Rights to Black Power," *The Journal of Negro Education* 87, no. 1 (2018): 26–28.

[152] Oluwakemi M. Balogun, "Beauty and the Bikini: Embodied Respectability in Nigerian Beauty Pageants," *African Studies Review* 62, no. 2 (2019): 84.

Gilbert has shown in her study of contemporary Nigerian Pentecostal beauty pageants where "prayerfulness" is evaluated alongside a contestant's dress, speech, and attitude.[153] In South Africa, therefore, church beauty pageants were part of a heavily populated landscape of pageants, and were implicated in the contested political meanings of changing fashions and hair styles.

Like the garment worker pageant contestants interviewed by Alegi, oral histories from former church beauty pageant participants emphasized not the meanings of their clothes and hairstyles, but simply the good fun that they had. The pageants were one of several church events that could draw a large crowd. Maureen Dabula and Thoko Mbeka recall that "in those days they also used to have shows to raise money… variety shows and beauty contests… It was for churches and neighboring [people]… churches would sell tickets and people would come."[154] Figure 12 shows what a typical pageant in East London may have looked like in the 1960s. A row of young women are walking across the floor of a hall, while the audience along the edges of the hall observe their dress and manner of walking. Several contestants have white labels attached to their clothing, likely an identification number for the judges. While all the contestants are wearing dresses and high heels, their individual dresses encompass a range of fashion styles. The contestant on the far left is wearing a dress made of shiny material, without any sleeves, and with a bracelet on her upper forearm that emphasizes her exposed skin. The contestant to her left wears a slightly longer white dress with long sleeves. This pageant was likely not a church pageant; the location is probably Rubusana Hall, the main indoor recreation

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[153] Juliet Gilbert, "'Be Graceful, Patient, Ever Prayerful': Negotiating Femininity, Respect and the Religious Self in a Nigerian Beauty Pageant," *Africa* 85, no. 3 (2015): 501–20.
[154] Maureen Dabula and Thoko Mbekela, Interview in Southernwood, East London, January 29, 2020.

facility in the East Bank in the 1950s and 1960s. However, the scene depicted here is similar to descriptions of church pageants.

Figure 12: Pageant contestants display their dress and deportment before an audience at an East Bank hall, c.1960s[155]

Jiki Lebetloane, who was a runner-up in the Anglican Miss St. Philips contest in the mid-1960s, gave a vivid description of the church beauty pageant. The pageant was an anticipated event, she recalled. In the 1960s, "every Sunday the churches used to be full… The people were not so busy those days."[156] The beauty pageant would take place on Saturday, before the rush of Sunday services. When she herself competed for the title of Miss St. Philips she was in her 20s and unmarried, a member of the church choir, and employed as a teacher. The other contestants were also younger unmarried women, who

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[155] Image by Daniel Morolong.
[156] Lebetloane, Interview in Dorchester Heights, East London.

had graduated from the ranks of St. Agnes (the girls' manyano) but were not yet eligible to join the Mothers' Union. When she and the other contestants arrived at the church hall, they found an enthusiastic crowd:

> they will be clapping, others whistling [she laughs] and standing up and saying [things], and shouting... but not in a bad mood. Ay, there were judges, there were people who judge. *Ka loku* [you see], even in those days people knew about these things.[157]

When I asked how the judges would evaluate the contestants, she replied,

> I'm not sure; they used to ask questions…[she laughs and strikes a pose to indicate how the contestants would show off]…But it was not tough as it is now, nowadays these competitions. It was not like that, with bathing costumes and all that. It was just one dress…it was not a tough thing, it was just…[158]

Lebetloane interpreted the Miss St. Philips competition as a moment of lighthearted recreation that was at the same time woven into the church's sacred space and ritual life. On Sunday morning, the day after the pageant, the winners came to the morning service "to be blessed" in front of the congregation. The winners and runners-up were also photographed at the front of the church, standing directly in front of the altar (Figure 13). Their dress is similar the more conservatively-attired pageant contestants in Figure 12, with long sleeves and gloves. The choice to photograph the pageant winners in front of the church altar, the most sacred and also the most recognizably religious feature of the building, is significant. These photographs are not only records of their individual achievement as winners or runners-up in a competition, but also acknowledgements of their link to a particular church institution, represented by the church building.

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[157] Lebetloane.
[158] Lebetloane.

Figure 13: Jiki Lebetloane (left) and the winner and second runner-up in the Miss St. Philips competition, c.1965[159]

The importance of the church building to these participants was evident in interviews with Lebetloane and Mbekela. There are four different photos in the Morolong collection of the Miss St. Philips and Miss Diocese contestants. In our interviews, we spent considerable time examining these photographs, not only to identify the people, but

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[159] Image by Daniel Morolong.

also to identify the setting. The St. Philip's congregation has moved buildings several times (see Chapter 5), and while a Mothers' Union banner in the background of one of the photos clearly identifies the setting as St. Philip's, my interviewees wanted to recall all the details of the "old," original St. Philip's to confirm whether the even took place there. Even after they are gone (or, in the case of St. Philip's, repurposed as a Hindu temple after its neighbourhood was proclaimed an Indian area in the 1960s), buildings continue to anchor the experiences of the communities that build them.

Conclusion

This chapter contributes to the literature about religious movements and urbanization in Africa by focusing on the role of women's church groups in constructing the church buildings that were such a prominent feature of the location's urban landscape. In East London, manyano women did not create a new religious movement linked to nationalist aspirations. They did support the ANC's Defiance Campaign, most visibly by their presence at the prayer meeting on Bloody Sunday in 1952. But in East London, where the ANC was cowed and disorganized after the 1952 riots, manyano activity remained apolitical, at least in its public appearance. Nor did the growth of manyano membership in this decade lead to a women's religious movement that challenged patriarchal norms in the church or in society as a whole. The evangelical fervor of early Assemblies of God converts threatened to upend traditional mothering roles, but eventually these energies were channeled into a traditional manyano organization. As this chapter has shown, in the 1950s manyano women offered each other solidarity, and counselled stoicism, while upholding the normative Christian understanding of a wife's submission to her husband within a monogamous marriage. To the extent that growth of women's church

organizations in 1950s and early 1960s East London can be considered a religious revival, it was not a noticeably revolutionary or confrontational one.

Yet, this chapter has argued, women's Christian organizations did shape the landscape and culture of the East London locations at a time when the urban community there was under threat. They shaped the urban landscape in the most obvious sense, by constructing durable church buildings that defied the precarious situation of the East Bank location in the decade after 1952, as forced removals to a new township loomed. In the Assemblies of God, women took pride in funding the construction of the largest church building in the city, as well as funding an ongoing traveling revival campaign. The church provided a private place for group members to meet, where they could discuss sensitive issues about families, and especially husbands. Such spaces for private discussion were rare in the location at that time, where families frequently shared a single room. This understanding of the significance of church space allows for a new interpretation of Daniel Morolong's photos of church events in the 1950s and 1960s. These photographs are unlike the usual examples that are cited in discussions of photography and Christianity, or women's popular photography. What was on display in these photos was not individual self-expression, but the corporate identity of women's groups, and their place of authority in the church building, the home of their community.

Moving Homes, Moving Churches: Home-Making in an Era of Apartheid Planned Domesticity, 1963-1981

At their quarterly meeting in early 1959, the women of the Queenstown manyano were given two new responsibilities. First, they were informed by the Superintendent of the local Methodist circuit that they should begin making contributions to "isephu kaNkosikazi"— housekeeping money, or "soap," for the minister's wife. This instruction prompted a flurry of questions from the delegates: Where had this custom come from? How much need they give her? The Superintendent assured them that he had researched this practice, and that churches in East London were already giving the minister's wife between £4 and £8 per quarter, while at Woodhouse she received £5. The Queenstown manyano voted to give their minister's wife £3 each quarter.[1] Immediately after this matter was settled, the meeting moved on to consider another new expense. The manyano was asked to purchase new furniture for the sitting-room of the Mission House, the minister's residence attached to the main Queenstown church. The treasurer at first suggested that the manyano should simply offer the minister a loan. But the Vice President "stood up to make it clear that the women's funds have, from long ago, been used to see to the appearance of the Mission House."[2] After further discussion, which suggests some reluctance to undertake this expense, the delegates authorized the manyano executive to spend up to £50 on sitting-room furniture. These two new financial duties for the Queenstown manyano were substantial. The furniture was a one-time large expense, but the housekeeping money for the minister's wife was a significant ongoing commitment. For one quarter of 1961, the income

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[1] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 9 April 1959.

[2] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 9 April 1959.

of the manyano was £10 (all from members' dues), of which £3 was set aside for "isephu kaNkosikazi."[3]

Despite their reservations, the Queenstown manyano of 1959 accepted the new responsibility to care not only for the church building, but also for the minister's home. This particular episode in the activities of the Queenstown manyano is indicative of a new theme in manyano and church activities in the 1960s: seeking security and status in housing. In the context of increasing forced removals and dramatic changes in the housing available to urban Africans, the homemaking roles of manyano women were a way that religious communities defended their status.

This chapter follows the histories of manyanos and their churches in the East London area from 1963, the date of the first forced removals to Mdantsane township, to 1981, the date at which the Ciskei homeland, or Bantustan as its critics called it, became nominally independent. 1981 marks the transition from the administration of the township and its churches by the Department of Bantu Administration (DBA; previously called the Department of Native Affairs) to administration by Ciskei officials.[4] This chapter argues that while apartheid legislation was intended to create total racial segregation in urban areas, the reality was a patchwork of urban housing systems that stretched from Mdantsane to the old location of Duncan Village (which was never fully cleared). These many types of housing created differentiated rights of urban

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[3] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Minutes of the Quarterly Session of the Queenstown Manyano, 17 August 1961.

[4] The distinction in the archival record between the pre-1981 and post-1981 Ciskei is more messy. Between 1972 and 1981 the Ciskei Territorial Authority was self-governing, although the DBA still exercised oversight over many details of administration. This appears to have resulted in some inconsistencies in record-keeping. The DBA files in the Pretoria National Archives document church building activity up to about 1970, after which the records are more patchy. Any records created by the Ciskei Territorial Authority about churches and township land use have not survived in the Eastern Cape provincial archives depot in Qonce [King Williams Town]. On the problems of preservation and storage in the Eastern Cape archives, see the discussion in the Introduction and Sean Morrow and Luvuyo Wotshela, "The State of the Archives and Access to Information," in *State of the Nation: South Africa 2004-2005*, ed. John Daniel, Roger Southall, and Jessica Lutchman (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2005), 313–35.

citizenship for Black urbanites. In this context, manyano women's roles as mothers and homemakers had particular relevance. By contributing to the maintenance of the minister's home, manyano women worked to solidify their church's standing in the new religious landscape of the township.

However, this chapter argues, the religious landscape of the township was also influenced by the government's notions of ideal, stable, religious communities. African Independent Churches (AICs) and Zionist churches were often at a disadvantage in securing access to township land, and the interventions of the DBA continued to favor mission-established churches. The efforts of smaller, independent churches to access land for church buildings reveal the national and international dynamics of an apartheid homeland township. As part of the Ciskei, Mdantsane was designed to be a commuter suburb within a nominally independent Xhosa ethno-state on its own path of "separate development." Bantustans did in many ways imprison their citizens in underdeveloped "dumping grounds."[5] But records of church construction in Mdatnsane reveal how religious communities leveraged national and international connections to secure their positions. Through South African or global institutional networks, township churches improved their position within the township, and demonstrated that they were part of something larger than the Ciskei.

Urban Segregation and Housing in South Africa

Urban segregation in South Africa began in the colonial period.[6] Historians agree, however, that urban segregation qualitatively changed in the second half of the twentieth century. Some date the shift to the National Party victory in 1948 and the legislation of the early 1950s, like the

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[5] Laura Evans, *Survival in the "Dumping Grounds": A Social History of Apartheid Relocation* (Brill, 2019).
[6] Maynard W. Swanson, "'The Durban System': Roots of Urban Apartheid in Colonial Natal," *African Studies* 35, no. 3–4 (1976): 159–76; Maynard W. Swanson, "The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909," *The Journal of African History* 18, no. 3 (1977): 387–410.

Group Areas Act (1950) and the Bantu Authorities Act (1951) which provided legal tools for a

more complete urban segregation.[7] Yet policy changes required real, and expensive,

infrastructure in order to have a widespread effect on people's lives. For example, the distinction

between permanent and temporary Black urbanites implied in the "Section 10" rights of the 1952

Abolition of Passes Act required the construction of two separate types of housing: family homes

for those with Section 10 (2) permanent rights, and hostels for migrant workers. Maylam argues

for a periodization of urban apartheid based on its practical implementation rather than its

legislation. Under such a periodization, urban apartheid developed gradually from the 1920s

through the 1950s, but shifted into a new period of intensity in the 1960s and 1970s.[8] Posel

agrees that the early 1960s marked a new phase of state intervention to achieve an ideal of

apartheid.[9]

This shift to more thorough urban residential segregation in the 1960s was not only a

shift of policy but depended on the slow, uneven construction of housing infrastructure. While

the pass system and policies of "influx control" have received much scholarly attention as

mechanisms of apartheid, urban segregation depended on the construction of new housing to

replace the old centrally-located urban locations.[10] Townships for "stabilized" African families

were expensive and politically complicated to build, and it was not until the 1960s that the such

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[7] R.J. Davies, "The Spatial Formation of the South African City," *GeoJournal* 2, no. 2 (1981); Doug Hindson, *Pass Controls and the Urban African Proletariat* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987).

[8] Paul Maylam, "The Rise and Decline of Urban Apartheid in South Africa," *African Affairs* 89, no. 354 (1990): 57–84; Ivan Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race* (University of California Press, 1997).

[9] Deborah Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 228; In one of the earliest assessments of urban apartheid history, Davenport made the early 1960s a turning point, for a different reason. He noted the close communication between policymakers in South African and other British colonies in the early twentieth century. They all followed similar urban segregation policies until the late 1950s, after which British colonies began preparing for independence while South Africa prepared itself for a new type of white republican government. Rodney Davenport, "African Townsmen? South African Natives (Urban Areas) Legislation through the Years," *African Affairs* 68, no. 271 (1969): 95–109.

[10] Maylam, "The Rise and Decline of Urban Apartheid in South Africa," 73.

townships became home to a significant number of people. For instance, Cato Manor location in Durban was demolished in the late 1950s, and its residents forcibly removed to the planned township of KwaMashu only starting in the early 1960s, although planning on the township had begun many years before.[11] Lady Selborne location in Pretoria was slated for demolition as early as 1949, but the forced removals to Ga-Rankuwa did not begin until 1961.[12] Similarly, although the Johannesburg city council began "clearing" the Western Areas and Alexandra locations in the 1950s, it was not until the late 1950s and into the 1960s that a newer conglomeration of townships began to take definitive shape and gained the name Soweto.[13] While South African municipalities had evicted Black residents from the city before, the 1960s marked a new phase of widespread forced removals and the building of large peri-urban townships.

Moreover, schemes of segregated housing were never watertight. Some old locations persisted, squatter settlements on the edges of cities continued to pop up, and municipalities and the central state argued and vacillated over construction projects. The cost and complexity of housing construction was one of the internal contradictions of apartheid; it was a particular challenge to the doctrine of separate development that demanded white South Africans pay as little as possible for services for other racial groups. As Maylam puts it, "the imperative towards control was often contradictory to the cost minimization imperative. At the centre of this contradiction was the whole housing question."[14] East London exemplifies this contradiction and its complex effects on residential patterns and urban rights. Mdantsane was a model of a large,

[11] A Manson, "From Cato Manor to Kwa Mashu," *Reality*, 1981, 10–15; Iain Edwards, "Cato Manor: Cruel Past, Pivotal Future," *Review of African Political Economy* 21, no. 61 (1994): 415–27.

[12] Maserole Christina Kgari-Masondo, "The Usable Past and Socio-Environmental Justice: From Lady Selborne to Ga-Rankuwa," *New Contree*, no. 66 (2013): 78–79.

[13] Clive Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 95–96; Philip Bonner and Lauren Segal, *Soweto: A History* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 1998).

[14] Maylam, "The Rise and Decline of Urban Apartheid in South Africa," 73.

planned township, and was originally intended to house the entirety of East London's Black population. But it was only one of the types of residential areas that emerged under high apartheid urbanism in East London.

The apartheid housing regime in East London, Mdantsane, and beyond

A brief review of the different housing regimes that emerged in East London from the early 1960s through the 1970s reveals the emergence of a patchwork of residential areas, each providing its residents with different rights, possibilities, and challenges.[15] By the early 1960s, each of East London's residential areas had been "proclaimed" in terms of the Group Areas Act of 1950, for the exclusive occupation of one racial group (see Figure 14).[16] The "Tsolo" and "Mekeni" sections of the East Bank location were proclaimed an Indian area, and renamed Braelyn. The racially heterogenous North End was proclaimed a white area, and its Coloured residents moved to Parkside and Buffalo Flats. The remainder of what had been the East Bank was now officially called Duncan Village, and was intended to house a diminishing number of Black residents as they were forcibly removed to Mdantsane.

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[15] The term "housing regime" is used by urban geographers and sociologists to describe the suite of methods that a state uses to achieve a desired standard of housing for citizens (for example, a stable rental market, or individual homeownership). Early theories of "housing regimes" focused on western Europe and assumed that all citizens were treated equally within a given housing regime, but more recent uses of the term have acknowledged how a housing regime may provide different housing for different classes of citizens. For example, Allweil argues that housing policy was at the centre of Zionist state-building in Israel, and involved creating discriminatory, separate housing for Palestinians. Yael Allweil, *Homeland: Zionism as Housing Regime, 1860–2011* (London: Routledge, 2016); Mark Stephens, "Social Rented Housing in the (DIS)United Kingdom: Can Different Social Housing Regime Types Exist within the Same Nation State?," *Urban Research & Practice* 12, no. 1 (2019): 38–60.

[16] The first area in East London (and only the third in the whole nation) to be proclaimed in terms of the Group Areas Act was the suburb of Amalinda, which was proclaimed a white area in 1955 in order to prevent the expansion of the East Bank. D.H. Reader, *The Black Man's Portion: History, Demography and Living Conditions in the Native Locations of East London Cape Province* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1961), 31.
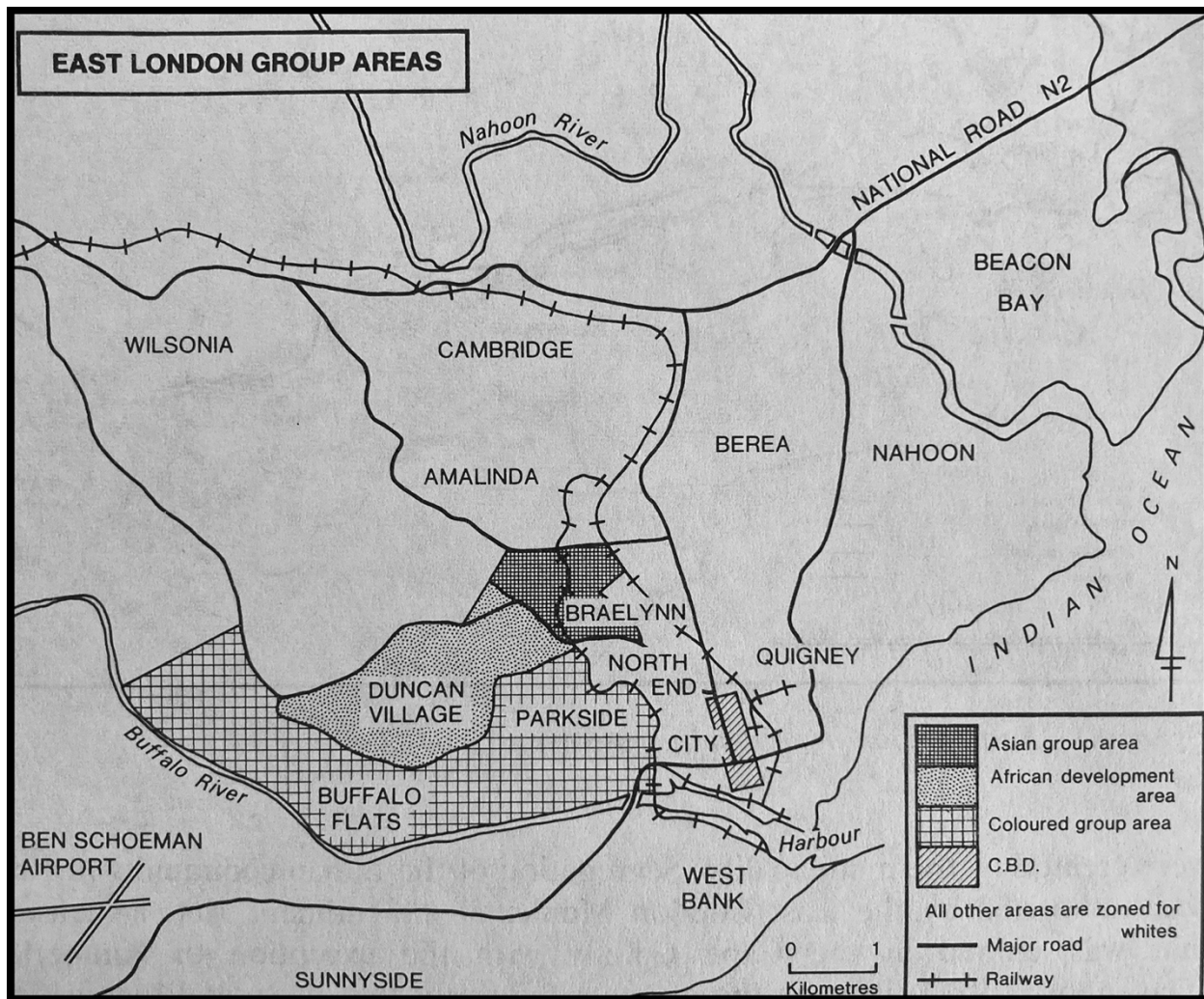
Figure 14: Group Areas in East London, c.1960[17]

The types of housing in Duncan Village, and the rights associated with that housing, were more complex than the map in Figure 14 suggests. The area shown as "Duncan Village" in this map also included several neighborhoods with different types of housing. Those who could prove their birth in the city qualified under Section 10 (2)b of the pass laws to remain in the four-room concrete block "municipal houses" of Duncan Village proper, an area of about 500 houses that had been built in the early 1950s; the ultimate plan was that even these people would

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[17] From R. Fox, E. Nel, and C. Reintges, "East London," in *Homes Apart: South Africa's Segregated Cities*, ed. Anthony Lemon (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 61.

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eventually be moved to Mdantsane.[18] To accommodate all those who qualified under Section 10 (2)b, a small extension had been added to Duncan Village in the late 1950s, called Ziphunzana.[19] According to oral history testimony collected by anthropologist Leslie Bank, the four-roomed houses at Ziphunzana were highly regarded by eligible young couples, who were thus able to enjoy relative security of tenure, live close to jobs in the city, and have a more spacious yard than the more densely built houses of Duncan Village.[20] In addition, small pockets of wood-walled, iron-roofed "shacks" remained scattered throughout Duncan Village, continuing to frustrate city planners. By the early 1980s, the population of Duncan Village was estimated to be between 90,000 and 140,000—unchanged, or possibly even greater, than the population before the beginning of removals in 1963.[21] The endurance of Duncan Village in East London is a testament to the weaknesses in even the most ambitious high apartheid segregation projects, and to the agency of the "shack" dwellers who resisted and evaded forced removals.[22]

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[18] Leslie J. Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles : Contesting Power and Identity in a South African City* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 72. By 1970, the Manager of Mdantsane was already sceptical that Duncan Village would in fact be removed. SAB BAO 2/1843 T60/2/1489 K.E. Tanner to Secretary of DBA, 28 May 1970.

[19] B.A. Pauw, *The Second Generation: A Study of the Family Among Urbanized Bantu in East London*, 2nd edition (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1973), 19–21.

[20] Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles*, 179–89.

[21] Etienne Louis Nel, "Mdantsane, East London's Homeland Township: Municipal Neglect and Apartheid Planning 1949-1988," *GeoJournal* 22, no. 3 (1990): 312.

[22] On the resistance of Duncan Village residents in the late 1980s, when the state attempted to finally clear the informal housing that remained, see Lungisile Ntsebeza, "Youth in Urban African Townships, 1945-1992: A Case Study of the East London Townships" (Master of Arts, Durban, University of Natal, 1993), 153–55; Hlengiwe Ndhlovu, "Fractured Communities and the Elusive State: A Study of State/Society Relations in Duncan Village" (Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand, 2020).

Figure 15: The four-roomed houses of Ziphunzana with the port industrial zone in the background, c.1965[23]

The majority of East Londoners classified as African could not produce the proof of urban birth or long-term urban employment to qualify for residence in Duncan Village or Ziphunzana. The West Bank location, located on the far bank of the Buffalo River from the main city centre, was the first Black residential area to be cleared, followed by the Tsolo and Mekeni sections of the East Bank; residents of these three areas had been forcibly removed by 1968. Families who agreed to give up their rural property rights were assigned to new houses in Mdantsane. Single male workers were sent to the hostels that had been built in the "B-section" of Duncan Village in 1959, while some domestic workers, predominantly women, moved into the backyard quarters of their white employers in town.[24]

[23] Image by Daniel Morolong.
[24] Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles*.

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But housing construction in Mdantsane was slower than the pace of removals, and so starting in 1961 the municipality built thousands of "emergency" houses—windowless rooms arranged in long single storey blocks—in what became known as "C-section" of Duncan Village.[25] Originally, these rooms were intended to be temporary homes for successive waves of future township dwellers, who would transition from the "emergency" housing to new township homes. The slow pace of construction in Mdantsane, and the pressure on housing there from rural migration and Western Cape forced removals, meant that some C-section residents never left. Despite some attempts to turn it into a hostel for single male migrant workers, the 35,000 units of C-section continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s to be occupied by a diverse mixture of families and *amakhaya* (friend groups of male workers from the same rural area).[26] People in C-section lived near East London, but did not have the same rights to permanent urban residence and employment as those who lived in Duncan Village or Ziphunzana, nor did they have services such as sewage and running water that were provided in Mdantsane. While residents of this area did not suffer the same loss of social networks as those who were moved to Mdantsane, they did suffer from very low employment, poverty, and high rates of crime.[27]

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[25] Bank, 72.

[26] "Families are moved, but houses are still full," *Daily Dispatch* (African Edition), 19 January 1965. Families were assigned to two-room units, while "bachelors" shared single rooms together.

[27] Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles*, 79–80. On attempts to turn the emergency housing into hostels, see SAB BAO 1939 A20/1489/4 20/1489/1, East London Town Clerk to Bantu Affairs Commissioner East London 22 April 1965.
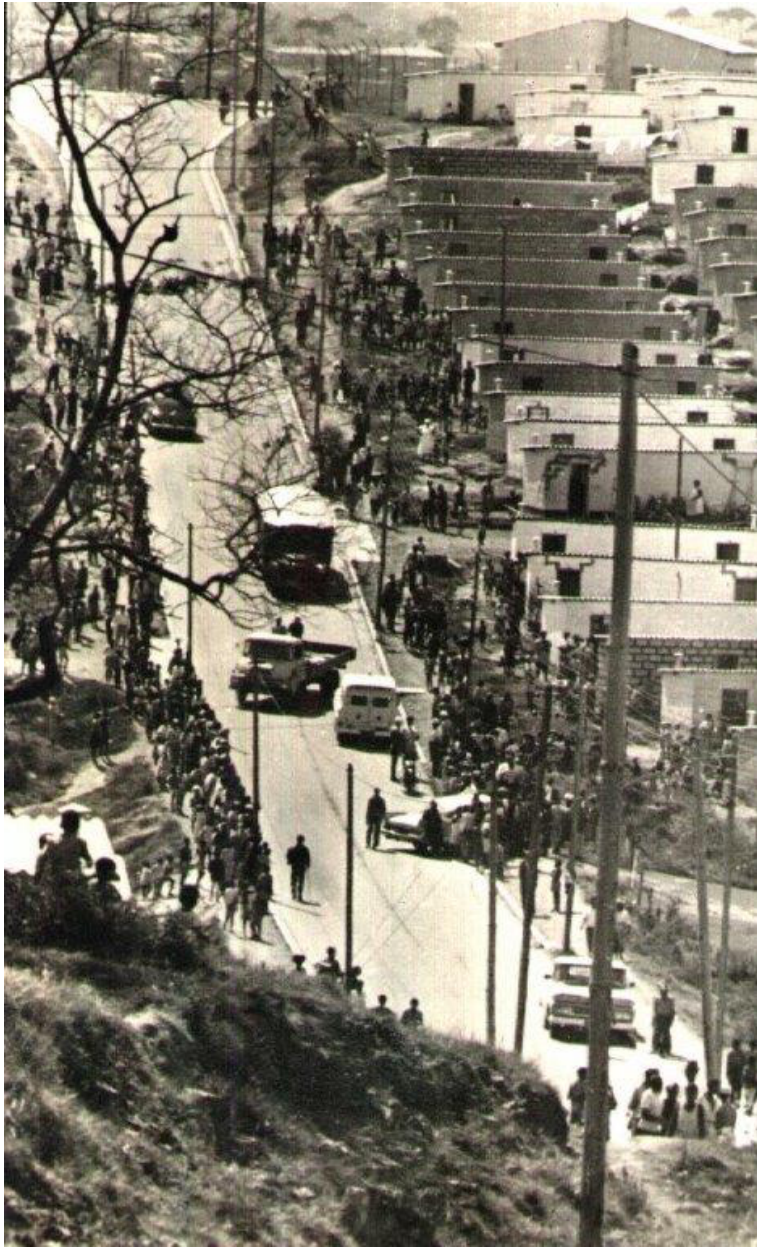
Figure 16: Two-roomed emergency houses in C-Section, next to Douglas Smith highway[28]

Those who were resettled in Mdantsane found themselves in a vast planned township

which was designed to remodel residents' lives into the pattern of nuclear families headed by a

male wage-worker. As the intended residence for East London's Black working class, one of the

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[28] Image by Daniel Morolong.

central purposes of Mdantsane was to reform the physical and moral disease of the East and West Bank locations, which administrators attributed to the shortage and inadequacy of housing for families. As Chapter 3 discussed, the East Bank location in particular suffered a severe housing shortage during the 1950s, like many other locations in South Africa, as its population grew without a corresponding increase in land or housing. Social scientists working in East London in the 1950s, like Philip and Iona Mayer and D.H. Reader, paid close attention to family structure and housing arrangements, and were skeptical that the crowded home spaces and prevalence of female-headed households in the East Bank could lead to "stabilization."[29] Mdantsane, therefore, would solve the problems of physical and moral ill-health through well-spaced and spacious single family dwellings, ideally occupied by wage-earning husbands and their dependent wives and children.

The very first homes constructed in Mdantsane were specially built for just this type of ideal Black working-class family who would eventually become citizens of a future Bantustan state, instead of (white) South Africa. The location of Mdantsane had been determined in 1957, in a surprise announcement by H.F. Verwoerd, then-Minister of the Native Affairs Department, during a visit to East London.[30] Verwoerd's insistence on this site far north of the city, close to the "Native Reserves," suggests his premeditated intention to incorporate the township into a future homeland, although the idea of homelands was not formally expressed in legislation until

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[29] Pauw, *The Second Generation: A Study of the Family Among Urbanized Bantu in East London*; Colonial administrators elsewhere in Africa used housing similarly to mould a working-class family and promote limited urban "stabilization": Frederick Cooper, *On the African Waterfront: Urban Disorder and the Transformation of Work in Colonial Mombasa* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987); James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

[30] Verwoerd's choice flew in the face of advice from the municipality's planners, who though that this hilly tract of farmland was too far from the city and topographically unsuitable. This, at least, is the claim of B. Watson, the former East London Town Planner, in an interview cited in: Nel, "Mdantsane, East London's Homeland Township," 308.

the 1959 Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act.[31] Despite its dissatisfaction with the proposed site, the East London municipality agreed to manage the construction of the township on behalf of the government. Municipal planners assumed that they would eventually administer the completed township. Only in 1962 did the government announce that Mdantsane would instead be administered through a newly created Ciskei Territorial Authority, under the supervision of the DBA, as part of a future self-governing Ciskei state.[32]

The actual construction of housing for Mdantsane only began when there was demand for workers in a new industry, which underscores the close synergy between apartheid segregation ideology and the labor needs of industrialists. In 1963 the Cyril Lord Organization agreed to build a new textile factory just outside Mdantsane, in response to government subsidies for "border industries" (factories located close to future homelands which could draw workers from homeland townships like Mdantsane). Like the Good Hope Textile factory in nearby Zwelitsha, the Cyril Lord factory diverged from the norm in South African textile industries by only employing men.[33] The factory was slated to begin production at the end of 1963, so Mdantsane's planning committee rushed to build 50 houses and a training school. These family homes were necessary to produce the kind of efficient worker that Cyril Lord wanted (and consequently the industrial growth that East London wanted). An official from the DBA argued that "it would be

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[31] Nel, 305; For a nuanced history of the many factors (besides Verwoerd's personal intervention) that contributed to the impoverishment of the territory that eventually became the Ciskei, see: Anne Kelk Mager, *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan: A Social History of the Ciskei, 1945-1959* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999).

[32] Nel, "Mdantsane, East London's Homeland Township," 309. The official proclamation of Mdantsane as a "Bantu Township" under the Ciskei Territorial Authority produced a belated attempt to produce an authentic isiXhosa etymology of the name (which had been spelled in several variations, including Umdanzani, by both white and black writers, since the late 1950s). In 1969 the Department of Community Affairs and the DBA attempted to establish the origin of the name. The Magistrate of Mdantsane reported that "one headman" believed it to be the name of a river, but that no one else knew the origins of the name. SAB BAO 2/1862 T60/4/1489, 7 August 1969.

[33] On the Good Hope factory built in 1953, see Mager, *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan*, 56–57; On the predominance of women in other parts of the South African textile industry, see Iris Berger, *Threads of Solidarity: Women in South African Industry, 1900-1980* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

quite impossible contemplate the operation of this factory on a three-shift, six-day-a-week basis

unless the labour force lived under proper family conditions in Mdantsane."[34]

The house that was to provide these "proper family conditions" was the standard 51/9

house, a four-room concrete block dwelling designed by planners from the DBA and used in

many townships across South Africa.[35] The house contained two bedrooms, a kitchen, a

bathroom, and a "living/sleeping room."[36] Figure 17 shows the exterior of a completed 51/9 type

house in Mdantsane, with its curved asbestos roof. These houses were supposed to provide

privacy and space for a single family, and were surrounded by a small yard for gardening or

washing laundry. With their indoor bathrooms and kitchens, the 51/9 type houses were intended

for townships with running water and sewage facilities. Plumbing would not only improve

hygiene but also promote family privacy since people would no longer have to walk to shared

ablution blocks.

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[34] Eastern Cape Provincial Archives, Qonce [King William's Town, hereafter KWT], Box 183, Mdantsane Township Local Committee, Meeting between the East London City Council and Government representatives, 24 April 1963.

[35] Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race*, 138–39.

[36] These room descriptions are from a plan of a 51/9 house in the magazine *Planning Building Development,* March/April 1980, 24 (SAB BAO 3/2561).

Figure 17: A 51/9 house in Mdantsane. Note the bank rising up the side of house; because of its hilly topography many Mdantsane homes are perched on even steeper inclines[37]

The houses were designed to promote privacy for individual families, but not neighbourly or community cooperation. Like other townships built during the same period, most streets were not named, and there was no regular pattern of street layout, making way-finding difficult (see Chapter 6). Mdantsane's planners divided the township into numbered residential zones, or "Neighborhood Units" (NUs). Each Unit had between two and three thousand houses, a few plots for churches and schools, but no other provision for businesses or social amenities. The only commercial or community spaces were in the "town center" in the middle of NU2, the area now known as "Highway" because it also holds the central bus and taxi depot. This town center was intended to hold a community hall, post office, hotel, bakery, and funeral parlor, but

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[37] SAB BAO 3/2561 *Planning Building Development* March/April 1980, 24.

construction on even these basic amenities did not begin until 1969.[38] The lack of attention to

community or commercial spaces in Mdantsane, typical of many townships, suggests the focus

of planners on cost-efficient family housing, as well as the government's attention to the wishes

of white urban business owners, who feared losing their customer base when Africans were

removed to Mdantsane.[39]

While housing was evidently the top priority of the township planners, even this

construction proceeded slowly. After the hurried construction of the first 50 houses for textile

factory workers, construction settled down to a steady pace of approximately two houses per day.

Thus, by July 1964, a year after construction began, 600 houses were occupied.[40] At this rate of

construction, the 8,000 houses of the first three planned Units would have taken over 13 years to

complete. The City Engineer in charge of the operations assured the DBA that construction rates

would increase to 12 houses a day.[41] In reality the builders only achieved half this rate of

construction. By 1967 both NU1 and NU2 were complete, comprising a total of 5,554 houses.[42]

The slow rate of building led to uncertainty among people awaiting removal, and debate

among policymakers about who should be moved first.[43] East London municipal officials

remained skeptical that all residents of the urban locations could actually be removed to

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[38] KWT Box 485, Report of the City Engineer to the Local Committee Mdantsane, 1 May 1969.

[39] Regulations prohibited whites from owning businesses inside townships, but they could circumvent this by selling goods from delivery vans driven by black drivers, as in 1966 when East London's Friesland Dairy undercut the business of Mdantsane's only black-owned dairy by sending its milk van around the township. KWT Box 595, Mdantsane Trading Sites, Bantu Affairs Commissioner East London to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 17 January 1967.

[40] KWT Box 182, Report by the City Engineer to the Executive Sub-Committee of the Local Committee, Mdantsane Agency, 23 July 1964.

[41] KWT Box 182, Report by the City Engineer to the Executive Sub-Committee of the Local Committee, Mdantsane Agency, 23 July 1964.

[42] Nel, "Mdantsane, East London's Homeland Township," 310.

[43] For example, in 1963 the municipality wanted to move people living in the "emergency housing" scheme, but the government urged them to focus on removing people from the "shantytown," or wood-and-iron shacks, in central Duncan Village. KWT Box 183, Meeting between the East London City Council and Government representatives, 24 April 1963.

Mdantsane, because of the slow rate of building. Writing to the Department of Transportation in 1964 about plans for railway service, the East London Town Clerk estimated that 15,000 former East Bank residents would eventually reside in Mdantsane. This estimate represented less than half of the East Bank's real population, suggesting both an underestimation of the location population and the municipality's doubts about the feasibility of the township model of urban segregation.[44] This skepticism increased after the government also announced its intention to forcibly remove so-called "surplus" Africans from the Western Cape (where their labor was unwanted because of the Coloured labor preference policy) and settle them at Mdantsane.[45] The first removals from the Western Cape to Mdantsane occurred in 1967, and exacerbated tensions over housing in the township, as the Ciskei administration wanted to use the housing for migrants from the rural Ciskei, while the East London municipality wanted more houses to resettle East Bank residents.[46] By 1974 over 15,000 houses had been built in Mdantsane, to house an official (underestimated) population of 175,000 people.[47]

Many of these houses were occupied by and headed by women and female-headed household groups, whose divergence from the expected male-headed nuclear family model made their tenant rights particularly vulnerable. Women who had owned homes independently in the old East Bank location, and who headed large families, were often treated sympathetically by

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[44] KWT Box 182, East London Town Clerk to Interdepartmental Committee for Non-White Transport of the South African Railways, 19 August 1964.

[45] "From deep gloom to hopes of a Border boom: E.L. Reaction to Influx Threat," *Daily Dispatch*, 1 September 1962. The Coloured labor preference required employers in the western Cape region to hire Coloured employees whenever possible, in order to justify the state's forced removal of Black people from the western Cape.

[46] By 1976, the allocation of houses in Mdantsane was made on the following basis: "80% for the settlement of bona fide residents of Duncan Village and workers of East London as priority number one, repatriated Ciskeian families from the Western Cape, and special cases from the area of the Eastern Cape Administration Board. The remaining 20% of accommodation, including 5% for Statutory offenders and Western Cape cases shall be made available to the Ciskeian Government and may be allocated by the Manager of the Township." SAB BAO 3/2561 6/9/1/4/168, Addendum to Agreement for Development of Mdantsane, Signed by East London City Council and South African Development Trust, n.d. [c.1967].

[47] Nel, "Mdantsane, East London's Homeland Township," 311.

bureaucrats, and classified as "fit and proper" household heads which allowed them to lease a

new house in Mdantsane.[48] However, women who were not officially classified as household

heads could not have their own homes and were vulnerable to police raids and crackdowns on

tenants who did not have a lodger's permit (a difficult document to acquire). For instance, in

1969 the *Daily Dispatch* reported on a housing raid in Mdantsane that had resulted in 200 arrests.

Those arrested included independent women who had taken in lodgers to make ends meet, and

unmarried women lodgers who had taken a room in someone else's house. The *Dispatch*

interviewed three of the arrestees, who, notably, were all married women: Mrs. Esther Luma who

had taken in a lodger, Mrs. Cynthia Metu who had no lodger's permit, and Mrs. Nompumelelo

Ndita who after being abandoned by her husband had been living with a friend.[49] Although the

apartheid regime proclaimed the ability of its townships to ensure stability and security for a

satisfied Black working class, in reality Mdantsane residents, especially women, had very

insecure rights as renters and township residents. Even people whose birth or long work tenure in

the city qualified them for the "Section 10" pass rights could find themselves "endorsed out" of

the township if they fell behind on rent or transgressed lodgers' rules.[50]

 Finally, the growing urban sprawl of Mdantsane blurred the boundaries between the

planned township and its rural surrounds. In 1971, the government authorized a second phase of

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[48] Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles*, 77; For instance, both Thoko Mbekela and Jiki Lebetloane moved to Mdantsane as part of a family headed by a grandmother. Thoko Mbekela, Interview in Tsolo/Braelyn, East London, February 6, 2020; Jiki Lebetloane, Interview in Dorchester Heights, East London, March 2, 2020.

[49] "Police Arrest 200 in House Raid in Mdantsane," *Daily Dispatch*, September 11, 1969.

[50] In 1970 the Mdantsane Town Manager complained that people who fell behind on rent or lost their jobs were "kicked out of Mdantsane irrespective of whether he is a Section 10(1) A, B, or D, of East London…This is all very frustrating to the Bantu and as they haven't been endorsed out of East London by the Municipal Labour Officer (where can a Section 10 (1)A of East London be endorsed to anyway?) they just creep back into Duncan Village and when picked up eventually they just want to know how can a person be driven out of a Bantu Homeland with no where to go." SAB BAO 2/1843 T60/2/1489/1, K.E. Tanner (Mdantsane Town Manager) to DBA Secretary, 28 May 1970.

construction, recognizing that the original plan of 6 NUs would be insufficient.[51] This

construction continued throughout the 1970s, but never kept pace with the natural population

growth, the arrival of job-seekers from the countryside, or the resettlement of those removed

from East London. Some people sought land in the rural settlements adjoining Mdantsane, such

as St. Luke's and Nxaruni. These settlements had been part of the Newlands Native Reserve in

the early twentieth century but were not incorporated into the consolidated Ciskei; from the

1970s these "black spots" were under threat of removal, although in the case of Nxaruni this

never occurred.[52] The story of Rosie Manene and her Methodist church, told later in this chapter,

shows how people living on the rural periphery constructed homes and churches through their

links to the city.

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[51] Nel, "Mdantsane, East London's Homeland Township," 311.

[52] On the history of "black spots" and their differences with other rural settlements administered through the Ciskei "traditional authority", see Luvuyo Wotshela, "Quitrent Tenure and the Village System in the Former Ciskei Region of the Eastern Cape: Implications for Contemporary Land Reform of a Century of Social Change," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, no. 4 (2014): 727–44.
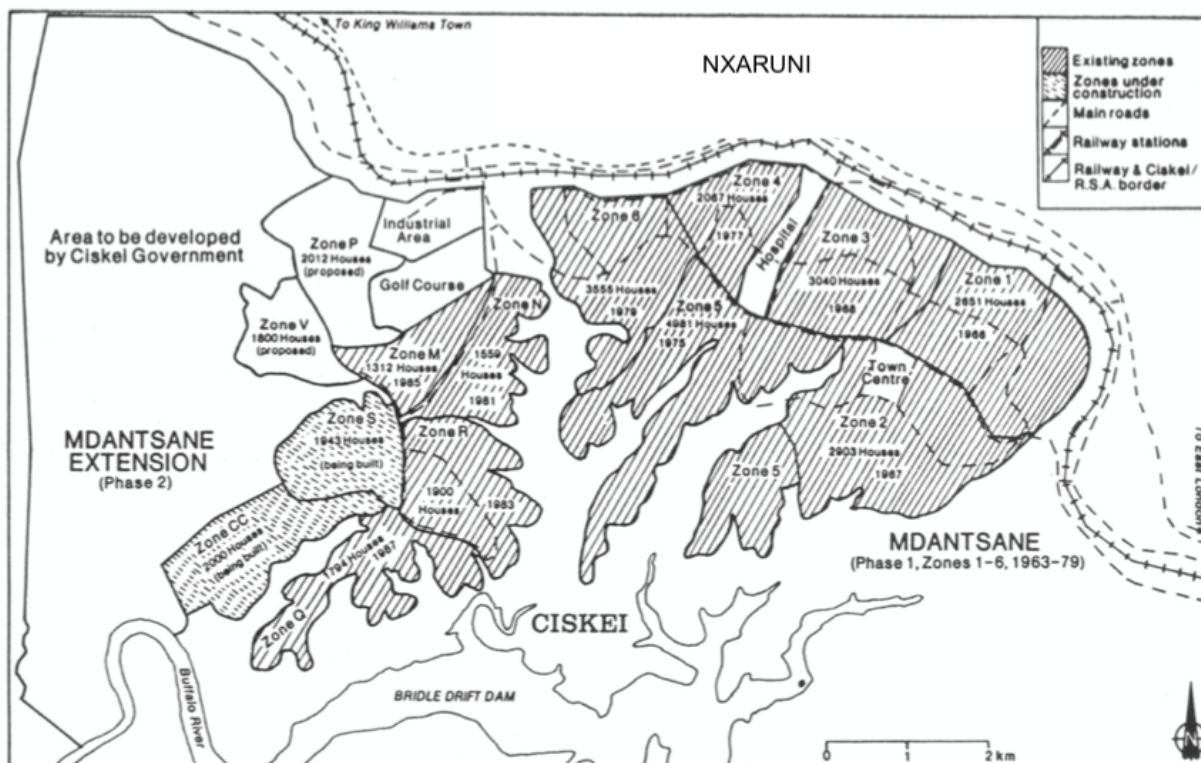
Figure 18: Map of Mdantsane showing the Zones or Neighborhood Units built or planned by 1988, with approximate location of Nxaruni north of the township[53]

These varieties of urban housing were a result of conscious planning by the architects of pass laws and group areas, but were also a result of the practical impossibilities and contradictions of segregationist urban planning. Despite the intentions of planners to cordon African urbanites within a self-contained Bantustan township, the reality of apartheid urbanism was a patchwork of different housing systems, within which Black urbanites had only a limited ability to negotiate.

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[53] Source: Nel, "Mdantsane, East London's Homeland Township," 311.

"Our umbilical cords are under the homes of Indians": forced removals and the loss of homes, 1965-1970s

The preceding section has shown the confusion and slowness in constructing housing, as well as the practical flaws in the plan of stabilized, male-headed nuclear family housing. But forced removals did eventually happen and were violently disruptive to people's lives and families. Forced removals meant not only the loss of individuals' homes, but also the loss of community buildings and institutions, including churches. The fact that Mdantsane was a township for permanently urban "families" meant that people had to make decisions about how to define their urban citizenship, although there were in practice some ways around the system.

The first forced removals occurred in 1965, when the West Bank, the smallest location in East London and a racially diverse neighborhood that threatened apartheid orthodoxy, was razed to the ground. The Coloured residents were sent to the new areas of Parkside and Pefferville east of Duncan Village, while Black Africans were sent to Mdantsane. "I have been living here peacefully since 1920 and have never dreamt of moving, but now I have to go," said one resident. A reporter for the *Daily Dispatch's* African Edition attempted to convey the sense of loss and displacement experienced by those being forcibly removed, who "sat dejectedly near their furniture waiting for the municipal trucks to transport them to their new homes. They looked with sad eyes as the remains of their long cherished houses went up in smoke." [54]

The promise of new houses at Mdantsane was not simple exchange of one living space for another. East Bank residents' attachment to their homes were more than a concern for their property rights as the owners of buildings. For those who were born in the city, the fact of their birth gave them a strong attachment to the land of their house. As Margaret Mjo pointed out, in

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[54] "West Bank faces problems of resettlement," *Daily Dispatch* (African Edition), 23 March 1965.

accordance with Xhosa custom the umbilical cords of babies were buried in the yards of urban

homes, just as they would be in a rural homestead, or *umzi*. "Our umbilical cords are buried

there," she said, to emphasize her family's deep ownership of the house from which they were

removed. "Our umbilical cords are now under the homes of Indians," she repeated, emphasizing

the continuing discord caused by forced removals, and the irreplaceable emotional connection

and cultural status of that original home.[55]

The destruction or repurposing of church buildings, the spiritual home of religious

communities, caused further distress during the process of forced removals. In May 1965 the

Congregational Church of the West Bank location held its last service before its community was

dispersed by racial segregation. "The African and Coloured communities have lived together

happily for many years," the *Daily Dispatch* noted, but the members would now live many miles

apart in the new townships of Mdantsane and Parkside.[56] This church, like all the other churches

in West Bank, was destroyed only a few months later. Another of the churches in the West Bank

that was destroyed was St. James Anglican Church, which had been burnt during the 1952

Bloody Sunday uprising and had been rebuilt by the community's efforts in 1956.[57]

In addition to the loss of individual homes and church buildings, the forced removals

presented an additional difficulty for many Black city residents, who had to make new decisions

about their urban citizenship. Mr. Matobo from the West Bank location explained the problem

fully in a letter to the *Daily Dispatch*. When learning of their impending removal to Mdantsane,

he and his neighbors were told that in order to receive houses in the township

> we were required to swear that we would become permanent residents at
> Mdantsane…and that we would have to give up all rights to our properties at our

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[55] Margaret Mjo, Interview in East London, March 14, 2022.
[56] "Last Service," *Daily Dispatch* (African Edition), 25 May 1965.
[57] "Last service held in West Bank church," *Daily Dispatch* (African Edition), 31 August 1965.

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homes in the country. We were made to understand that if we did not do this we would be lodged at the Mdantsane bachelor quarters [a hostel].[58]

The problem Mr. Matobo was experiencing was a consequence of the enforcement of Section 10 of the pass laws, under which Africans who qualified for permanent urban residence could not have property in the rural areas. While these laws had been in force since 1952, many people had been able to work around them or evade police pass inspections. But the housing assignments at Mdantsane were accompanied by thorough inspections of passes and documents. Because the provision of housing in Mdantsane was supposed to be limited to permanently urban nuclear families, those whose families had moved fluidly between country and town residences found themselves choosing between stark alternatives. This choice caused some men, who had previously been living alone in town, to bring their wives to the city in order to qualify for a 51/9 type house in Mdantsane.[59] In other situations, women returned to the country because they did not qualify for a house in Mdantsane, or because they did not wish to lose rights to rural property. In an interview, Wallace Daka recalled that when members of his Baptist congregation were removed from the East Bank location, many older women moved to the country rather than live in Mdantsane.[60]

The people with the most choice in this matter were professionals—doctors, lawyers, and teachers—who could continue to practice their profession if they moved to a smaller town in the countryside. For example, the Mbekela family in the 1950s had rented out a room in their East Bank home to a lawyer, Mr. Mshizana. When the family's home was taken away from them,

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[58] M.M.F. Matobo, "Three Weeks With our Families is Not Enough," *Daily Dispatch* (African Edition), 16 March 1965.
[59] Philip Mayer and Iona Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen: Conservatism and the Process of Urbanization in a South African City*, 2nd ed. (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1971), 308–9.
[60] Wallace Daka, Interview in Mdantsane NU6, trans. Phelisa Mtima, January 28, 2020.

Mshizana "ran away" to Aliwal North.[61] Similarly, when Dr. R.R. Mahlangeni heard "the rumours that all the Africans will soon be removed to Mdantsane Township," he announced his intention to move to the town of Mt. Frere in the Transkei. His lawyer wrote to the Town Clerk of East London to negotiate the compensation price for his house in Duncan Village, which had "all the amenities and in addition to several outbuildings has two garages and has been well kept."[62] Working-class men and women who worked in East London's industries or in domestic service had a more difficult calculation. Some women who had been domestic workers in East London qualified for a house in Mdantsane, but after moving to the township they found the commute too far. They were then forced to choose between giving up their employment, or leaving their children alone in a house in Mdantsane while they resided in their employers' backyards in town.[63] While Mdantsane was, in the official pronouncements of urban planners, supposed to be conducive to "stable" nuclear families, its creation was in fact destructive to many livelihoods and domestic arrangements.

Churches as new religious homes in Mdantsane

Although the grand apartheid project of urban segregation was never fully realized, even its partial realization was profoundly disruptive to individuals and communities. Individual people had only limited room to negotiate when their old urban homes were wrested from them. Churches buildings and their congregations, likewise, had no effective means of protest against forced removals, and did not mount a concerted protest against the loss of their lands and buildings. When religious communities reconstituted themselves in Mdantsane and built new buildings, they were still under the control of the state. Just as Mdantsane was supposed to create

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[61] Thoko Mbekela, Phone interview, March 22, 2022.
[62] M. Gavin King Moshesh to Town Clerk of East London, 9 November 1967.
[63] Prieska Mpetsheni, Interview in Stirling, East London, March 10, 2020; Theresia Ndlovu, Interview in Mdantsane NU13, trans. Phelisa Mtima, December 16, 2019.

a "stable" nuclear family, the administration of religious space in the township was guided by DBA officials' notions of ideal, stable churches. The religious landscape of the township was therefore shaped by government policies which favored larger, mission-established churches. However, church buildings were ultimately designed, funded, and built by the churches themselves. Church buildings, and their adjoining parsonages, were one type of home over which African Christian urban communities had some control. Church communities' efforts to secure desirable land, and suitable accommodation for their minister, show how a new urban religious landscape took shape across East London and Mdantsane in response to the new residential housing regimes. This is the context that illuminates the Queenstown manyano's reluctant assumption of additional home-making duties for the minister's family.

As the construction of homes lagged behind the original ambitious schedule, the assigning of plots to churches was also slow, and the records of church plot applications show that congregations needed persistence and resources in order to secure land. In 1962, a full five years after the location of the township was determined, and shortly before its construction commenced, the Anglican diocese of Grahamstown requested a plot in the new township, since their congregations in the East and West Bank locations were slated for removal.[64] DBA officials told them to renew their applications once construction of the township had begun. By late 1963, when "a few" families were living in the township, four of the major mission established churches (Methodist, Dutch Reformed, Anglican, and Catholic) had applied for church plots, but none had yet been approved.[65] Only after multiple applications, and several amendments to its

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[64] SAB BAO 2/2862 61/6/A2040/1489, G.L. Tindall, Archdeacon of Grahamstown, to Town Clerk East London, 12 September 1962.
[65] SAB BAO 2/2862 61/6/A2040/1489, Bantu Affairs Commissioner East London to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner KWT, 16 November 1963.

building plans, did construction start in late 1966 or early 1967 on Holy Cross Anglican Church in Mdantsane's NU1 section.[66]

Moreover, the DBA exercised close control over the approval of church building applications, and its interventions shaped the religious landscape of Mdantsane. A departmental circular of 1956 had established strict criteria for the granting of sites to churches in "Native Areas." Only denominations with more than one million members were guaranteed land for a church building.[67] All others had to prove that they had at least one hundred baptized members living within ten miles of the proposed site, as determined by the judgment of the Native Commissioner.[68] All church site applications, furthermore, were subject to the final approval of the Bantu Affairs Department, who evaluated the reputation of the applicant church and could refuse permission if the denomination was not well established or had signs of internal division.

These criteria clearly favored mission-established churches, which had large memberships, the financial resources to support a centralized administration, and a predominantly white clerical hierarchy. In the late 1950s the only churches that met the one-million-member rule were the Dutch Reformed, Anglican, and Methodist churches, although the Catholic church claimed in the early 1960s that it had reached this milestone.[69] Government bias in favor of these churches can be seen by comparing the church site applications of the Anglican and Assemblies of God churches in Mdantsane. The Anglican church of Holy Cross was granted a centrally located plot in NU1, the first section of the township to be completed. Its application

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[66] SAB BAO 2/2862 61/6/A2040/1489, F.E.C. Vaughan-Jones, Missionary-in-Charge to Bantu Affairs Commissioner East London, 25 October 1966.

[67] The context for this circular was the Bantu Education Act (effective January 1954), as a result of which previously church-run schools were handed over to government. The circular stipulated that any church which handed over a combined church-school site was automatically entitled to a new plot of land.

[68] SAB BAO 7899 61/6/14891/1, General Circular No. 3 of 1956 of the Department of Native Affairs.

[69] SAB BAO 2/2862 61/6/A2040/1489, Bantu Affairs Commissioner EL to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner KWT, 16 November 1963.

was supported by letters from the Archdeacon of Grahamstown and the rector of St. Mark's in Cambridge (a white suburb of East London; the rector of St. Mark's was nominally in charge of the Mdantsane congregation until its priest moved from East London).[70]

The Assemblies of God, on the other hand, was likely the largest congregation in the East Bank location. According to some supporters, its building on the edge of Duncan Village was the largest church in southern Africa (see Chapter 3). The Assemblies of God, however, did not have white church leaders to advocate for it, nor a well-established national structure. In 1966 the Assemblies of God applied for and was granted a plot in NU1, but the land was much less desirable than that given to the Anglican church. Church leaders were "not very much happy because of the spot which is on a very bad position… very near the river and there is a likelihood of water running into the church on torrential rainy days." The plot was also too small to accommodate the one thousand members who usually attended services, and there would certainly be no room to build a minister's parsonage.[71] After receiving the church's complaints, the Superintendent of Mdantsane selected a different plot for the church, but the DBA refused a "permission to occupy" certificate because the plot in question was apparently zoned for residential rather than church use. By 1968, more than two years after their initial application, the church was still without land and held its services outdoors.[72]

Thus, even though the Assemblies of God congregation was large and well-off, it had difficulty in securing land to build a church. These difficulties were even greater for smaller African Independent (AIC) and Zionist congregations. The African Congregational Church

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[70] SAB BAO 2/2863 61/6/A2040/1489.

[71] SAB BAO 2/2863 61/6/A3031/1489, G.T. Mxego to Bantu Affairs Commissioner EL, 27 November 1966.

[72] See correspondence in SAB BAO 2/2863 61/6/A3031/1489. The Assemblies of God did eventually build a very large building in NU2. I have not found documentation about it in the national or provincial archives of church building applications from 1963-1981. The archival records are not exhaustive, however, especially for the period after 1975.

applied for land in Mdantsane in 1967, stating that its 350 members would raise enough funds to begin building within a year. Its application was denied, however, because the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner believed "the Church has no funds to erect the building."[73] Besides lack of money, leadership disputes were another strike against AICs in the eyes of officials. When the General Church of the New Jerusalem applied for a plot in NU3 in 1973, they were approved by the local authorities, but after inquiries into the state of their denominational headquarters in Bloemfontein, the DBA official in Pretoria decided to assign the plot to a different church.[74]

The records of church plot applications in the national and provincial archives are probably not a complete picture of the church-building projects that occurred in in Mdantsane in the 1960s and 1970s. All of the major mission-established denominations appear in these archival records, but many of the smaller AIC churches listed by Dubb in his (partial) list of East Bank churches in 1957 appear not to have submitted church site applications.[75] Possibly, some of these smaller congregations were dispersed during the forced removals, and could not reconstitute themselves at all in Mdantsane. Another strong possibility is that these churches, not being able to afford buildings and knowing the bureaucratic process was stacked against them, met instead in homes, school classrooms, or on vacant land.[76] The siting of these churches on unofficial, marginal sites in the township indicates how the highly centralized bureaucratic control of the DBA therefore profoundly shaped Mdantsane's religious landscape, and largely reinforced the long-standing distinctions and disparities between mission established and AIC

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[73] SAB BAO 2/2892 61/6/A2016/1489, Application for church plot by Conference of the African Congregational Church, dated 30 June 1967.
[74] SAB BAO 2/2866 61/6/B3336/1489, Application for church plot by General Church of the New Jerusalem, dated 24 December 1973.
[75] Allie A. Dubb, *Community of the Saved* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1976), 19.
[76] For example, the Apostolic Faith Mission first began meeting in a schoolroom, then in a tent, and only constructed their own building in the early 1990s. Apostolic Faith Mission Sisters' Fellowship, Interview at Apostolic Faith Mission Church NU3, Mdantsane, trans. Phelisa Mtima, December 10, 2019; Fikile Dyantyi and Boniwe Dyantyi, Interview in Scenery Park, East London, trans. Phelisa Mtima, December 4, 2019.

congregations. At the same time, the meeting of smaller, predominantly AIC, congregations in homes, school assembly halls, or in informally built structures, is a testament to the limits of government power under high apartheid. By not pursuing access to church land through official structures these religious communities remained invisible to the state (or at least to the Pretoria bureaucrats of the DBA); they created new religious spaces that were not part of the official urban landscape.

Given the difficulty of acquiring church land, having a permanent building on an official church plot was a mark of status for a congregation. The church building was, in this sense, a home for the whole congregation, but it was also home in a quite literal sense for the minister and his family.[77] The records of church plot applications from the 1960s and 1970s in the archives of the DBA show that constructing a parsonage or rectory was often the first activity of a congregation when they acquired permission to build. When the Methodist church was assigned a plot of land in NU1 in 1966, the congregation immediately built a substantial parsonage on the land, to the outrage of the chief township planner who thought the house was too large and would "impair" the "dignity" of the church building.[78]

The close association between the church building and the minister's home sometimes clashed with government planners' strict distinction between residential and religious space. For example, the Old Apostolic Church proposed to build housing for a "Bishop with assistant and Priest" next to its church, suggesting a more substantial ecclesiastical residence than the usual

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[77] And it was always "his." The Methodist Church of Southern Africa began ordaining women in 1976, and the Anglican church in 1992, but in oral history interviews or in the archives I have not heard any instances of a woman being the minister of an Mdantsane church before the early 2000s.

[78] SAB BAO 2/2863 61/6/A3057/1489. H. Kok, Chief Town Planner of Mdantsane, to Secretary of DBA, 17 May 1967.

rectory for a minister and his immediate family.[79] The Catholic church also proposed to build an extensive residence in Mdantsane in the form of a convent, to accommodate the Black sisters of the Dominican order who expected their convent at St. Peter Claver in Duncan Village to be demolished. The priests doing the paperwork insisted that the convent would have both residential and charitable functions, and tried to negotiate around the demands of DBA officials who claimed that land could be zoned only for one purpose.[80]

This rush to provide accommodation on church land is understandable given the shortage and precarity of township housing during this period, but the importance of parsonages for Mdantsane churches also reflects the deeper significance of church buildings as a home. The status and respectability of the minister's home reflected on the entire church community. Nontle Kombele, a member of the Catholic sodality of St. Anne, defined the group's mission as caring for the family, the church, and the community. Asked how St. Anne cared for the church, the first duty she mentioned was "to care for the priest."[81] In Protestant churches, where ministers were ordinarily married, the duty of the manyano was particularly to the minister's wife. Orienda Magqaza joined the Baptist church in the early 1970s. According to her, manyano women have a special responsibility to their "mother," the minister's wife:

> our Mother is our responsibility. Every month we give her a monthly pantry... we give her money so that she goes and fill up her pantry. That is the responsibility of the Mothers' Union. Then again when she has to go to meetings, to rallies... it is our responsibility to assure that she has transport and accommodation.[82]

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[79] SAB BAO 2/2863 61/6/A3047/1489. Application for church plot by Old Apostolic Church of Africa, dated 19 May 1965.

[80] SAB BAO 2/2863 61/6/A3099/1489. Rev. H. Maggorian to Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 14 November 1967. Ultimately, the convent was never built because St. Peter Claver mission in Duncan Village was never demolished.

[81] Nontle Kombele, Interview in Gompo, East London, December 16, 2019.

[82] Orienda Nolitha Magqaza, Interview at First Mdantsane Baptist Church, February 13, 2020.

The social honor and visibility of the minister, as demonstrated in their housing, had direct effects on the church's standing in the community. The rectory at Holy Cross Anglican church was a substantial three-bedroom home with an attached garage, much larger than the standard 51/9 house.[83] The minister's full-time presence on church property allowed him and his family to make the church's presence felt in local neighbourhood affairs. The first rector of Holy Cross was Rev. Shai, who according to one interviewee, left a lasting influence on the neighbourhood by convincing authorities to forbid liquor licenses to any businesses near the church, and crack down on illegal brewers: "so [this area] is still quiet. So it shows he was really concerned about the church and what was going on around the church."[84] The work of the "minister, wife and children who should have an eye on the site" was supported by the work of manyano women, who incorporated the minister's home into their definition of the duties of motherhood and home-making.[85]

National and international dynamics of church building and fundraising in Mdantsane

Although Mdantsane was slated to be part of the Ciskei Bantustan, and thus outside South Africa proper, the construction of its new churches in fact pulled together people and funds from a wide national and international network. The financial burden of reconstructing their religious homes in the township was too much for most Mdantsane congregations, especially if they planned multiple buildings to serve the multiple Neighbourhood Units. In this situation, Mdantsane

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[83] In fact, the original plan for the rectory was much grander: four bedrooms, a study, and a "supply room" in addition to living room, dining room, bathroom, and kitchen, with a separate building for the garage. In this original plan, however, the rectory and the church overlapped the boundaries of the two plots that had been assigned to the Anglican church. DBA officials required the church to re-draw the plans so that the rectory was contained within one plot and the church building in the other. This necessitated a smaller rectory. See architectural plans and correspondence in SAB BAO 2/2862 61/6/A2040/1489/1.

[84] Maureen Dabula and Thoko Mbekela, Interview in Southernwood, East London, January 29, 2020.

[85] This statement about "keeping an eye on the site" was provided in answer to the form question "Is it the intention to provide accommodation on the site for one or more Bantu workers of the Church?" SAB BAO 2/2867 61/6/B6087/1489/1. Application for church plot by Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa, dated 7 May 1965.

congregations called on national denominational leadership, and tried to reply on international connections in order to build their new homes.

In theory, the sale of old church buildings in the East London locations would pay for new constructions in Mdantsane. In practice, however, this was more complicated. The East London Ministers' Fraternal, an ecumenical group representing mainline Protestant churches, wrote to the local Bantu Affairs Commissioner in 1964 with concerns about the transfer of their congregations to Mdantsane. They noted that for a long time, their congregations would likely be split between Mdantsane and the East Bank due to the slow pace of removals. They argued that all churches should be assigned plots before their congregations had moved, so that they could begin planning and raising funds as soon as possible.[86] Eventually, some former church buildings in the East Bank were sold when their land was "proclaimed" for a different racial group under the Group Areas Act. The Baptist church in Duncan Village, for example, was purchased by the municipality sometime around 1968, and the congregation used the funds towards a new building in Mdantsane.[87] Similarly, when the Tsolo section of the East Bank location was proclaimed part of the new Braelyn suburb for Indians and Coloureds, St. Philip's Anglican church chose to sell their building to a Hindu association who transformed it into a temple.[88] For both the Anglican and Baptist churches, however, the sale of a single building was insufficient to allow the denomination to thrive in the township, since Mdantsane's size and growing population necessitated multiple churches. By the middle of the 1970s, the Anglican church had two

[86] SAB BAO 7899 61/6/14891/1. East London African Ministers' Fraternal to Bantu Affairs Commissioner EL, 6 July 1964.
[87] Daka, Interview in Mdantsane NU6.
[88] The Siva Soobramanian Alayam, on Carnation Street. Before Tsolo section of the East Bank became Braelyn, this street was called Church Street because of its many churches. The old Methodist church remains standing today, though apparently unused. Dabula and Mbekela, Interview in Southernwood, East London.

congregations in Mdantsane (Holy Cross and St. Gregory), and the Baptist church three (First Mdantsane, Gilgal, and Lighthouse).[89]

The building of churches in Mdantsane, then, required years of planning and support from national-level denominational structures of churches. The involvement of white church leaders in securing plots for township churches has already been discussed above, using the example of Holy Cross Anglican church, where diocesan administrators and white clergy endorsed applications and petitioned the DBA on behalf of the township congregation. Denominational leaders also provided practical financial support for new church buildings in townships. The South African Baptist Missionary Society, for instance, helped Mdantsane Baptists to fund multiple church-building projects, and even helped to pay the salaries of ministers while congregations were still growing.[90] In fact, Desmond Winkelmann, one of the directors of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), took up construction as a full-time job after his retirement and oversaw the construction of First Mdantsane Baptist Church in 1968.[91]

Similarly, the commitments of national church leaderships to the building of new township churches can be seen in a 1967 petition from the Old Apostolic Church. This denomination was founded in the early twentieth century, with a particularly strong following among African and Coloured urbanites in the Eastern Cape cities of Port Elizabeth, East London, and Queenstown.[92] By the early 1960s in East London Old Apostolic Church boasted two

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[89] Daka, Interview in Mdantsane NU6; Dabula and Mbekela, Interview in Southernwood, East London.
[90] SAB BAO 2/2867 61/6/B4904/1489/1. Application by Bantu Baptist Church for plot in Mdantsane, dated 8 June 1965.
[91] Daka, Interview in Mdantsane NU6; For full explanation of the relationship between the BMS and the "Bantu Baptist" churches during apartheid, see Desmond Henry and Cornelius J. P. Niemandt, "Waves of Mission amongst South African Baptists," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35, no. 1 (2014): 1–8.
[92] B.A. Pauw, *Christianity and Xhosa Tradition: Belief and Ritual among Xhosa-Speaking Christians* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1975), 297.

congregations and about three thousand members.[93] The Old Apostolics were granted a plot in

Mdantsane in 1965, but two years later had not begun construction. Their General Secretary

wrote to the local Bantu Affairs Commissioner to explain that the delay was not due to any

fundamental lack of funds but rather "through the intensive building programme which we are

FORCED TO undergo with the Non-whites as a result of the Group Areas allocations and as a

result of this we are very busy now erecting buildings where congregations had to move to areas

which formerly was good, and which is now in European areas."[94] Lest the Commissioner read in

this a critique of apartheid, the letter-writer hastily explained that "we are fully in agreement with

this principle but you will appreciate that this giving us much concern to satisfy all at practically

the same time."[95] The church petitioned for, and was granted, an extension of the usual 2-year

deadline to begin construction after receiving a "permission to occupy" certificate. This letter

reveals the efforts of national-level church leaders to support their congregations in new

townships of the 1960s, It also points to the financial strains placed on denominations as a result

of the wave of township construction across apartheid South Africa.

While national structures of churches were stretched thin by the need to build new sacred

spaces for their congregations in new townships, international Christian allies were another

potential source of help. This, of course, was not a new idea. Christianity in South Africa has

since the early nineteenth century facilitated transatlantic and trans-imperial connections between

far-distant believers.[96] In the twentieth century, the most robust international circuits of

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[93] SAB BAO 2/2863 61/6/A3047/1489/1. Application by Old Apostolic Church of Africa for plot 3047 in Mdantsane, dated 19 May 1965.

[94] SAB BAO 2/2863 61/6/A3047/1489/1. General Secretary of the Old Apostolic Church to Bantu Affairs Commissioner EL, 30 January 1967.

[95] Ibid.

[96] For example: Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Missions, Colonialism, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1853* (Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002); James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

Christianity in South Africa were grounded in African Independent and Pentecostal churches, whose lines of communication and authority were not contained by any long-established national ecclesiastical bureaucracy. According to Joel Cabrita, churches from the connected Pentecostal, Holiness, and Zionist traditions saw themselves as members of a universal community of believers, and as the equals of the North American believers with whom they sometimes maintained connections.[97] At the most basic level, the claims of Zionist churches to international connections are evident in the names they chose, which frequently referenced both Ethiopia and Zion; for example, the International Ethiopian Council of African Manyano, the Ethiopian Church in Zion, or the General Apostolic Church in Zion.[98] Cabrita's narrative of Zionist cosmopolitanism, which is focused on the Witwatersrand and Eswatini, characterizes the 1960s and 1970s as a period of increasing localization for Swazi Zionists, who incorporated more specifically Swazi custom into their practices and beliefs.[99] The evidence from Mdantsane, however, suggests that circumstances in late 1960s and 1970s encouraged more outward-looking international connections. The concept and the infrastructure of a Bantustan township meant that Mdantsane was cordoned off from "white" South Africa, although this separation did not become a legal reality until 1981.[100] At the same time, its people and churches were still subject to the scrutiny of white officials who evaluated their applications for church land. In this context,

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[97] Joel Cabrita, *The People's Zion: Southern Africa, the United States, and a Transatlantic Faith-Healing Movement* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2018), see especially Chs. 5 and 6.

[98] For the International Ethiopian Council of African Manyano (which called itself both a "union" and a "church"), see SAB NTS 1487. The other examples appear in Sundkler's list of African Independent Churches: Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* [London: Oxford University Press, 1961], 317–37.

[99] Cabrita, *The People's Zion*, 233.

[100] For instance, Ciskei residents needed to produce a passport in order to visit the Transkei, which created barriers for visiting between church groups. Orienda Magqaza, Interview at First Mdantsane Baptist Church, February 13 2020. An Anglican priest once told this anecdote to a group, illustrative of creative ways around these Bantustan barriers: in the 1980s, she and her husband (also a priest) were stopped at the Transkei border by police. They didn't have passports. As the police approached, they both dropped to their knees and began to pray volubly. The police were so embarrassed by the display that they waved them back into the car, and the two drove off laughing at their own performance.

where Mdantsane's Christians were increasingly cut off from fellow believers elsewhere in South Africa, some looked overseas for legitimacy and support.

In the early 1970s, the National Baptist Church (a denomination founded by African American missionaries in the late nineteenth century, and with longstanding connections to the National Baptist Convention in the United States) was beginning to put down roots in the township.[101] For a long time, they met in a schoolroom on Sundays. Sometime in the early 1970s, however, their cause came to the attention of E.V. Hill, the charismatic and politically active pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Los Angeles, California's largest Black Baptist church. Hill was active in the Southern Baptist Convention and the Republican Party, and led his growing congregation to fund humanitarian and church-building projects around the world.[102] In an interview, Nozuko Menzeleli stated that her congregation had received financial support from Mt. Zion Baptist Church, and named their new building the Dr. E.V. Hill National Baptist Church out of gratitude.[103] While I have not been able to find any reference to this specific Mdantsane church in the news coverage of Hill's charitable activities, Mt. Zion certainly did sponsor the construction of at least one church in South Africa.[104] In the case of the National Baptist church in Mdantsane, the international solidarity of other Black Baptists helped them to gain a foothold in the township.

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[101] Eric Michael Washington, "Heralding South Africa's Redemption" (Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University, 2010), https://doi.org/10.25335/M5X921J8R.

[102] "Services, Tributes Set for Pastor E.V. Hill," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 6, 2003.

[103] Nozuko Menzeleli and Mr. Menzeleli, Interview in Mdantsane NU3, trans. Phelisa Mtima, February 18, 2020.

[104] Cal Thomas, "Two Choices for U.S. in S. Africa: Dancing in the Streets - or Blood," *Philadelphia Daily News*, December 14, 1984. The article mentions that Mt. Zion "underwrote the construction cost of a church in South Africa 10 years ago, only to see it bulldozed by the government as it moved blacks further into the countryside." This is evidently not the National Baptist Church in Mdantsane, which remains standing. Hill, like other Black Republicans, found himself in an increasingly difficult position in the 1980s, when supporters began to ask that he denounce the Reagan administration's policy toward South Africa. Betty Pleasant, "Of Falwell, Apartheid And Black Republicans," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 29, 1985.

The story of the Rev. Tom Ntshintshi and his several churches also reveals how international connections—even if not in the form of direct monetary support—could help a community of believers navigate the bureaucratic demands of the state and ultimately secure space in the township. Ntshintshi began his career in the Bantu Methodist Church (BMC), an AIC founded in Johannesburg in the 1930s.[105] The BMC, which claimed a membership of 700 in its East Bank location, applied for a church site in Mdantsane in late 1967. A bureaucrat confused their application with another from the Bantu Methodist Church of South Africa, which also applied for the same plot around the same time. For two years, Ntshintshi worked to convince the DBA of his priority, emphasizing that the congregation had already hired a contractor and had spent R45 to have building plans drawn up.[106] Eventually the mix-up was resolved in the BMC's favor, and the church reapplied for the original site (3336 in NU2).[107]

This time, however, the application snagged on the DBA's requirement that churches demonstrate "stability" in order to qualify for a plot. The DBA Secretary responsible for this file declared that the national leadership of the BMC was split between two rival factions, and therefore denied the application.[108] This was a significant setback for Ntshintshi and his congregation.

Within three years, however, Ntshintshi and most of his congregation had left the BMC to join a different denomination, the Church of God Apostolic (CGA).[109] In yet another application for a church plot, Ntshintshi stated that his congregation had 400 members, and that

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[105] KWT Box 468 86/6, Church Applications for Government Recognition.

[106] SAB BAO 2/2866 61/6/B3336/1489/1. Rev. Tom Ntshintshi to Manager of Mdantsane, 6 June 1968.

[107] SAB BAO 2/2866 61/6/B3336/1489/1. Director of Community Affairs Ciskeian Territorial Authority to Secretary of DBA, 26 August 1969.

[108] SAB BAO 2/2866 61/6/B3336/1489/1. Secretary of DBA to Director of Community Affairs Ciskeian Territorial Authority, 12 March 1970.

[109] SAB BAO 2/2866 61/6/B3336/1489/1. Manager of Mdantsane to Secretary for the Interior (Ciskeian Government Service), 20 August 1973. The Township Manager believed that Ntshintshi had founded the CGA himself, but Ntshintshi claimed it was started by a Rev. Tulwana in 1910.

they had saved R200 towards a church building.[110] Ntshintshi clarified that the CGA was not his own invention, but was "an offspring of the mother church named "Church of God" whose address is PO Box 568 Israel. In a conference, the South African Group felt that they should add the word 'Apostolic' and thus have the name reading Church of God Apostolic."[111]

Ntshintshi was emphasizing that his church was not a local invention, but was connected to a worldwide movement. The Church of God (today called the Church of God, Seventh Day) was founded in the late nineteenth century in the Midwest United States, as part of an evangelical Protestant movement with a strong interest in keeping Old Testament Jewish law (including the observance of the Sabbath).[112] A.N. Duggar, one of Church of God founders, moved to Israel in the early 1950s and declared Jerusalem to be the denomination's world headquarters; the church still exists, and still uses P.O. Box 568, Jerusalem, Israel.[113] Ntshintshi certainly did have opportunities to forge international connections, as he claimed to have received theological training through the Voice of Prophecy school in Cape Town (a correspondence course), and through "Every Crusades Home" in Swaziland.[114] Ntshintshi's connection to an international denomination, as well as his educational qualifications from outside the Ciskei, appear to have been useful to the church's claim for land, because their 1973 application for a plot of land was approved by the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner.[115]

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[110] SAB BAO 2/2867 61/6/B6087/1489/1. Application for a Church Site by Church of God (Apostolic), dated 26 June 1973; Tom Mandleni Ntshintshi to Manager of Mdantsane, 17 February 1975.
[111] SAB BAO 2/2867 61/6/B6087/1489/1. Tom Mandleni Ntshintshi to Manager of Mdantsane, 17 February 1975.
[112] "Our History," Church of God (Seventh Day). https://cog7.org/our-history/
[113] This Jerusalem-based branch did not maintain its connection with the "Church of God Seventh Day" in the United States. See "Our History," Jerusalem 7th Day Church of God. https://jsd-cog.org/a-brief-history/. The Jerusalem-based church published a monthly paper, the *Mount Zion Reporter*, whose "Letters from Readers" section attests to the global reach of this group: in the 1970s it had many readers from Nigeria, and some from South Africa. See the archives of the *Mount Zion Reporter* at https://jsd-cog.org/judah-magazines/. I have not been able to determine whether a Church of God branch still exists in Mdantsane.
[114] SAB BAO 2/2867 61/6/B6087/1489/1. Tom Mandleni Ntshintshi to Manager of Mdantsane, 17 February 1975.
[115] SAB BAO 2/2867 61/6/B6087/1489/1. Application for a Church Site by Church of God (Apostolic), dated 26 June 1973.

Another intriguing detail of the Mdantsane CGA's connection to the worldwide Church of God is contained in a copy of the church's constitution that Ntshintshi forwarded to the DBA. At the bottom of the constitution is a handwritten note, signed by Ntshintshi, which reads, "Church of God (Apostolic) of South Africa is No-Longer Co-Operating with World Headquarters Except in the South African Homelands."[116] While Ntshintshi did not explain the reason for the rift between the CGA churches of the homelands and those elsewhere in South Africa, this detail is suggestive of the extra motivation that Bantustan churches had to maintain international connections at a time when their lines of travel and communication to the rest of South Africa were being impeded.

With building applications in the township under close scrutiny by Pretoria bureaucrats, it helped churches to have national as well as international allies. AICs have often been criticized for their sectarian tendencies; since the Swedish anthropologist Bengt Sundkler published his list of some 500 Zionist and Independent churches in 1948, government observers and scholars of Christianity generally took a negative view of these churches as inward-looking and fundamentally "African" in their beliefs. But as Cabrita and others have shown, African Independent churches in the 1950s and beyond continued to care about their connections to the global body of fellow believers. Indeed, many AIC leaders used Sundkler's published list as a form of evidence to prove their legitimacy to skeptical Native Commissioners.[117] Mdantsane's religious landscape was shaped by the connections that congregations of varying theological traditions built with their national-level leadership as well as international leaders. The irony of

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[116] SAB BAO 2/2867 61/6/B6087/1489/1. Constitution of the Church of God (Apostolic). Undated.
[117] Joel Cabrita, "Writing Apartheid: Ethnographic Collaborators and the Politics of Knowledge Production in Twentieth-Century South Africa," *The American Historical Review* 125, no. 5 (2020): 1668–97.

church-building in a township under a regime of "separate development" was that churches needed more, not less, support from outside the township in order to secure land and legitimacy.

Manyano women and church-building in the gaps

The archival records of church plot applications portray male church leaders as the initiators of church-building projects, speaking on behalf of their congregations. The fundraising work of the congregations is pushed into the background and anonymized in these applications, appearing only as a single sum in answer to a question on the official application form. Church applications in the Pretoria National Archives provide a single number for the size of a congregation, but not any details of the age or gender of congregants. While the official application forms always optimistically stated that the congregation had sufficient funds to construct a building, the preceding section has shown that township congregations often had to look outside for support.

Manyano women did continue to raise funds using the same social events and repertoires of reciprocal gift-giving that they had established in East London in the early twentieth century (see Chapter 3). In interviews, women from a number of churches named the "mothers" as the key movers in building Mdantsane churches. "Our mothers built that church," Margaret Mjo said of the Congregational (Rabe) church in NU 3. Although individuals had been torn from the homes of their umbilical cords in Duncan Village, "God remains in the house that he owns."[118]

Manyanos organized "bazaars" on Saturdays and Sundays, selling cooked food and used clothing to church members and neighbors. They continued to hold concerts and fundraising dinners (*umjikelo*), as they had in decades previous.[119] However, the rising cost of living in the township, and general social disruption because of forced removals, meant that these fundraising

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[118] Mjo, Interview in East London.
[119] Kombele, Interview in Gompo, East London; Nathi Vuyiswa Blauw, Interview in Gompo, East London, March 15, 2022.

techniques were not major sources of income. The financial records of the Queenstown Methodist manyano shows a similar trend in (rather patchy) records of the 1960s. In the 1940s and 1950s, fundraising teas and concerts had been a regular source of income for the manyano's bank account. Records of the Queenstown manyano are only extant for the first five years of the 1960s, but in this period the manyano reported income from a fundraising tea only once, and characterized this event as "unsuccessful."[120] Instead, during the 1960s, the Queenstown manyano seems to have the vast majority of its income from the dues of its large and still-growing membership. Thoko Mbekela recalled observing, as a teenager in the 1970s, the older Mothers Union women at Holy Cross Anglican church in Mdantsane. "On Saturdays," Mbekela said, "they would take a table there, and put clothing, and have different stalls. But I do not know how they were making money. We were looking at it, and we didn't see that they made too many people busy. But they did it. Whatever little money they were getting, it would make a difference in the church."[121]

Small sums like these might be saved towards church building funds, or spent on the smaller expenses of the maintenance for the church and the minister's family: buying groceries for the minister's wife,[122] or installing a carpet in the church.[123] One quarterly expense report of the Queenstown manyano shows that out of £40 in total expenses, approximately £27 was spent on travel expenses for a recent convention, £6 was given to the minister's wife, and the small remainder was taken up by "imali yezinto ngezinto," or miscellaneous expenses.[124] Care for the minister's home and family therefore constituted a significant portion of the manyano budget.

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[120] Apparently several funerals were held on the same day as the fundraising tea, resulting in only £2 income. CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Queenstown manyano quarterly meeting, 22 December 1960.
[121] Dabula and Mbekela, Interview in Southernwood, East London.
[122] Magqaza, Interview at First Mdantsane Baptist Church.
[123] Swazi Marambana and Thoko Mbekela, Interview in East London, March 14, 2022.
[124] CL, Methodist Collection, C5: Box 4, Queenstown manyano quarterly meeting, 3 December 1964.

The places where manyano women were still responsible for new building construction were the places that fell outside the ideal plan of the segregated city. On the rural outskirts of Mdantsane and in the suburb of Ziphunzana on the edge of Duncan Village, manyano women embarked on an extended project, lasting decades, to build churches in areas that had been forgotten by city planners or church officials.

The story of Rosie Manene's Methodist manyano exemplifies how women built their own religious spaces in urban spaces that did not fit into the neat social geography of apartheid, characterized by the white city and the peripheral Black townships. As a young married woman, Manene moved with her husband to Nxaruni, a rural area on the outskirts of Mdantsane. Around 1970, they approached Chief Ngwenyathi for land on which to build a house. In order to build their house and feed their growing family, however, they needed a cash income. So in 1971, she took a job as a domestic worker with a white family in East London. Nxaruni was on "Native Trust" land that by 1971 was part of the Ciskei Territorial Authority, but it was only about 15 miles from the city. It was, in fact, closer to suburban East London than many parts of Mdantsane, but lack of public transportation meant that Manene could only visit Nxaruni once a month.[125] Life as a domestic worker in white suburban East London was difficult, and the pay was so low that Manene had to ask for extra gifts from her employers in order to send enough food back home for her children. The center of her life in the city, and a lifeline back to her home in Nxaruni, was the Methodist manyano she joined.[126] This manyano was composed of other domestic workers, who met under a tree because the old Methodist church in the East Bank

[125] On the incorporation of Trust lands into the consolidated Ciskei, and the system of rural traditional rule controlled by the one-party Ciskei state, see Luvuyo Wotshela, "Homeland Consolidation, Resettlement and Local Politics in the Border and the Ciskei Region of the Eastern Cape, South Africa, 1960 to 1996" (Doctoral dissertation, Oxford, University of Oxford, 2001).

[126] Rosie Manene, Interview in Nxaruni, Eastern Cape, trans. Tembakazi Zulu and Phelisa Mtima, November 16, 2019.

location had been demolished.[127] Although they lacked a proper building to meet in, manyano

members offered one another solidarity and support in their shared struggles.[128]

Another important benefit of the domestic workers' union was its connection back to

Nxaruni. Several of the other domestic workers also had homes in Nxaruni, and with Manene,

they worked to establish a new Methodist congregation there. At first, the Methodist believers of

Nxaruni met in the garage of a Mr. Tutu.[129] By 1973, their congregation of 75 had submitted an

application to build a church.[130] Manene asserts that "we fundraised as congregants, using our

own money to build the church. We didn't use church funds [from the regional or national

Methodist structures]."[131] Because the congregation, especially the women's manyano, did their

own fundraising, the building proceeded slowly. A report by the local magistrate estimated that

the church building would be complete by June 1977, but Manene recalls that it was not

completed until the early 1980s.[132] This was a longer timeline to completion than many of the

township churches. It is notable that the building project did not receive support from regional or

national level church leaders; the Nxaruni Methodists were proud of having built their church by

themselves, even though it took a long time. The former members of the domestic workers'

manyano now hold a reunion every year on August 9 at the church in Nxaruni.[133] This date is

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[127] This was a common problem for East London's approximately 10,000 live-in domestic workers. "Domestic servants living in rooms in the city make up most of the big congregations at services in Duncan Village churches," according to a *Daily Dispatch* reporter, but they could not afford to travel to Mdantsane on Sundays when their congregations were removed to the township. The African Ministers Fraternal worried that lack of Black congregations in the city would cause "large-scale moral degeneration among the domestics." Gordon Qumza, "Worshippers with a Problem: The Price of Attending Church," *Daily Dispatch*, 1966.

[128] Deborah James' study of women's *kiba* dance groups on the Rand shows how these performance groups were similarly helpful in allowing women to maintain links, real or imagined, to rural areas. Deborah James, *Songs of the Women Migrants: Performance and Identity in South Africa* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

[129] Rosie Manene, "History of Nxaruni society," typescript, trans. Phelisa Mtima, 2019.

[130] SAB BAO 1/1883 47/2010/10/1, Application for church plot by Nxaruni Methodist Church, dated 13 October 1973.

[131] Manene, Interview in Nxaruni, Eastern Cape.

[132] SAB BAO 1/1883 47/2010/10/1, Magistrate of Mdantsane District to Secretary for the Interior of Ciskei, 26 January 1977. Manene, Interview in Nxaruni.

[133] Manene, Interview in Nxaruni, Eastern Cape.

Women's Day, the annual commemoration of the 1956 Women's March on Pretoria, at which 20,000 women (including many manyano women) protested pass laws and Bantu Education.[134] The choice of this day for the manyano reunion emphasizes the degree to which the Nxaruni Methodist women understand their church-building work as part of their struggle to build a home in the face of urban segregation, as well as their desire to identify their church-building work with the commemoration of anti-apartheid struggle in the new democratic South Africa.

Within the boundaries of the city of East London, there were also areas where church members felt left out by the planning for religious buildings. The story of the rebuilding of St. Philip's Anglican church in Ziphunzana is another example of how manyano women worked over a long period of time to build a church home without support from outside sources. When its Black congregants were forcibly removed from the East Bank and the land proclaimed for "Indian" use, the Anglican diocese had to choose between abandoning or selling the building. Sometime in the late 1960s the diocese sold the building to a local Hindu association, and St. Philip's was transformed into the Siva Soobramanian temple.

The remnant of St. Philip's members who remained in Duncan Village and Ziphunzana no longer had an Anglican church to attend. Church leaders and city planners expected that the relatively small Anglican community in Duncan Village and Ziphunzana would commute to the township on Sundays. Parishioners like Margaret Ngcayiya, however, found this impossible.[135] Instead, beginning in 1975 the remnant of St. Philip's congregation rented a small, low-ceilinged building made of iron sheets on the edge of Duncan Village, next to the rather disreputable "C-

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[134] Nomboniso Gasa, "Let Them Build More Gaols," in *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo / They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007), 129–52; Meghan Healy-Clancy, "The Family Politics of the Federation of South African Women: A History of Public Motherhood in Women's Antiracist Activism," *Signs* 42, no. 4 (2017): 843–66.

[135] Margaret Ngcayiya and Mazoe Nopece, Interview at St Phillip's Church, Gompo, East London, trans. Phelisa Mtima, November 15, 2019.

section" area. The Mothers' Union fundraised using their usual methods: selling baked goods

and clothing to passersby outside the church. The process took two decades; in 1986 St. Philip's

acquired a new piece of land on the edge of Ziphunzana, a better-off area with wider roads,

newer houses, and better infrastructure. The new church was finally dedicated in 1995.[136]

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how religious communities negotiated forced removals and the

creation of a Bantustan township in Mdantsane. This ambitious project of apartheid urban

planning occurred during South Africa's "silent decade" (1963-1973), when resistance

organizations had been thwarted by mass banning and imprisonment, and the tightening of racial

exploitation drove high economic growth.[137] Despite the close control that bureaucrats exercised

over religious space, church-building projects in the township offered some latitude for Christian

communities to define the terms of their own homes, and to engage in networks that stretched far

beyond the Ciskei. Yet the work of manyano women in the 1960s and 1970s seems to have

become more circumscribed, not less. Archival evidence and oral history interviews do not

suggest that manyano women were the primary force, in terms of money, behind church building

projects. Instead, evidence from the Queenstown manyano records and from oral histories

suggests their focus on the smaller-scale matters of home-making, particularly the home and

family of the minister.

At the most basic level, this apparent narrowing of focus can be explained by physical

and economic circumstances: the process of forced removals to Mdantsane was destructive to

social and family networks that had existed in the East Bank. In the township, social dislocation,

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[136] Ngcayiya and Nopece; Margaret Ngcayiya, "History of St Philip's Church," trans. Mazoe Nopece, n.d.

[137] For a description and moderate critique of the concept of the "silent sixties", see Steven Friedman, "The Sounds of Silence: Structural Change and Collective Action in the Fight against Apartheid," *South African Historical Journal* 69, no. 2 (2017): 236–50.

rising cost of living, and high unemployment meant that manyano women's fundraising powers were limited. They could no longer host as many successful concerts, *imjikelo*, or teas as they had in years past. Instead, they devoted their funds to maintaining their minister's family in suitable style. From this perspective, manyano women's values of home-making in this period had much in common with other conservative women's movements of the time, for example the Inkatha Women's Brigade, founded in 1975. According to Shireen Hassim, the work of the Women's Brigade "was shot through with conservative appeals to women's maternal responsibilities, their obedience to their husbands and their commitment to the church."[138] Similarly, manyano women in the 1960s and 1970s did not openly challenge the Bantustan township model of urban life, which claimed to promote working-class nuclear family stability.

But the theme of acquiring, furnishing, and maintaining a good home that runs through church and manyano records of this period means more than simply the narrowing of people's focus to the bare essentials of housekeeping. Concern with home furnishings and groceries can be about more than the struggle to make ends meet. Scholars of motherhood in African history argue that African women's appeals to motherhood are not merely "maternalist politics" that reduce their political existence to their individual biological motherhoods.[139] Instead, the actions of "public mothers" reveal a way of thinking about motherhood that is not confined by Western gender definitions, by biology, or by nuclear families.[140] Healy-Clancy even suggests that South African women's appeals to motherhood as the justification for their anti-apartheid protests were

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[138] Shireen Hassim, "Family, Motherhood and Zulu Nationalism: The Politics of the Inkatha Women's Brigade," *Feminist Review*, no. 43 (1993): 2.

[139] Nomboniso Gasa, "Feminisms, Motherisms, Patriarchies and Women's Voices," in *Women in South African History: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo / They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, ed. Nomboniso Gasa (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007), 207–29.

[140] Lorelle Semley, "Public Motherhood in West Africa as Theory and Practice," *Gender & History* 24, no. 3 (2012): 600–616.

a form of what Darlene Clark Hine calls "dissemblance"—an appearance of transparent motherly concern that allowed women to keep private their true feelings and motives.[141]

While I am not necessarily describing manyano women's practices as dissemblance, this chapter has tried to show how, as they promoted the politically safe value of motherhood and home-making, they worked towards a more expansive definition of "home" that also included religious space. The work of manyano women like Rosie Manene or Margaret Ngcayiya, who devoted decades to the construction of churches that fell outside the interests of church or government leaders, shows the significance of physical religious buildings to women's sense of belonging and security in the city.

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[141] Meghan Healy-Clancy, "The Family Politics of the Federation of South African Women: A History of Public Motherhood in Women's Antiracist Activism," *Signs* 42, no. 4 (2017): 862; Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West," *Signs* 14, no. 4 (1989): 912–20.

CHAPTER 5:

Mothers on the Move: Manyanos and the Social History of Transportation in Mdantsane, 1963-c.1990[1]

One Sunday morning in the 1980s as Frances John and her two young children walked to St. Peter Claver Catholic church in Duncan Village, soldiers on the road stopped them and demanded that they turn back and attend a different church. John and her children were classified as Coloured during apartheid, but attended a church in a location reserved for those classified as African. The soldiers asked her, "Why do you come this side? Why don't you go to the [church] for Coloureds?" They accused her of being involved in political activity, saying, "We must start with these ones. They are the troublemakers." In her telling, John retorted: "We are free. You tell them [your superiors], Catholics are free to go where they wish to. So we are not going to St. Francis Xavier." The soldiers relented and they continued their walk to church, although they knew they would likely encounter this challenge again.[2]

In our interview, John could not recall what year this specific event took place.[3] Indeed, she emphasized that police or military presence on her journeys to church-related events was a common occurrence throughout her career as a member of the Catholic Women's League. "Oh, always, they were always there," she stated. "They would follow

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[1] A version of this chapter originally appeared as: Katie Carline, "Mothers on the Move: Manyanos and the Social History of Transportation in a South African Homeland Township, 1963–1990," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 57, no. 1 (2023): 161–80.

[2] Frances John and Rachel Doans, Interview at Sister Aidan Memorial Centre, St. Peter Claver Church, Duncan Village, East London, November 28, 2019.

[3] Possibly it was in the aftermath of the 1963 attempted uprising of Pan African Congress militants in East London, or perhaps during the long period of protest and clashes between militant youth and the state in the location from 1985-89. For references to military presence in the streets during these periods see: Lungisile Ntsebeza, "Youth in Urban African Townships, 1945-1992: A Case Study of the East London Townships" (Master of Arts, Durban, University of Natal, 1993).

us… to make sure we were going to church."[4] This story is one particularly dramatic example of the many barriers to travel and mobility faced by manyanos in East London and Mdantsane during apartheid. Manyano members did not always encounter resistance to their mobility in the form of a uniformed soldier; most often the spatial realities of the apartheid city were the main barrier to mobility and to regular meeting with their fellow group members. Frances John's story of arguing with the soldiers on the road is one example of the many creative ways that manyano members challenged or circumvented restrictions on the travel and meetings that were an integral part of their groups' purpose.

This chapter examines the effects of East London's apartheid city planning, particularly transportation infrastructure in the township of Mdantsane, on the structure and activities of manyanos. The forced removals of people classified as African to the distant, decentralized township of Mdantsane changed the structure of manyanos, weakened connections between different church and social organizations that had existed in the old urban locations, but also led to new practices of mobility that kept women in communication across a divided city and township. The history of manyano mobility offers a glimpse into a broader social and cultural history of transportation within and between the township and the city. The 1970s and 1980s saw a revolution in Mdantsane and East London (part of a national trend) from a state-subsidized bus system to privately-operated taxis. Male wage workers and activists have received most of the attention as the protagonists of this revolution, but in fact the transformation of township travel was made by the small daily decisions of many travellers. Manyano members'

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[4] John and Doans, Interview at Sister Aidan Memorial Centre, St. Peter Claver Church, Duncan Village, East London.

histories of traveling therefore exemplify the complexity of the "liberation" from apartheid-era bus transportation.

The intertwined history of township-building and transportation has received sustained attention from scholars of South Africa, who have shown how transportation systems worked to reinforce the racial and spatial hierarchy of apartheid cities, and how, concomitantly, commuter protests and boycotts were effective challenges to the political order of the apartheid state. Histories of transportation in South Africa's cities emphasize the role of (mostly male) labor activists in the bus boycotts of the 1950s, 1970s and 1980s that challenged the political and economic order of apartheid urbanism and ultimately created a new industry of privately-owned minibus and sedan taxis that came to constitute Black South Africa's informal transportation system.[5] This historical narrative makes South Africa's transportation history part of political and economic history, drawing on evidence from newspapers and official documents and focusing on the role of the workers' unions and political leaders who organized bus boycotts.

However, this approach and these sources do not allow much room for questions about the commuter experience of travel, the social history of travel in and beyond townships, or connections between changes in transportation and changes in other parts of social life. These questions are especially salient to East London, a "motor city" with a long history of car manufacturing. Leslie Bank's recent anthropological work shows how

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[5] Key examples of this literature are: Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983), Chapter 8; Meshack M. Khosa, "'The Travail of Travelling': Urban Transport in South Africa, 1930–1996," *Transport Reviews* 18, no. 1 (1998): 17–33; Tim Gibbs, "Becoming a 'Big Man' in Neo-Liberal South Africa: Migrant Masculinities in the Minibus-Taxi Industry," *African Affairs* 113, no. 452 (2014): 431–48; Most recent is Elliot James' history of entrepreneurship in the informal taxi industry: Elliot James, "Sithutha Isizwe ('We Carry the Nation'): Dispossession, Displacement, and the Making of the Shared Minibus Taxi in Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa, 1930-Present" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2018).

for both Black and white East Londoners, car ownership has been strongly linked to desires for autonomy, adventurous masculinity, and the right to the city.[6] As powerful as the desire for independent automobility has been in East London, car ownership has remained out of reach for the vast majority of Black residents of the city and of the township of Mdantsane. Travel by public bus and taxi (and sometimes train) has historically been the primary form of urban travel for the majority. Following the example of scholars who have called for a "rediscovery of the ordinary" in South African history and particularly township histories, this chapter uses the history of urban travel by East London and Mdantsane manyano members to show how the history of transportation, bus boycotts, and the taxi industry affected daily life and social activity for township-dwellers.[7]

In asking these questions, I am taking inspiration from recent histories of urban transportation in other parts of Africa which emphasize the role of commuters and their everyday practices in shaping the nature of urban transportation. Recent work by Jennifer Hart and Joshua Grace, for example, show how in Ghana and Tanzania, drivers and passengers created unique national cultures of road travel. People adapted vehicles to fit their travel agendas in ways that contradicted the agendas of colonial and post-colonial governments.[8] Similarly, Kenda Mutongi shows how, in Nairobi, the experience of travel in minibus taxis (*matatus*) changed over time through complex interactions between

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[6] Leslie J. Bank, *City of Broken Dreams: Myth-Making, Nationalism, and the University in an African Motor City* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2019) See especially Part 2 and Part 3.

[7] Jacob Dlamini, *Native Nostalgia* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2009); Philip Bonner and Noor Nieftagodien, *Alexandra: A History* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008); Njabulo S. Ndebele, *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture* (Scottsville: University Of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 1991).

[8] Jennifer Hart, *Ghana on the Go: African Mobility in the Age of Motor Transportation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016); Joshua Grace, *African Motors: Technology, Gender, and the History of Development* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022).

drivers, passengers, and the state. She argues that changes in matatu culture reflected – and were bound up in – Nairobians' changing ideas about democracy, youth, and gender.[9] In Mdantsane, the history of travel by manyano women similarly reveals the perils and possibilities of a changing urban transportation system during a time when state tried to control the mobility of Black people, especially Black women.

The first section of this chapter traces the history of transportation in the model township of Mdantsane, which was designed to facilitate travel for male industrial workers. As people classified as African were forcibly relocated to Mdantstane between 1963 and the early 1980s, the social networks of manyanos were torn apart and they had to devise new ways of meeting together. The second section of the chapter revaluates the history of Mdantsane's 1974-75 and 1983-85 bus boycotts, which have been told as a history of labour organizing and political resistance to the Ciskei state, but in fact involved a cast of characters much wider than East London's factory workers. Manyano members' experiences of the boycotts and the rise of new informal taxis demonstrate how, between the 1970s and 1980s, transportation became faster, more expensive, and more dangerous – allowing people to meet and socialize in new ways, but with new risks. I analyse how manyanos adapted to travel opportunities in the 1980s, particularly the new opportunities for long-distance travel by individuals and groups.

Transportation in an Apartheid Planned Township 1963-1983

When construction began in Mdantsane in 1963, planning for transportation within and beyond the township was still in its early stages, and the execution of transportation infrastructure was entangled in the competing agendas of multiple state and business

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[9] Kenda Mutongi, *Matatu: A History of Popular Transport in Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

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actors. The Department of Native Affairs (later called Department of Bantu Administration and Development) financed the construction of roads; the East London City Council was commissioned by the government to oversee all construction; the South African Railways controlled the limited rail service between the township and city; and industry leaders lobbied with all of the above entities for increased, subsidized transport for their workers. The transportation infrastructure which was ultimately built in Mdantsane reflected the fact that all of these actors prioritized the transportation of workers from the township to the city.

A 1963 plan of the first "Neighbourhood Unit," or zone, of Mdantsane shows a single road (the Mdantsane Access Road) connecting the township to the city. The Access Road splits into two wide streets where it enters the township.[10]

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[10] Plan of Neighbourhood Unit 1 dated 17 October 1963 by the Department of Bantu Administration and Development and the City of East London City Engineers Department. Box 476, Mdantsane Planning Files, Eastern Cape Provincial Archives King Williams Town.

Figure 19: 1963 Plan of Mdantsane Access Road and Neighbourhood Unit 1

This Access Road was the only motor vehicle point of entry or exit until Billie Road connected the township to the R102 and N2 highways (These two roads remain the only entrance or exit points by motor vehicle to this township of half-a-million people). Mdantsane's central police station occupied the large plot marked "police" at the intersection where the Access Road enters the township, giving the police an easy point of surveillance for movement in and out of the township. At the junction with the police station, the Access Road splits into what are now called Spine Road and Mazaule Road, wide thoroughfares meant to accommodate the buses that would pick up passengers at

central bus depots within the township and carry them out, via the Access Road, to their jobs in the city. All of these urban design features—limited entrances and exits, and the central placement of police stations for surveillance—were typical of planned apartheid townships.

Between the arterial roads of Spine Road and Mazaule Road the plan depicts a complex network of narrow streets. These streets, which are wide enough for only one vehicle, link the small plots on which the standard 4-room houses were built. These streets are not named on the plan, and despite at least one effort to name streets in the 1960s the vast majority of residential streets in Mdantsane remain unnamed. Addresses in Mdantsane consist of a plot number and the number of the Neighbourhood Unit (NU) in which it is located. Consequently, local knowledge of the sequence of plot numbers and of the unmarked boundaries between Units is necessary for a visitor to locate a home, business, church, or school for the first time. The lack of street names caused serious problems for residents. As early as 1964, when there were only a few thousand houses in NU1, mail carriers had difficulty in delivering mail because plot numbers were difficult to locate and did not follow a predictable pattern.[11] When residents first arrived in Mdantsane they often got lost in traveling between their homes, work, or social events.[12] Even recognizing one's own house could be difficult if the number was not painted on it: "We used to get lost. All these houses were the same. My house is the sixth one, you've got to count, one two, three, four five..." said Jiki Lebetloane.[13] A street-naming committee was proposed by the Department of Bantu Administration and Development

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[11] Letter from Bantu Affairs Commissioner EL to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner KWT, 6 October 1964. (26) N13/2/1/4/4/1, Box 475, Mdantsane Planning Files, Provincial Archives King Williams Town.
[12] Mthobeli Nkwatheni, Interview in Mdantsane NU10, March 3, 2020.
[13] Jiki Lebetloane, Interview in Dorchester Heights, East London, March 2, 2020.

(DBA) in 1965 but never produced results, perhaps because the committee did not allow for much community input (it was supposed to consist of the Bantu Affairs Commissioner and "two prominent Bantu residents") and was instructed to limit its choices to "names of birds, animals, plants and trees."[14] In 1966 a local politician, A.M. Voyi, also announced a street-naming plan (to name streets after township residents), but it produced no results.[15]

The lack of street names, the tightly-controlled entrance roads, and the bewildering anonymity of the residential streets, are all typical features of South African townships. Alexandra, one of South Africa's oldest (freehold) townships, also had only a single entrance road and few streets with names.[16] Likewise, the physical layout of Sharpeville was planned to facilitate control and surveillance.[17] For homeland townships that were planned and built from scratch, rather than emerging gradually out of old settlements, these characteristics of surveillance and monotonous anonymity were especially noticeable. The township of Kwa Mashu outside Durban, for instance, bewildered its newly-arrived residents with the sameness of its streets.[18] Mdantsane, another homeland township, shared these characteristics. It is representative of apartheid urban planning that did not seek to improve the mobility of residents within the township.

[14] Secretary of the Department of DBA to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner KWT, 6 January 1965. (26) N13/2/1/4/4/1, Box 475, Mdantsane Planning Files, Provincial Archives King Williams Town.

[15] "Street names for Mdantsane," *Daily Dispatch*, 17 January 1966.

[16] See the map of Alexandra by the Alexandra Heritage and Tourism Committee: Bonner and Nieftagodien, *Alexandra*, xvii; Belinda Bozzoli, *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004).

[17] Philip Frankel, *An Ordinary Atrocity: Sharpeville and Its Massacre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Tom Lodge, *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and Its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[18] A Manson, "From Cato Manor to Kwa Mashu," *Reality*, 1981, 13.

Instead, the focus of township planners was on transporting workers into the East London city centre and the industrial zones. Financial responsibility for transportation infrastructure and vehicles was debated between the government, the East London City Council, and the Railways. For example, a 1968 meeting between the City Council, the local Chamber of Commerce, and the National Roads Department spent a long time laying out the barriers to transportation between the township and the city, but were only able to conclude that "the authorities responsible" must improve the efficiency of the roads, without settling the central thorny question of whether the City Council or the National Roads Department was the responsible authority.[19] At this meeting as at other times, the City Council hung its transportation funding hopes on the South African Railways (SAR), which it believed had the capital to invest in frequent rail service between Mdantsane and the East London Central station At first, the closest railway station to Mdantsane was at Arnoldton, a mile south of Mdantsane's boundary. Its passenger service operated only twice a day.[20] The City Council argued in 1964 that the SAR should invest in new stations (or fund its own temporary bus service) on the strength of predicted future rail passengers once Mdantsane was completed.[21] However, the SAR was also hampered by bureaucratic conflicts of jurisdiction, as the

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[19] Minutes of a Meeting between EL City Council, EL Chamber of Commerce, and National Road Departments, 13 June 1968. (26) N13/2/1/4/4/1, Box 475, Mdantsane Planning Files, Provincial Archives King Williams Town.

[20] East London Town Clerk to the Interdepartmental Committee for Non-White Transport and South African Railways, 19 August 1964. Box 182, Mdantsane Rural Village Local Committee, Provincial Archives King Williams Town.

[21] East London Town Clerk to the Interdepartmental Committee for Non-White Transport and South African Railways, 19 August 1964. Box 182, Mdantsane Rural Village Local Committee, Provincial Archives King Williams Town.

Interdepartmental Committee for Non-White Transport ruled in 1968 that the SAR could

not increase its service to Mdantsane.[22]

In all of these discussions planners assumed that the passengers in questions

would be male industrial or manual laborers; the anxiety of the East London City Council

to improve township transportation was directly linked to their hopes for industrial

growth. When the City Council made one of its appeals to the SAR for increased service

to Mdantsane, they framed their appeal not in terms of their mandate to construct the

township on behalf of the national government, but in terms of the needs of East London

businesses who needed workers to arrive on time.[23] In 1966 the City Council began a

scheme to subsidize bus fares for its own Black African employees, selling books of

weekly bus tickets to full-time municipal workers (clerks and manual labourers, and

therefore likely predominantly male) for 40 cents less than the face value. It hoped that

other businesses would follow the example.[24] In a 1968 transportation planning meeting,

the City Council again stressed "the absolute necessity to get Bantu passengers from

Mdantsane to town as quickly and as early as possible" because of "the high lost-time

wage bill and the loss of production at present being experienced by industries."[25] The

focus of all efforts of transportation improvement in Mdantsane was male wage workers

employed full-time in businesses and industries.

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[22] Minutes of a Meeting between EL City Council, EL Chamber of Commerce, and National Road Departments, 13 June 1968. (26) N13/2/1/4/4/1, Box 475, Mdantsane Planning Files, Provincial Archives King Williams Town.

[23] East London Town Clerk to the Interdepartmental Committee for Non-White Transport and South African Railways, 19 August 1964. Box 182, Mdantsane Rural Village Local Committee, Provincial Archives King Williams Town.

[24] *Daily Dispatch*, 1 February 1966.

[25] Minutes of a Meeting between EL City Council, EL Chamber of Commerce, and National Road Departments, 13 June 1968. (26) N13/2/1/4/4/1, Box 475, Mdantsane Planning Files, Provincial Archives King Williams Town.

The Ciskei Territorial Authority, under the guidance of the DBA, administered the township after its initial planning and construction, and its transportation priorities mirrored those of the initial township planners. Ciskei authorities continued to focus township transportation planning on carrying industrial labourers to work. In 1978, a promotional publication by the Ciskei authorities claimed that the Mdantsane bus system carried 50,000 passengers a day. "The vast majority of these are employed in the commercial and industrial sectors of greater East London," it claimed."[26]

During both the period of construction in Mdantsane and during the early administration of the township by Ciskei authorities, transportation infrastructure mainly consisted of buses. The City of East London encouraged the creation of the Border Passenger Transport Company (BPTC), which operated all buses between the township and the city between 1963 and 1975. After the 1974-75 bus boycott, the bankrupt bus company was taken over by the Ciskei Territorial Authority, through the Xhosa Development Corporation, and was re-named the Ciskei Transportation Corporation (CTC). The CTC continued to provide the only official bus service within and beyond Mdantsane until it too was closed by a bus boycott that began in 1983.[27] In addition to buses, the South African Railways in the late 1960s and early 1970s built two stations (Egerton and Mount Ruth) at the eastern edge of Mdantsane, which provided service between central East London and the township, although infrequent service limited use of the railway. Buses and trains were the only legal form of public transportation within and beyond Mdantsane until 1977, when the national government deregulated the taxi

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[26] "Ciskei: the way ahead," special supplement to the *Daily Dispatch*. Thursday, June 29, 1978.

[27] South African Labour History Project, "Lessons from the 1970s Struggles and Strikes in East London" (Labour Research Service, 2006), 10.

industry and allowed unmetered vehicles to transport fare-paying passengers (although unregistered "pirate" taxis had existed well before this).[28] Even after privately-owned taxi services became legal, buses and trains continued to provide transportation for the vast majority of Mdantsane travelers: a 1982 study found that 69% of commuters used the CTC bus, 22% used the train, and fewer than 8% travelled by taxi or private car.[29] Transportation planning in Mdantsane was geared entirely towards transporting workers, which resulted in a single bus service that funneled passengers from the township to the city using a single main road, to the neglect of internal transportation within the township.[30]

The transportation needs of non-working travellers or of the many women employed in domestic service do not appear in archival and newspaper discussions of transportation in Mdantsane in the 1960s. Oral history, therefore, is a valuable source for urban histories and transportation histories, because it can uncover the experiences and strategies of people whose needs had not been considered in urban planning. Oral histories also show that the township's transportation was more complex and varied than the official state-run bus and rail services. The oral history record, therefore, is critical to a history of apartheid townships that contextualizes the struggle against state-run transportation within the everyday strategies and work-arounds that people used to stay connected within a segregated city and township.

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[28] Mark Ingle, "An Historical Overview of Problems Associated with the Formalization of the South African Minibus Taxi Industry," *New Contree* 57 (2009): 72–73.

[29] Jeffery McCarthy and Mark Swilling, "The Apartheid City and the Politics of Bus Transportation.," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 25, no. 99 (1985): 392 citing Jenkinson 1982.

[30] Mark Swilling, "'The Buses Smell of Blood': The East London Boycott," *South African Labour Bulletin* 9, no. 5 (March 1984): 48.

How Travel and Distance Transformed Manyano Social Activity in Mdantsane

When people began to be forcibly removed to Mdantsane in 1963, transportation was one of the earliest problems that surfaced in this ideal apartheid township, and mobility within and beyond the township continued to be difficult as its population grew over the next two decades. The experiences of manyano members show that transportation was difficult not only for the male wage workers for whom the system was designed, but also hindered the social activities and organizations that had been an important part of women's daily lives in the old urban locations of East London. Manyano activity in Mdantsane grew smaller in scale and lost its close connections with other home-improvement and charitable societies. Nevertheless, oral history evidence suggests that manyano membership increased in Mdantsane between the 1960s and 1980s. This was because manyano members adapted their work to the spatial reality of the township in ways that drew in new members, attracted young women to take leadership positions, and facilitated group travel to maintain connections over long distances.

According to one anonymous writer in the *Daily Dispatch's* African Edition, transportation was the biggest fear that people had in moving to Mdantsane. The writer believed that "those who have already settled, those who are in the process of being moved and those who still have to wait for the change — have allowed the one thought of transport to dominate their approach to the prospect of moving to the all-Black city." The addition of bus fares to people's monthly expenditure was a major challenge. In the dense, centrally-located urban location of Duncan Village most people had been able to walk to work in the city, but in the township had to spend 22-32 cents a day on bus fare,

or 1.1 to 1.6 Rand per week.[31] Income statistics for Mdantsane in the early 1960s are not available, but in 1960 in Duncan Village "the majority of households record[ed] a per capita weekly income of less than R2."[32] In the early 1960s the monthly rent for a standard four-room house in Mdantsane was 6 Rand, which meant that transportation costs for a single commuter might take up as much of the household budget as the entire family's rent.[33] Buses did not follow the schedule, resulting in long waits at a bus stop, which made travel in Mdantsane expensive in terms of time as well as money.[34]

Mdantsane's travelers also feared mass transportation's life-threatening dangers. For example, Prieska Mpetsheni told me that before she moved to Mdantsane she was afraid of the frequent bus accidents that occurred on poorly-maintained roads, and she felt justified in this fear when a deadly bus accident took place close to her new Mdantsane house.[35] Travelers' anxieties about personal safety extended to "thugs" who preyed on passengers as they walked to bus stops. The lack of streetlights made people nervous to travel before dawn and at night.[36] Meetings to address these concerns had few results because Mdantsane residents, in the 1960s, had no community representative structures. The Locations Advisory Board (LAB) of Duncan Village rather than any township residents' group, tried to begin negotiations with the City Council to improve bus service, but coverage in the *Daily Dispatch* suggests that neither residents nor the Council were

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[31] "Mdantsane hit by transport costs," *Daily Dispatch*, 19 January 1966.

[32] B.A. Pauw, *The Second Generation: A Study of the Family Among Urbanized Bantu in East London*, 2nd edition (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1973), 28–29 Statistics on household income in Mdantsane in the mid-1970s suggest that this average income stayed the same. Charton, "Economic Development for the Ciskei", 21.

[33] Philip Mayer and Iona Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen: Conservatism and the Process of Urbanization in a South African City*, 2nd ed. (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1971), 295.

[34] "Bus Service is Causing Distress," *Daily Dispatch*, 3 August 1965.

[35] Prieska Mpetsheni, Interview in Stirling, East London, March 10, 2020.

[36] "Bus Service is Causing Distress," *Daily Dispatch*, 3 August 1965.

confident in the LAB as a representative of local Mdantsane opinion, and the meetings convened by the LAB did not produce results.[37]

Oral history evidence shows that Mdantsane's transportation problems did not only affect workers traveling to jobs in the city—the primary concern of those who administered the township—but also disrupted the social lives of residents and strained the relationships and organizations that had held communities together. Anthropologists Philip and Iona Mayer in 1971 described a "torn social fabric" in Mdantsane, an assessment reiterated by Leslie Bank in his more recent work on the city and the township.[38] Moving from Duncan Village to Mdantsane, for most people, meant the loss of relationships with neighbours, and a narrowing of their social life. Many jazz bands, rugby clubs, community choirs and Boy Scout troops that had kept community and church halls in Duncan Village fully booked did not re-form in Mdantsane.[39] For those who had been affiliated with a church in Duncan Village, this meant a loss of the busy social life of the church and the manyano. The move to Mdantsane divided congregations, caused some manyano members to drop out of their groups, and weakened the previously strong connections between manyanos and other social organizations. Likewise, for those who remained in Duncan Village or Ziphunzana, social life became flatter as membership in churches, manyanos, and clubs was reduced.[40]

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[37] "Wrangle Over Buses Continues," Daily Dispatch, 7 September 1965. Atkinson shows how, by the 1960s, the LAB had lost the confidence of both municipal government and Black residents: Doreen Atkinson, "Political Opposition in Patriarchal East London, 1950-1960: Dilemmas of Paternalism," *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa* 6, no. 1 (2010): 1–16.

[38] Mayer and Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*; Leslie J. Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles : Contesting Power and Identity in a South African City* (London: Pluto Press, 2011).

[39] Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles*, 75.

[40] Nontle Kombele, Interview in Gompo, East London, December 16, 2019; John and Doans, Interview at Sister Aidan Memorial Centre, St. Peter Claver Church, Duncan Village, East London.

Wallace Daka, a member of a Baptist church, recalled that in Duncan Village, "life was not easy because of apartheid" and yet "life at church was good." The Duncan Village Baptist church had multiple services on Sundays (a morning service and a later one to accommodate women whose domestic service work kept them busy until Sunday afternoon). Many members of the female-dominated congregation attended multiple services over the weekend to make sure of seeing all their friends. In addition to the services there was choir practice, which kept people at the church all weekend long. But when the majority of the church members were moved to Mdantsane between 1965 and 1966, this community was strained. In Mdantsane they could not regroup: "we were scattered, we were moved to different areas," Daka said. "Transport was very poor at that time," and even starting two separate Baptist congregations in different parts of Mdantsane did not solve the problem. Members disliked being told which of the two new churches to attend, and some of them lived too far away to attend either.[41]

For others, like Theresia Ndlovu, the move to Mdantsane completely severed their connection with church and manyanos. Ndlovu had been a member of the Catholic Women's League in Duncan Village in the 1950s, but when she was removed to Mdantsane in 1971 she stopped attending manyano meetings. For one thing, there was no Catholic church in her new neighbourhood of NU7; there were not even any shops, and her daughter had to travel across the township to NU4 to attend school. Moreover, as a domestic worker Ndlovu soon found it impossible to commute between Mdantsane and East London every day. Soon after arriving in Mdantsane she left her daughter alone at the house in NU7 and began living-in at her employer's house. Although she quit this job

[41] Wallace Daka, Interview in Mdantsane NU6, trans. Phelisa Mtima, January 28, 2020.

in 1974 and moved back to Mdantsane, she felt that she had already lost her connection

to the manyano, and did not become an active member again until 2000.[42]

Even for those who remained members of a church and a manyano, the move to

Mdantsane often broke the connections between the manyano and other social

organizations like the International Order of True Templars (IOTT) (a temperance

society) and the zenzeles (women's home improvement societies). Catherine Higgs'

research on zenzeles shows that the popularity and unity of these societies declined after

the creation of the Ciskei state, which she attributes partly to the efforts of Lennox Sebe,

leader of the Ciskei, to set up a Ciskei Women's Association in competition with the

established Zenzele Association.[43] Oral history evidence from Mdantsane suggests that in

the township, the decline in zenzele membership was also due to difficulties in

transportation and travel to meetings. In the old East Bank location, church halls had

often been used for zenzele events, and links between manyanos and zenzeles were

strong because church ministers' wives (as senior community members) had been

involved in leadership in both manyanos and zenzeles.[44] Despite attempts to start new

zenzele branches in Mdantsane,[45] membership did not increase in proportion to the

population, and it struggled to attract new members.[46] Mdantsane zenzeles "were not like

the old locations," one woman recalled, "because now the people were all over, not like

there, and the people were suffering at Mdantsane. Ehhh, those [bus] fares… there was

[42] Theresia Ndlovu, Interview in Mdantsane NU13, trans. Phelisa Mtima, December 16, 2019.

[43] Catherine Higgs, "Zenzele: African Women's Self-Help Organizations in South Africa, 1927–1998," *African Studies Review* 47, no. 03 (2004): 134.

[44] Mpetsheni, Interview in Stirling, East London.

[45] "Zenzele meeting was successful," *Daily Dispatch*, 23 March 1965.

[46] Orienda Nolitha Magqaza, Interview at First Mdantsane Baptist Church, February 13, 2020.

too much expenditure."[47] Similarly, the IOTT in Duncan Village had brought together members from many churches at its temperance meetings, events, and children's clubs, and manyano members took a leading role in the organization. In Mdantsane, however, IOTT membership declined because people no longer had the time or money to be involved in a society that was seen as supplementary to their primary church and manyano membership.[48]

Despite the disruptive effect of forced removals and the difficulty of traveling to meetings in Mdantsane, manyanos adapted their structure and activities to maintain their networks across greater urban distance and to attract new members. The general consensus of manyano members who lived in Mdantsane between the 1960s and 1980s is that membership in the manyanos grew, despite the challenges of mobility.

The first adaptation of manyanos was to scale down their organizational structure to walking distances, which usually meant the Neighbourhood Unit. In the dense urban centre of East London, the entire location was walkable. In the township, few women lived within easy walking distance of the church they attended. For at least some manyanos, the response was to decentralize the regular weekly Thursday meetings and hold separate meetings in each Neighbourhood Unit (NU) in which they had members. Rather than requiring that manyano members congregate at the church every Thursday, the Assemblies of God manyano created neighbourhood weekly meetings. "The one that is easily accessible, go and worship with those people," was the principle for weekly meetings, according to Nokwanda Mlomzale. Mlomzale herself lived in NU14, far away from the Assemblies of God church in NU3, and worked as a teacher at Rubusana

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[47] Lebetloane, Interview in Dorchester Heights, East London.
[48] Nkwatheni, Interview in Mdantsane NU10.

College in NU1. Therefore she attended the Thursday manyano meetings in NU1, held in an empty school classroom, to which she could easily walk after work.[49] The Apostolic Faith Mission, which in the late 1970s was recently established in Mdantsane and had few members, also divided its manyano members up by neighbourhood. Women from each NU were instructed to do their charitable fundraising together. This allowed them to work together without having to travel far. Each neighbourhood group was given a fundraising goal, and they might work together to set up a food or used clothing stall in their neighbourhood to meet the goal.[50] This kind of small-scale local township organizing by manyanos is notably similar to the grassroots civic associations that affiliated to the United Democratic Front (UDF) in the 1980s,[51] and indicates how organizations, both religious and political, were able to survive in township by scaling down.

Funerals were another way in which manyanos attracted new members within walking distance. Funerals were important events in Black urban communities during apartheid; a dignified funeral gave honor to the deceased and their family, and cemented ties between rural and urban areas.[52] Members of two different Baptist denominations recalled how their churches used funerals – at which manyano members provided much

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[49] Nokwanda Mlomzale, Interview in Amalinda, East London, January 14, 2020.

[50] Edna Dyakop, Wilton Dyakop, and Siya Dyakop, Interview in Mdantsane NU8, trans. Phelisa Mtima, December 3, 2019.

[51] Jeremy Seekings, *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983-1991* (Cape Town; Oxford; Athens: David Philip : James Currey : Ohio University Press, 2000).

[52] While much has been written on the innovations in funeral culture in the wake of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Rebekah Lee and others remind that South Africa's funeral industry and culture of mourning have deep, complex roots. Rebekah Lee, "Death 'on the Move': Funerals, Entrepreneurs and the Rural–Urban Nexus in South Africa," *Africa* 81, no. 2 (2011): 226–47; Mia Brandel-Syrier, *Black Woman in Search of God* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1962), 66–78; See also: Rebekah Lee and Megan Vaughan, "Death and Dying in the History of Africa Since 1800," *The Journal of African History* 49, no. 3 (2008): 341–59; Garrey Michael Dennie, "The Cultural Politics of Burial in South Africa, 1884-1990" (Ph.D., The Johns Hopkins University, 1997); Casey Golomski, *Funeral Culture: AIDS, Work, and Cultural Change in an African Kingdom* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018).

of the music and prayers – to attract new adherents from nearby houses. Newly-formed

township churches offered to conduct funeral services for people living nearby. The

minister of the church led the funeral service, but the largest contribution of time and

effort came from manyano members, who donned their uniforms and went as a group to

the home of the deceased to pray and sing during the vigil and visitation, which might

stretch over several days. At the funeral itself, manyano members again provided much

of the singing. A well-attended funeral – and a well-attended vigil at the family home

preceding it – was important to township residents. In the early decades of the township

when people were newly arrived in unfamiliar neighborhoods, such a funeral was

difficult to arrange.[53] By providing funeral services to neighboring families, manyano

branches contributed to the formation of new communities and relationships within

Mdantsane's Neighbourhood Units. Indeed, the observations of the Mayers in Mdantsane

in 1970 suggest that the formation of spatially based relationships in the neighbourhoods

(rather than relationships based on clan-name, kinship, or profession) was a particularly

female phenomenon. They observe that "it seems a general rule in Mdantsane those who

become intimate through neighbourhood as such are mainly women."[54]

This decentralization of social activity and increase in smaller weekly gatherings

attracted a new cohort of younger women to the manyanos. This growth was due in part

to demographic developments in Mdantsane, as its population came to include more

women. In 1972, township administrators estimated a township population of

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[53] Daka, Interview in Mdantsane NU6; Nozuko Menzeleli and Mr. Menzeleli, Interview in Mdantsane NU3, trans. Phelisa Mtima, February 18, 2020.
[54] Mayer and Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 302.

approximately 36,000 men and 46,000 women.[55] The rapid increase in the number of

women in the township was especially true during the peak of removals to Mdantsane

from the mid-1960s to mid-1970s, because men who had previously been living alone in

the East London locations now had incentive to bring their wives to the city, in order to

qualify for a 4-room family house in the township.[56] Moreover, although Mdantsane had

been designed for male-headed nuclear families, officials who evaluated families for

resettlement were willing to classify single mothers as "fit and proper" household heads,

and assign them houses. Therefore Mdantsane's population included a significant number

of single mothers, widows, and other independent women.[57] Wallace Daka, a long-time

member of a Baptist church, summed up this historical moment as the time when young

women "got power" in the church:

> In 1966 most of us were moved here to Mdantsane, some women passed
> away, some moved to the rural areas. It was then where women got power
> because there were no longer old women at church; there were mainly young
> ones, they were very active and more creative than the old ones.[58]

Orienda Magqaza, who was one of these young manyano members at the same Baptist

church in the early 1970s, agreed that when she first joined, she was pleased to find that

young women had leadership and influence in the manyano.[59] The increase in young

members in Mdantsane manyanos, who were more likely than older women to be

employed, resulted in a further innovation in manyano organization: Sunday afternoon

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[55] Mayer and Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen: Conservatism and the Process of Urbanization in a South African City*, 302.

[56] Although this was still a complex gamble, as permanent residence in the township might disqualify a person from quitrent tenure rights to their rural land. Mayer describes a complicated scene in which many women moved from rural areas to join families in Mdantsane, but did not claim to be "permanent" residents. Mayer and Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 308–9.

[57] Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles*, 77.

[58] Daka, Interview in Mdantsane NU6.

[59] Magqaza, Interview at First Mdantsane Baptist Church.

meetings for members who could not attend the traditional Thursday afternoon meetings. The creation of separate Sunday and Thursday meetings was a trend that occurred at churches of various denominations in Mdanstane in the 1970s and early 1980s.[60]

The reorganization of manyanos in the township, with more numerous, smaller neighbourhood-based Thursday and Sunday meetings opened up new leadership positions for young women. Traditionally, the pastor or minister's wife was the head of each congregation's manyano, and presided at a single weekly meeting. In the new context of the township, the minister's wife remained in charge of the manyano as a whole, but other women were elected to lead small neighbourhood and Sunday groups. The manyano career of Nokwanda Mlomzale demonstrates the opportunities that this gave to young women who joined manyanos in the township. She joined the manyano immediately after her marriage in 1983; she attended a small neighbourhood meeting on Thursday with only four older women. On her second week as a member, they asked her, "*Makoti* [young wife], can you take the book and be the secretary?" This was the beginning of her long and successful career in manyano leadership. The older women were so impressed with her writing skills that, she remembers, they wept over the first monthly report she produced. She was elected to a committee of other makoti in Mdantsane, and then "in two years, because I'm a good secretary" she was promoted to secretary of the senior women's committee that represented all the small Mdantsane neighbourhood manyano groups for the Assemblies of God churches. From there, she quickly rose in the manyano leadership in the city, region, and province, until she became

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[60] Lebetloane, Interview in Dorchester Heights, East London; Magqaza, Interview at First Mdantsane Baptist Church.

a full-time paid organizer for the Assemblies of God manyano, a job that brought her

great satisfaction because it allowed her to travel throughout the Eastern Cape.[61]

Bus Boycotts and the New Era of Taxi Travel

From the middle of the 1970s through the 1980s Mdantsane's rapidly growing

population, combined with political and technological changes across South Africa, led to

a transportation revolution. By 1976 the township's official population was 115,000, but

officials admitted that the real number was much higher. In 1977 Mdantsane was South

Africa's seventh-largest urban center.[62]

Between 1974 and 1983 Mdantsane's bus transportation system was changing,

often gradually but sometimes violently through the increase in privately-owned taxis and

growing commuter dissatisfaction with the bus system. These taxis were at first 5-seater

sedan cars without a meter, which roamed the streets picking up any passengers who

flagged it down, and dropping them off along the side of the road at informal taxi-stops.

Later, 16-seater minibus taxis appeared on the scene and operated similarly, running

popular routes with flexible pick-up or drop-off points. The ultimate victory of the taxi

industry over the bus system was sealed by bus boycotts in 1974-75 and 1983-85 that

united workers, unions, and the taxi industry against the buses and led to the bankruptcy

of bus companies.

The history of Mdantsane's transportation revolution from state-subsidized buses

to private Black-owned taxis parallels developments in many South African townships

and cities. The earliest documented township bus boycotts were in Alexandra, in

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[61] Mlomzale, Interview in Amalinda, East London.

[62] T.J. Gordon, "Mdantsane: The Evolution of a Dependency," in Jeff Opland and Gillian Cook, eds., *Mdantsane: Transitional City* (Rhodes University, Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1980), 1, 14.

Johannesburg, in the early 1940s.[63] Again in the 1950s, residents of Alexandra and

nearby Evaton won small victories in reducing fare increases. These boycotts set a

precedent by establishing bus fares as a political issue that could be taken up by the

African National Congress (ANC) on a national level.[64] By the 1970s, the taxi industry

had begun to challenge state-owned bus system, and this conflict was woven into local

political struggles. The best-documented of these conflicts was between the Public Utility

Transportation Corporation (PUTCO) and the residents and taxi owners of townships in

the Pretoria and Johannesburg region.[65] The significance of South Africa's revolution in

transporation has been explained by scholars in two ways. First, scholars like Lodge, and

McCarthy and Swilling have portrayed it as a history of workers' struggles to improve

their economic lives, which necessarily implied a struggle against apartheid and its

system of racial capitalism.[66] More recently, scholars of transportation history including

James, Khosa, and Gibbs have examined the internal dynamics of change within the taxi

industry, and have given a nuanced picture of how government, Black taxi entrepreneurs,

and taxi drivers, negotiated and struggled to shape the transportation industry in the final

two decades of apartheid.[67] Both of these approaches to South Africa's transportation

history agree that there was a dramatic change in transportation in the 1970s and 1980s,

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[63] Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, 12.

[64] Lodge, 181–82.

[65] Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* Chapter 8: "The Bus Boycotts of Evaton and Alexandra 1955-1957"; G. H. Pirie, "Urban Bus Boycott in Alexandra Township, 1957," *African Studies* 42, no. 1 (1983): 67–77 .

[66] Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*; McCarthy and Swilling, "The Apartheid City and the Politics of Bus Transportation."

[67] James, "Sithutha Isizwe ('We Carry the Nation')"; Meshack M Khosa, "Accumulation and Labour Relations in the Taxi Industry," *Transformation* 24 (1994): 55–71; Gibbs, "Becoming a 'Big Man' in Neo-Liberal South Africa"; Ingle, "An Historical Overview of Problems Associated with the Formalization of the South African Minibus Taxi Industry"; Leslie J. Bank, "The Making of the Qwaqwa 'Mafia'? Patronage and Protection in the Migrant Taxi Business," *African Studies* 49, no. 1 (January 1, 1990): 71–93.

and that this change was driven by the activism and creativity of workers, students, and taxi entrepreneurs.

What has received less attention from historians is what exactly this revolution in transportation looked like for ordinary commuters in South Africa's townships during the final decades of apartheid. The emergence and success of the privately-owned taxi industry was a challenge to the control of transportation by the state and white-owned business, but beyond its political valence it also had an effect on the daily lives, habits, and culture of Black travelers in South African cities. Townships like Mdantsane continued to be spread-out, and people continued to travel far for work and social gatherings. How did their travel change as taxis became more prevalent and the bus system ended through boycotts? While bus boycotts were a potent form of protest to apartheid and homeland governments, the new regime of taxis that replaced buses was not necessarily a liberation for all travelers. Taxi transport brought new opportunities for increased mobility, but also new costs and new dangers. The collective use that manyanos made of taxis in the late 1970s and the 1980s demonstrate the ways that commuters shaped transport in apartheid townships.

Mdantsane's tumultuous transportation history has been under-represented in scholarship on transportation and politics. Events in Mdantsane were easy to ignore, even for the most sympathetic outside observers in the 1970s and 1980s, because of its status as a homeland township, connected to a South African city but under the jurisdiction of a nominally-independent homeland government.[68] The 1983-85 bus boycott received relatively little attention in the English-language press, even from the local East London

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[68] Nicholas Haysom, "Ruling with the Whip: A Report on the Violation of Human Rights in the Ciskei" (University of the Witwatersrand: Centre for Applied Legal Studies, October 1983), 23.

Daily Dispatch.[69] Therefore, the history of the taxi industry in East London and

Mdantsane must be pieced together from limited local and national sources.

Because many taxi services were unlicensed, data about their historical growth is

hard to come by. Khosa claims that "the Black taxi industry has grown from a few dozen

six-seater sedan taxis in the early-1930s to over 80 000 ten- and sixteen-seater minibuses

in the 1990s."[70] The limited evidence from East London supports this claim about the

1930s. In 1936, for example, E.H. Maxakato placed advertisements for his Duncan

Village taxi in the local paper *Umlindi we Nyanga*, which suggests that his taxi was a

unique form of transport not commonly known or used by people on a daily basis, and

likely booked for specific trips rather than plying popular commuter routes all day long.[71]

Over the next five decades the taxi industry grew rapidly. By 1983, industry observers

estimated that South Africa had 18,000 legally licensed minibus taxis and a further

64,000 unlicensed minibus taxis.[72] Likely there were tens of thousands more smaller

sedan taxis.[73] The majority of these taxi owners were Black, and most were small-scale

entrepreneurs who owned a few vehicles each.[74] Certainly, by the mid-1970s the taxi

industry in townships was part of a new wave of protest against the state-subsidized bus

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[69] Based on the SALDRU newspaper clipping collection, which collected transportation-related articles from all of South Africa's major English-language newspapers including the *Daily Dispatch*. In 1983-84, fare disputes and bus boycott negotiations in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth received extensive coverage, while the complex violence of the Mdantsane bus boycott was barely covered. As Haysom notes, this was because the Ciskei government closely controlled the entry of journalists and researchers from South Africa.

[70] Khosa, "Accumulation and Labour Relations in the Taxi Industry," 56.

[71] *Umlindi we Nyanga*, 15 January 1936; 15 February 1936.

[72] "Black Taxis: a way through the maze," *Financial Mail* 10 February 1984. SALDRU Transport General Collection.

[73] Sheryl Raise, "82 000 minibuses give unique national service," *The Star*, 22 August 1983. SALDRU Transportation General newspaper clippings collection.

[74] Khosa, "Accumulation and Labour Relations in the Taxi Industry"; Gibbs, "Becoming a 'Big Man' in Neo-Liberal South Africa."

companies that served the new townships being built far outside white cities in accordance with the Group Areas Act.

In 1974 Mdantsane residents began a boycott of Border Passenger Transportation Corporation (BPTC) buses. Leaders of the boycott were industrial workers inspired by recent strikes and boycotts by factory workers in Durban.[75] In early 1973, over 30,000 workers across multiple sectors went on strike in Durban, and achieved significant gains in pay and working conditions.[76] The unity and resolve of the workers took the government by surprise, and the strikes ushered in a new era of Black labor organizing that prepared the ground for the trade unions' leading role in the UDF in the 1980s.[77] In East London, Black workers at the General Motors automobile plant and other factories went on strike in July and August 1974. In late November 1974 the BPTC announced that it would increase fares between the township and the city by 10-18%, depending on the type of ticket. The most significant fare increases were for travel within the township: trips within Mdantsane would increase from four cents to six cents (an increase of 50%) and weekly ticket books for internal township trips would increase from 20 to 40 cents (an increase of 100%).[78] A boycott began on December 2. It was led by the factory workers who had been on strike several months before, and was widely supported by Mdantsane residents. Support for the boycott may have been strengthened by fact that

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[75] South African Labour History Project, "Lessons from the 1970s Struggles and Strikes in East London."

[76] Institute for Industrial Education, *The Durban Strikes 1973: Human Beings with Souls* (Johannesburg: Institute for Industrial Education, 1974).

[77] Grace Davie, "Strength in Numbers: The Durban Student Wages Commission, Dockworkers and the Poverty Datum Line, 1971-1973," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33, no. 2 (2007): 401–20; Steven Friedman, *Building Tomorrow Today: African Workers in Trade Unions 1970-1984* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986).

[78] "Bus Boycott as Fares Jump: police called in," *Daily Dispatch*, date unknown [possibly 3 December 1974]. Newspaper clipping reproduced in South African Labour History Project, "Lessons from the 1970s Struggles and Strikes in East London." CD-ROM, 2006.

local, internal township fares increased at a greater rate than township-city fares, meaning that students, the elderly, and all those who were not employed in the city were affected by the fare increases even more than city workers. According to eyewitness Nonda Payi, the bus boycott was spontaneous: "people were fed up with the transport increases," she reported, and needed no pamphlets, posters, or active organizing from labor leaders to join the boycott.[79]

Taxis in Mdantsane supported the boycott (and made themselves more attractive to commuters) by lowering their fares for internal township trips from 15 to 10 cents, and fares for township-to-city trips from 30 to 25 cents.[80] Taxis were therefore still much more expensive than the bus, but some boycotting commuters used them. Others walked or stood in long lines at the train station to catch the infrequent train service into East London.[81]

The BPTC entered negotiations with representatives of the boycotters to address commuter complaints, but ultimately the boycott was resolved when Lennox Sebe, Chief Minister of the Ciskei, intervened and claimed to speak on behalf of the Ciskei people. Sebe claimed that the true cause of commuters' dissatisfaction was the fact that the bus company was white-owned.[82] Sebe requested that the BPTC leave Mdantsane, and initiated a deal for the Ciskei government to take over the nearly-bankrupt bus company

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[79] Nonda Payi, Interview at NUMSA [National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa] Offices, East London[?], interview by E.D., September 9, 2005, South African Labour History Project.
[80] "Deadlock in bus boycott talks?" *Daily Dispatch*, date unknown [December 1974 or January 1975]. Newspaper clipping reproduced in South African Labour History Project, "Lessons from the 1970s Struggles and Strikes in East London." CD-ROM, 2006.
[81] "Free buses, but boycott goes on," *Daily Dispatch*, date unknown [December 1974]. Newspaper clipping reproduced in South African Labour History Project. CD-ROM, 2006.
[82] "Politics behind bus boycott, says bus workers' leader," *Daily Dispatch*, date unknown [late December 1974]. Newspaper clipping reproduced in South African Labour History Project. CD-ROM, 2006.

with the financial support of the state-sponsored Xhosa Development Corporation.[83]

When the company take-over was finalized in mid-January 1975 Sebe proclaimed a

victory by "the people" over white economic domination. After announcing that fares on

the new Ciskei Transportation Corporation (CTC) buses would return to pre-boycott

rates, Sebe promptly commanded commuters to return to the buses, threatening police

force if they continued the boycott. L.F. Siyo, the Ciskei Minister of the Interior, also

suggested that "pirate" (that is, unregistered) taxis would be shut down in order to force

commuters to use the bus.[84] Armed men (employed by the Ciskei government and factory

owners, it was popularly believed) forced some reluctant commuters to board the CTC

buses, and the boycott petered out at the end of January 1974.[85]

Government subsidies allowed the new CTC to continue and even expand its

service at the old fare rates, and after January 1974 bus transportation continued to be the

main form of public transit in Mdantsane. Over the next decade, however, the bus system

continued to disappoint township residents. Since Sebe had personally taken credit for the

creation of the CTC, the bus system's inadequacies came to be associated with general

dissatisfaction with his Ciskei regime, which had been grated nominal independence from

South Africa as a "homeland" state in 1981.[86] By 1980, approximately 50,000 commuters

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[83] "Quit Mdantsane, Sebe tells bus company," *Daily Dispatch*, date unknown [January 1975]. Newspaper clipping reproduced in South African Labour History Project. CD-ROM, 2006.

[84] "Sebe government to take over buses," *Daily Dispatch*, date unknown; "Siyo blames CNP for bus boycott," *Daily Dispatch*, date unknown. Newspaper clipping reproduced in South African Labour History Project. CD-ROM, 2006.

[85] Payi, Interview at NUMSA [National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa] Offices, East London[?].

[86] McCarthy and Swilling, "The Apartheid City and the Politics of Bus Transportation.," 393.

rode on the CTC's 276 buses every day, and those who commuted between Mdantsane and East London spent between two and three hours traveling each day.[87]

Dissatisfaction with this bus service was heightened by the growing availability of taxis as a more convenient alternative to the buses. In 1977 the South African government changed regulations for taxi licenses, allowing vehicles with a taxi license to drive without a meter, and to pick up multiple passengers at different points. This effectively legalized the system already used by "pirate" or unlicensed taxis in townships. The 1977 legislation also allowed taxis to carry more than 4 passengers. This accommodated the new 16-seater minibuses being introduced to South African roads at the time.[88] From this point, both sedans and minibuses could obtain taxi licenses. The minibuses became colloquially known across South Africa as *kombis* (sometimes spelled *combi*). Sedan taxis became known, at least in Xhosa-speaking areas, as *amaphela* ("cockroaches" in isiXhosa). After 1977, then, both amaphela and increasingly kombis, were able to drive around the streets of Mdantsane, finding the most popular routes of travel, and picking up and depositing passengers along these routes.

These legislative and technological changes set the stage for a new and more violent bus boycott in Mdantsane that began in mid-July 1983. As before, this boycott was initiated because of a fare increase, but was connected to events in townships in other parts of the country.[89] The introduction of the tricameral Parliament in 1983, which was

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[87] Haysom, "Ruling with the Whip: A Report on the Violation of Human Rights in the Ciskei," 24; McCarthy and Swilling, "The Apartheid City and the Politics of Bus Transportation.," 392; For vivid descriptions of Black commuters' gruelling schedules in other cities, see Joseph Lelyveld, *Move Your Shadow: South Africa Black and White* (New York: Time Books, 1985), 129–37.

[88] Ingle, "An Historical Overview of Problems Associated with the Formalization of the South African Minibus Taxi Industry," 71.

[89] "Bus fares up July 13," *Daily Dispatch*, 5 July 1983. SALDRU Transportation General newspaper clippings collection.

intended to divert apartheid's opponents by providing limited representation for Indian and Coloured voters, in fact galvanized new grassroots resistance and led to the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF). As an umbrella group, the UDF brought together diverse civic groups and unions, and reflected the willingness of black South Africans to take organized, militant action against the state.[90] Although the UDF did not arrive in the Eastern Cape until late 1983, Mdantsane was undoubtedly influenced by these national events.[91] The zeal of Mdantsane boycotters was sharpened by fare disputes and bus boycotts that had occurred in Cape Town and Johannesburg in January-March of 1983.[92] Moreover, bus boycotts around the country in 1983 occurred at a time when the government was seriously considering revising its 1977 taxi legislation to exclude kombis from taxi licenses. The Welgemoed Commission on transportation, which published its report in late 1982, advised the government to make kombis operate like buses, with a scheduled route and pre-paid tickets.[93] Across the country, then, conflicts between commuters and state-subsidized bus companies over fares were also entangled in disputes between bus companies and taxis (led by the South African Black Taxi Association) over the right of taxi-owners to ply their trade in the townships.[94]

After the announcement of fare increases in Mdantsane in July 1983, a popular boycott of the buses began. Boycott organizers came from among "highly politicized

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[90] Seekings, *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983-1991.*

[91] Swilling, "'The Buses Smell of Blood': The East London Boycott," 64.

[92] Joshua Raboroko, "Student Fares Up," *Sowetan,* 4 January 1983; Ryland Fisher , "Suspense over Busfare Talks," *Cape Times*, 12 March 1983; "Putco clarifies stand: Bus company denies instigating kombi ban," *Sowetan*, 22 March 1983; "Black Taxis under siege," *Financial Mail*, 15 April 1983. SALDRU Transportation General newspaper clippings collection.

[93] Khosa, "'The Travail of Travelling,'" 22–23; Simon Willson, "Naamsa backs minibuses," *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 January 1983.

[94] Khosa, "The Travail of Traveling,"; "Putco clarifies stand: Bus company denies instigating kombi ban," *Sowetan*, 22 March 1983.

workers" of the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU).[95] The boycott was strengthened by efforts of the Transport Allied Workers Union (TAWU) and SAAWU to organize bus drivers and mechanics against low pay and poor working conditions.[96] The Ciskei government blamed the unions for instigating the boycott, and began months of increasingly harsh measures to stop the boycott and save the CTC from bankruptcy. This included intimidation and violence against kombi taxi drivers to prevent them from carrying passengers and competing with the bus service.[97] In early August 1983 the Ciskei government declared a curfew in Mdantsane. Besides hindering meetings between boycott organizers, the curfew (which ended at 4am) was intended to prevent people from rising early to walk to their jobs. Those breaking the curfew or suspected of participating in the boycott were arrested and detained. By the second week of the curfew regulations over 800 people had been arrested.[98] Police and hired vigilantes from outside the township also tried to prevent commuters from boarding taxis or trains. The moment that made national headlines was the "Egerton massacre" on August 4, when Ciskei police opened fire on commuters at the Egerton train station, killing 15 and wounding many more.[99]

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[95] Swilling, "'The Buses Smell of Blood': The East London Boycott," 50–51.

[96] "Unionists detained," *Sowetan*, 3 August 1983; "Ciskei detains Saawu men," *Daily Dispatch*, 5 August 1983; "21 detained in Ciskei," *Daily Dispatch*, 6 August 1983. SALDRU Totalitarianism Detentions newspaper clipping collection.

[97] "Taxi operator obtains interim order," *Daily Dispatch*, 9 August 1983. SALDRU Transport General newspaper clipping collection.

[98] Koos Coetzee and Benito Phillips, "800 detained: Massive Ciskei bid to smash Mdantsane bus boycott," *City Press*, 14 August 1983.

[99] Haysom, "Ruling with the Whip: A Report on the Violation of Human Rights in the Ciskei," 38.

The state of emergency and curfew regulations continued in Mdantsane for much of 1983, and the boycott was not officially resolved until early 1985.[100] However, the Ciskei government had effectively been defeated much earlier, as the CTC went bankrupt early in the boycott. Taxis had become the de-facto mode of public transit, and the CTC never resumed its old routes.[101] The new ascendant position of taxis was reinforced when the South African government (partly through the efforts of the well-organized South African Black Taxi Association and its leaders Jimmy Sojane and TJ Ngcoya)[102] did not implement the licensing restrictions recommended by the Welgemoed Commission, and instead in 1987 passed new legislation to further de-regulate the taxi industry.[103]

Contemporary newspaper coverage of the boycotts, and much of the scholarship on South Africa's transportation history, focuses on the role of unions, workers, taxi owners, and the government in the boycotts. However, some newspaper evidence and oral histories provide evidence of how the boycotts affected daily life and travel for ordinary people, including women generally and manyano members specifically. While the union leaders and taxi owners whom the Ciskei government accused of organizing the boycott were male, female commuters were equally affected by the arrests, violence, and intimidation used by the Ciskei police and their hired vigilantes, known as the "Green Berets."[104] Leslie Xinwa, a reporter for the East London *Daily Dispatch*, recounted his personal experience of arrest during the 1983 boycott. Xinwa was arrested by Ciskei

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[100] "Talks bring end to EL bus boycott," *Argus*, 18 March 1985. SALDRU Transport General newspaper clipping collection.

[101] McCarthy and Swilling, "The Apartheid City and the Politics of Bus Transportation.," 394–95.

[102] Simon Willson, "Naamsa backs minibuses," *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 January 1983; "Black Taxis under siege," *Financial Mail*, 15 April 1983; Phil Mtimkulu, "Taxis chasing time," *Sowetan*, 20 July 1983; "Nine-seater mini-buses can be used as taxis, operators told," *Natal Mercury* 19 September 1985. SALDRU Transportation General newspaper clipping collection.

[103] Khosa, "'The Travail of Travelling,'" 23.

[104] Haysom, "Ruling with the Whip: A Report on the Violation of Human Rights in the Ciskei," 10.

police on his way to work one morning; the police claimed that the time was before 4:00am, and that Xinwa and others on the street had broken curfew. There were taken to the central Mdantsane police station along with 200 others arrested that morning for the same offence. Xinwa's description of his time in the police station yard with his fellow detainees demonstrates how the boycott repression affected everyone in Mdantsane. Many of those arrested were women domestic workers. Those who had left home early for school and shopping had also been arrested. For example, Xinwa saw "April Poni and his wife, Doris, and I was to see many more couples. In some cases it was father, mother and child."[105]

Oral history evidence from manyano members similarly shows how women's work, and their manyano activity, was affected by the bus boycotts, especially the 1983 boycott. Prieska Mpetsheni recalls that during the boycotts she was afraid to board the bus to her employers' house (she was a domestic worker). Sometimes she took the bus anyways, taking the risk that the bus might be stoned by boycott-enforcers . Sometimes she stayed over at her employers' house rather than take a bus or taxi back to her home in the township, although this meant having to skip church and manyano meetings.[106]

In interviews, many manyano members today do not recall being personally interested in the boycott; when asked about their experience of the boycott they expressed their surprise and dismay at the violence. Manyano members presented themselves as having been apolitical, and that their main concern at the time was simply to keep out of

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[105] Leslie Xinwa, "Arrest: time and innocence discounted," *Daily Dispatch*, 12 August 1983. SALDRU Totalitarianism detentions newspaper clipping collection.
[106] Mpetsheni, Interview in Stirling, East London.

trouble.[107] For example, Nozuko Menzeleli recalled that members of her manyano walked to meetings rather than take a taxi or bus during the 1983 boycott:

> It [the boycott] was too bad, but it was not something that prevented us from performing our daily duties as a church. We would even travel by foot if needs be, we did not let anything to stand in our way… [we] would walk to where ever we needed to be at that moment and we did not mind at all.[108]

While the Ciskei police saw travelers on foot as active partisans in the boycott and sometimes arrested them, Menzeleli represented herself and fellow manyano members as bystanders to the boycott and its politics; they walked simply to avoid trouble with either police or boycott-enforcers who might have attacked them if they had taken the bus.[109]

This perspective contrasts with that of a male church leader, Rev. Dias Buso, a worker at the Mercedes Benz plant and an active union member. Buso spoke of his efforts to "conscientise" the people of Mdantsane (including presumably those in his own church).[110] He believed that people "came together as a community and decided not to board any those buses." From Buso's perspective as a church leader, industrial worker, and union activist, the "bus boycott itself made most of the people recognise that they can fight for their right…I think that bus boycott in a way, was a stepping stone to unite the community. They were liberating themselves in all spheres of life."[111] However, the

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[107] Mpetsheni; Magqaza, Interview at First Mdantsane Baptist Church; Lebetloane, Interview in Dorchester Heights, East London.

[108] Menzeleli and Mr. Menzeleli, Interview in Mdantsane NU3.

[109] Menzeleli and Mr. Menzeleli.

[110] "Conscientization," based on the pedagogy of Paulo Freire, was taken up by Black Consciousness and Black Theology practitioners in South Africa as a way for people to understand the influence of apartheid racist injustice in their daily lives. Allan Aubrey Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence: A Socio-Ethical Study on Black Theology and Black Power* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015); Leslie Anne Hadfield, *Liberation and Development: Black Consciousness Community Programs in South Africa* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2016); Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[111] Dias Buso, Interview in unknown location, interview by E.D., September 7, 2005, South African Labour History Project. This interview was conducted as part of a research project about the 1973-74 boycott, and the interviewer's questions are about the 1973-74 boycott. However, it is clear from the interview recording

evidence from manyano members shows that not everyone in Mdantsane experienced the boycotts as a united community effort, and that the "liberation" from the bus system was complex, and came with new challenges for commuters.

Manyano women's apparent disinterest in the liberation politics of the bus boycotts did not mean that they were disconnected from the reality of township life. Rather, their ambivalent assessments of the boycotts reveal a critique of the transportation industry that went beyond simple opposition to the Ciskei-government-owned bus system. For the taxi revolution, while it was a victory for Black entrepreneurs, did not necessarily improve transportation for ordinary township commuters. Khosa argues that while the deregulation of taxis after 1987 "seemed to have 'succeeded' in promoting a free market economic state among some African traders ... [these policies] fell short of offering practical ways of reducing commuter distance and of providing cheaper fares to the majority of the African working class."[112] Khosa's findings indicate a need for historians to understand how commuters adapted their travel to the new challenges of taxis.

Manyano members had mixed reactions to the taxi system. Some welcomed the new conveniences of the taxis, and found them affordable. Nozuko Menzeleli recalled that in the 1980s taxi fare was 1 Rand, which she considered fair, and not too different from the bus fare.[113] Wallace Daka, whose late wife had been an active manyano member,

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that Buso is speaking about the events of 1983: he describes the political situation of the Ciskei as it was in the 1980s, refers to the Ciskei police violence, and specifies that he is speaking about the boycott that happened after the BPTC was replaced by the CTC.

[112] Khosa, "'The Travail of Travelling,'" 25.

[113] Menzeleli and Mr. Menzeleli, Interview in Mdantsane NU3 Menzeleli's memory is confirmed by reporting in the Daily Dispatch, which in 1985 reported that fares from Mdantsane to East London were 80 cents during the week, and 1 Rand on weekends. Internal township taxi fares were about half that price.

recalled that the boycotts and the new taxis were good for them. Daka perceived the boycott as a form of resistance against Ciskei Bantustan leaders "who oppress us… but through that oppression we succeeded." The taxis were a good thing for him and his wife, he recalled: "After we boycotted the buses the taxis took over. Things became easy now, because taxis were everywhere and easily accessible."[114]

Others disagreed with this positive assessment of taxis, and especially object to the new expenses. Orienda Magqaza, a member of the same church as Daka, certainly had a very different opinion of taxis. The buses worked well, she thought: "It was just frequent. You wouldn't stand many minutes in the bus stop to wait."[115] Most importantly, she thought, the bus fares were much cheaper than the taxis. When the buses were gone, manyano members who were unemployed could no longer afford to travel to Thursday manyano meetings. Their manyano membership declined in the immediate aftermath of the boycott, she remembered, because some "would prefer to jump Thursday to attend [the main church service] Sunday."[116] Indeed, Jiki Lebetloane believed that the whole bus boycott had been organized by taxi owners as a way to keep customers despite their higher prices. "Because the buses were more cheaper than the taxis," she said, "that's why they [i.e., the boycotters] made that chaos there." The taxis might have been more convenient, she admitted, but the buses "were cheaper than the taxis. That's why the taxis were so cross."[117]

"Fuel price causes raised taxi fares," *Daily Dispatch*, 12 February 1985. SALDRU Transportation General newspaper clipping collection. .

[114] Daka, Interview in Mdantsane NU6.

[115] Magqaza, Interview at First Mdantsane Baptist Church.

[116] Magqaza.

[117] Lebetloane, Interview in Dorchester Heights, East London.

Another problem of the new taxi system was its increased dangers. The bus

system had its dangers in frequent accidents and the robberies that occurred at bus stops.

These dangers were also present in the taxi transport system, and were compounded by

violence that occurred within the taxi itself. In the 1980s, taxi drivers and taxi

associations became involved in complex networks of violence linked to political

uprising against the apartheid state and to state repression. Township youths sometimes

commandeered taxis to take them to political funerals, or to transport them for purposes

of "thuggery."[118] The powerful taxi associations that regulated routes and fares in the

large cities and townships also engaged in violence, as they fought over the most

lucrative routes. The apartheid state stoked the fires of these conflicts, according to Jackie

Dugard, as part of its attempt to destabilize Black communities in the lead-up to the

transition.[119] This violence in the taxi ranks made travel dangerous for ordinary

commuters, and for female travelers was compounded by the culture of aggressive

masculinity embraced by taxi drivers and fare-collectors that permitted sexual aggression

towards female passengers.[120]

Despite their expense and potential danger, however, taxis also provided new

opportunities for travel and manyano socialization. They allowed ordinary rank-and-file

members to travel within and beyond the township for manyano events, the kind of

frequent and long-distance travel that had in earlier decades been reserved for leaders

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[118] "Cabbies take stand against thugs," *Sowetan*, 16 October 1985. SALDRU Transportation General newspaper clipping collection.

[119] Jackie Dugard, "From Low Intensity War to Mafia War: Taxi Violence in South Africa (1987 - 2000)," Violence and Transition Series (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2001), 10, http://www.csvr.org.za/docs/taxiviolence/fromlowintensity.pdf.

[120] Gibbs, "Becoming a 'Big Man' in Neo-Liberal South Africa"; Gillian Eagle and Kgomotso Kwele, "'You Just Come to School, If You Made It, Its Grace': Young Black Women's Experiences of Violence in Utilizing Public 'Minibus Taxi' Transport in Johannesburg, South Africa," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 2019.

alone. The possibilities of taxi travel began to be realized by manyanos in the mid-1970s, as the taxi industry grew, and oral history evidence suggests that by the 1980s and certainly after the bus boycott, taxis were facilitating increasingly frequent travel for manyano members within and beyond the township.

Taxis allowed for stronger relationships between manyanos in the township and those in the city. Connections between people who remained in East London (either awaiting removal to Mdantsane or, for the select group with somewhat more secure "Section 10" rights in Ziphunzana and Duncan Village) and those in Mdantsane had weakened in the 1960s and early 1970s as the removals proceeded quickly. Frances John recalled that when people were first removed to Mdantsane, they found it difficult to return for visits to their old friends in the city. Taxis were expensive, and people still had to walk long distances through dangerous "bushy" areas before they could catch one of the infrequent taxis.[121] But as taxis became more numerous, and kombis appeared that could transport more people at once, travel between the township and the town became more convenient, even if more expensive. Nozuko Menzeleli's manyano at the Mdantsane National Baptist Church had walked between Mdantsane and Gompo for events during the 1983 bus boycott, but once the boycott was over they were able to take a taxi. Taxis allowed manyano members from her church in Mdantsane to maintain a close relationship with their sister manyano in the Gompo neighbourhood of East London:

> We loved our manyano very much; as result, we did not mind traveling, it
> was not a big deal to us, instead we were always so excited for our meetings.
> We would even go to the funerals on that side of town, that's how valuable

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[121] John and Doans, Interview at Sister Aidan Memorial Centre, St. Peter Claver Church, Duncan Village, East London.

our manyano was to us. We would travel back and forth from here to Gompo just to conduct prayer sessions every day… transport was not a problem as we would hire Mr. Mhlanga's taxi to take us there each time as it would accommodate us all.[122]

As Menzeleli's anecdote indicates, the value of taxis for manyanos was not only that they made travel between the city and the township faster and more convenient; unlike buses taxis could be chartered or booked for a group trip. Her specific mention of Mr. Mhlanga's taxi suggests the possibility of long-standing special arrangments between taxi owners and particular manyano groups, where each party could trust the other and rely on them for a regular source of transportation and income. By clubbing together to book a taxi all together, manyanos also made it possible for their poorer members to travel by taxi, as members were usually expected to contribute funds for group costs according to their means, those with jobs and wealthier families contributing more than those who did not have steady income.[123]

Clubbing together for a taxi also addressed the safety concerns that women had with travel in the township. Frances John, a member of the Catholic Women's League from St Peter Claver Church, remembers that her group used to get together and take a taxi in to Mdantsane. The manyano at St Peter Claver included both Black African and Coloured members, and many of them were nervous to visit Mdantsane, especially the Coloured members who because of their skin colour and accent would stand out as outsiders. But, John says, when taxis were available "we would stick together, all in one group, take the taxi straight to church." It was the support of the St Peter Claver manyano branch, John believed, that allowed the Mdantsane Catholic churches to raise the money

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[122] Menzeleli and Mr. Menzeleli, Interview in Mdantsane NU3.
[123] Magqaza, Interview at First Mdantsane Baptist Church.

to construct two new churches in the township (in 1974 and 1977).[124] In the era of the

BPTC and CTC buses, which had been perceived as slow and inconvenient and

dangerous (if relatively inexpensive), manyano members had not travelled frequently

between the town and the township for special events like funerals and fundraisers.

Mamcwerha Ngcayiya recalls that when parishioners were first relocated away from St

Phillip's Anglican church in Duncan Village (a process that began in 1963), only those

few people with private cars returned to visit for services.[125] The possibility for travelling

safely (and sociably) together in a taxi allowed manyano members from St. Phillips and

Holy Cross (the first Anglican church built in Mdantsane) to visit each other for

funerals.[126]

Finally, taxis changed the nature of travel, for manyanos and other organizations,

by facilitating long-distance travel for rank-and-file members of these organizations. In

the past, only senior members of manyanos and other social organizations had travelled

regionally or nationally for special events. A manyano leader, who was generally the wife

of a minister, might visit manyano branches in other towns or regions when her husband

also travelled for church conferences. The East London local social news covered in the

Daily Dispatch's weekly African Edition (1963-66) shows how in the 1960s, the travel of

manyano members to regional conferences and events was restricted to a few leaders. For

example, a Ciskeian region conference of the Bantu Presbyterian Mother's Union and

[124] John and Doans, Interview at Sister Aidan Memorial Centre, St. Peter Claver Church, Duncan Village, East London; Helena Glanville, *"Growing in Faith": A Historical Sketch of the Diocese of Port Elizabeth, 1847-2007* (Editions du Signe, 2007).

[125] Margaret Ngcayiya and Mazoe Nopece, Interview at St Phillip's Church, Gompo, East London, trans. Phelisa Mtima, November 15, 2019.

[126] Margaret Ngcayiya, Interview in Ziphunzana, East London, trans. Phelisa Mtima, January 29, 2020.

Girl's Christian Union involved only three representatives from East London.[127] Women

who joined manyanos several decades later remembered conferences differently, as

events where large numbers of members attended and participated. For Methodist

manyano conferences in the Eastern Cape in the 1980s and 1990s, local branches would

charter a taxi for all their members, and everyone would contribute to the cost.[128]

Manyano members might travel long distances together even outside of annual or

quarterly conferences. In the early 1970s First Mdantsane Baptist church founded a new

congregation at Chalumna, a rural settlement some 50 kilometers beyond Mdantsane. The

Chalumna church was very small, but the greater proportion of its members were women,

who had soon formed a "Women's Department," as they called the manyano in their

denomination. Visits between the two congregations were frequent, and the manyanos

from both the Chalumna and Mdantsane churches would travel to the other's church on

special occasions.[129]

Taxis also allowed for more solo long-distance travel by manyano members, even

women who were not ministers' wives. The experience of Beatrice Tyesi illustrates this

well. Tyesi first joined the manyano in the Assemblies of God church when she was

newly married in 1956. The family moved from Port Elizabeth to Mthatha, capital of the

Transkei homeland, in 1967, where Tyesi raised many children and worked in her

husband's backyard mechanic shop. Although she had little formal education and her

husband was not even a church member, she eventually gained a leadership position in

the manyano. In the 1980s, she won her husband's permission to begin traveling for the

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[127] "Presbyterian women's union hold meeting," *Daily Dispatch*, 13 April 1965.

[128] Frances Virginia Dynjwa and Theresa Sihele, Interview in Vincent, East London, February 7, 2020; Fezeka Mantakana, Phone interview, February 6, 2020.

[129] Chalumna Baptist Women's Department', Group Interview at Chalumna Baptist Church, Chalumna, Eastern Cape, November 19, 2019; Daka, Interview in Mdantsane NU6.

manyano, to oversee local branches across the Transkei. "They would send the leading women all over, they would go all over on visits… to enforce uniformity so the whole thing moved together at the same pace." Tyesi travelled by bus, or by kombi. Her travel was partly paid by the manyano but sometimes she made journeys from her own initiative paid out of her own pocket. Her daughter recalled that "her travelling was because she wanted to do it, not because she was mandated by the church."[130] Tyesi's travel around towns and rural areas in the Transkei was facilitated by kombis that operated long-distance routes throughout the South African countryside. Many of their customers were workers in urban areas returning to visit family in rural areas.[131] The existence of the kombis, their wide range, also gave new opportunities to enthusiastic manyano members like Tyesi, who did not have a private car.

Conclusion

The history of transportation in Mdantsane, and in particular the history of manyano women's mobility, demonstrates the close and complex relationship between urban travel and social and religious life. Mdantsane's history is also part of a national story, and the timeline of removals, struggles and strikes parallels similar events in many other South African townships. This chapter has used oral histories to reveal manyano women's creative travel strategies and complex experiences of township transportation, which stand as a counterpoint to the histories of township transportation that focus on male workers, activists, and entrepreneurs.

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[130] Beatrice Tyesi and Ndileka Tyesi, Interview in Cambridge, East London, November 25, 2019.

[131] Gibbs, "Becoming a 'Big Man' in Neo-Liberal South Africa"; Bank, "The Making of the Qwaqwa 'Mafia'?"

Like other townships created in the 1960s and 1970s, Mdantsane's residents experienced the trauma and disruption of forced removals. People who had been resident in older urban locations close to city centers, like East London's Duncan Village, found their community structures splintered by the move to new planned townships.[132] Manyano history in Mdantsane shows how women created new organization structures to regroup after forced removals. In fact, in Mdantsane manyanos grew because they were able to attract and reward the efforts of a new generation of young women.

Mdantsane was also similar to other South African township in that transportation infrastructure was key to the maintenance of the system of apartheid urbanism. This apartheid urbanism was challenged in the 1970s and 1980s by commuter boycotts and the innovative adaptation of minibuses as taxis by township entrepreneurs. Oral history evidence from manyano members offers a unique perspective on the experience of travel for ordinary people, not just the male workers, activists, and entrepreneurs who have been the protagonists of South African transportation history. The stories of manyano members show how women's religious and social groups were negatively affected by the expense and danger of the taxi transportation system, but also took advantage of the rise of kombi transport in the 1980s and early 90s to travel further and expand their organizational networks. Scholars of African history have argued elsewhere that ordinary commuters, including women, shape transportation history.[133]

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[132] Philip Bonner and Noor Nieftagodien, *Kathorus: A History* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 2001); Bill Freund, *Outsiders and Insiders: The Indian Working Class of Durban, 1910-1990* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995); Philip Bonner and Lauren Segal, *Soweto: A History* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 1998).

[133] Mutongi, *Matatu: A History of Popular Transport in Nairobi*; Joshua R. Grace, "Heroes of the Road: Race, Gender and the Politics of Mobility in Twentieth Century Tanzania," *Africa* 83, no. 3 (2013): 403–25.

The history of transportation in Mdantsane demonstrates the effect that township transportation troubles had on the lives of ordinary people. At the same time it also reveals the creative adaptations that people made to their social lives and daily habits in order to accommodate the challenges and opportunities of a changing transportation system. As the largest formal women's social organizations, who saw themselves as playing an important public social role, manyanos are a valuable gendered lens through which to examine this social history of township transportation. This chapter echoes the claims made by recent social histories of African urban transportation, that the experience of travel was complex; that it is intimately connected with changing regimes of politics and technology; and that commuters as well as government and transportation owners play a role in shaping the nature of travel in twentieth-century Africa.

CHAPTER 6:

"This maternal instinct, we lived it": Manyanos and the Transformations of a City at the End of Apartheid, 1983-1994

On a chilly June afternoon, a group of women dressed in the uniforms of the African Methodist

Episcopal (AME) manyano walked towards a Mdantsane high school. On the school grounds,

the women called students to the school's assembly hall—or perhaps some students were already

in the hall, making speeches or singing protest songs. Once students had congregated, the

manyano women led them in prayers generic enough to avoid censure from any police who

might appear, but still conveying the message of solidarity against apartheid that was the purpose

of the meeting. The date, of course, was June 16, the anniversary of the start of the Soweto

uprising in 1976, when Black schoolchildren protested against the use of Afrikaans in

classrooms, which symbolized the discriminatory effects of the Bantu Education system. Police

killed more than 150 protestors during the brutal repression of the Soweto uprising.[1] Despite

press censorship and police repression, June 16 remained a significant anniversary for protestors

across South Africa's townships in the 1980s.[2] According to the two AME leaders who told me

this story, their manyano organized these June 16 prayer events annually throughout the 1980s.

The manyano leaders who told me this story presented their primary motive not as

commemorating a tragedy or protesting ongoing apartheid repression, but rather appealing to the

interests of youth. Manyano women feared that students would exchange church affiliations for

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[1] Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, *The Soweto Uprisings: Counter-Memories of June 1976* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1988); Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, "'I Saw a Nightmare...': Doing Violence to Memory: The Soweto Uprising, June 16, 1976" (Ph.D., University of Minnesota, 1999).

[2] Ali Khangela Hlongwane, "Commemoration, Memory and Monuments in the Contested Language of Black Liberation: The South African Experience," *Journal of Pan African Studies* 2, no. 4 (2008): 135; Rachel E. Johnson, "'The Day That Fell Off the Calendar': 16 June, South African Newspapers, and the Making of a National Holiday, 1977–1996," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 42, no. 6 (2016): 1143–60.

political ones, and so, according to Nonzwakazi Mpahlaza: "we had to go and come gather them… We had to observe some of what was then current. On June 16 we had to be so active in that time, go to the schools, pray, assemble them one by one. We had to go to the hall and organize them."[3] Mpahlaza's explanation suggests that the AME women's primary motive in organizing the June 16 prayer event was making the church appear relevant to young, politically active students.

This story is indicative of some of the broad trends, and internal tensions, of manyano activity in late-apartheid South Africa. Manyano women were present at the sites of the popular urban struggle against apartheid (like schools) but were sometimes reluctant to identify their activities as explicitly "political." Sometimes even church buildings, the solid and secure corporate homes that manyano women had helped to construct, became sites of late-apartheid urban conflict. One witness recalled that Mdantsane's Nondlwana Methodist Church was "like a battlefield" during a funeral in the late 1980s for schoolchildren killed by police.[4] During the uncertain and often violent process of mass protest, state repression, diplomacy, and international pressure that ultimately led to the first democratic elections in 1994, manyano women cautiously tried out new practices of public motherhood to keep up with the agenda of the anti-apartheid and liberation movement.

However, manyano women's narration of their role in the realm of formal political struggle is only part of the story. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, economic and social changes within South African society were transforming the very definition of manyano membership. This chapter examines how these economic, demographic changes played out on the physical landscape of late-apartheid East London and Mdantsane. The two most significant areas of urban

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[3] Nomathemba Zwelibanzi and Nonzwakazi Mpahlaza, Phone interview, March 17, 2020.
[4] Swazi Marambana and Thoko Mbekela, Interview in East London, March 14, 2022.

change in late-apartheid cities were the informal settlements that grew on the edges of townships, and the formerly-white city suburbs which began to receive a new population of educated, aspiringly middle class Black urbanites. Informal settlements and township edges became home to unemployed or underemployed new urbanites. Pentecostal and African Independent Churches (AICs) were particularly successful in these new urban settlements, and their members worked hard to fund permanent buildings. These buildings gave manyano women a secure space in which to cultivate the long-standing manyano practices of prayer and preaching, which allowed them to build up their standing as mothers in the wider urban community. At the same time, a different cohort of educated, upwardly mobile, professional women began to try out different practices of manyano motherhood that sometimes took them into formerly-white parts of the city. These women wanted to make manyano activity more outward-looking and practical, and were sometimes critical of what they perceived as the piety and subservience of existing manyano practice. The contrast between the prayer-focused mothers in the new township churches, and the focus on community charity by more educated, mainline manyano mothers was indicative of emerging class differences among Black urbanites at the end of apartheid, which were linked to changes in urban residential patterns.

To make these arguments, this chapter draws on oral history interviews, newspapers, and archival evidence. For contextual information about events in East London and the Ciskei during the transition era, I relied primarily on the extensive news clipping collection created Southern African Labour and Development Unit.[5] To understand broader South African discussions of

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[5] SALDRU, a project housed at the University of Cape Town from 1975-2000, clipped articles from major English-language newspapers and sorted them under subject headings. The digitized collections are available at: https://saldru.lib.msu.edu/. In researching this chapter, I read through the following collections: Church & State 1984, 1986, 1989; Homelands-Ciskei General 1983a, 1984, 1986, 1990-1991, 1991-1992, and 1993; SA Council & Churches 1987-1994.

women's liberation in the church and in society at the end of apartheid, I examined the feminist newsletter *SPEAK* and the *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa*, both of which have been digitized by Digital Innovation South Africa (DISA).[6]

In researching this chapter, I also searched for archival records in the national (Pretoria) and provincial (Qonce/King William's Town) archives related to urban planning, church building permits, and township governance for East London and Mdantsane. However, archival records for the Ciskei, and Mdantsane in particular, are scarce for the later 1980s and 1990s. In the Pretoria National Archives, I found only a few files related to church building applications for the settlement of Needs Camp outside Mdantsane. Other records of the township's planning and administration may have been lost or misplaced in the administrative turmoil of late apartheid. The Ciskei state took over administration of Mdantsane from the Department of Cooperation and Development (formerly Bantu Administration and Development) in the early 1980s. On the demise of the Ciskei in 1994 the township became part of the new Eastern Cape province. As Sean Morrow and Luvuyo Wotshela demonstrate, the practical and political difficulties of records management at the end of apartheid meant that many Ciskei-era documents were destroyed or remain uncatalogued.[7] These gaps in government archives are matched by gaps in church archives. The records of the Queenstown Methodist manyano, discussed in previous chapters, have only been preserved up to 1965. The late apartheid and transition eras, therefore, present a particular challenge to historians.

This chapter is organized in four sections. The first section examines churches' involvement in the popular protests and political turmoil in cities, in the decade leading up to

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[6] Digital Innovation South Africa, https://disa.ukzn.ac.za/. Accessed January 30, 2023.
[7] Sean Morrow and Luvuyo Wotshela, "The State of the Archives and Access to Information," in *State of the Nation: South Africa 2004-2005*, ed. John Daniel, Roger Southall, and Jessica Lutchman (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2005), 319–20.

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1994. I discuss manyano women's reluctance to speak of their experiences of transition-era conflict. These silences and uncertainties are indicative of the traumatic effects of conflict on their communities, as well as the continuing legacy of transition era unrest in the city. The second section of the chapter focuses on the growth of informal urban settlements at the end of apartheid, and shows how poorer and newly-arrived urbanites built churches and improved their position in the city through manyano membership. The third shows how a different cohort of more educated, upwardly mobile women tried out new kinds of manyano work that took them into different parts of the city. These charitable projects had the potential to emphasize class and economic differences between women in different parts of the city. Finally, I discuss changes and debates about the definition of manyano motherhood in the late apartheid era, which were indicative of the distance between manyanos and more progressive voices for women's liberation.

Churches, township uprisings, and oral historical silences

Jacob Dlamini writes that townships were the "metaphorical black home in whose living room the post-apartheid imaginary was largely conceived by a revolutionary movement that never really moved out of its urban base."[8] In this metaphor of the township, churches were one of the household members sitting in the living room, trying to turn the post-apartheid imaginary into a reality. As the pillars of township congregations, manyano women were also involved in this struggle to define the future shape of the township, but their position as mothers made them hesitant to represent their work as explicitly political.

While township activists had led successful protests against local issues throughout the 1970s, the scale of resistance began to change in 1983. In that year, the government proposed to

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[8] Jacob Dlamini, *Native Nostalgia* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2009), 160–61.

establish a tricameral parliament with separate representation for white, coloured, and Asian voters, and to contain all African political rights within the homelands. Popular resistance to these proposals coalesced behind the United Democratic Front (UDF), whose formation was announced by Dutch Reformed minister Allan Boesak at a rally in August 1983. The UDF was a coalition of civic, trade union, religious, and student organizations who shared the broad desire for "a single, non-racial, unfragmented South Africa."[9] The UDF's broad aims and flexible structure allowed groups across the nation to connect local agendas to a national project of liberation.[10] The UDF's hope of building "people's power" in the townships was fulfilled, but also challenged, in the "township revolt" of the late 1980s. At some times and places, grassroots "street committees" and "people's courts" held sway, though UDF leadership was often playing catch-up rather than initiating these events.[11] In Duncan Village in East London, for instance, a popular uprising in 1985 allowed activists (operating as the Duncan Village Residents' Association) to take effective control of the location, a control that was made real and visible in the new informal shack housing that was constructed with the DVRA's blessing.[12] The government used a State of Emergency in 1986, and again in 1988, to bring the military into townships, but these measures did not completely quell protest. Through the early 1990s, Black townships remained sites of conflict between state security forces, liberation organizations including the ANC, PAC, and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), and local residents. While the

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[9] Thula Simpson, *A History of South Africa: From 1902 to the Present* (Cape Town: Penguin, 2021), 258–59; Ineke van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000).

[10] While the UDF was not a political party, in practice its leadership and affiliates were closely connected to the ANC, especially in the Eastern Cape and "Border" region that included the Ciskei. Jeremy Seekings, *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983-1991* (Cape Town; Oxford; Athens: David Philip : James Currey : Ohio University Press, 2000), 83–84.

[11] Seekings, 170–80.

[12] Leslie J. Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles : Contesting Power and Identity in a South African City* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 89–90; Lungisile Ntsebeza, "Youth in Urban African Townships, 1945-1992: A Case Study of the East London Townships" (Master of Arts, Durban, University of Natal, 1993), 130–57.

players in these conflicts differed in townships across the country, the government frequently used police or Military Intelligence agents to destabilize the ANC, its primary opponent.[13]

In this context of continuing violent conflict, church leaders took on a prominent role as advocates for peace during a transition to democracy. Until the late 1970s, the white ecclesiastical leadership of the Catholic and mainline Protestant churches had advocated a vague racial "reconciliation." But by the early 1980s, a growing cohort of Black clergy in the South African Council of Churches (SACC) expressed the need for real justice and regime change. Frank Chikane, a minister of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) and president of the SACC, co-authored the *Kairos Document* in 1985, which condemned apartheid as a heresy and called on Christians to actively work for regime change.[14] After this date, leaders of many mainline churches used the platforms of the SACC and UDF to vocally denounce apartheid and appeal for peace during a transition to democratic rule. Activist Black clergy were regularly detained by police, or had their homes firebombed. Some were targets of sophisticated assassination attempts that originated from high up in the state security apparatus. Chikane, for instance, narrowly escaped death in 1989 when the clothing in his luggage was dusted with a neurotoxin.[15]

While high-profile leaders like Chikane, Boesak, and Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu received much national and international media attention as spokesmen for the churches' anti-apartheid message, local clergy and congregations, including women's groups, also engaged in work towards ending apartheid and promoting peace, including in the local committees

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[13] Gary Kynoch, "Reassessing Transition Violence: Voices from South Africa's Township Wars, 1990-4," *African Affairs* 112, no. 447 (2013): 283–303; Simpson, *A History of South Africa: From 1902 to the Present*.
[14] Steve De Gruchy and John W De Gruchy, "Resistance, Repression, and the Transition to Democracy," in *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 198–99. See also Chikane's autobiography, *No Life of My Own* (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1988).
[15] "Church Set to Probe Attacks on Activists," *Weekly Mail*, July 2, 1989.

established by the National Peace Accord in 1990.[16] At the Delmas treason trial of 1987, for

instance, at which six youths were accused of killing a policeman, Catholic priest Patrick

Noonan was surprised and pleased that "conservative church *manyano* (church women's

organisations) were flocking to the trial court… The treason trialists and their legal team,"

Noonan wrote, "noted with singular satisfaction this community-based support."[17] In

Johannesburg-area townships in the early 1990s, manyano women also led public protests on a

variety of issues: preventing rape; mediating conflict between ANC and IFP factions; and

improving working conditions for female factory workers.[18] One instance of church women's

work for peace was bold and unusual enough to receive newspaper attention in the Johannesburg

Star. In 1990, as township ANC-IFP conflict heated up, the Inter-denominational Women's

Prayer League (a coalition of different manyanos) arrived at Soweto's Merafe hostel, whose

residents were associated with the IFP. Mrs. Mary Mabuso, the prayer league's leader, addressed

a crowd of 200 hostel dwellers: "We have buried the dead and visited bereaved families all over

the townships but we haven't as yet met you. You too belong to us and it is time we came

together as one and stopped the fight."[19] Mabuso's assertion that the hostel residents "belong to

us" demonstrates how manyano women could use the idea of their maternal authority to attempt

peacebuilding.

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[16] On the origins and structures of the National Peace Accord, see Liz Carmichael, *Peacemaking and Peacebuilding in South Africa: The National Peace Accord, 1991-1994* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2022).

[17] Patrick Noonan, *"They're Burning the Churches": The Final Dramatic Events That Scuttled Apartheid* (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2003), 265–66.

[18] Lakela Kaunda, "Enough Is Enough," *SPEAK*, October 1993, 54 edition; "Women of Steel," *SPEAK*, 1991, 37 edition; "No to Rape!," *SPEAK*, 1990, 29 edition. *SPEAK*'s coverage of the "No to Rape!" march credited a local manyano leader with the idea for the event. Its coverage of the factory worker protest ("Enough is Enough") and the protest against township-hostel violence ("Women of Steel") does not explicitly state that the events were organized by manyano women. However, photographs of both events clearly show leaders dressed in manyano uniforms. The photograph accompanying "Women of Steel," for instance, shows manyano women carrying banners from the Anglican Mothers' Union, the Catholic Sodality of St. Anne, and the Catholic Sodality of the Sacred Heart.

[19] Abel Mushi, "A Brave Prayer for Peace," *Star*, September 14, 1990.

Such peacebuilding through Christian public motherhood was difficult in Ciskei, where the existence of the Bantustan government made the transition to democracy particularly complex, with added difficulties for church leaders when the Ciskei tried to co-opt Christianity to legitimate its regime. The end of apartheid in the Ciskei was in some ways more complex, and received less media coverage, than the globally reported events of the townships surrounding Johannesburg, Cape Town, or Durban. Residents of the "independent" Bantustan states (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei) had to contend with the local agendas of their homeland governments as well as with the national politics of the struggle against apartheid.

Like other Bantustan governments, the Ciskei tried to attract the support of churches—or to create supportive churches, when the former was not possible. In Transkei, for instance, leader Kaiser Matanzima had forced Methodist congregations to secede from the Methodist Church of Southern Africa to his own Methodist Church of the Transkei in the 1970s; the Venda government of Patrick Mphephu made a similar threat to the Lutheran church in the late 1980s.[20] In Ciskei, government pushed churches to participate in national ceremonial events, like the celebrations of Ciskei "independence" in 1981.[21] The cabinet of Lennox Sebe, Ciskei's first president, included several ministers who gave public speeches proclaiming Ciskei a "God-fearing nation."[22] When the Ciskei planned a state celebration to coincide with Easter in 1989, a government spokesman described the rally as "the meeting of the whole church of the whole nation."[23]

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[20] Patrick Laurence, "Mphephu Warning to Lutherans," *Weekly Mail*, March 7, 1986; Barry Streek and Richard Wicksteed, *Render Unto Kaiser: A Transkei Dossier* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1981), 277–82. The Methodist Church of the Transkei, renamed the United Methodist Church of Southern Africa, still exists today. See https://umcosa.co.za/our-history/.

[21] "Xaba: We'll Deal with the Priests," *Daily Dispatch*, November 25, 1981.

[22] "Black and White Are Brothers--Takane," *Daily Dispatch*, April 15, 1986.

[23] "Ciskei: Nation Comes before Religion," *City Press*, March 26, 1989; On the Easter celebrations at Ntaba ka Ndoda (the Ciskei "national shrine") see also Anonymous [Jeff Peires], "Ethnicity and Pseudo-Ethnicity in the

This rhetoric of Ciskei as a Christian nation did not stop the Bantustan government's

repression of anti-apartheid church activists such as M.A. Stofile (Presbyterian) and Smangaliso

Mkhatshwa (Catholic). Clergy affiliated with UDF were targeted by Ciskei police throughout the

1980s.[24] For example, on the tenth anniversary of the Soweto uprising in 1986, some Mdantsane

churches were given permission to hold memorial services, but Ciskei police then broke up the

services, leading to the death of a 14 year-old boy.[25] The fact that this death was covered by

national newspapers, however, was due in part to the unique political position of the Bantustans:

since Ciskei had not followed the national government in declaring a state of emergency earlier

in 1986, reporters were allowed to be present in Mdantsane for the June 16 commemorations,

which they were not in townships elsewhere in South Africa.[26]

After Lennox Sebe was deposed in a coup by Brigadier Oupa Gqozo in 1990, the Ciskei

state continued to try to bolster itself through appeals to Christianity.[27] Gqozo, with the support

of South African Military Intelligence (MI), tried to steer the Ciskei towards a future as a semi-

independent state in a federated South Africa. Gqozo's increasingly antagonistic position

towards the ANC created ongoing conflict between Ciskei security forces and ANC

representatives who had the support of the vast majority of Ciskeians; the headline event in this

"low-key civil war" was the Bhisho massacre in 1992, when CDF forces killed 27 demonstrators

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Ciskei," in *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, ed. Leroy Vail (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 403, 405.

[24] "Mkhatshwa in Court Today," *Daily Dispatch*, January 20, 1984; "Stofile, 12 Others Freed," *Daily Dispatch*, April 19, 1986; Lloyd Coutts, "Bishop 'manhandled and Abused' by the Ciskei Security Police," *Star*, May 8, 1989.

[25] "Youth Dies after June 16 Service," *Daily Dispatch*, June 18, 1986.

[26] Franz Kruger, "Some Ironic Pockets of Press Freedom," *Weekly Mail*, June 20, 1986.

[27] Gqozo's self-presentation as a devout Christian, and his reliance on Christianity as a justification for his opposition to the ANC, are apparent in the seven interviews he gave to Padraig O'Malley between 1990 and 1996. Full transcriptions of the seven interviews are hosted online by the Nelson Mandela Foundation, "O'Malley's political interviews." https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/site/q/03lv00017/04lv00018/05lv00096/06lv00106.htm. Accessed 5 Feb, 2023.

(and one of their own soldiers) during an ANC-organized march.[28] Gqozo received support from

right-wing white nationalist groups operating through the Concerned South African Group; this

influence was apparent Gqozo's attempts to obtain political representation through founding his

own Christian Xhosa ethno-nationalist party.[29] Gqozo's African Democratic Movement (ADM),

according to the SACC's Independent Board of Inquiry, "pushes a strong Christian and anti-

communist line, focuses on 'moderates' and organises in areas which are supportive of the

ANC."[30] While the ADM did not have grassroots support, especially in Mdantsane, funding

channelled from MI allowed Gqozo to buy some followers for his conservative vision of

Christian ethno-nationalism.[31] In a context where the Ciskei state was explicitly attempting to

legitimize itself through Christianity, ordinary church activities were quickly politicized.

Funerals, prayer meetings, and church services could easily be seen (both by the state and by

participants) as forms of resistance to Bantustan rule.

Despite the dangers of police retaliation against church-goers (for example the breaking

up of the June 16 services in 1986), manyano women did organize to undermine the Bantustan

government and advocate for a transition to democratic rule. In addition to holding June 16

memorial services with schoolchildren, women of the AME manyano also participated in

interdenominational "prayer walks" on significant occasions. Nomathemba Zwelibanzi described

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[28] Independent Board of Inquiry, "Special Report on Bisho: Ciskei Shootings September 7, 1992" (Johannesburg, 1992); "Low-Key Civil War Follows Massacre," *City Press*, October 25, 1992; Conflict between the ANC and the CDF was further complicated by APLA, the armed wing of the Pan African Congress (PAC). APLA was alleged to have cooperated with the CDF or Military Intelligence in targeting the ANC. Claire Keeton, "PAC Linked to 'Gqozo's Inkatha,'" *Weekly Mail*, January 21, 1993; "Anxiety over Apla Build-up in Ciskei Area," *Argus*, May 1, 1993.

[29] "Ciskei 'tiger' Talks Tough," *Weekly Mail*, October 22, 1992; "Gqozo Nuzzles up to Volksfront," *Sunday Times*, June 6, 1993; J.B. Peires, "The Implosion of the Ciskei and Transkei" (African Studies Centre, University of the Witwatersrand African Studies Seminar, May 4, 1992).

[30] Wits Historical Papers, Independent Board of Inquiry AG2543, Monthly Reports 2.2.29, "IBI Monthly Report 29," (October 1992), 41.

[31] Ibid. On the links between Gqozo, the ADM, Military Intelligence, and the PAC, see IBI Monthly Reports 18 (September 1991) and 20 (November 1991).

how a mobile prayer service could achieve greater visibility, while also circumventing government restrictions on large gatherings: "We also had prayer walks, and… as you come to one church you collect… we take them out, we don't concentrate in one place." These marches would take participants all the way from Mdantsane to East London.[32] When I asked whether they had trouble from the police during these walks, Zwelibanzi emphasized the apolitical image that they were able to maintain. They didn't have any trouble, she asserted, "because we were doing that under the auspices of the church. So they noticed [us] as the church member, not the politician."[33]

Women also provided practical support towards ending apartheid and restoring peace. For instance, in the 1980s Margaret Mjo was an active member of L.L.C. Duze Congregational Church in Mdantsane, taught primary school, and in her spare time was busy sheltering ANC cadres at the house she shared with her brother.[34] According to Swazi Marambana, women's groups—including but not limited to manyanos—helped underground ANC members when the organization was still banned, and provided material assistance to families of those killed in political violence. According to Marambana, the UDF only flourished in Mdantsane because "the money was coming from the women." This fundraising built on the natural solidarity shared by women, who "have a natural oneness that allows projects *yecawa* [of the church], *yecommunity* [of the community] to succeed."[35] Marambana emphasized the specifically mothering character of this work. "This maternal instinct, we lived it," she said, in summing up a list of practical ways that women's groups had supported the struggle for democracy.[36]

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[32] Zwelibanzi and Mpahlaza, Phone interview.
[33] Zwelibanzi and Mpahlaza.
[34] Margaret Mjo, Interview in East London, March 14, 2022.
[35] Marambana and Mbekela, Interview in East London.
[36] Marambana and Mbekela.

While the interviewees cited in the preceding paragraph did mention some examples of church women's involvement in explicitly political activities, their other statements also indicated some hesitancy to speak at length about events in the transition era. For instance, when I asked a broad question about what manyanos had been doing during the time of Gqozo's rule, Margaret Mjo replied that they had not done anything, because "the reasoning was shut down."[37] Life was so uncertain during the transition era, Marambana and Mbekela said, that no manyano was planning its actions or thinking strategically about the future.[38] In general, in oral history interviews, when I asked specific questions about the late apartheid and transition era, the tone of interviewees' responses was more hesitant, and less detailed.

"There isn't much to say," said one interviewee when I asked a broad question about the final years of the Ciskei; "everything was lawlessness. We've lost our values, we've lost ourselves."[39] "That was a hard time," said Nomathemba Zwelibanzi; "you know, people were very skeptical to go to church."[40] When I asked Jiki Lebetloane what things were like in the church and the manyano around the time of Gqozo's coup and the Bhisho massacre, she responded: "We used to be afraid. We used to—usually you stayed at home…We will go [to church], a few of us, but not all of us. [Pause.] And you are afraid."[41] Later on in our conversation, Lebetloane did talk about her involvement in literacy classes for domestic workers in the early 1990s (see below), but our discussion of the 1980s and 1990s drew much less of her interest than our discussion of earlier decades of her life.

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[37] Mjo, Interview in East London.
[38] Marambana and Mbekela, Interview in East London.
[39] Thoko Mbekela, Phone interview, March 22, 2022.
[40] Zwelibanzi and Mpahlaza, Phone interview.
[41] Jiki Lebetloane, Interview in Dorchester Heights, East London, March 2, 2020.

I wished to respect my interviewees' feelings, and so did not push for more detailed information when I perceived that they did not wish to speak in detail about the late 1980s and early 1990s. At the most basic level, silence or brevity is an understandable response to questions about a traumatic period of history, especially given my position as a foreigner, a cultural outsider, and someone whom my interviewees had only recently met. At the same time, oral historians have shown that silences and evasions in themselves still communicate historical meaning; people's choice to represent themselves as *not* involved in historical events can be revealing of how they understand the past and the present. For instance, in an exploration of women's oral historical testimony about transition-era violence in rural KwaZulu-Natal, Jill Kelly argues that when women emphasize their non-participation in war, they are making claims about their role, as Zulu women, in upholding a certain definition of Zulu moral ethnicity.[42] Philippe Denis makes a complementary point about how religious practices—which appear on the surface to be unrelated to traumatic political events—can help people to cope and recover from traumatic events.[43] Understanding the reasons for silence helps historians to understand the very things that are not being talked about.

This approach could be used to interpret the silences of manyano women about the transition era in Mdantsane and East London. For instance, manyano women may be reluctant to speak directly about topics like the Bhisho massacre, the final years of the Ciskei, or the transition to democracy because aloofness from the realm of formal politics is part of their

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[42] Jill E. Kelly, "'Women Were Not Supposed to Fight': The Gendered Uses of Martial and Moral Zuluness during UDlame (1990-1994)," in *Gendering Ethnicity in African Women's Lives*, ed. Jan Bender Shetler (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 186.

[43] Philippe Denis, "Prayers and Rituals to the Ancestors as Vehicles of Resilience: Coping with Political Violence in Nxamalala (1887-1991)," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 128 (2007): 37–52; See also Philippe Denis, "The Churches' Response to Political Violence in the Last Years of Apartheid: The Case of Mpophomeni in the Natal Midlands," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 39, no. 1 (2013).

understanding of Christian public motherhood. An aversion to detailing what they witnessed or did during that period demonstrates their commitment to a certain understanding of manyano women's role in society. Further, the references that manyano women made to people's fear of leaving home, and the resulting low attendance at church events, indicates again the importance of the physical church buildings for their understanding of their work.

Additionally, I argue, listening carefully to silence and vagueness in oral history testimony reveals the ongoing, unresolved tensions of the transition era and dissatisfaction with failed promises democratic-era South Africa.[44] The anthropologist Henni Alava, in her work on religious communities in the aftermath of war in northern Uganda, fastens on the concepts of silence and "confusion" to understand how communities rebuild unity in the aftermath of a divisive conflict. Alava proposes that researchers use "confusion" as an epistemological tool to counter their usual search for a clear causal narrative, and attend what she calls a "polyphonic silence," a silence that can indicate both trauma and healing.[45]

Lihle Ngcobozi's sociological analysis of the contemporary Methodist manyano movement is helpful here, for understanding the reticence and uncertainty in oral history tellings of the manyanos during the transition era. According to Ngcobozi, the social role of manyanos has two distinct periods. During apartheid, manyano women were part of a "black counterpublic" who were directly opposed (either overtly or covertly) to the destructive violence of the state. But in the post-apartheid world, she argues, manyanos have "retreated" to what Mahmood Mamdani called the "customary" sphere, where they are "now a hegemonic public within their

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[44] Sean Field, *Oral History, Community, and Displacement: Imagining Memories in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[45] Henni Alava, *Christianity, Politics and the Afterlives of War in Uganda: There Is Confusion* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022); Henni Alava, "The Lord's Resistance Army and the Arms That Brought the Lord: Amplifying Polyphonic Silences in Northern Uganda," *Suomen Antropologi/Antropologi i Finland/The Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 44, no. 1 (2019): 17.

communities."[46] Rather than working to undermine the state, manyano women in the post-apartheid era try to manage the economic and social problems in their communities by upholding the values of prayer, piety, and perseverance of which they are the acknowledged exemplars.

While I do not entirely agree with Ngcobozi that manyano women in contemporary South Africa have "retreated" from the public sphere of citizenship, I think that she is correct that the end of apartheid involved a shift in manyano women's self-perception. In contemporary South Africa, older Black women are aware of the serious problems of the post-apartheid state: the lack of jobs for their children and grandchildren; fear of crime on the streets; and the inability of the state to provide infrastructure like electricity or housing. If, as Ngcobozi argues, manyanos are now a "hegemonic" cultural force within Black communities in South Africa—the recognized, respected authorities on prayer and perseverance—then they could feel concerned that their prayers and moral leadership have not been able to prevent all the disappointments that have happened to their families and communities since 1994. Such a sense of disappointment can indicate why it is so difficult for people to talk about the transition era. That liminal, confused time— when the end of apartheid was certain but the future shape of life was still unclear—continues to cast a long shadow over memories of the period. "I don't think we were struggling for what we got today," said Swazi Marambana when recalling the challenges she and others in Mdantsane had faced in the 1980s.[47] Her statement encapsulates the ambivalence, and even disappointment, that accompany memories of this time period.

Pentecostalism, AICs, and the dignity of motherhood on the urban margins

The violence and political unrest during the late 1980s and early 1990s did not happen in a vacuum, but rather was accompanied by widespread economic and demographic change in South

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[46] Lihle Ngcobozi, *Mothers of the Nation: Manyano Women in South Africa* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2020), 114–15.
[47] Marambana and Mbekela, Interview in East London.

African cities. After the mid-1970s, South Africa's previously robust economic growth began to slow. Industries in the late apartheid era turned to capital-intensive production methods, which resulted in dramatically increasing unemployment for Black unskilled workers. Rising unemployment, coupled with droughts in the 1980s, meant that about half of Black South Africans saw their incomes decline by 42 percent between 1975 and 1991.[48] This economic downturn contributed to rapid urban population growth across South African cities. As influx control measures faltered in the late 1980s and were ultimately removed, rural dwellers from across the country moved to cities to seek work, or to join family members who had been living in single-sex accommodation. New urbanites had to make homes and find subsistence for themselves in the informal shack settlements, often called "squatter camps," that appeared on the edges of townships and cities. Municipalities did not invest in housing as South Africa's economy stuttered in the 1980s, leading to rapid unsupported urbanization with serious social and ecological consequences.[49]

In Ciskei, the problems of this unplanned, under-resourced urban growth were exacerbated by the Bantustan's attempts to mold a compliant citizenry. In exchange for extra territory, Lennox Sebe's administration agreed in the 1970s and 1980s to receive people who had been removed from so-called rural "black spots" on white-zoned land, although several communities successfully resisted incorporation into the Ciskei.[50] Sebe also did not hesitate to rid himself of uncooperative Ciskeians, which resulted in displaced people being forced off land in

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[48] Sampie Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2002), 390; C. H. Vogel and J. H. Drummond, "Dimensions of Drought: South African Case Studies," *GeoJournal* 30, no. 1 (1993): 93–98.

[49] See, for instance, detailed studies of the expansion of informal settlements in Cape Town and Edendale: Anne-Maria Makhulu, *Making Freedom: Apartheid, Squatter Politics, and the Struggle for Home* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 12, 110; Marc Epprecht, *Welcome to Greater Edendale: Histories of Environment, Health, and Gender in an African City* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 217–19.

[50] Luvuyo Wotshela, "Asiyi ECiskei['We Are Not Going to the Ciskei']: Removals and Resistance in the 'Border' Region, 1972–1988," *South African Historical Journal* 52, no. 1 (2005): 140–69.

the rural Ciskei and onto the urban fringes of East London. When Ciskeian soldiers forced nearly one thousand residents of Nkqonkqweni village off their land in 1989, the villagers took shelter for several weeks at Sacred Heart Catholic church in King William's Town (now Qonce), before being resettled in the town's nearby Gisberg location.[51] Similarly, when the villagers of Kuni and Welcomewood "caused trouble" for government-appointed headmen, the Ciskei Defense Force (CDF) loaded them into trucks, drove them across the border into South Africa, and left them on the side of the road. The approximately 4,000 people "deported" from Kuni were ultimately allowed to settle on state-owned farmland at Needs Camp, close to the outer edges of Mdantsane (but technically outside the Ciskei border).[52] Needs Camp was unlike other informal peri-urban settlements in that its residents had official permission to build on the land. However, its lack of services, jobs, or infrastructure made it very similar to numerous other settlements that appeared on the edges of South African cities in the final years of apartheid.

For long-time Mdantsane residents, the arrival of the shacks (whether on the township outskirts at Needs Camp, or within the township itself) was the most visible feature of the collapse of apartheid urbanism. Orienda Magqaza, who first arrived in Mdantsane's NU3 in 1970, reflected on the "development" of the township in these words: "It was not as busy as it is now…and with all the things that crop up like crime…It used to be quiet. But development wise, it's getting more and more developed. Like when I came here, there were no shacks, it was just the four-roomed houses."[53] Indeed, the emergence of squatter settlements on unoccupied land inside Mdantsane can be dated to a specific moment in the Ciskei's history. Gqozo, in the first

[51] Ismail Lagardien, "A Scarred Community," *Sowetan*, November 29, 1989.
[52] Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, vol. 2, ch. 5, ss 20. https://sabctrc.saha.org.za/reports/volume2/chapter5/subsection20.htm. Accessed 3 Jan. 2023. "People 'dumped' on Ciskei," *Cape Times*, March 25, 1986; "Evicted Families Iiving in S.A.," *Cape Times*, January 9, 1986.
[53] Orienda Nolitha Magqaza, Interview at First Mdantsane Baptist Church, February 13, 2020.

weeks of his military rule in 1990, courted popular favour by encouraging people to build on unoccupied land, and his offer was enthusiastically taken up. One source claimed in 1993 that "in Mdantsane…there was not a single shack before Gqozo assumed power in Ciskei, but besides Gqozo Village [the inaugural shack settlement] there are now Manyano, Linge, Velwano, Hani Park, Slovo and Masibambane among many others." The Ciskei government claimed that 10,000 families lived in informal settlements within its borders in 1991; most of these would have been in urban areas like Zwelitsha and Mdantsane.[54]

These informal settlements were sites of growth for different churches, particularly Pentecostal and AIC congregations which had experienced difficulty in acquiring space in the older planned parts of the township. This trend is evident in the limited archival records about Needs Camp. When Needs Camp was established, mainline churches were quick to apply for church plots in order to minister to the spiritual needs of the resettled community. However, the largest congregation to apply for land in Needs Camp was an AIC, the Bantu Congregational Church of Zion R.S.A (BCCZ). The other applications for plots in Needs Camp came from the Anglican, Catholic, and Assemblies of God churches, all long-established in the East London area. These churches claimed much smaller congregations than the BCCZ. The Catholics claimed to have 250 members in Needs Camp and the AOG 200, while the BCCZ reported 428 members.[55] The BCCZ was also the only one of these four churches to state its intention of building a minister's home on its land; presumably the ministers of the Anglican, Catholic, and Assemblies of God congregations who also applied for church plots in Needs Camp planned to supply the churches with ministers who already had homes in other parts of the city.

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[54] Eric Naki, "Oupa to Squatters: Get out or Else," *Weekly Mail*, January 28, 1993.
[55] National Archives, Pretoria (SAB) BAO 4/388 6/3/4/2/M38/9, Application for a Church Site in a Black Area by the Bantu Congregational Church of Zion R.S.A., dated 5 May 1989. The Anglican church did not state its membership numbers.

Interestingly, the BCCZ listed its headquarters—or at least, the residence of its Bishop—in Sada, a resettlement camp in the arid northern Hewu district of the Ciskei. These "resettlement camps," of which Sada and Dimbaza were the largest in the Ciskei, were undeveloped, infertile plots of land to which the government forcibly removed isiXhosa-speaking people who had been deemed "surplus" to the labor needs of white cities and farms. Approximately 40,000 people were forcibly resettled in Sada the 1960s and 1970s.[56] The BCCZ, therefore, was a church based among landless people living on marginal peri-urban and rural settlements.

Pentecostal churches also experienced rapid growth in the 1980s and early 1990s in South Africa, among poor but aspiringly upwardly mobile Black urbanites, as well as among middle-class white Christians.[57] The growth of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) in Mdantsane demonstrates how Pentecostals claimed new urban spaces for themselves at the end of apartheid. While the AFM did not thrive in Mdantsane until the late 1980s, it was linked to a long history of Pentecostal revival in the area, stretching back to Nicholas Bhengu's "Back to God Crusade" of the 1950s. Bhengu's crusade converted a young man named Richard Ngidi, who went on to become a member of the AFM, which in the 1950s was predominantly a white Pentecostal denomination. Ngidi's preaching, along with that of his fellow evangelist Reinhard

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[56]Laura Evans, "Resettlement and the Making of the Ciskei Bantustan, South Africa, c.1960–1976," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, no. 1 (2014): 21–40; Laura Evans, *Survival in the "Dumping Grounds": A Social History of Apartheid Relocation* (Brill, 2019); Pippa Green and Alan Hirsch, "The Impact of Resettlement in the Ciskei: Three Case Studies," Saldru Working Papers (Cape Town: Southern Africa Labour & Development Research Institute, 1983), 78–85. *Forced removals in South Africa: the Surplus People reports*, vol. 3 (Cape Town: The Surplus People Project, 1983), 207-08.

[57] For instance, see the case study of Soweto's Grace Bible Church in Maria Frahm-Arp, "Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity and Social Media in South Africa," in Felicitas Becker, Joel Cabrita, and Marie Rodet, eds., *Religion, Media, and Marginality in Modern Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2018), 256–80. For a detailed analysis of the appeal of Charismatic Pentecostalism to white audiences in the 1980s, see Allan Anderson, "New African Initiated Pentecostalism and Charismatics in South Africa," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 35:1 (2005), 66-92.

Bonnke (a German evangelist who held very large Pentecostal crusades across Africa), brought growing numbers of Black converts to the AFM throughout the 1970s and 1980s.[58]

One of these successful crusades was in Mdantsane, where after a Bonnke crusade in 1979, a group of converts decided to join the AFM. At first, they met outdoors.[59] Within a few months, however, they had accomplished the remarkable feat of constructing a small concrete building in a fairly central location of NU3; as Chapter 5 demonstrates, obtaining the necessary building permissions was a difficult task for small Pentecostal or AIC congregations.[60] However, the AFM congregation in NU3 remained numerically small throughout the 1980s. When Wilton and Edna Dyakop arrived in Mdantsane in 1988 to be the congregation's pastors, they found that only a few of the women who were the majority of the congregants had any income from formal employment.[61]

A second AFM congregation, located on the western reaches of Mdantsane in NU11 (which had been recently constructed in the 1980s), had a similarly poor congregation. This congregation was founded in 1991, when Fikile and Boniwe Dyanti began holding revival services in the area. But building up a permanent congregation was no easy task. At first, like many other small Pentecostal and AIC groups, they met in a school classroom. But a borrowed space was not conducive to the formation of a permanent congregation, and especially to the formation of a women's manyano. "That time was very difficult because we couldn't establish a sisters' union," Boniwe said. "The school told us that we are disturbing. So we couldn't organize

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[58] Mookgo Solomon Kgatle, "Integrated Pentecostal Ministry of Richard Ngidi in the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, 1921-1985," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 46, no. 3 (2020); Barry Morton, "Elias Letwaba, the Apostolic Faith Mission, and the Spread of Black Pentecostalism in South Africa," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 43, no. 2 (2017): 1-17. On Bonnke, see Anderson, "New African Initiated Pentecostalism," 74.

[59] Edna Dyakop, Wilton Dyakop, and Siya Dyakop, Interview in Mdantsane NU8, trans. Phelisa Mtima, December 3, 2019.

[60] I did not find the archival records of the NU3 AFM church plot. Apostolic Faith Mission Sisters' Fellowship, Interview at Apostolic Faith Mission Church NU3, Mdantsane, trans. Phelisa Mtima, December 10, 2019.

[61] Dyakop, Dyakop, and Dyakop, Interview in Mdantsane NU8.

some things for the church."[62] Moreover, in 1994 the congregation was "chased" from the school, by enforcement of new rules about who could use school classrooms.[63] The transition to democracy was therefore the moment at which the AFM church in NU11 finally acquired its own piece of land. At first, they could only afford to put up a tent, but this tent did provide a meeting place for a newly established women's manyano. The building progress was slow not because of a lack of enthusiasm from the congregation, but because so many of them were unemployed. "We had only five men working at that time," Fikile said; "I think the women working for good salaries were teachers. And others [were] working in the houses [i.e., as domestic workers]; it was not big money."[64]

The value that small Pentecostal or AIC congregations placed on having their own permanent building is evident in a photograph by Daniel Morolong taken some time in the late 1980s (Figure 20). Uniformed church members, with four manyano women flanking the priest in the front row, are posed indoors, in an informal building whose walls are made of corrugated iron and wood. All of them are holding up small rectangular certificates, on which the word "Perm" is just legible. These were certificates of membership in South African Permanent Building Society (Perm), a home-buying and home-building loan firm that in the mid-1980s began to offer its first loans to Black consumers in urban areas. Perm's business strategy fit in with the late-apartheid government's program of market liberalisation and new willingness to encourage Black borrowing in order to sustain the country's overall economic growth.[65] The

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[62] Fikile Dyantyi and Boniwe Dyantyi, Interview in Scenery Park, East London, trans. Phelisa Mtima, December 4, 2019.

[63] Fikile Dyanti, Interview in Scenery Park, East London, trans. Phelisa Mtima. Dyanti implied that all churches had been barred from using schools around 1994. I have not found any evidence of this on a broader scale, but this could be related to local school administrators' interpretation of the new constitution of 1996, under which Christianity was no longer the officially recognized religion of South Africa.

[64] Dyantyi and Dyantyi, Interview in Scenery Park, East London.

[65] Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002*, 72–83; Deborah James, *Money from Nothing: Indebtedness and Aspiration in South Africa* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015); On Perm's

members of this church are likely displaying the proof of their investment in a larger, more

permanent building that would enhance their standing in Mdantsane.

Figure 20: Members of an unidentified church pose with certificates from the building society Perm[66]

For AFM women, a permanent church building allowed them to model their manyano on

the long-standing practices of weekly meetings, prayer, and preaching, that had characterized

manyanos of many denominations since the early twentieth century. They met on Thursdays at

the church. They had a uniform, although their simple white blouse and black skirt was notably

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successful capture of the Black home-buying (or church-building) market, see Grietjie Verhoef, "The Dynamics of South African Banking in the 1980s," *South African Journal of Economic History* 9, no. 1 (1994): 103.
[66] Daniel Morolong, used with the permission of the estate of Daniel Morolong.

less expensive to procure than the specially-colored blouses, jackets, caps, pins, and skirts of, for instance, the Methodist or AME churches. Unlike the more outwardly-focused charity work of manyanos from Catholic and mainline Protestant congregations (discussed in detail below), AFM manyano women recalled the early 1990s as a time when they were focused on fundraising for their own congregations, helping those in need within their congregation, and building up their stature as Christian mothers. According to group interview of AFM women who joined the manyano between the late 1970s and 1990s, the purpose of manyano membership is "how to be saved, how to be a good parent and wife, generally how to run your household and how to love one another, to help develop each other."[67]

For the women of the AFM, becoming a manyano member allowed them to achieve a dignity and public reputation that would otherwise be inaccessible. The AFM Sisters' Fellowship taught members skills that increased their *isidima* (dignity).[68] This pursuit of dignity and public stature through the manyano melded well with the Pentecostal idea of being "saved" (a transformative inner experience that also altered one's outward behavior). During a group interview with the Sisters' Fellowship of the AFM congregation in Mdantsane's NU3, several women expressed how manyano membership cemented the link between inner spiritual transformation and the outward attributes of dignity. One woman said: "through the Sisters' Fellowship I learned how to carry myself with dignity; I have learned to have faith as well."[69] Another emphasized the need for this faith and dignity to be visible: "If here at church you carry

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[67] Apostolic Faith Mission Sisters' Fellowship, Interview at Apostolic Faith Mission Church NU3, Mdantsane.

[68] Regarding isidima as a key value of manyanos, see Ngcobozi, *Mothers of the Nation: Manyano Women in South Africa*, 134. *Isidima* as a crowning quality of manyano motherhood is expressed in this statement (directed to a visiting manyano evangelist) from the Queenstown Methodist manyano records: "Ivasi yako, nesidima sako noku tembeka kwako silapa namhlanje sizokubulisa wena uze ungahlali hlali pantsi ke, uze usebenze ugcine lomntwana." [This verse, about your dignity and trustworthiness, is made evident here today, and we give thanks for you because you don't sit down, you work and keep your children.] Cory Library, Methodist Collection C5, Minutes of the Queenstown Women's Manyano, 2 June 1949.

[69] Apostolic Faith Mission Sisters' Fellowship, Interview at Apostolic Faith Mission Church NU3, Mdantsane.

yourself as a saved woman, it should be like that even outside the church premises; only our neighbors can tell [whether a woman is truly saved]."[70]

Being "saved," and being a member of the Sisters' Fellowship, therefore involved an increase in publicly visible dignity. One AFM manyano member explained: "for those who are not part of any women's manyano, you will find out that they are not familiar with the word of God. For example, when there is a funeral in the neighborhood, you find out that they do not know how to comfort mourners, which is something that we in the Sisters' Fellowship are good at." In response to this statement, another member chimed in:

> To add on to what my sister is saying, those who are part of the Sisters' Fellowship are better prepared than those who are not attending, because there are those who are supposed to be attending but for some reason do not attend. So now when there is a prayer session for the bereaved and they are expected to share the word of God, they stutter because they are never at the Sisters' Fellowship to acquire and learn ways of doing it.[71]

These statements demonstrate that active participation in the AFM manyano gave its members not only an internal assurance of spiritual salvation, but also public, visible skills that increased their dignity and standing in the community. The members of the AFM, like other new Pentecostal and AIC congregations, were often poor or unemployed, and in the late apartheid and transition era had to make their individual homes and corporate religious homes on the outskirts and burgeoning informal settlements of the township. Manyano women's contribution to new church buildings provided them with a space where they could practice the skills of Christian public motherhood—prayer and preaching—that had long been associated with the manyano movement. This link between public motherhood and urban belonging is put succinctly by one woman, who joined a manyano around 1990, who is quoted in Sarah Mosoetsa's study of poor

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[70] Apostolic Faith Mission Sisters' Fellowship.
[71] Anonymous sister (C), Apostolic Faith Mission Sisters' Fellowship.

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township households in KwaZulu-Natal: "When I joined the women's group, I felt blessed. God gave me the answers to my problems. Even though I never had children of my own, I was given the status of being a mother. I became a mother in my church and in my community."[72] The attributes and practices of manyano motherhood gave women dignity and public standing among their neighbors in a swiftly growing urban community with limited economic opportunities.

The new Black middle class and manyano charity in the city and suburbs

At the same time that informal settlements were expanding on the margins of South African cities, a small class of educated and aspiringly middle-class Black urbanites were changing the landscape of the city through their residential and economic mobility. Beginning in the mid-1980s, the South African government promoted what Mark Hunter calls "marketized assimilation"—deregulating sectors such as housing, education, and transportation in order to forestall protest by allowing some limited opportunities for Black upward mobility.[73] These structural changes allowed for the emergence of a small but influential "new black middle class" in the 1980s, even as unemployment and inflation worsened the living conditions of the majority of Black Africans.[74] Therefore, a small number of Black women were able to access educational, employment, and housing opportunities that had previously been closed to them. As manyano members, these women tried out new, more outward-looking charitable activities.

The expansion of educational opportunities for Black learners beginning in the late 1970s had a particularly marked effect on women's social mobility in the following decades. In his

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[72] Quoted in Sarah Mosoetsa, *Eating from One Pot: The Dynamics of Survival in Poor South African Households* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2011), 97.

[73] Mark Hunter, *Race for Education: Gender, White Tone, and Schooling in South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 78.

[74] Between 1975 and 1991, the wealthiest 20 percent of Black households increased their earnings by 38 percent, while during the same time period, the majority of Black households saw their incomes decline by 42 percent. Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002*, 63–65, 399; Roger Southall, *The New Black Middle Class in South Africa* (Johannesburg: James Currey, 2016), 24–40.

study of the Durban township of UImlazi, Hunter shows how expanded funding for education in the mid-1970s allowed a much greater number of children to attend high school.[75] In Ciskei, secondary school enrolment increased by almost 20 percent every year between 1975 and 1981.[76] By the middle of the 1980s, the curriculum offered to Black students had been adjusted to focus on vocational skills training, reflecting the government's desire to grow the economy through more skilled Black employment.[77] And when previously all-white "Model C" schools (semi-private fee-paying schools) were opened to Black learners in the early 1990s, many township parents made financial sacrifices to send their children to these schools.[78] These educational changes meant that more Black women, from the 1980s onward, entered the service sector or took professional jobs as nurses and teachers.[79] In fact, teaching itself was transformed from a male to a female profession in the 1980s, when the Department of Education and Training turned to lower-paid female teachers to economize during its expansion of Black township school programs.[80] This further revealed the hollow lie of the idea of Bantustan townships of nuclear family homes with male breadwinners. While more women entered service sector or professional jobs in the 1980s, male workers were more likely to struggle to find work in the stalling industrial economy, a trend that had potential to increase tensions between husbands and wives, as Niehaus shows in a study of the Qwaqwa Bantustan township of Phutaditjhaba.[81]

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[75] Hunter, *Race for Education*, 80–83.

[76] Sarah Meny-Gibert, "State 'Infrastructural Power' and the Bantustans: The Case of School Education in the Transkei and Ciskei," *African Historical Review* 50, no. 1/2 (2018): 56.

[77] Andre Kraak, "Discursive Shifts and Structural Continuities in South African Vocational Education and Training: 1981-1999," in *The History of Education Under Apartheid: The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall Be Opened*, ed. Peter Kallaway (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 74–93.

[78] Hunter, *Race for Education,* 77; Vuyisile Msila, "The Education Exodus: The Flight from Township Schools," *Africa Education Review* 2, no. 2 (2005): 173–88.

[79] Hunter, *Race for Education*, 79.

[80] Elaine Unterhalter, "Gender, Race and Different Lives: South African Women Teachers' Autobiographies and the Analysis of Educational Change," in *The History of Education Under Apartheid: The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall Be Opened*, ed. Peter Kallaway (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 247.

[81] Isak Niehaus, "Disharmonious Spouses and Harmonious Siblings," *African Studies* 53, no. 1 (1994): 115–35.

While exact figures are not available for Mdantsane, Leslie Bank's 1995 household survey of Duncan Village reveals exactly this trend: in the 1950s, 83 percent of men and 36 percent of women in Duncan Village had been formally employed. By 1995, only 45 percent of men were employed, while women's employment had risen to 40 percent. Moreover, women held 66 percent of all the well-paid professional jobs (primarily as nurses).[82] Women with higher education credentials also applied their skills outside the professional sector, and achieved middle class status running informal street shops. A 1992 article in the progressive women's magazine *SPEAK* reported on a cohort of women street sellers in Mdantsane who, although they had matric (high school) and nursing certificates, chose to build business empires selling fruit and vegetables at the taxi stands; with their profits, they had bought vehicles and sent their children to high school and university.[83] While the new Black middle class was numerically tiny at the end of apartheid, the new cohort of Black middle class working women was highly visible to contemporaries, especially in contrast to the faltering employment prospects of men in the mining and industrial sectors.

At the same time, the boundaries and residential patterns of South African cities were changing. There was upward residential mobility by aspiring middle-class Black South Africans, who as early as the mid-1980s moved into so-called "grey" areas that had been zoned white under the Group Areas Act. In the case of the Albert Park neighborhood in Durban, landlords began to quietly contravene the Group Areas Act legislation by allowing Black tenants, whose legally precarious situation allowed landlords to burden them with extra curfews and rules.[84]

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[82] Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles*, 99–100.

[83] "Vukuzenzele!" *SPEAK*, August 1992, p.10-12. Available at disa.ukzn.ac.za. Accessed 12 January 2023. On the history and goals of SPEAK, see *Women Speak: Reflections on Our Struggles 1982-1997,* ed. Shamim Meer (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 1998).

[84] Brij Maharaj and Jabulani Mpungose, "The Erosion of Residential Segregation in South Africa: The 'Greying' of Albert Park in Durban," *Geoforum* 25, no. 1 (1994): 25.

After President F.W. de Klerk announced the repeal of the Group Areas Act (1950) in 1990, residential desegregation increased in East London, although the association between race and class still continued, as Black home-owners could generally only afford to live in less affluent neighborhoods like Southernwood, Amalinda, and Cambridge.[85]

Jiki Lebetloane's life story represents well how these broad economic and educational changes could play out in individuals' lives. She was born in the old East Bank location, until her family was forcibly moved to Mdantsane in 1976. She kept her job teaching at a Duncan Village school, however, and continued to commute back to East London from Mdantsane. When "those people were driven away by Sebe" in the late 1980s, she volunteered to teach at one of the temporary school buildings that had been set up at Needs Camp. Around the same time that she became involved in helping this community on the urban margins, the waning of influx control laws meant that she herself could move back to the center of the city. In 1993 she found a house in Duncan Village to rent, not too far from the childhood home she had been forcibly removed from in the 1960s. A year later, as a citizen of the new democratic South Africa, she moved to her current home in Dorchester Heights, a leafy suburban development on the eastern outskirts of East London.[86] While only a small proportion of Mdantsane residents made the move from the township into the city and its formerly-white suburbs at the end of apartheid, Lebetloane's history is indicative of broader changes in how manyano women interacted with changing city spaces.

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[85] Cecil Seethal, Etienne Nel, and John Bwalya, "From East London to Buffalo City Metropole: Developmental Challenges of a South African Metro," in *South African Urban Change Three Decades After Apartheid*, ed. Anthony Lemon (GeoJournal Library, 2021), 108–9.; John Bwalya and Cecil Seethal, "Spatial integration in residential suburbs of East London, South Africa (1993-2008)," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50, no. 6 (2015): 637-49.
[86] Lebetloane, Interview in Dorchester Heights, East London.

The first of these changes within manyanos themselves were the increasing number of members who were professional working women. Long-time members perceived a shift within their organizations around the early 1990s.[87] In the past, those manyano members who were employed were likely to be domestic workers; indeed, as the story of Rosie Manene (Chapter 5) illustrates, domestic workers sometimes formed their own manyano branches. In the 1990s, a new category of working women joined manyanos, those whom Margaret Ngcayiya called "the career women."[88] Virginia Dynjwa, for instance, had a busy career as a teacher in schools across the rural Eastern Cape and Transkei. On her retirement in 1989, she finally felt settled enough to join the Catholic sodality of St. Anne.[89] Other women, like Thoko Mbekela (a bank clerk) or Nokwanda Mlomzale (a teacher) turned their professional skills to use within the manyano, by becoming full-time paid workers, in the early 1990s, in the regional structures of their manyanos.[90]

The arrival of this new cohort of "career women" to the manyanos changed not only the internal dynamics of local branches, but also the denominational leadership of their organizations. Since the early twentieth century, Black women in mainline Protestant churches had effective practical control over their local manyano branches. At the national level, however, the Anglican Mothers' Union and Methodist Women's Prayer and Service Society had been controlled by white women elected from the much smaller white congregations. This began to change in the 1980s, a time when mainline churches were beginning to make institutional

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[87] Margaret Ngcayiya, Interview in Ziphunzana, East London, trans. Phelisa Mtima, January 29, 2020; Magqaza, Interview at First Mdantsane Baptist Church.

[88] Ngcayiya, Interview in Ziphunzana, East London.

[89] Frances Virginia Dynjwa and Theresa Sihele, Interview in Vincent, East London, February 7, 2020.

[90] Nokwanda Mlomzale, Interview in Amalinda, East London, January 14, 2020; Mbekela, Phone interview.

changes in response to challenges from Black theology and feminist theology.[91] June Cherry, a white member of the Mothers' Union, had been the MU Secretary for the Diocese of Grahamstown in the 1970s. She and other white MU officials made occasional visits to Black MU branches, where she says she often felt embarrassed by the atmosphere of deference and difference. This all changed in the 1980s, however, when Black women "who were more educated than me," Cherry said, began to be elected to the MU leadership, where they confidently pursued their own goals, such as starting a children's lunch program at Holy Cross Anglican church in Mdantsane.[92]

This new cohort of manyano women began to work and live in different parts of the city. Moreover, for manyanos from mainline churches, there were opportunities for manyano work to take place inside formerly all-white church buildings. For instance, in the early 1990s, a leader from the Anglican Mothers' Union set up a literacy course for domestic workers, which was hosted at Vincent Methodist Church (in one of the city's oldest white suburbs); volunteer teachers were recruited from among manyano members, including Jiki Lebetloane, who were retired teachers.[93] Around the same time, Anglican churches in the area promoted interracial prayer meetings at which members of white, Black, Indian, and Coloured congregations took turns travelling to one another's churches.[94] The loosening of formal urban segregation in late-

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[91] For instance, in 1985 the South African Council of Churches created a Women's Division, headed by a Black woman, Lulu Xingwana. "The new women's division: an important step for women in the church world," *Crisis News*, no. 17 (Western Cape Council of Churches), July/August 1987, 12-13.

[92] June Cherry, Interview in Stirling, East London, February 24, 2020. Cherry emphasized her approval of Black women's rise to leadership in the MU, but other white women did not share that approval. When Daisy Ncaca was elected President of the Grahamstown diocesan MU in 1982, one of the white branches immediately resigned from the organization. Ngewu, *Listening to the Silent Voices of the MU: the Centenary History of the MU in the CPSA* (Lovedale: Mothers' Union, 2004), 135-37.

[93] Lebetloane, Interview in Dorchester Heights, East London.

[94] Prieska Mpetsheni, Interview in Stirling, East London, March 10, 2020.

apartheid cities allowed a small number of women to begin traveling, working, and living in parts of the city from which they had previously been excluded.

Some manyano branches also began to try out new, more outwardly focused charitable projects. Before the 1980s, manyano women's efforts had been squarely focused within their own denomination and congregation, even if they did sometimes engage with other denominations in reciprocal fundraising assistance (see Chapter 3). New Pentecostal churches like the AFM (see above), also focused on building and supporting their own communities in the 1980s and early 1990s. Manyanos from the older, well-established congregations in the city, however, began in the late apartheid era to take up new kinds of charitable work. Women at Holy Cross Anglican in Mdantsane started a free lunch program for neighborhood school children.[95] The women of Mdantsane's First Baptist church began to support a local school for disabled children.[96] And in the 1980s, the Catholic Women's League (CWL) of St. Peter Claver church in Duncan Village began to do charitable work in the squatter camps on the edge of the city. Narratives of the CWL's work reveal how manyano charitable projects could reinforce the growing class distinctions between those who had a secure home in the city and those on living on the informal margins. Two CWL members praised the founder of their branch, Mrs. Poppy Fourie, emphasizing the determination and generosity she demanded of them. Rachel Doans, who joined the CWL as a young woman in the 1980s, recalled with pride their busy program of work:

> That time when Mrs. Fourie and Mrs. Justam, they were a group of strong ladies. So we are smaller ones, younger ones joining under them, so we went with them and they were teaching us… Even go out in the bushes in the camps, go see the people

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[95] Cherry, Interview in Stirling, East London; Lebetloane, Interview in Dorchester Heights, East London.
[96] Magqaza, Interview at First Mdantsane Baptist Church.

there, make up food parcels, take—whether [the recipients are] Catholic or not Catholic. That's how they were training us.[97]

Giving aid to those who did not have proper housing was the primary charitable activity of the CWL. In telling how the CWL delivered its donations, Frances John drew attention to the distance and separate-ness of the squatter camps from the rest of the city: "We just club together…we buy food and samp and all that…We'll just make it up a bundle and take it to them. By car, because Mrs. Martin had a car. And some of us will go by taxi. And that's how we'll go, right into the squatter camp."[98] John's emphatic delivery of the phrase "right into the squatter camp" suggests the distance that the CWL women, long-time residents of East London, felt between themselves and the recently-arrived urbanites of the 1980s, who had no formal housing. John and Doans mentioned the surprise and gratitude that people felt when the "mamas of the Roma" (i.e., the Roman Catholic church) visited them.[99]

This kind of charitable work could therefore draw attention to the differences in urban status and belonging between manyano women and the recipients of their charity. The women of the CWL were by no means well-off; neither John or Doans completed high school, and they did not have high-paying jobs. But the CWL women of St. Peter Claver did have permanent homes in the city, either in Duncan Village or in the adjacent Coloured locations of Pefferville or Buffalo Flats. Changes in urban space and demographics, therefore, allowed a new practice of Christian motherhood by CWL women, one that emphasized their difference from those who did

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[97] Frances John and Rachel Doans, Interview at Sister Aidan Memorial Centre, St. Peter Claver Church, Duncan Village, East London, November 28, 2019.
[98] John and Doans.
[99] John and Doans.

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not have permanent urban housing. This new charity-focused manyano work underscored the increasing economic inequality Black urbanites at the end of apartheid.[100]

Changing definitions of motherhood and women's liberation at the end of apartheid

The new charitable projects taken on manyano women could be seen as their attempt to keep pace with a broader movement for gender equality as South Africa began to dismantle the legal structures of racial inequality. Through the 1980s and early 1990s, activists in both religious and secular organizations advocated for the end of gender inequality as a necessary correlative to South Africa's political liberation. Shireen Hassim and others have argued that within the ANC, women were largely successful in making gender equality a central component of the liberation agenda, even if the agenda was not always implemented.[101] Within mainline Protestant churches, feminist laypeople and theologians began to call for the end of patriarchal oppression, and specifically advocated for women's ordination (which was achieved by the early 1990s in the Methodist, Anglican, and Dutch Reformed churches).[102]

Although they were the largest and oldest women's organizations in any church, manyanos had an ambivalent relationship to the broader South African women's movement. During the late apartheid era, manyanos at both the grassroots and institutional level redefined

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[100] "In 1995 the inequality in the distribution of income *within* the African population group was considerably larger than the inequality within each of the other three population groups [Whites, Coloureds, and Asians]." Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002*, 400.

[101] Shireen Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 114–18; Shireen Hassim, "'A Conspiracy of Women': The Women's Movement in South Africa's Transition to Democracy," *Social Research* 69, no. 3 (2002): 693–732; Gay W. Seidman, "'No Freedom without the Women': Mobilization and Gender in South Africa, 1970-1992," *Signs* 18, no. 2 (1993): 291–320; Shamim Meer, "Freedom for Women: Mainstreaming Gender in the South African Liberation Struggle and Beyond," *Gender and Development* 13, no. 2 (2005): 36–45.

[102] Denise Ackermann, Jonathan A. Draper, and Emma Mashinini, eds., *Women Hold up Half the Sky: Women in the Church in Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1991); Bernadette L. Mosala, "Black Theology and the Struggle of the Black Woman in South Africa," in Itumeleng Jerry Mosala and Buti Tlhagale, *The Unquestionable Right to Be Free: Essays in Black Theology* (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1986); For a historical overview of the development of feminist theology, see Christina Landman, "Ten Years of Feminist Theology in South Africa," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 11, no. 1 (1995): 143–48.

their formal membership criteria to include unmarried or childless women. However, manyanos'

continued focus on motherhood, and their image of political quiescence, meant that they were

not often talked about by advocates of women's liberation in church and society.

In the late apartheid era, manyano members of many denominations made some

alterations to their understanding of Christian motherhood, in order to accommodate the realities

of people's marital and economic lives. The first, and most practical, change was in the

requirement that manyano members be married. Marriage was the foundation of Christian

motherhood in the eyes of the white church leaders who wrote the first manyano rule books in

the early twentieth century. For much of the twentieth century both mainline and African

Independent churches made marriage a prerequisite for manyano membership, although

anecdotal evidence from interviews suggests that plenty of manyano women, who may have

been married at some point, were functionally single and not cohabiting with their spouses. The

Anglican church was the first to formally change this rule; by the late 1970s, the Anglican

church recognized "traditional" African ceremonies as a valid sacramental form of marriage, and

also removed marriage as a requirement for membership in the Mothers' Union.[103] However, in

interviews, those MU members who mentioned the change in marriage rules did not believe that

the change had fundamentally altered the character of their manyano: age and experience, rather

than marital status, had always been the true defining qualities of motherhood. For instance,

Margaret Ngcayiya joined the MU when she was married and had children, but felt out of place

in her branch, as she was only 31 at the time of joining.[104] Prieska Mpetsheni, who was

unmarried, joined the MU after the rule change, but explained her choice to join mostly in terms

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[103] Ngewu, 100-111.
[104] Ngcayiya, Interview in Ziphunzana, East London.

of the fact that she had finished having children and now had the maturity and free time to join.[105]

Similar policy changes took place across various denominations in the following decades, although some groups (the Assemblies of God or the Catholic Sodality of St. Anne)[106] continued to require their members to be formally married. For instance, members of the Apostolic Faith Mission agreed that everyone in their manyano had been either married or widowed around 1991, but that things began to change soon after. "As time went by," one woman said, "even those who were not married were also accepted, as long as they were considered as mothers by the church; that was determined by age and the responsibility of the woman." This motherhood did not necessarily have to be biological motherhood. Rather, a mother was one who "had to be responsible, run a household and have a family that she is responsible for."[107] Manyano members did not feel that this formal change in rules had deeply affected the character of their organizations; as one long-time member of the Baptist manyano put it, "we have kept it [the manyano] just as we found it."[108] The most important central requirement of manyano membership was motherhood, not marriage.

Statements such as this confirm that motherhood, rather than marriage, was the primary criteria for manyano membership. The definition of motherhood itself, however, was open to debate in this period. For a more conservative Pentecostal denomination like the Assemblies of God, which continued through the 1990s to insist on marriage as a qualification for manyano membership, the financial independence of career women threatened the gendered hierarchy of a

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[105] Mpetsheni, Interview in Stirling, East London.
[106] The Catholic Sodality of the Sacred Heart and the Catholic Women's League had always been open to all women, regardless of marital status.
[107] Anonymous sister (A), Apostolic Faith Mission Sisters' Fellowship, Interview at Apostolic Faith Mission Church NU3, Mdantsane.
[108] Magqaza, Interview at First Mdantsane Baptist Church.

Christian home. "The aim of Pastor Bhengu [founder of the Assemblies of God] was that women are not supposed to work," said Nokwanda Mlomzale. "They're supposed to be at home and look for children so that children don't go astray…But now we're working, you know, because of the cost of living."[109] According to another member of the Assemblies of God, working Christian mothers needed to take particular care that their careers did not disrupt their duties to their husbands. They could do this, for instance, by making sure that they, and never their hired domestic worker, served their husband's meals.[110] Career women's absence from the home was a particular issue for members of the Assemblies of God, who maintained a more conservative definition of marriage and motherhood.

For women in other denominations, the advent of middle-class career women as members was largely welcomed. Professional women had the training and connections to initiate new charitable projects that took them further afield outside their homes and local congregations. Virginia Dynjwa, for instance, was proud that her branch of the Sodality of St. Anne included "a lot of retirees, retired nurses, retired teachers, people from the private sector. People that have been working as administrators, stuff like that."[111] A similar positive assessment of the arrival of career women to manyano was put forward by Mazoe Nopece, the wife of the former Anglican Bishop of Port Elizabeth, had held leadership positions in the Mothers' Union starting in the 1980s. She believed that since the 1990s, the MU had pursued more active and practical work, leaving behind the focus on prayer espoused by an older generation of manyano mothers, "the ones of the uniforms."[112]

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[109] Mlomzale, Interview in Amalinda, East London.
[110] Beatrice Tyesi and Ndileka Tyesi, Interview in Cambridge, East London, November 25, 2019.
[111] Dynjwa and Sihele, Interview in Vincent, East London.
[112] Mazoe Nopece, Interview in Vincent, East London, October 30, 2019.

Although some manyanos tried to redefine motherhood to be less focused on single congregations, and more inclusive of all women, they did not earn the wholehearted support of the broader women's movement in 1990s South Africa. Activists looking for exemplars of grassroots feminist solidarity did not hold up manyanos as shining examples. One problem was the gerontocratic and hierarchical associations of manyanos' focus on motherhood. Members of the ANC Women's League tried to resist the use of the term "ma" or "mother" within their organization, arguing that "we must not assume that every woman is a wife or mother, or that she intends to become a wife or mother. This is a weakness. It arises from our tradition."[113]

Feminists within the church similarly critiqued status distinctions between women in the church. In what could easily be interpreted as a direct critique of an older generation of manyano women, theologian Joyce Masenya asserted that "the wrong use of Scripture…by men and by elderly women serves to oppress the Christian woman. Elderly women tend to accept the Bible uncritically taking it as the undisputed world of God."[114] A related problem was that manyanos, largely, were uninterested in advocating for women's ordination or other issues of gender equality within the church. Zodwa Memela, a woman and an ordained minister in the Methodist church, asserted that church women have internalized their oppression, and "resign themselves to running soup kitchens for the unemployed men in the streets, church bazaars and running Sunday School classes."[115]

Moreover, when leaders in the South African women's movement made practical plans for how Christian women could achieve liberation in their religious lives, manyanos were

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[113] Anonymous ANCWL member, quoted in"ANC Women's League: South African Women March to Freedom!," *SPEAK*, 1990, 30 edition.

[114] Joyce Masenya, "Freedom in Bondage: Black Feminist Hermeneutics," *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa* 8, no. 1 (May 1994): 41.

[115] Zodwa Memela, "Racism and Its Impact on Black Women: A South African Perspective," *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa* 8, no. 1 (May 1994): 16.

entirely absent from the discussion. The feminist publication *SPEAK* reported on a 1991

ecumenical conference in Durban, where attendees discussed the theme of "Christian women

participating in the shaping of the new Constitution of South Africa." The delegates unanimously

agreed to "encourage the forming of women's desks in their churches to make sure that women's

issues are taken up."[116] The delegates at this conference evidently did not see the manyanos of

their respective denominations as the equivalent of a "women's desk," or the appropriate

institutional mechanism for advancing women's issues in the church. The trade unionist Emma

Mashinini, speaking in her capacity as an Anglican, observed that women "are the ones keeping

the church financially viable by fund raising," and praised their "unique contribution to the area

of ministry. Perhaps you could call it 'mothering.'"[117] Yet when Mashinini went on to list all the

organizations that exemplified women's solidarity against apartheid, she included credit unions,

stokvels, and the organization Women Against Apartheid, but not manyanos.[118] The ecumenical

leader Brigalia Bam, who became Secretary General of the SACC in 1995, expressed the

feminist critique of manyanos most succinctly. Women's church organizations, she said, provide

"a sense of belonging and dignity" to women, but "it is a very defined space. Women need to be

able to rise to the highest levels of leadership."[119] In short, while some manyanos in East London

(and likely elsewhere in South Africa) adjusted their definitions and practices of Christian public

motherhood, they were not part of the national public conversation about instituting gender

equality and promoting women's liberation at the end of apartheid.

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[116] "Fighting Sexism in the Church," *SPEAK*, 1991, 33 edition, 18–19.
[117] Emma Mashinini, "Women Between Church & Society," in Ackermann, Draper, and Mashinini, *Women Hold up Half the Sky*, 349.
[118] Mashinini, "Women Between Church & Society," 351.
[119] Brigalia Bam and Elinor Sisulu, "Born into the Church," *Agenda* 11, no. 25 (1995): 25.

Conclusion

As the Bantustan system of government began to unravel in the Ciskei in the late 1980s and early 1990s, church leaders were involved in protest against the regime and in efforts to promote peace and democracy—and this was despite the Ciskei government's attempts to represent itself as a Christian state and silence dissenting church voices. In a final effort to retain power in 1993, Brigadier Oupa Gqozo founded a new political party, the Christian People's Movement, which tried to argue that Christianity was one of the values that united Xhosa people in their need for a separate homeland.[120] This posturing was not taken seriously by Gqozo's dissatisfied subjects. In March 1994, only a few weeks before the first democratic elections, Gqozo was forced to resign through a combination of civil service strikes and a CDF mutiny. The national Transitional Executive Council appointed Rev. Bongani Finca to lead a team of administrators to manage the Ciskei until its structures were merged into those of the new democratic South Africa.[121] These events at the demise of the Ciskei show how individual church leaders, and the idea of Christianity in general, were very much part of the struggle to define the post-apartheid South African future.

Manyanos at the end of apartheid largely maintained their focus on prayer, preaching, and solidarity. Even those manyanos which extended their activities to include more active community-focused charity did not represent themselves as activists. In this chapter, I discussed some of the silences and hesitancy that surround manyano members' memories of the late apartheid and transition era. These silences are revealing of how manyano members' identities as

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[120] Wits Historical Papers, Independent Board of Inquiry, AG2543 IBI Monthly Report 36 (June/July 1993), 32. Chris Mabuya, "Outcry over Gqozo's CPM," *Weekly Mail*, June 10, 1993.

[121] Wits Historical Papers, Independent Board of Inquiry, AG2543 IBI Monthly Report 41 (February/March 1994), 68-69. Laura Evans, "The Bantustan State and the South African Transition: Militarisation, Patrimonialism and the Collapse of the Ciskei Regime, 1986–1994," *African Historical Review* 50, no. 1–2 (2018): 119–22.

"mothers" made them reluctant to associate themselves with what they perceived to be the realm of politics. Silences and uncertainties in oral historical memory of the transition era also indicate the ongoing, unresolved legacy of this turbulent time.

Yet, as Shireen Hassim argues, even if manyano women did not see themselves as political activists, they shared "strategic links and cultural affinities" with women's political organizations.[122] As Hassim points out, the uniform of the ANC Women's League is modeled the basic elements of a manyano uniform: a colored blouse, black skirt, and cap.[123] And although the East London manyano members quoted in this chapter generally did not represent their activities as constituting a form of active resistance to apartheid, their everyday activities allowed members to find a sense of belonging and security in a rapidly changing, often inhospitable, city. As this chapter has shown, to focus only on manyanos' relationship to the formal politics of anti-apartheid and the transition to democracy is to miss some of their historical and social significance.

Manyanos reveal some of the religious dimensions of the demographic and economic changes of cities at the end of apartheid. Informal settlements grew quickly on the outskirts of South African cities in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as the government's weakening control of Black urban spaces allowed more people to move to cities to join family, look for work, and escape desperate conditions in rural areas. In the Pentecostal and African Independent churches that attracted interest among poorer urbanites in East London and Mdantsane (in part, perhaps, because of loosening of the bureaucratic controls that had in the 1970s favored larger, mission-established denominations), manyanos gave women the opportunity to practice the skills of prayer and preaching that brought them dignity and respect as mothers in the community. For

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[122] Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority*, 27.
[123] Hassim, 27–28.

these manyano women, including Mdantsane's two AFM congregations discussed in detail in this chapter, the permanent physical church building was the place that anchored them as mothers in the city.

For other manyano women, however, the 1980s and 1990s was a time when they began to look beyond their own congregation's local building, taking on charitable activities in the wider community and moving in parts of the city that had formerly been closed to Black women. The late-apartheid economy and educational system had allowed a small number of Black women to enter careers that put them on the path to middle-class status. These women were keen to join manyanos, and their presence and interests contributed to some shifts in what it meant to be *umama lomthandazo* (a mother of prayer). Particularly in mainline Protestant and Catholic manyanos, manyano membership was no longer officially restricted to married women (although this rule had always been somewhat flexible), and manyanos took on charitable projects beyond their individual congregations. This charity, in the case of the CWL's gifts to residents of the squatter camp, emphasized the growing differences between manyano women at the end of apartheid, as inequality in many ways became more marked between urbanites.

CONCLUSION

1994 was an important turning point in South Africa because of the formal end of the Bantustan system, the extension of the franchise to all adult South Africans regardless of race, and an official change in relations between church and state (after the 1994 elections the South African Council of Churches officially changed its policy from one of opposition to the government to one of "critical solidarity").[1] Yet 1994 was not a complete disjuncture in South African history; many of the trends discussed in the previous chapter, including the expansion of informal urban settlements, the emergence of a new Black middle class, and the growth of Pentecostal churches in townships, continued from the late 1980s through the 1990s and further. These changes continued to affect the manyano movement.

In particular, changes in the South African religious landscape mean that manyanos are no longer the primary, default, form of Black women's formal participation in institutional Christianity. Mainline churches, as well as some Pentecostal and AIC churches, ordain women as ministers, which means that women's religious leadership is no longer confined to the manyano. More significant for women's Christian practice, however, is the growth of new Pentecostal Charismatic Churches (PCCs) in South Africa since the 1990s. Since 1994, Christianity has continued to be the majority religion in South Africa, and adherence to Christianity has grown among Black South Africans according to some survey data.[2] Much of this growth in Christian affiliation and membership has taken place in globally-connected PCCs, who use new media and

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[1] Lulama Ntshingwa, Interview in Nahoon, East London, February 3, 2020.

[2] The 2001 census found that 79 per cent of South Africans identified as Christian. The 2011 census did not ask any questions about religion. A survey by the Pew Forum in 2010 concluded that 87 per cent of South Africans were Christian, while the 2013 General Household Survey reported that 84 per cent of South Africans were Christian. Willem J. Schoeman, "South African Religious Demography: The 2013 General Household Survey," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 73, no. 2 (2017): 2.

new forms of piety and liturgy to bring their adherents into a cosmopolitan community that promises upward mobility and material security at a time when the state is an unreliable provider of basic services.[3] Members' participation in PCCs is shaped by gendered and generational dynamics, but these churches do not have organizations that are comparable to manyanos. In mainline, AIC, and older Pentecostal churches, manyanos continue to recruit new members, but the overall growth of PCCs at the expense of these older denominations may lead to declining manyano memberships in the future.[4]

Yet manyanos in contemporary South Africa continue to hold an important place in the popular imagination of Christian motherhood and piety. Academics writing for a popular audience have reintroduced the public to well-known figures like Charlotte Maxeke (founder of the Bantu Women's League in the early twentieth century), Josie Mpama (activist and Communist Party leader), and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela (prominent ANC member and Women's League president and wife of Nelson Mandela), with a renewed emphasis on these women's identities as manyano members, a fact that had often been overlooked in their memorialization as struggle heroes.[5] Singers like Samthing Soweto (in "Omama Bomthandazo")

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[3] In the extensive literature on the growth of PCCs in Africa, key studies for the South African context include: Birgit Meyer, "Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 447–74; Ilana van Wyk, *The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Maria Frahm-Arp, "Pentecostalism, Politics, and Prosperity in South Africa," *Religions* 9, no. 10 (2018): 298; Maria Frahm-Arp, "Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity and Social Media in South Africa," in Felicitas Becker, Joel Cabrita, and Marie Rodet, eds., *Religion, Media, and Marginality in Modern Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2018), 256–80.

[4] Manyano members and church ministers I talked to in East London and Mdantsane generally concurred that manyano membership is as strong today as it was twenty years ago. However, some interviewees expressed concern that young women no longer want to join the manyano, and that manyano membership is becoming the preserve of retirees who have the time and money to participate.

[5] On Mpama as an Anglican Mothers' Union member, see Robert R. Edgar, *Josie Mpama/Palmer: Get Up and Get Moving* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2020); On Madikizela-Mandela, see Chapter 5, "Walking a Sister to Heaven," in Lihle Ngcobozi, *Mothers of the Nation: Manyano Women in South Africa* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2020), 134–39; For an extensive debate on the religious and political legacy of Charlotte Maxeke, see this exchange of op-eds between Chigumadzi and Masola: Panashe Chigumadzi, "Our Debt to Charlotte Maxeke: 150 Years after Her Birth, She's Still Our Mother," *Sunday Times*, April 18, 2021, https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/opinion-and-analysis/2021-04-18-our-debt-to-charlotte-maxeke-150-years-after-her-birth-shes-still-our-

and Sjava (in "Edokodweni") have celebrated the resilience of mothers whose prayers and

sacrifices underpinned their children's success in life.[6] Similarly, artists have celebrated the

historical and contemporary work of manyano women through visual art. In her paintings of

manyano women, and in her film *Joko Ya Hao* (which portrays a Methodist woman's struggle

against patriarchy and apartheid in the 1950s), artist and filmmaker Mmabatho Montsho

celebrates the resilience of manyano women against forces of oppression.[7] In short, manyanos

are present in South African popular culture, with an emphasis on their overlooked acts of care

that sustained their children and communities during difficult times.

This dissertation has examined the history of manyanos in one South African, in order to

show how practices and ideas of manyano motherhood have changed over time. I have argued

that manyano women in the Eastern Cape and East London throughout the twentieth century

acted out evolving understandings of Christian public motherhood, in conversation with other

understandings of motherhood coming from the state, from church leaders, and from other

women's religious and political movements. Home-making was one of the primary ways that

manyano members acted out their roles as Christian public mothers. They were often heads of

households who had to maintain family homes under conditions of urban segregation and

apartheid that were antagonistic to the wellbeing of Black women. However, as this dissertation

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mother/; Panashe Chigumadzi, "Charlotte Maxeke: The Mother of Black Freedom," *Sunday Times*, April 25, 2021, https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/opinion-and-analysis/2021-04-25-charlotte-maxeke-the-mother-of-black-freedom/; Athambile Masola, "ANC Can't Co-Opt Maxeke," *Sunday Times*, May 2, 2021, https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/opinion-and-analysis/2021-05-02-anc-cant-co-opt-maxeke/; Athambile Masola, "I Cite a Little Prayer: Name Your Black Feminist Sources," *Sunday Times*, May 2, 2021, https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times-daily/opinion-and-analysis/2021-05-02-i-cite-a-little-prayer-name-your-black-feminist-sources/.
[6] Samthing Soweto, "Omama Bomthandazo," track 3 on *Isiphithipithi*, 2019; Sjava, "Edokodweni," track 2 on *Umsebenzi,* 1020 Cartel Records, 2021.
[7] *Joko Ya Hao [Your Load]* (Blanket Entertainment and Black Brain Pictures, 2020); Zaza Hlalethwa, "The Divinity in the Everyday," *The Mail & Guardian*, August 17, 2018, https://mg.co.za/article/2018-08-17-00-the-divinity-in-the-everyday/. Accessed March 9, 2020.

has emphasized, manyano women's home-making work extended beyond the bounds of the nuclear family space, and encompassed the making of durable, secure corporate religious spaces. In making and maintaining the physical spaces for religious life and community, manyanos shaped the twentieth-century urban landscape in significant ways. They funded buildings that lasted on the landscape, created new religious spaces of belonging in marginal or neglected areas of the city, and defied the hindrances to Black women's mobility by their travel around the city and the country. The history of manyanos in East London shows how gendered religious culture has influenced, and been influenced by, the city.

Manyanos began, however, in rural areas, and the nature of these organizations has to be understood through the rural-urban connections of early twentieth century industrializing South Africa. Manyanos formed as response to war, land dispossession, and the economic pressures and possibilities of the emerging migrant labor system. Black Christian women met together, traveled around, and formed bonds of solidarity to mourn and to combat these threats. The unpublished history of the Clarkebury Methodist manyano, as well as the records of the Queenstown Methodist manyano, show how manyano membership put women on the move, going around the country. Their focus on prayer and church buildings was not the only vision of black Christian motherhood: white church leaders and the home improvement movement both emphasized a more practical, domestically focused motherhood as the path to spiritual and national uplift. The popularity of manyanos suggests the relatively greater appeal of their broad understanding of motherhood.

In the 1940s the population of East London's segregated East Bank location grew significantly. Manyano women who arrived in cities in the 1940s had to navigate the economic challenges of living in the city while being subjected to the scrutiny that white officials and the

black press directed at domestic servants and independent women. Manyano membership (and other women's groups like home improvement, charitable, or temperance societies) offered a foothold in town, a link back to home areas, and a way to demonstrate respectability. As newspaper reports and the Queenstown Methodist manyano minutes show, tea parties, concerts, and imijikelo (fundraising dinners) were the staple of women's church work. These events were part of a range of reciprocal fundraising ventures (including stokvels, or rotating credit associations) which were one of the few legal opportunities for black urbanites to make and spend money in the location, since the municipality tightly controlled economic activity. Manyanos were therefore participants in shaping an emerging Black urban culture in East London.

By the early 1950s, urban segregation in South Africa was beginning to enter a new phase. The recently-elected National Party was promising white voters a stricter program of urban segregation. Manyano women participated in political organizing, such as the ANC's Defiance Campaign in 1952, or the 1956 march on the capital to protest Black women being forced to carry passes. After the 1952 "Bloody Sunday" massacre in East London, manyano women were not visibly involved in formal politics in East London. However, manyanos largely financed the (re)construction of at least four church buildings during the 1950s. Churches provided a private place for women to meet at a time when domestic space was increasingly scarce and insecure. Church buildings also provided a place for socialization and community activity, such as the church beauty competitions photographed by Daniel Morolong. Oral histories, photographs, and newspaper records show how church buildings provided an important space of women's urban belonging; these imposing physical structures also emphasized their sense of belonging in the city, at a time when their right to live in the city was under threat.

This threat became real after 1963, when municipal and central state authorities began to forcibly remove people classified as African from the East Bank and send them to the peri-urban township of Mdantsane which would be ultimately incorporated into the nominally independent Ciskei "homeland." Forced removals deeply disrupted individuals, families, and community organizations, who in Mdantsane were forced to some degree to reshape their lives in accordance with urban planners' notions of nuclear family domesticity. Bureaucrats also exercised control over access to religious space in Mdantsane; AIC and Pentecostal churches were at a disadvantage in accessing land. These difficulties encouraged churches to rely on far-flung connections, beyond the restricted economic and political space of the Ciskei. Yet while male church leaders made connections to fund new church buildings, the work of Mdantsane manyano women in the 1960s and 1970s became in some ways more circumscribed, focused on the smaller-scale matter of supporting the minister and his family. Outside Mdantsane, however, in urban or peri-urban areas that did not fit the grand apartheid plan of a homeland township, manyano women continued to be active in building churches.

Tracing the history of manyanos, especially of their mobility practices, reveals some of the contingencies and changes in the apartheid urban system in the 1970s and 1980s. At the same time that churches were trying to construct new buildings in Mdantsane, manyanos were adapting their organizational structure to the new township space. In the township, manyanos created smaller groups that met within walking distance; these scaled-down groups offered new opportunities for younger women to take on leadership positions in the manyano. By the 1980s, manyano women were also beginning to take advantage of the informal minibus taxi transportation system that, after two violent and politically charged boycotts, replaced the state-subsidized buses as the main form of transportation for black urbanites in East London and

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Mdantsane. The stories of manyano members show how women's religious and social groups were negatively affected by the expense and danger of the taxi transportation system, but also took advantage of the rise of kombi transport in the 1980s and early 90s to travel further and expand their organizational networks.

Mobility—not just physical travel, but also economic and social mobility—continued to characterize manyano activity in the decade before the first democratic elections in 1994. In informal settlements on the city and township edges, Pentecostal and African Independent churches offered poor, newly urbanized women a place to cultivate their identity as mothers through prayer and preaching. At the same time, a smaller cohort of educated, professional women began to work, live, and spend more time in formerly white parts of East London. These women, mainly members of mainline churches, focused their manyanos' efforts on practical, charitable work. These changing definitions of what it meant to be a manyano member, and a Christian public mother, were reflective of emerging class differences among Black urbanites at the end of apartheid and of changing understandings of motherhood in South Africa more broadly.

As the brief discussion at the beginning of this Conclusion shows, manyanos did not cease to be an important cultural force in Black urban communities after 1994. More research remains to be done, taking the lead from Lihle Ngcobozi's study of the Methodist manyano in contemporary South Africa, on how women's Christian public motherhood has changed in the past three decades. In particular, the HIV/AIDS epidemic made heavy demands on organizations like manyanos, who were responsible for caring for the sick, raising children, and conducting funerals. More historical research remains to be done on manyanos in the post-apartheid era.

In addition to expanding the history of manyanos into the twenty-first century, this dissertation also demonstrates the value of religious history, and specifically a gendered religious history, for the history of urbanization in South Africa. The "infrastructural turn" in urban history and urban studies since the early 2000s has probed how the basic physical components of cities—roads, sewage systems, or housing projects—can perpetuate economic and political divisions between urbanites. Paying attention to how and where religious communities have constructed buildings in South African cities can deepen our understanding of the persistent divisions and inequalities in cities, as well as the ways that people have forged connections across divided urban spaces.

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APPENDIX

NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

Race is a social construct, and the terminology of racial categories changes over time. In South Africa, this fact is especially problematic because terms including "African," "Native," "Indian," and "Coloured" were legal categories assigned by the apartheid state. However, these terms continue to have salience for individuals and communities. In this dissertation, I use the terms employed in the most recent South African census. "White" refers to European settlers and their descendants. "Black" or "Black African" refers to people from southern Africa who speak Nguni and Sotho-Tswana languages. In the Eastern Cape, the focus of this dissertation, the dominant Nguni language is isiXhosa. "Coloured" refers to the population of people of mixed racial ancestry. Black Consciousness activists beginning in the 1970s used "black" to describe all people discriminated against because of their race; I occasionally also use "black" in this sense and have tried to make it clear when I am doing so.

Scholarly terminology for Christian religious movements in South Africa has also changed over time. Some distinguish between "Ethiopian" or "separatist" churches that broke from missionary control while maintaining similar institutional and liturgical forms, and "Zionist" churches which incorporated more apparently traditional ritual. Others have used the term "Independent" to refer to all these churches. The growth of globally connected Pentecostal movements (which expanded in the 1970s and took new charismatic forms after the 1990s), complicates any strict distinction between mission-established and African Independent churches.[1] Indeed, one of the contentions of this dissertation is that focusing only on the

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[1] For a thorough overview of all the terms that have been used for new Christian movements in Africa, and the debates around their meaning, see Ezra Chitando, "Naming the Phenomena: The Challenge of African Independent Churches," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 31, no. 1 (2005): 85–110.

differences between denominations can obscure their commonalities. When it is useful to distinguish between denominations, I use "African Independent Church" (AIC) to refer to denominations founded by Black South Africans.[2] I use the term "mission-established" to refer to denominations founded by white missionaries. Finally, when writing about the late twentieth century I use "mainline Protestant" to refer to long-established institutions with similar practices and structures (this category includes most mission-established churches and some older AICs).

I have abbreviated the full names of some denominations frequently mentioned in the dissertation. There are numerous Methodist denominations in South Africa, but unless otherwise specified, "Methodist" refers to the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, the largest mission-established denomination in the country. Likewise, "Anglican" refers to the Church of the Province of Southern Africa, and "Catholic" to the Roman Catholic Church.

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[2] Anderson and Kalu have each made persuasive arguments that "initiated" or "instituted" are more appropriate than "independent" to describe churches founded in Africa by Africans. However, "independent" remains the most common term in current scholarship (see Chitando; Meyer; Cabrita and Erlank). In any case, the acronym AIC refers to the same set of churches, whatever the "I" stands for. Allan H. Anderson, "Types and Butterflies: African Initiated Churches and European Typologies," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25, no. 3 (2001): 107–13; Ogbu U. Kalu, ed., *African Christianity: An African Story* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007); Birgit Meyer, "Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004): 447–74; Chitando, "Naming the Phenomena: The Challenge of African Independent Churches"; Joel Cabrita and Natasha Erlank, "New Histories of Christianity in South Africa: Review and Introduction," *South African Historical Journal* 70, no. 2 (2018): 307–23.