

**SYMBOLISM IN SANGOMA CLOTH: A SOUTH AFRICAN PRINTMAKING
JOURNEY**

FROM THE LIMINAL TO THE LIMINOID

by

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DECLARATION

I, Mavis Lebohang Rankou-Radebe, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work, except where otherwise stated. The dissertation has not previously been submitted at any other university. All sources are acknowledged, giving explicit references.



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This project was planned, administered and co-ordinated by the researcher. The researcher was responsible for the overall research, field work, ethical considerations, designing and printing of artworks, interview sessions, and the analysis of the results obtained as well as the financial administration arrangements.

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ABSTRACT

The *sangoma* cloth is one of the objects which the Zulu people use to utilised in terms of culture and tradition and still is significant amongst African diviners. Initially, *sangomas* (traditional healers/diviners) dressed in animal skin, but because of the lack or deficiency of the animal skin, the cloth substituted the skin. The cloth carries a wealth of sacred symbolism and meanings which have been constructed by the *sangoma* community to best fit or describe the symbolic meanings and the potencies embedded in them. However, such cultural artefacts and symbols change over time, and new ones emerge through cultural practice. Therefore, the tension between conserving the religious and sacred, on the one hand, and the emerging, context and contingency based development on the other leads to problems of acceptability, authorized use and sanctified adaptation.

This project explores the symbolism in the meaning and function of the *sangoma* sacred cloth which forms part of the *sangoma* dress code. It sets out three sets of interwoven binaries or tensions. Firstly, it explores the tensions between the liminal of ritual practices, and the liminoid (following Turner 1969), so that the second set of tensions, namely between the sacred and the profane (or secular or the commodified) can be explored. This leads to the third set of tensions, namely between Indigenous Knowledge Systems on the one hand and a potential Global Knowledge System on the other. In this way the tensions in the use of the *sangoma* cloth was explored, to attempt to determine a system that would assist in defining at what moment and following what dynamics the symbology would move from one side of the set of tensions to the other.

The artist/researcher worked together with a focus group of *sangomas* who are part of a non-governmental organization are based in Sedibeng region. This study's research methodology is a Practice-led research approach within the framework of qualitative research methodology in the Fine Arts. The first method of data collection included one-on-one interviews from which the data was analysed and from which the existing designs could be reworked into new ones. Following this, a series of design and artmaking processes were followed, where five original cloth designs were taken through six different redesign iterations. The third method was a focus group method where the focus group participants (consisting of the original *sangoma* community, but with a ritual to request insight from the ancestors/*amadlozi* and therefore their contributions) was employed to view the five sets of redesigned cloths, to attempt to establish the moment when the Indigenous

Knowledge System and the sacred of the *sangoma* cloth enters the secular domain which forms part of Global Knowledge Systems.

The research project offers one system or methodology which is based on comparison as presented by the community who claim originality, in that the community itself decide when something needs to be protected by IKS and when it may be allowed to move into a public, shared, domain. The findings of this project were done by the owners of the cloth which resulted in them stating that: to claim IKS, one has to make an inquiry with the community who owns it; one cannot claim an entire design as IKS due to the composition or design having individual elements which have distinct meanings; The element of colour plays a dominant role within the *sangoma* community; and finally, for this project a clear and powerful system of humanity was set out by the *sangomas/amadlozi* that the sacredness of the cloth lies with the human who wears or uses it, and not with the cloth itself.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
DEDICATIONS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY	1
1.1 Introduction and motivation	1
1.1.1 History and purpose of the <i>sangoma</i> cloth	1
1.2 Current ‘abuse’ of the designs of the cloth for commercial and non-sacred use	4
1.3 Research questions	7
1.4 Problem statement	8
1.5 Rationale of the study	11
1.6 Theoretical Framework	15
1.7 Outline of chapters	16
1.8 Chapter Summary	17
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	18
2.1 Introduction	18
2.2 Practice-led research in the framework of qualitative research methodologies	18
2.3 Rationale of Qualitative approach	20
2.4 Phase One: the survey of scholarship	21
2.5 Phase two: Interviews	22
2.5.1 Description of research population	23
2.5.2 Description of research sample	24
2.5.3 A description of the community accessed	24

2.5.4	The interview process	25
2.5.5	Data analysis	26
2.5.6	Ethical considerations	27
2.6	Phase three: The surface printing	28
2.6.1	The appropriation of the current sangoma cloth into new designs	28
2.6.2	The digital imaging and silk screen process	28
2.7	Phase four: The focus group	30
2.7.1	Rationale for focus group methodology	30
2.7.2	Data analysis	31
2.7.3	Ethical considerations	31
2.7.4	Informed Consent	32
2.7.2	Validity and reliability of the analysis	32
2.8	Chapter Summary	33
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW		34
3.1	Introduction	34
3.2	Turner: Liminality and the rites of passage	35
3.2.1	The tensions between the liminal and the liminoid	40
3.3	Theoretical framework: Turner (as part of rituals) and indigenous knowledge systems (as part of ownership)	41
3.4	Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) and global knowledge systems (GKS)	44
3.5	The sacred and the profane	45
3.6	The religious and the commodified	48
3.7	The tipping point	49
3.8	The engagement of the NPO with the community	52
3.9	The dynamics of <i>ukuthwasa</i> ritual	53
3.9.1	Stages of <i>ukuthwasa</i>	58

3.10	Garments that delineate representivity	63
3.11	The meaning of the common colours and animal motifs on the sangoma cloth	63
3.12	Chapter summary	66
 CHAPTER 4: DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING		67
4.1	Introduction	67
4.2	Phase One	68
4.3.	Ilanga / Lestsatsi / Sun original	70
4.3.1	Sun One	71
4.3.2	Sun Two	72
4.3.3	Sun Three	73
4.3.4	Sun Four	73
4.3.5	Sun Five	74
4.4.	Thebe / Isihlangu / Shield series original	75
4.4.1	Shield One	77
4.4.2	Shield Two	77
4.4.3	Shield Three	78
4.4.4	Shield Four	80
4.4.5	Shield Five	80
4.5	Inyoka / Noha / Snake Series original	81
4.5.1	Snake One	82
4.5.2	Snake Two	83
4.5.3	Snake Three	83
4.5.4	Snake Four	84
4.5.5	Snake Five	85
4.6	Ingonyama / Tau / Lion Series Original	85
4.6.1	Lion One	87

4.6.2	Lion Two	88
4.6.3	Lion Three	88
4.6.4	Lion Four	89
4.7	Big Five Original	90
4.7.1	Big Five One	91
4.7.2	Big Five Two	92
4.7.3	Big Five Three	92
4.7.4	Big Five Four	93
4.8	Phase two: Printing process	93
4.8.1	First process: Washing of screens	94
4.8.2	Second process: Coating of screens and exposing	96
4.8.3	Third process: Printing	98
4.8.4	Last Process: Preparing prints for private exhibition	99
4.9	Phase three: Focus group	100
4.10	Chapter Summary	101
CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION		102
5.1	Introduction	102
5.2	Private exhibition	103
5.2.1	Participant attire	105
5.3	Focus group exploration and discussion	107
5.3.1	The <i>phahla</i> ritual	107
5.3.2	The walkabout	107
5.3.3	Sun Series	108
5.3.4	Shield Series	112
5.3.5	Snake Series	116
5.3.6	Lion Series	120
5.3.7	Big Five Series	124

5.4	Analysis	128
5.4.1	Design Series analysis	128
5.4.1.1	Sun Series analysis	128
5.4.1.2	Shield Series analysis	129
5.4.1.3	Snake Series analysis	132
5.4.1.4	Lion Series analysis	132
5.4.1.5	Big Five Series analysis	132
5.5	Provisional conclusion	133
5.6	Chapter Summary	134
 CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS		135
6.1	Introduction	135
6.2	Findings obtained	138
6.3	Shortfalls / Limitations of the study	140
6.4	Future research	141
6.5	Personal experience	141
 REFERENCES		142
 ANNEXURE A		152

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: *A selection of commercial cotton cloths obtained in the White River.* University of Johannesburg. (Simmons 2008:104)

Figure 1.2: *Standing Fiberglass Shiva.* Source: <https://www.plutusart.com/product/fiberglass-beautifully-colored-standing-shiva-statue/>

Figure 1.3: *Oriental carpet gallery.* Source: <https://www.orientalcarpetgallery.co.za/>

Figure 1.4: *South African Traditional wedding.*

Source: <https://web.facebook.com/OurPerfectWeddingMzansi/photos/1057773017689558>

Figure 1.5: NEWS24. 2014. *Latoya Makhene.* Drum Digital 11 November 2014. Source: <https://www.news24.com/drum/News/letoya-makhenes-new-chapter-20170728>

Figure 1.6: NGCOBO, N. 2019. *Showing off the colourful reflection of my ancestor's wear.* Source: <https://web.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10156868644018042&set=pb.635363041.-2207520000.&type=3>

Figure 1.7: GUMEDE, N. 2011. *Modern Sangoma range.*

Source: <http://dutfashion.blogspot.co.za/2011/10/morden-sangoma-range.html>

Figure 1.8: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2016. *Untitled Photograph.* Vanderbijlpark.

Figure 1.9: NGXOKOLO, L. *Maxhosa knit wear design.* Source: sdr.co.za, Source: <https://mg.co.za/article/2019-05-10-00-why-i-decided-to-call-my-brand-maxhosa/>

Figure 1.10: NGXOKOLO, L. *Male circumcision kit.* Source: <https://qz.com/africa/789623/a-south-african-male-circumcision-kit-by-fashion-designer-laduma-ngxokolo/> accessed

Figure 3.1: RADEBE, M. Lebohang 2020. *A depiction of the integration and reintegration into and out of the liminal space.*

Figure 3.2: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2020. *Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Global Knowledge Systems spheres of influence.*

Figure 3.3: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2020. *Gogo Mmakgomo Photograph* (Published with permission). Vanderbijlpark.

Figure 4.1: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series original.*
40cm x 60cm Digital image.

Figure 4.2: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 1.*
40cm x 60cm Digital image.

Figure 4.3: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 2*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.

Figure 4.4: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 3*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.

Figure 4.5: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 4*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.

Figure 4.6: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 5*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.

Figure 4.7: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series original*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.

Figure 4.8: ALLE, C.R. 2014. *Shaka's Regimental Color-Coded Shields*. Fort Leavenworth:
Kansas (Allen 2014:15)

Figure 4.9: *Zulu bride with Shield traditional attire*.

Source: <https://www.yellosa.co.za/company/946412/passion4fashion>

Figure 4.10: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 1*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.

Figure 4.11: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 2*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.

Figure 4.12: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 3*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.

Figure 4.13: ALLEN CR. 2014. *Portrait of King Shaka*. Fort Leavenworth: Kansas (Allen 2014:
8)

Figure 4.14: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 4*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.

Figure 4.15: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 5*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.

Figure 4.16: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/Noha/Snake Series original*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.

Figure 4.17: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/Noha/Snake Series 1*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.

Figure 4.18: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/Noha/Snake Series 2*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.

- Figure 4.19:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 3*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.
- Figure 4.20:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 4*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.
- Figure 4.21:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 5*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.
- Figure 4.22:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series original*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.
- Figure 4.23:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series 1*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.
- Figure 4.24:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series 2*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.
- Figure 4.25:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series 3*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.
- Figure 4.26:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series 4*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.
- Figure 4.27:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series original*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.
- Figure 4.28:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series 1*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.
- Figure 4.29:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series 2*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.
- Figure 4.30:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series 3*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.
- Figure 4.31:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series 4*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image.
- Figure 4.32:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Cleaning of screens* Photograph. Vanderbijlpark.
- Figure 4.33:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Drying of screens* Photograph. Vanderbijlpark.
- Figure 4.34:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Azucol emulsion coated screen with Sellotape* Photograph. Vanderbijlpark.
- Figure 4.35:** RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Transfer film paper preparation* Photographo. Vanderbijlpark.

Figure 4.36: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019 *Transferred Image from film paper to coated screen* Photograph. Vanderbijlpark.

Figure 4.37: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Silkscreen Printing* Photograph. Vanderbijlpark.

Figure 4.38: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Heating ink after printing* Photograph. Vanderbijlpark.

Figure 4.39: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Final Printed cloth* Photograph. Vanderbijlpark.

Figure 4.40: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Burning of impepho to prepare cloths for focus group* Photograph. Vanderbijlpark.

Figure 4.41: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Preparing for focus group* Photograph. Bophelong.

Figure 4.42: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Focus group performing the Phahla ritual* Photograph. Bophelong.

Figure 5.1: RADEBE, M. 2018 Lebohang *Untitled* Photograph. Tshepiso.

Figure 5.2: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2018 *Untitled* digital Photograph. Bophelong.

Figure 5.3: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series original*.

40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.4: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 1*.

40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.5: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 2*.

40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.6: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 3*.

40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.7: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 4*.

40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.8: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 5*.

40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.9: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series original*.

40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.10: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 1*.

40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.11: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 2*.

40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.12: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 3*. 40cm x 60cm Silkscreen print.

Figure 5.13: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 4*. 40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.14: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 5*. 40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.15: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series original*. 40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.16: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 1*. 40cm x 60cm Digital Print.

Figure 5.17: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 2*. 40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.18: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 3*. 40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.19: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 4*. 40cm x 60cm Silk Screen print.

Figure 5.20: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 5*. 40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.21: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series original*. 40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.22: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series 1*. 40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.23: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series 2*. 40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.24: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series 3*. 40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.25: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series 4*. 40cm x 60cm Silkscreen print.

Figure 5.26: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series original*. 40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.27: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series 1*. 40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.28: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series 2*.
40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.29: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series 3*.
40cm x 60cm Digital print.

Figure 5.30: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series 4*.
40cm x 60cm Digital Silkscreen print.

Figure 5.31: *Swati ceremony* Source: <http://www.stockphotos.ro>

Figure 5.32: *Women in Swati attire* Source: <http://www.stockphotos.ro>

Figure 5.33: *Swaziland flag*. Source: <http://www.stockphotos.ro>

Figure 5.34: *Mkwanazi sisters dressed for a traditional wedding* Photograph.(published with permission). Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2940545472643330&set=pb.100000637176556.-2207520000>

Figure 5.35: *Seshweshwe designs*. Source: <https://www.pinterest.fr/pin/462815299180850500/>

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

1.1.1 History and purpose of the *sangoma* cloth

The purpose of this chapter is to situate the *sangoma* cloth of this study in a context, to pose the research aim and research questions and to present the meaning, function and strategies of design.

The *sangoma* cloth has played a pivotal role in trading between Asians and the African Indigenes in the past (Simmons 2008:101). El Anatsui, a Ghanaian teacher and sculptor elaborates that while having functional use, the cloth contributes a huge part in ritual whether it be for everyday use or special ceremonies, civil or sacred (Checinska 2018:3). Anatsui further states that the cloth becomes soaked with social significance and memory, as creating procedures and family souvenirs are passed on from generation to generation (Checinska 2018:3). Axel-Ivar Berglund, one of the seminal scholars on Zulu tradition, furthermore recorded that the cloth was one of the objects the Zulu people utilised regarding their culture and tradition. It signified wealth and used to be traded for surplus products amongst the Zulu royal family and the Europeans and still plays a significant role amongst the African diviners “came to be related with both dignity and transitional experiences such as rites of passage (hlonipha)¹” (1976: 188). These cloths replaced animal hides that were previously used by the Indigenes and became popular among *sangomas*².

In South Africa, among the Zulu-speaking people, diviners are termed *sangoma*. The history of *sangomas* can be foot-printed (that is to say, has been written about) back to the 19th century in the Southern part of Africa during King Shaka Kasenzangakhona’s³ rule. King Shaka was initially the military commander of King Dingiswayo and later ascended the throne after his father’s death and ruled the Zulu people between 1816 and 1828. One of the first identified Zulu *sangomas* that can be traced in the written history of South Africa is Queen Ntombazi – mother of King Zwide⁴ (Allen 2014).

¹ Respect.

² A *sangoma* (Isizulu) is a traditional healer within the South African context. The singular is ‘*sangoma*’ and the plural *Izangoma*. Within this dissertation the plural, for the sake of ease, will be presented as ‘*sangomas*’ unless the context requires otherwise.

³ A king of the Zulu kingdom between 1816-1828 (Allen 2004).

⁴ King of the Ndwandwe nation who murdered King Dingiswayo (Allen 2004).

Sangomas obtain their titles through *ukuthwasa*, which is a process in which the novice or neophyte is nurtured and catechised into becoming a *sangoma*. *Ukuthwasa* has no specific time frame. Mlisa (2009:x) interprets *ukuthwasa* as a devotional journey that is constructed by ancestors for those who are given the gift of healing by their ancestors. These cloths play a very significant role in the process of *ukuthwasa*.

Originally, *sangomas* used to dress in animal (or reptile) skins, such as snake, lion, zebra and so forth. This was done due to the accepted potent nature of these hides, to distinguish them from the rest of the community and to grant them the respect they require. However, the leopard skin was also worn by dignitaries and chiefs, which exceedingly indicated prominence, power and authority (Simmons 2008:96).

Contemporarily, a *sangoma* dresses in cloths that are wrapped around the waist and thrown over the shoulders. These cloths play a very significant role in the process of initiation as each cloth has its own specific meaning and function. These cloths are made in different designs that consist of various colours, patterns and images or motifs of animals, which have symbolic representations (see Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1: A selection of commercial cotton cloths obtained in the White River. Source: University of Johannesburg. (Simmons 2008:104)

Sangomas thus now dress in modern textile cloths that are printed in different animal motifs, which represent the original animal skins they initially had to dress in. Distinct aspects of the cloth included the celestial signs that consist of the moon, sun and the stars and the four cardinal points. The celestial signs bring forward the religious demeanour within the ritual of

Ukuthwasa (Simmons 2008:89). The composition and design of these cloths include a large central motif surrounded by smaller motifs placed on the corners of the rectangular field, enclosed with decorative borders. The common colours that are utilised are red, black and white. A variety of other hues such as yellow, green etc, had recently been included as one of the main colours printed on the *sangoma* cloth (Simmons 2008:101).

Simmons (2008:106) argues (perhaps controversially) that the origins of these cloths with regard to composition and colour might have been through the influence of the Indian deities (see Figure 1.2) displayed in the Indian shops, before these cloths transitioned from animal hides. Simmons (2008:102) infers that the influence in the composition of these cloths might have also been through Islamic influence due to the cloth resembling the layout of the imported Persian carpets (see Figure 1.3) also displayed in these Indian stores. Be that as it may, conceptually, the talks of the iconography and symbolism portrayed in these contemporary cloths were expanded and compiled by the *sangomas* themselves. The researcher supports a discussion by Hallam and Ingold (2007), which states that over time, traditions may evolve. They refer to these changes as improvisation. The ancestors have indeed accepted this improvisation of cloths replacing animal hides. This acceptance is evident in the type of dreams contemporary potential *sangomas* have, involving the cloths in question, as a signal for them to heed the call by undergoing *ukuthwasa* and to progress to different phases while in training. (This insight is clearly demonstrated in the series of interviews that form the underpinning of much of the research prior to the designs and will be documented in Chapter 4 of this study. Here the researcher leaves this simply as a declaration).

1.2 CURRENT ABUSE OF THE DESIGNS OF THE CLOTH FOR COMMERCIAL AND NON-SACRED USE



Figure 1.2: *Standing Fiberglass Shiva*

Source: <https://www.plutusart.com/product/fiberglass-beautifully-colored-standing-shiva-statue/>



Figure 1.3: *Oriental carpet gallery*

Source: <https://www.orientalcarpetgallery.co.za/>

The researcher's academic background and training as an artist has assisted in developing an eye for detail. The researcher noticed how the use of this cloth has somehow changed or seemed slowly to be losing its meaning in terms of who is supposed to utilise this cloth and why. Nkabinde (2008:104) refers to this cloth as a sign of respect amongst the community of *sangomas*. In other words, the cloth is a visualisation of a sacred hierarchy and a sacred calling, yet it seems to be changing. Many individuals, even those who have not undergone the ritual of *ukuthwasa*, are seen tailor-making these sacred cloths into wearable clothing items, be it for weddings or any traditional ceremony, or, indeed, for everyday style.

The researcher recently noticed the misuse of the cloth in question on a local television reality show (MZANSI MAGIC TV 2017. Channel 161. *Our perfect wedding*. [Tv programme 5 June] (see Figure 1.4)]. This is a reality show of South African weddings, both European/western traditional and South African traditional weddings. During the South African traditional part of the wedding, couples have been seen wearing the Nguni *ukuthwasa* cloth. This causes much confusion as to whether this cloth might belong to the Nguni community as a whole or is it the

sacred property of the *sangoma* community? This is considered a catastrophe by/for the *amadlozi*⁵ as this is a sacred cloth not to be used by anyone but the owners, the owners being the *sangoma* community, it can be argued.



Figure 1.4: South African traditional wedding

Source: <https://web.facebook.com/OurPerfectWeddingMzansi/photos/1057773017689558>

In some instances, the owners of this cloth can somehow be the culprits (or perpetrators, for the lack of better description), of this exploitation of the sacred cloth. When the *ithwasana*⁶ undergo training, they are shown how and when to use the cloth. Latoya Makhene (see Figure 1.5) is a local actress and famously known for her role (Tshidi) on local soap opera (soapie) *Generations*⁷ (DSTV. 2021. SABC1 Channel 161. *Generations: the legacy*. [TV programme]) and is also a *sangoma* in real life. During her News24 *Drum* interview (11 Nov 2014 issue), Makhene was photographed dressed in black panties and what appears to be a short dress designed with the cloth in question. Makhene is portrayed in a considerably seductive manner with her left hand tilting the short dress upwards to flash her black panties. This has brought outrage to some of the elder *sangomas*, as what she was wearing appears to have a sexual connotation. What Makhene was wearing is known as a minidress/skirt, or an *isiqcebezana* in the South African context. Radebe and Van Der Bank (2016) discuss and put into contrast the perception of the western miniskirt and the traditional miniskirt (*isiqcebezana*). Radebe and

⁵ An '*idlozi*' is an ancestor. The plural form is '*amadlozi*' (Mokgobi 2012).

⁶ *Ukuthwasa* initiate or trainee.

⁷ <https://www.sabc1.co.za/sabc1/tv-show/generations/>

Van Der Bank reference Makoni (2011: 345) who articulates that the current context of the miniskirt connotes a move away from conventional femininity to the idea of portraying women in a degrading manner when wearing a western miniskirt as opposed to when she is wearing a traditional miniskirt. They further state that the miniskirt in the contemporary time is presently not seen as decent attire in the Zulu culture, as it was during the colonial times. The Zulu culture views the traditional miniskirt as a cultural norm but regards the western miniskirt as sleazy. The outrage caused by Makhene is based on the contemporary perception of the miniskirt.



Figure 1.5: NEWS24. 2014. *Latoya Makhene*. Drum Digital 11 November 2014. Source: <https://www.news24.com/drum/News/letoya-makhenes-new-chapter-20170728>

The above argument begins to demonstrate that the *sangoma* cloth should be seen as sacred cloth that belongs to the ancestors and is used by the *sangomas* to demonstrate their connections to the ancestors and the power that the ancestors bring to them. However, in current South Africa, this sacredness seems to be disregarded (and abused, one can argue) in the profane world of the everyday. This may seem a harsh position, so it could be argued that there comes a time when the sacredness ‘changes’ to the profaneness (perhaps better categorised now as the ‘secular’); therefore, the cloth can be worn by anyone. Thus, one can speculate on a particular moment or dynamic that occurs when the cloth ‘changes’ from the sacred to the profane/secular. It is the attempt to find this moment or dynamic that is the purpose of this dissertation and research project.

This situation (of moving from the sacred to the secular) can also be thought of around the nature of ownership. Thus, as will be argued below and further, the sacred can be seen to belong to a community; whereas, the secular is available to anyone, irrespective of what community

they belong to. Within the current debate in this regard, the connection can be made between the sacred that is part of indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs) and the secular, which, therefore, becomes part of the global knowledge systems (GKSs). Returning to the *sangoma* cloth, therefore, one can speculatively argue that the *sangoma* cloth is part of the *sangoma* IKS. If this is the case, then it seems ethical that the *sangoma* community themselves should be the ones that decide on what belongs to them and to the ancestors and what can be released to the secular world. The problem is to determine how this might be done and when this method is put in place, what might the *sangomas*' (and ancestors'/*amadlozis*') decisions on the cloths be?

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main question

What methodology can be used to determine the moments where the sacredness of the *sangoma* cloth symbology, which is part of the indigenous knowledge system (IKS) of the *sangoma* community, changes to the profane or secular usage of the cloth found in global knowledge systems (GKS)?

Sub-question 1:

What are the dynamic relationships between the liminal and the liminoid, the sacred and the profane/ secular, the religious and the commodified and indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs) and global knowledge systems (GKSs)?

Objective 1:

The first objective is the development in the interrelationships of these terms, so that these interrelationships can be used as a theoretical model to understand the symbology of the *sangoma* cloth and the processes that are in play that seem to undermine the sacredness of that symbology.

Sub-question 2:

What is the actual or perceived symbology contained in the *sangoma* cloth?

Objective 2:

This objective sets out to trace, explain and document the symbology used in the *sangoma* cloth, as it pertains to the *sangoma* training and community, so that the symbology can be used

as the basis for the creative changes envisaged in the study to determine the tipping point from the sacred to the secular (as outlined above).

Sub-question 3:

How can one use the creative arts potential to develop a series of prints that suggest a move from the sacred to the profane in the symbology of the *sangoma* cloth?

Objective 3:

This objective sets out to develop a series of changing print designs for each selected *sangoma* cloth, so that these changed prints can be used to present to the *sangoma* community to determine the tipping point or moment that that community decide that the symbology may enter the general public (or global knowledge system(GKS)) domain.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The trainees took me to Hlengiwe's place. I was not dressed in my sangoma clothes. I was wearing jeans, a T-shirt, jacket and my sneakers. I had my sangoma cloths in my bag. Normally when you visit the house of an older sangoma, you are supposed to wear a traditional cloth as a sign of respect. (Nkabinde 2008:104)

Zandile Nkabinde (2008) is a young *sangoma* residing at Soweto in Gauteng, South Africa. She has undergone *ukuthwasa*⁸ (initiation) training for *sangomas*. The statement above indicates the importance and worthy esteem of the cloth. Trainees who are still undergoing *ukuthwasa* are identified by their reddish/brownish hair with a chicken or goat gall-bladder hanging from the back of the head, red ochre known as *idumane* and, particularly relevant for this study, colourful vibrant cloth wraps decorated with various patterns and symbolic markings with red, white or black colours. Presently, a wide spectrum of colours have been introduced as part of these sacred cloths (Xaso 2015:18).

Zandile Nkabinde (2008:108) stressed her embarrassment about being inappropriately dressed while visiting another *sangoma*'s house. She feels comfortable in her sneakers and jeans but the duty of being a *sangoma* requires her to dress in the cloth in question, when she pays a visit

⁸ A formal training that a novice undergoes before becoming a qualified healer *sangoma* (Xaso 2015:47)

to another *sangoma*'s house regardless of the distance travelled. As a result of this incident, Nkabinde has now tailored her *sangoma* cloths as wearable everyday normal clothing.

Times are inevitably changing and recently, these cloths have become one of the latest fashion trends in South Africa, mostly among young *sangomas* where they are seen redesigning these cloths into fashionable clothing for wearing every day as normal clothing or attending ceremonies (see Figure 1.6). However, the general public have also gained interest in the *sangoma* trend and joined the process of buying and tailor-making these cloths into clothes. It should be kept in mind that these cloths replaced the animal hides the early *sangomas* used to wear but the symbolism and function has, arguably, remained perpetual. These sacred cloths are obtained through the sacred ritual of *ukuthwasa*. By way of example, Nontobeko Gumede (2011), Durban University of Technology fashion designer, also designed a range labelled Modern Sangoma Range (see Figure 1.7) in which, in some of her designs, the cloth in question is tailored into a sleeveless strapless knee length cocktail dress. The researcher's argument is that these cloths were made for a reason, therefore, this exploitation is not only compromising the cloth itself, but the owners (*sangoma* community) and their identity, as this cloth is a major communication tool in and out of the peripheries of the *sangoma* community. Various designers have also incorporated this cloth into modern designs – a strategy which, in times past, would be considered a catastrophe, sacrilegious and tantamount to defying the ancestors. Indeed, provisional observations suggest that changes are also occurring in the cloths themselves.



Figure 1.6: NGCOBO, N. 2019. *Showing off the colourful reflection of my ancestor's wear.*
Source:<https://web.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10156868644018042&set=pb.635363041.-2207520000..&type=3>

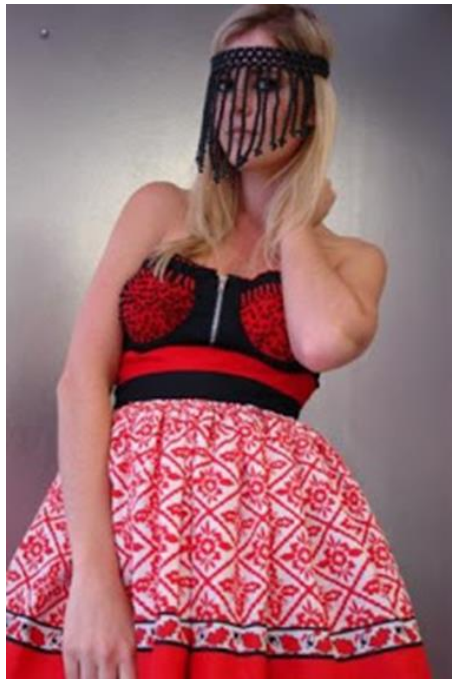


Figure 1.7: GUMEDE, N. 2011. *Modern Sangoma range.*

Source: <http://dutfashion.blogspot.co.za/2011/10/morden-sangoma-range.html>

1.5 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

As discussed earlier, some *sangomas* have successfully tailored these cloths into wearable clothing. But in previous times this was considered disrespectful to the ancestors because these cloths were not made to be wearable but as wrappings (see figure 1.8).



Figure 1.8: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2016. *Untitled* Photograph. Vanderbijlpark

Arguably, these cloths have replaced animal hides, which were previously worn by *sangomas*. These cloths are not any different purposely from the animal hides; they serve the same purpose and therefore can be worn as clothes. There is a need to enlighten society about the importance, function, symbolism and representations of the visual aspects in *sangoma* clothing as it was one of the first manifestations of embracing the Zulu culture and simultaneously recording and preserving these cultures and traditions as improvisation takes place.

This research is a contribution towards building up on the archives of South Africa and its culture in this IKS. The researcher's creative body of work does not only provide visual content in the field of Visual Arts, surface printing and textile printing, but also contributes towards the literature and elevating the overlooked sacred knowledge of indigenous people into the contemporary context.

Controversially, these cloths have also been associated with dirt and poverty because of the mere fact that *sangomas* wrap themselves with these cloths and sometimes walk bare foot and smeared in red ochre. *Sangomas* are perceived as uneducated, poor, uncivilised and unsophisticated as a result of their dress code requirements and amulets. Some *sangomas* who

reside and work in metropolitan districts have experienced challenges at their workplaces and some have even been sent home as a result of their form of dress code or artefacts. On occasion, some *sangomas* wish to, or are requested to, dress up in their basic *sangomas* clothing, not necessarily the whole regalia. The reason for this is that some of these *sangomas* are still undergoing training and another reason would be to inform or conscientise the community of their status, even if they have other professions.

As stated above, *sangomas* do not only wear these cloths during traditional ceremonies. Some prefer to wear these cloths every day due to the fact that they consult from their homes on a fulltime basis. These cloths have a significant symbolism attached to them depending on the type of *ukuthwasa*.

The ‘chosen’ is born as a *sangoma* but will need to undergo the process of *ukuthwasa* to receive training so that he/she can communicate with the *idlozi*. One of the most important signs that the novice will receive, from *amadlozi*, in order to undergo *ukuthwasa*, is the type of cloth they are supposed to utilise. This will be received via premonitions and dreams, which will clearly specify or indicate, which kind of training they are supposed to undergo, whether *ubundawo*⁹ or *ubunguni*¹⁰.

Nowadays people are judged and gauged according to what they wear. One example is the ritual of *Ulwaluko*¹¹ in the Xhosa culture where young boys go to the mountains for initiation; upon their return from the mountains, they are considered as men and have to dress as such. trainees used to dress in tweed jackets, khaki trousers and checked caps, some still do. Times have changed and some no longer dress in khaki clothing – some will dress up in the latest fashion labels that the family provides when they come from the mountains and some will dress up in simple clothing. Culture and traditions are inevitably transforming as well, for example, Western medicine has now become part of the traditional circumcision procedure where doctors circumcise these males using western practices in the presence of *sangomas* at the mountains. In the case of dress code, men who have been to the circumcision initiation will dress in a distinctive manner in contrast to men who have not attended the initiation. Previously, for six months after initiation, as a symbol of their journey, Xhosa men exchanged their clothing for formal wear and the tweed jackets mentioned earlier. Laduma Ngxokolo, a famous

⁹ Novices who under go a training that originates from various part of Africa, e.g. Mozambique. (explained in Chapter Three).

¹⁰ Novices are trained the traditional Nguni way. (Further explained in Chapter Three).

¹¹ Xhosa male circumcision (Mlisa 2009).

South African knitwear designer from the Eastern Cape, himself a Xhosa man who has undergone *ulwaluko*, has designed a menswear range (see Figure 1.9) for Xhosa men who have gone through Xhosa conventional *ulwaluko*. This menswear incorporates more local designs and material through his label *MaXhosa*. Ngxokolo draws his inspiration from the Xhosa designs, which include the zigzag, diamond and arrow motifs that are shown in Xhosa beadwork. He felt that the tweed jackets had no specific significance to the Xhosa *ulwaluko* ritual as this ritual is regarded as sacred in the Xhosa culture. *MaXhosa* has also become one of the latest trending designer labels among the youth of South Africa and not just the Xhosa communities. Additionally, Ngxokolo has designed a circumcision toolkit (see Figure 1.10) for the *ikuwaluka* initiation, in which, as part of the packaging, he incorporated the Xhosa geometrical contour designs. He has blended traditional and contemporary medication with the purpose of conserving culture and at the same time creating a safe environment. This was brought about by the escalating South African statistics of young boys dying while attending these initiation schools, which are located in the bush or mountains away from the rest of the community (Chutel 2016).



Figure 1.9: NGXOKOLO, L. *Maxhosa knit wear design*. Source: sdr.co.za, Source: <https://mg.co.za/article/2019-05-10-00-why-i-decided-to-call-my-brand-maxhosa/>



Figure 1.10: NGXOKOLO, L. *Male circumcision kit*. Source: <https://qz.com/africa/789623/a-south-african-male-circumcision-kit-by-fashion-designer-laduma-ngxokolo/> accessed

For *sangomas*, dressing up in these *sangoma* cloths in everyday life, in ceremonies and in various rituals, is very crucial as they need to be identified amongst themselves and by the community, in the case of trainees and trainers. These cloths are pivotal for identity purposes, as in the case of the *Nguni* trainees, or *sangomas*, who have their specific cloths as compared to the *amaNdawo*. The *amaNguni* are addressed as “*makhosi*” and *amandawo* as “*thokoza*” and this is revealed by the type of clothes they wear (Nkabinde 2008:102-103). These are some of the important factors regarding communication channels and barriers. On News24Live (5 Aug 2013) it was reported that:

“an East London *sangoma* initiate was reported to have been fired from work when he arrived for work in traditional beads, a white doek¹² and white paint¹³ on his face”

This is a clear indication that the corporate world has moved on from traditional ways, yet the importance of the *sangomas* themselves should not be challenged. However, all of this creates the cultural tensions, as innovation and transformation are taking place due to globalisation, but, in the same breath, this transformation needs to be taken into consideration also in the areas of our customs and traditions and at the same time still honouring and respecting the ancestors.

¹² Head wrap.

¹³ White ochre/clay to indicate transitional stages during initiation (Mlisa 2009:39)

The general public also needs to respect and adhere to these cultural and traditional regulations. These cloths are viewed in changing, diverging and emerging ways by society due to their potential exploitation. With reference to cultural religious and linguistic communities, the constitution of the Republic South Africa states:

Persons belonging to a cultural religious or linguistic community may not be denied the right, with other members of that community – to enjoy their culture, practise their religion and use their language and, the rights subsection (1) may not be exercised in a manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights (the constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996:625).

The South African Bill of Rights handbook declares many rights, which accommodate the rights of South African citizens belonging to different cultures and ethnic groups. Various African customs are different, but these rights are set out to suit and protect our different life settings. If one belongs to a particular culture, one should abide by the rules and regulations and at the same time feel free to practice one's culture or tradition. These phenomena are explained in Chapter 3 of this current study, using Turner's (1969) notion of liminality and rites of passage, where it becomes a problem when one is torn between two worlds and one has stripped off the one world just so one can accommodate the other; an example previously mentioned is the issue of *sangomas* who also occupy corporate/business spaces. There are some ancestors who require their servants to have some form of indication that they have the gift of healing, whether it be beaded hair, beads in the form of neck piece or bracelet and in most cases, wrap the cloth in question around the waist or shoulders just to acknowledge the *amadlozi* in general and the *sangoma's* own *idlozi*, specifically. These amulets are substantial as this is a connection or ties together the *sangoma* and the *amadlozi*.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The modern literature developments can serve as a tool to archive and protect this information, the motive being that as the world evolves, so is the way of life and living. The ritual of *ukuthwasa* falls under the periphery of 'ways of knowing' of a certain community. It can be argued that the trainee moves from generalised knowledge of the world to the very specific knowledge of the *sangoma* community through this ritualised process. If one, provisionally, can conceive of the knowledge of the *sangoma* community as belonging to the community, then one can perhaps speak of the knowledge as belonging to an IKS. It should be stressed that

such a community is an ancestral community, for which the *sangomas* serve as servants, for want of a better description. This research project focused on only two types of *ukuthwasa*, which are common in the Zulu culture, namely *ubunguni* and *ubundau*. This study used the liminal and liminoid (as part of rituals) to explain the movement between the sacred and the profane/secular and IKS (as part of ownership) as theories to attempt to engage in the potential abuse of the *sangoma* cloth.

The study made use of qualitative research methods to unpack the symbology and meaning of the cloths through interviews with the selected *sangoma* community, followed by an extensive creative design process to ‘change’ the designs from the original, *sangoma*-worn cloths through a series of iterations, to a creative and artistic, but idiosyncratic (and potentially secular) creative output, followed by intensive focus group engagement with the *sangoma* community and through them, with the *amadlozi*. The purpose was to attempt to determine the specific moment when the designs moved from the sacred to the secular, or from the IKS moment to the GKS moment. This moment, following Gladwell (2000), will be known as the tipping point,

1.7 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 2: The purpose for this chapter is to furnish information regarding the methodologies and methods used to carry out this study. The opening section of this chapter lays out the research methodology and research design, which are based in the practice-led research approach within the framework of qualitative research methodology in the fine arts. The chapter, furthermore describes reasons for the specific methodologies. The data collection methods are thoroughly discussed and are as follows: the first phase discusses the gathering of data from the scope of scholarship around *sangoma* matters; the second phase describes the one-on-one interview approach to gather the information on the *sangoma* life world and particularly the *sangoma*’s understanding, the place of the cloth and its symbology; the third phase describes the designing and printing of the designed and redesigned cloths; the fourth phase is the focus group method where the *sangoma* community and the *amadlozi* interrogate the designed cloth sequences.

Chapter 3: The purpose of this chapter is to provide the theoretical underpinning of the project, namely the dynamics of the ritual, the tensions between the liminal and the liminoid, the sacred and the profane, the religious and the commodified and particularly, the tensions between the IKS and the global (or potentially GKSs). These dynamics are used to engage with the continuum of the cloth development in the design chapter, the *sangoma* tradition both

generically and then within the domain of the selected NGO. The chapter explains the pull of the global and the counterforce of the traditional at play in the changing, emerging and improvising relationship between the *sangoma* and the community, the non-governmental organisation (NGO) and the particular community. The bulk of the information presented here is gained from the interviews and participant observation within the NGO. The reason for this chapter is to understand the dynamics at play in the *sangoma* community and the cloths that they use, so that the understanding of these dynamics and how they relate to the visual aspects of the cloth can be used both as part of the changing design and as the engagement with the changes.

Chapter 4: The purpose of this chapter is to describe the designing process and to trace the journey of the development of the cloth design continuum as the researcher/designer undertakes it. The information presented is drawn extensively from the researcher/designer's personal and potentially idiosyncratic engagement with the subject matter at hand. As such, the engagement is both with the nature and strategies of design and with the particular subject matter. To achieve this, the chapter draws on the information contained in chapters 1 – 3 in the design process.

Chapter 5: The purpose of this chapter is to engage with the NGO *sangoma* group specifically to determine the tipping point in the designs. This is achieved through a clear presentation of the trajectory and responses of the focus group to the exhibition of the continuum of the cloths. Critically, the purpose of this chapter is to attempt to ascertain not only the tipping point, but, if possible, the reasons for the decision of that tipping point.

Chapter 6: The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the study, to document the shortfalls in the study and to indicate the application of the findings to society and to further research.

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an orientation, to put the study into context and to provide sub-questions that the study utilised as guides and attempted to answer. The purpose of the following chapter is to present, define and to provide reasons for the methodologies and methods that were used to carry out and to conduct the study. The opening section of the next chapter addresses and outlines, research methodology and research design.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the previous chapter was to provide an orientation as to what the overall study entails. The purpose for this current chapter is to present, describe and justify the methodologies and methods, which were utilised to steer and conduct this study. The opening section of this chapter addresses and outlines the research methodology and research design. King and Horrocks (2010:670) state that methodology is a process where the researcher produces the research designs and specific choice of methods and their motivation. The reasons for the specific methodologies used are discussed under the following headings (with the inclusion of relevant subheadings): Practice-led research within the framework of qualitative research methodologies and rationale for qualitative research methodology.

The study consists of four phases in terms of data collection. The first phase provides the trajectory of the project, the gathering of data from a survey of scholarship around the *sangoma* matters and the notions of the ritual. Phase two of the study constitutes interviews, which were undertaken for two reasons: first, to add to an understanding of the lived experiences of the specific selected *sangoma* community and secondly, to engage with specific references to the *sangoma* cloths. The results of the survey of scholarship and the interviews are presented in Chapter 3 of the study. Phase three is the printmaking design process (presented in Chapter 4) and Phase four is the focus group to ascertain the tipping point idea (documented in Chapter 5). Ethics were carefully considered as this project has engaged with a deeply spiritual and highly sacred territory; these are discussed under ethical considerations. Both the interviewees and the focus group members were fully acquainted with the procedures to take place and these are discussed under the informed consent and confidentiality section.

2.2 PRACTICE-LED-RESEARCH IN THE FRAMEWORK OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

This study's research methodology is embedded in a practice-led research approach, therefore, is found within the framework of qualitative research methodology (in the fine arts, in this case). It is argued that artworks exhibit research findings, which are symbolically expressed, even when not conveyed through numbers and words, although numbers and words are inevitably symbols themselves (Haseman 2006:100). Haseman (2006:100) explains that practice-led research is fundamentally experimental and comes to life when the researcher creates artworks

for exhibition or display. This research is centred around the symbolism of the *sangoma* sacred cloth and leads to the potential appropriation of the original symbols on the cloths, as the redesigning leads (potentially) to a new secularised meaning, where the decision as to the secularisation is based on the data gathered from the focus groups. Macbean (2013:4) quotes Merriam-Webster.com:

The art or practice of using symbols especially by investing things with a symbolic meaning or by expressing the invisible or intangible by means of visible or sensuous representations: as artistic imitation or invention that is a method of revealing or suggesting immaterial, ideal, or otherwise intangible truth or states.

This research project is centered around iconography used in the *sangoma* cloths and the meanings these symbols might communicate. Qualitative research draws on exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups attribute to a general or human complication. The course of examination includes addressing arising questions and systems, which allows for data to be collected in the participants' own comfortable sitting. Data analysis and conclusion-building develops from participants to general themes and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell 2009).

Since the focus of qualitative research seeks meaning and understanding of the world around the participants (and the researcher), the philosophical roots are based on interpretivism and constructivism; this study focuses on constructivism. Social constructivism was also employed and is seen as an approach to qualitative research. The researcher linked this study to Creswell's (2009:9) articulation of the concept of social constructivism, which states that this approach holds assumptions that as individuals we seek understanding with regards to the world that we occupy. Individuals link certain experiences to specific objects or things. Drawn up from interactions and discussions with other people, the concepts become generalised so that the participants build up the meaning of the situation. Open-ended questions give the researcher an opportunity to listen attentively to what people say or do in everyday life settings. Generally, these subjective meanings are conveyed socially and historically. These meanings are not naturally present in individuals but are constructed through interaction with others with regards to history and cultural norms (Creswell 2009)

Creswell's extended definition (2009:9) describes the process that was undertaken as changing subjective meanings were discovered and adopted. Critically, these subjective meanings are

potentially embedded in IKS and then also the world of the ancestor-*sangoma* interaction. Social constructivism, as a part of the qualitative approach, has been utilised due to the link in the teachings of the ritual of *ukuthwasa*. Teaching and learning take place between the *gobela* (teacher) and the *ithwasana* (initiate/novice). It is revealed through research that *ukuthwasa* is a form of learning and training, which advances and develops a novice. It is led and guided by dreams and other material as well as the relationship between the initiate and the trainer. This form of training is regarded as a critical pedagogy, which certifies that the novice will be a positive influence in society once the training is successfully completed (Mokgethi 2018:10).

It is acknowledged here that the process is filled with a sense of spirituality and the sacred. Therefore, to speak of the notion that this is socially constructed suggests a possible undermining of the training. The tension between the sacredness of the process and the possible ‘profaneness’ of the pedagogy, as explained here, will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter that speaks of the ritual and more particularly the difference between Turner’s conceptualisation of the liminal and the liminoid. Nevertheless, the analytical approach supported by the notion of ‘social constructedness’ was followed, at least to provide the supporting argumentation for the creative act as well. How this data were collected, will be addressed below.

2.3 RATIONAL FOR QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Qualitative research places the observer in the world (Denzin & Lincoln 2005:3). This situates the researcher as part of the material practice of the *sangoma* and the researcher’s own practice as an artist. The world is made clearer and altered through a series of explainable material practices carried out by the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln 2005:3). The researcher embarked on recording the data gathered as it was. Everything was recorded in its natural setting since qualitative research seeks to capture everything in its natural setting. The natural setting in this instance was achieved through the consistency in taking pictures, interviews, field notes and recording any form of visual data in its natural setting, as qualitative research dictates (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:3). As will also become clear, the focus group that was employed to allow the *sangomas* to engage with the designed and redesigned cloths attempted to ‘recreate’ as natural a ritual as possible. These processes are explained below.

2.4 PHASE ONE: THE SURVEY OF SCHOLARSHIP

The researcher conducted preliminary desktop research. This was carried out to accumulate all the crucial images of the cloth relevant to the study. The images collected form an exceedingly large part of the *sangoma* dress code. Images allow individuals to provide their own distinct narration of experiences in telling intricate experiences. Images can also stimulate valuable and perceptive individual and group conversations; hence, the use of both an interview and focus group approach. The collection of the images was to also provide visual reference for the researcher for practical purposes. The researcher closely analysed the cloths individually and linked the meanings articulated by the interviewees to the cloths (Dimarco 2010).

Pertaining to the theory, the researcher focused on the potentially-changing dress code of *sangoma* with specific reference to the symbolic use of designs and their visual and symbolic meaning in the cloths. This was achieved through accessing the relevant literature, as well the data that were revealed by *sangomas* in the interviews. Having established the base-line designs of the cloth (that is to say, the cloths that are deeply embedded in traditional cultural practice), the researcher (as an artist) developed a range of cloths that move from the traditional, sacred symbology, through a trajectory of changes to the design, to a place where the designs are self-created but based on the original designs. The processes of change and the methods used are documented in Chapter 4.

As part of the practical design research work, the researcher utilised the original cloths for *Amandawo* and *Amanguni* as reference in the Zulu *ukuthwasa*. The researcher produced a series of *sangoma* cloths, which portray the symbolism in the cloths from the original symbols and proceeded, through adaptation and creative intervention, across the continuum until the researcher was ‘convinced’ as an artist that she had appropriated them into the contemporary context. Each series consists of the researcher’s (as an artist) journey from the sacredness of the cloth and travelled into the profane (these terms will be defined in Chapter 3) of what society perceives this cloth to be. These cloths form part of the prominent *ukuthwasa* rites of passage. These symbols are important due to the fact that they also form part of the *sangoma* hierarchy, which distinguishes or separates *sangomas* from society and each *sangoma* one from another, in terms of status. The testing of the researcher’s conviction was undertaken in the focus group session.

2.5 PHASE TWO: INTERVIEWS

For the second phase, the researcher used a narrative, semi-structured approach to the interview schedule, using open-ended questions as a guide, which were also recorded as visual and audio format. According to Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002:331), a narrative approach grants participants the freedom to tell their story or experience from beginning to end. This approach allowed the interviewees to be more forthcoming in sharing their views or perceptions about the topic at hand. The semi-structured interview questions, used as a guide, were planned and premediated by the researcher before the interviews took place (Alsaawi 2014:150). The semi-structured approach, however, allowed the researcher to probe and extend the questions, based on the narrative provided, to the structured part of the interview. The researcher interviewed members of the Bophelong Emfuleni Traditional Healers Forum¹, as a focus group of ten participants, who have all undergone the process or ritual of *ukuthwasa* and have in-depth knowledge of the cloth and the symbols contained therein. The interview questions were based on the symbolism and meaning embedded in the *sangoma* cloth, focusing on colour, motifs, style of printing, design, patterns and function. The researcher used open-ended questions. The questions also touched on the subject of ownership, or who ‘owns’ these cloths and designs. Critically, the interviews were conducted to gather information and not to play different opinions off against each other. Thus, the data gathering was conducted to gather consensus on meanings and not divergence of meanings.

The utilising open-ended questions led the participants to respond spontaneously to the questions asked. On the contrary, the researcher assumed that the study would be compromised with the use of closed-ended questions due to the fact that the information required had depth and sought further explanation into giving better understanding to the meaning and symbolism the study was investigating. Speculatively, closed-ended questions might have limited the participants’ responses and led to bias. However, open-ended questions can also have disadvantages where the respondent will meander into unnecessary information. Again, on the contrary, it might occur that not all of information is redundant; this information might somehow come in handy to the researcher. The researcher did not only depend on the open-ended question approach, she also utilised the snow-ball² effect approach to gather relevant

¹ Informed Consent was sought from the participants that were to be part of the research. Specifically, the researcher sought permission to undertake this project with their blessing, guidance and permission. The same ethical concerns were considered for and strategies applied to the focus group

² The snowball effect is normally associated with recruiting the next participant or interviewee, but in this case, it was used to assist in developing the series of questions. This can be seen as being acceptable because the purpose of the interviews was simply to gather information and not opinions, as such.

data that might not be unasked in the structured open-ended questions. Whenever the interviewee mentioned a point that was new, relevant and convenient to the study, the researcher built up on the question that followed and based the following question on the previous answer, although the open-ended questions were used at a guide for the face-to-face, one-on-one interviews (Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec, & Vehovar 2003).

2.5.1 Description of research population

According to Banerjee and Chaudhury (2010:60), what makes up a population is a group of people with special attributes and a sample can be referred as a subgroup of this population. The research population are *sangomas* based in the Vaal Triangle (currently referred to as ‘Sedibeng’). These *sangomas* belong to an NGO³, namely Bophelong Emfuleni Traditional Healers Forum (BETHF). Fundamentally, the views and actions of this NGO do not fall far from what the researcher set out to achieve in this study. The NGO, some may argue, has moved into the profane, based on the fact that it is trying to reach out to the community and, in so doing, combating the stigmas associated with *sangomas*. This NGO is involved in various projects, which include sports, art, heritage and agriculture, which are all part of their vision and mission to get young people off the streets and to improve the livelihood of their communities by engaging the youth in various activities. Since this project only engages with one specific, targeted *sangoma* community, the results might not be generalisable, but the aim was to provide a description that fosters transferability. This approach is in line with the nature of qualitative research findings of Korstjens & Moser (2017:3). Creswell (2009:5) argues that when carrying out a study, it is important for a researcher to take their expectations of the study into consideration with regards to their philosophical worldview. Guba (1990:17) refers to a philosophical worldview as “*a basic set of beliefs that guide action*”. This means that there should be a link between the way the researcher plans to implement the study and how the world operates (Creswell 2009).

³ It would seem strange to indicate that the organisation is an NGO because of the Western assumption of a split between church and state. In traditional African cultures there is no such split, it can be argued.

2.5.2 Descriptions of the research sample

Normally, the sample that is utilised in qualitative research is smaller than the one utilised in quantitative research. The reasons for this are that the kind of methods that are used in qualitative research are frequently concerned with gathering a detailed and in-depth understanding of a representative sample or are focused on meanings, which are often centred on the how and why of a particular issue or a specific situation (Dworkin 2012:1319). Before the individual one-on-one interviews commenced, a focus group was established. Gibbs (1997:1) states that a focus group can be an exclusive elected group of individuals in order to extract information regarding perspectives and experiences of a specific topic. The focus group consisted of 10 female *sangomas* who are in their 40s, 50s and 60s. The reason for the age group is because the participants have been in the field for a reasonably longer duration and therefore have in-depth knowledge about the topic at hand. The selection of the participants was dependant on the participants' knowledge of the cloth in question and the approach in selecting the participants was in line with the notion of applicability (Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey 2016:500). The researcher only chose women because she is a woman. It was feasible and applicable to use this specific sample because some of the candidates are also *gobelas* (teachers) that have the rights and the full rites to take in *amathwasana* (initiates/novices). The fact that most candidates are *gobelas* who teach and mentor upcoming *sangomas* indicates that the information gathered is legitimate and confirms the applicability of the research sample selected (Hammarberg *et.al* 2016).

The interviewees, therefore, were also the focus group participants. In this way, the pre-design interviews contributed the information that led to the designs and the same group, in the form of a focus group, viewed the design series.

2.5.3 A description of the community accessed

The interviews were held at each *sangoma's* residence on particular dates. The researcher interviewed 10 participants from BETHF. The questions were asked by the researcher and utilised equipment that belongs to the Vaal University of Technology in the Visual Arts and Design Department. The equipment included a Canon 100NCD60 camera and an audio recorder to record the interviews. The camera was placed on a tripod in a steady position throughout the whole process of recording. Each member of BETHF had a different *sangoma*

cloth and was asked questions about that cloth (see addendum⁴. The addendum contains all additional material used to carry out this study: Informed consent leaflets and signed consent forms by each participant and the semi-structured questions asked during the individual interviews).

2.5.4 The interview process

Although this study uses a focus group method, the first phase of interviews was conducted face-to-face on a one-on-one basis. The interviewer read all the rules and conditions of the study to the interviewees. The interviewees were informed about the dissemination of the interviews and were requested to sign a consent form and an anonymity confirmation clause that formed part of the consent (see addendum). The interviews were conducted in two South African languages, namely Sesotho and IsiZulu, which was dependent on the interviewees' home language. The interviews were conducted in the townships of Bophelong, Sharpeville, Tshepiso and Sebokeng extension, which are all situated in Sedibeng. The interviews took place during the day and carried on across 11 days from 29 February 2016 to 10 March 2016. Each interview carried on for the duration of about 30 minutes to an hour. The interviews were video recorded by reason of capturing all the visual content and aspects of the cloth being interrogated. Photographs of the cloths were taken during and after the individual interviews.

The reason for conducting the first session of interviews on a one-on-one basis was so that the interviewees would be comfortable and more open about the journey of being called into being a *sangoma* and, furthermore, to share their views openly with regards to the ritual of *ukuthwasa* and the cloth in question without being self-conscious about being judged by other participants. The researcher found it fitting to conduct these one-on-one interviews in the comfort of the interviewee's own homes where the atmosphere is familiar as opposed to adapting to new and unfamiliar surroundings. Most of the interviewees allowed the researcher into their sacred space (called *indomba*), where consultation and healing take place⁵.

Prior to the individual interviews, the researcher read the informed consent so as to inform the interviewee of what was about to take place. The researcher asked for permission to take a video and audio recording of the interview.

⁴ Annexure C

⁵ It was also important for the researcher to sense the potential presence of each *sangoma's amadlozi* in the interview, as to a large extent, the decisions on the acceptance and rejection of the designs of the cloths would be reliant on the presence of the ancestors. This becomes evident in the focus group interaction with the final designs. The researcher cannot verify whether the ancestors joined the interview or not but, given the status of the *sangoma*, it is safe to make this assumption.

2.5.5 Data analysis

This step includes the way in which the researcher makes sense of all the information gathered. It involves a strategy of unpacking information and logically putting it back together again. The first step that was undertaken by the researcher was to setup the information gathered for analysis. A photoshoot was conducted on 26 March 2016 at the Vaal University of Technology in the Budutu Gallery, where all the members of the focus group were present, photographed simultaneously as a collective and separately with each one displaying their main cloth. The second step taken was to go through the data for a general overview and to reflect. This was achieved by the analysis of the symbolic meanings of the cloths. These meanings might also be drawn from the literature and from a visual analysis of the symbols, both for their meaning and for their design elements. The method used is one of design semiotics (Sebeok 2001). Specifically, this was to locate the design first as a signifier and then to develop a twofold level of signified, namely as the signification applies to symbols and as the signification applies to design.

The third step taken was to code the data into different categories, in this instance the first to fourth phase, interviewee one to ten, the naming of different series produced by the researcher/artist. The interviews were transcribed⁶ and the information gleaned from the analysis of each interview was used in two places. First, it was used to understand, support and describe the work of the *sangomas* themselves (as will be encountered in Chapter 3), Secondly, the information from the interviews was used to support and understand the symbolism of the cloth designs themselves; in other words, to assist in the design semiotic analysis of the cloths. This allowed for the clustering of design approaches into the series that led to designing and manufacturing the range of cloths according to the objective of this study.

Careful records (that is, a visual and written diary) of the designing and the making process were kept, (1) recording process, (2) reasons for the change from moment to moment and (3) the researcher's reactions as a designer/artist to what was emerging based on the researcher's training as a fine artist. In this sense, the emerging of the design possibilities that are part of practice-led research methods could be captured to explain the insights the designer used to generate the five series.

⁶ It should be noted that the interviews were transcribed into isiZulu or Sesotho as this was the language in which they were conducted. The researcher is fluent in both languages and the translated material from the interviews that appear in this dissertation are fair and have been confirmed by the co-supervisor, who is also fluent in both languages.

In the final stage of the project, the design series were exhibited and the *sangoma* group, now as a focus group, were invited to assess the designs, so as to determine the tipping points, namely when they decided what aspects of the cloth design were no longer sacred and could be used as profane, or non-indigenous designs. This focus group was video-graphed, and the audio of the video was transcribed and then analysed to determine these tipping point moments and, where possible (or acceptable), to capture the reasoning behind these decisions, as shared either by the *sangomas*, or through them, by the ancestors.

2.5.6 Ethical consideration

Ethics were carefully considered as the researcher engaged with a deeply spiritual and highly sacred territory. The researcher thought about the outcomes and how to achieve these and maintain the dignity and sanctity of the *sangoma* group in general and the specific target community. Considering the fact that the research might lead to new knowledge production, the issue of intellectual property and IKS go hand-in-hand. As part of a type of practice-led research, new ideas might develop, and the formal copyrighting of the ideas and designs was taken into consideration. IKSs are systems that are considered to belong to a particular community, but it has not yet been confirmed that this knowledge does indeed belong to that community (Munro 2014:126).

As this study appropriated designs that ‘belong’ to the *sangoma* community, a formal ritual was performed by the researcher as part of seeking permission of the ancestors who are the rightful owners of these designs and all the knowledge that has been acquired by the researcher from the participants. It should be noted that, prior to the *sangoma* focus group moving into the presence of the design series, the *sangomas* deemed it necessary to conduct a full ritual to ask permission and guidance from the ancestors. As this is a full sacred ritual, it suggests a cautious parallel to the notion of ethics clearance for the sharing of information. In this way, the researcher and the participants deeply acknowledged (and still do) the presence, wisdom, insight, guidance and permission given the study by *amadlozi*.

2.6 PHASE THREE: THE PRINT MAKING

2.6.1 The appropriation of the current *sangoma* cloth into new designs

The initial stage of this process includes the original cloths being redesigned on Photoshop adobe then being appropriated into new designs. According to Bauer (2018:8), Photoshop is a photo-editing program, which assists in altering images and photographs. Dimarco (2010:135) refers to Photoshop as being an exceptional program for improving and adding different types of effects on images. The use of this application was advantageous to the researcher as she had received formal training of Photoshop from the previous degree. The researcher appropriated the original symbols on Photoshop and then, in the form of overlays, she included her own artistic designs as an idiosyncratic artist and using some of the data obtained from the one-on-one interviews. The researcher's focal points were the colour, pattern and the different animal motifs since they play a pivotal role in giving the cloth its meaning. However, in some designs, the composition remained consistent with the original design.

2.6.2 Digital Imaging and Silkscreen Process

After working on Photoshop, 80 percent of the designs were printed as digital prints to minimise the printing costs as there were limited funds. The digital printing was sponsored by Tshungu Multimedia Enterprise. 20 percent of the photoshopped designs were printed on red and blue polycotton material using a silk screen technique. Digital printing is a technique that is utilised in order to alter or appropriate images digitally then transfer the image directly onto a two-dimensional surface using a printing machine (Dimarco 2010:135). In this instance, the digital prints were printed on matte printable vinyl paper using a Titan Jet 3.2 Solvent digital printer with CMKY eco solvent ink.

Screen printing is a printing technique where a screen is used to transfer ink onto a two-dimensional surface. The researcher used Azucol screen emulsion to coat the screens. There was a total of eight A2 size screens used for the silk-screening process, four being the test prints and the other four being the final print. The positives were exposed to ultraviolet light unit so that the image could be transferred to these screens and light-sensitive emulsion. The positive areas are exposed to the ultraviolet light for the ink to go through the screen holes to create an image. The parts that are not exposed are blocked by the emulsion. This whole printing process was undertaken by the researcher in the fine art printing studios at the Vaal University of Technology and carried on for a duration of two weeks.

The original *sangoma* cloth itself is printed on polycotton. The researcher printed the silkscreen designs on polycotton to familiarise the focus group participants with the texture of the original *sangoma* cloth during the focus group. The researcher produced five series, the first three series consist of six designs each and the last two series consist five designs. The first artwork of every series is the original design of the *sangoma* cloth. The body of the project, therefore, consists of 23 new designs, excluding the original design, which was the starting point of the appropriation. The total number of artworks displayed was 28 (A2 size), including the original designs. The digital prints were displayed on a fish line as if each print was laundry hung on the washing lane. This was carried out to revive the idea of the *sangoma* community evolving from the original animal hides to washable and ‘more hygienic’ material and, furthermore, to emphasise the concept of indigenous and GKS. The silk screen prints were displayed on tables like tablecloths. This was done to stress the idea of the ‘the cloth’, which will be demonstrated in Chapter 5.

The third phase of the study, therefore, was the redesigning of the cloths based on the original designs and then printing the new designs on cloth and paper. Drawing from the data gathered from phases one and two, the researcher looked at a continuum: on one side is a cloth printed with the sacred symbols as they are combined with the sacred, the ritual, the use in the liminal space, and as they are used at the moment. In essence, on this side of the continuum, as an artist, the researcher simply copied and rearranged these symbols. On the other end of the continuum, the researcher utilised an artistic interpretation and manipulation of the symbols. Here, the researcher is in the world of the idiosyncratic artist, the liminoid, the commoditised and the profane. Between these two extremes lies a journey of change that the researcher’s manipulation of the designs/symbols has traced. The key was to find the tipping point when the sacred becomes the profane, the liminal becomes the liminoid, the symbol becomes commodified. The concept of the tipping point comes from the work of Malcolm Gladwell where he suggests that everything can suddenly change, all at once in one dramatic moment, in any given situation (Gladwell, 2000:12). This concept shall be unpacked further in the chapter to follow.

2.7 PHASE FOUR: THE FOCUS GROUP

The plan was to host the focus group at a place that was appropriate with regards to distance, being central and familiar to the *sangoma* participant. The researcher initially opted to use a local hall in the township of Bophelong, where the *sangoma* participants usually host their events. However, the hall was not in a good condition, so the researcher decided to utilise the study area of the local library, which is within proximity of the initial venue. The study area is a very private and discreet environment and not everyone has access to this space without making the necessary arrangements with management. The conditions of the new venue were convenient for the display of the artworks due to the natural light and the focus group being able to view the designs in private.

2.7.1 Rationale for focus group methodology

One of the main reasons why the researcher opted for a focus group is because the topic at hand is in a sacred periphery and required a sense of discreetness and to be carried out in a considerate manner in order to draw upon the participants' frames of reference, attitudes, experiences, beliefs and reactions in a way that would not be achievable had other methods been employed. These experiences and beliefs give common ground with regard to the rites of passages undergone to be a fully-fledged *sangoma*, which is *ukuthwasa* and, furthermore, being part of the *sangoma* community. Interviews in this phase and other forms of research methods would not have captured the essence of the study and would have defeated the whole purpose of the study. Gibbs (1997:2) argues that in contrast with individual interviews, focus groups evoke a variety of perspectives and emotions in the format of a group. Focus groups are very conducive where there is a hierarchy involved in decision-making and when one wishes to identify the extent of consensus regarding a topic (Morgan & Krueger 1993). Although the first phase of data collection included one-on-one interview sessions, these were conducted to capture the individual experiences of each interviewee with regards to the ritual of *ukuthwasa* and to give the participants the freedom to be more open and forthcoming about their own personal experience (Gibbs 1997).

The fourth phase, which was conducted using a focus group method, included the participants, which were the interviewees who took part in the one-on-one interviews. Thus, there were 10 participants in the focus group. Generally, the researcher is the mediator who guides the whole process of the focus or group interview and makes sure that all the required information is collected (Morgan 1998:170). According to Krueger and Casey (2015:2), focus groups function

well to find out, ultimately, the perceptions, feelings and thinking of people about issues, products, services and opportunities.

The study falls under a sacred and highly spiritual domain, which is centred around healing and the notion of the *amadlozi*.⁷ The focus group details will be fully described in Chapter 5. If *amadlozi* did speak, it would be in a language that only the *sangomas* understood, therefore, the researcher was reliant on the *sangomas* to give meaning. The focus group was conducted in Sesotho and IsiZulu (see addendum). The focus group members mostly spoke Sesotho and IsiZulu to the researcher. The researcher found it fitting to use a language that most of the participants are comfortable with so that the critical information should not get changed and the true essence of the language and meaning should be captured.

2.7.2 Data analysis

Once the recording of the focus group was completed, the members of the focus group were thanked, and they departed (the original cloths were donated to the *sangoma* community). The recording was transcribed, then translated into English by the VUT African Languages Development Unit. The translation was verified as a fair translation by one of the supervisors. The attempt to determine the various tipping points was concluded from an analysis of the transcriptions and, where possible, the reasons for the decisions by the focus group were determined. These findings are discussed in Chapter 6.

2.7.3 Ethical consideration

Prior to the focus group, all the necessary arrangements were carried out. The participants were telephonically contacted to set the date of the focus group. The researcher gave the participants two different dates to choose from that might suit them best and be more convenient to their schedule; the participants all agreed on a date and time. A day before the focus group took place, the participants were reminded telephonically. With regards to seeking permission, the participants all agreed that there is no need for the researcher to perform a ceremony for seeking permission this time as this had already been done before the whole study began and permission had already been granted to the researcher. Food and drinks were organised for the participants to enjoy after the focus group.

⁷ It can conceivably be argued that the focus group was indeed a double focus group, with the *sangomas* being physically present and the *amadlozi* being spiritually present to lead the *sangomas*. Whereas the researcher can only bear witness to the physical presence of the *sangomas*, the researcher needed to believe that the *amadlozi* were also present, having been invited through ritual at the beginning of the viewing.

2.7.4 Informed consent

For the interviews, informed consent was sought from the *sangoma* community that was to be part of the research. Specifically, the researcher had to seek permission to undertake this project with the ancestors' blessing and guidance. The same ethical concerns were considered, and strategies applied to the focus group. Because the designs that were made fall between the representation of IKS, on the one hand and the exploitation of IKS, on the other hand (that is the potential for commercialisation, which was not the aim), the required contractual negotiations were concluded, drawing on the advice of an IKS specialist. At the time of this study's completion, these negotiations had not yet taken place, but had been committed to in the relevant information leaflet and informed consent.

2.7.5 Validity and reliability of the analysis

Validity is essential since the nature and quality of a study may be interrogated. Validity refers to the measuring of the truthfulness of the outcomes of the study (Brink 1993:35). A comparison with regards to the interviewees' feelings around the notion of the general public misusing the cloth in question was confirmed during the interview phase by all, thus contributing to the validity of the project. None of the interviewees knew the questions to be asked beforehand but most of them gave the same answers, strongly suggesting the reliability of the questions posed. The interviewees unanimously concurred with one another on most questions, which showed the reliability of the study and the purpose of the questions posed. Reliability is the consistency portrayed by the total population regarding the outcomes of a specific study (Brink 1993:35). More stability indicates a higher degree of reliability, meaning if a study were to be retested, the results would be the same. This phenomenon was detectable in the data similarities of the one-on-one interviews and the focus group fundamentally (Joppe 2000).⁸

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, triangulation was utilised. Triangulation refers to using multiple methods to ensure the credibility of the research findings (Guba 1990:23). More than two methods of data collection were utilised to conduct this research as it was divided into four different phases to ensure meticulous results. Phase one, which included

⁸ Within a Western research approach, part of verifiability is the accepted practice that the person who provided the information can be physically traced, that it can be determined that participant X actually said Y. This study was deeply reliant on the evocation of the presence of the *amadlozi* to guide the process and provide the information. There is no way of verifying whether they actually were present, except to go through the sacred rituals to invite them to speak through the *sangomas*, as is their practice.

a photo session to collect the relevant visual data as visual reference, which was the central aspect of the study; Phase two included one-on-one in-depth interviews; Phase three included the appropriation of the visual data drawn from Phase one and two; Phase four was the focus group, which was the main tool of collecting data, which led to the crux of the study, which was to determine the tipping point.

The coding depended on the connection of the data gathered from the four different phases of the research. According to Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019:260), coding is the operation of identifying segments of meaning in data and labelling it with a code. To avoid the distortion of information gathered, the interviews were transcribed by the researcher as they were conducted in Sesotho and IsiZulu. Language use was not an issue to the researcher as she is fluent in both languages; Sesotho originates from the researcher's maternal side and isiZulu from the paternal side and she is equally fluent in both languages. The transcripts were later sent to the Vaal University of Technology African Languages Development Unit to be translated into English. The reason for conducting these interviews in vernacular was to avoid misinterpretation of information, as language can also be a barrier with regards to capturing the essence of the participant's original meaning. One of the supervisors is fluent in Sesotho and sufficiently fluent in IsiZulu to (a) verify the translations and (b) to verify the transcripts done by the researcher.

2.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provides an overview on the methodology utilised in this study. Qualitative research methods were discussed in detail and the rationale for choosing the specific method. The theory of the study was based on the potentially changing symbols on the *sangoma* cloth. The participants who took part in this study were a focus group, which belong to the *sangoma* community in the Sedibeng region and are part of an BETHF NGO. The study was divided into four phases: Phase one: the survey of scholarship; Phase two: interviews; Phase three: The print making; Phase four: focus group.

The next chapter discusses the theories utilised to put the study into context. The tensions between the liminal and the liminoid, the sacred and the profane, IKS and GKS, the dynamics of the *ukuthwasa* ritual and the notion of the tipping point by Malcolm Gladwell are all presented to provide a model to assist in the development of the art designs and to provide a mode of analysis and justification for the study development.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Generally, traversing the notion of the continuum between the liminal of the ritual and the liminoid of the everyday, IKS (such as the *sangoma* tradition) are becoming a commodified culture. The indigenous knowledge (of the healers) is challenged or exploited by designers, creatives or artists through commodification, especially pertaining to the *sangoma* cloth symbology. The commodification of such traditions presents challenges for both the public and sacred community of traditional healers in terms of what is accepted and what is not accepted in a public sphere. Consequently, this creates a sense of tension between the Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Global Knowledge Systems, due to a lack of or a limited understanding of both worlds. Therefore, to interrogate these challenges, the researcher engages Victor Turner's (1969) notions of the liminal and liminoid (as part of rituals) and IKS (as part of 'ownership'). Both the practices of the *sangoma* community and the work of Hallam and Ingold (2007) guide this interrogation.

This chapter is structured as follows: First, the researcher will discuss theoretical frameworks, including rites of passage by Arnold Van Gennep (1960[1909]); liminality by Victor Turner (1974) and the tipping point by Malcolm Gladwell (2000). Secondly, the researcher will discuss the dynamics of the *ukuthwasa* ritual, thirdly, the tensions between the liminal and the liminoid are described and, lastly, the engagement with the particular NGO and the symbology of rituals through the symbols in the cloths are engaged with. The purpose, therefore, of this chapter is to describe and explain the *sangoma* tradition, both generically and then within the domain of the selected NGO. The chapter explains the pull of the global and the counterforce of the traditional at play in the changing, emerging and improvising relationship between the *sangoma* and the community, the NGO and the particular community. Therefore, this chapter will help to understand the dynamics at play in the *sangoma* community and the cloths that they use, so that the understanding of these dynamics and how they relate to the visual aspects of the cloth can be used both as part of the changing design and as the engagement with the changes.

3.2 TURNER: LIMINALITY AND THE RITES OF PASSAGE

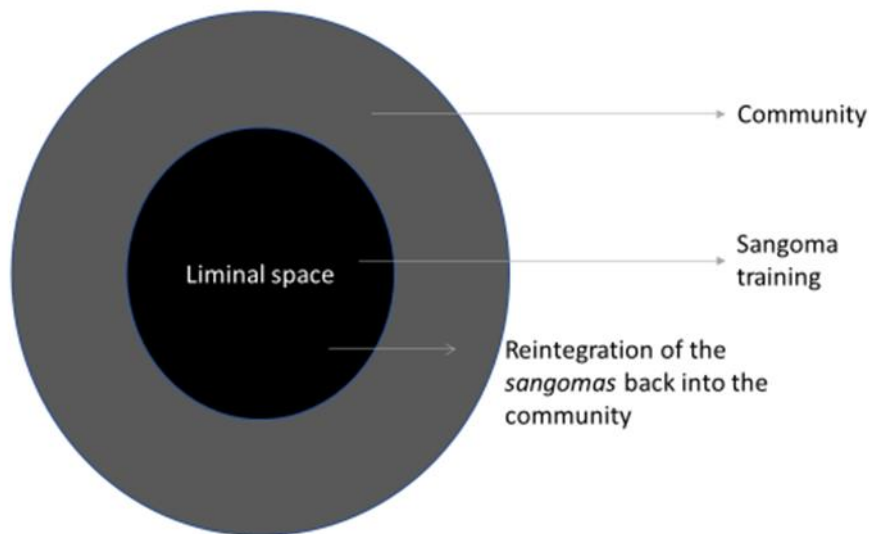


Figure 3.1: RADEBE, M. Lebohang 2020. *A depiction of the integration and reintegration into the liminal space.*

According to Mirream-Webstar.com “*Liminal is a word acquired from a Latin word limen, which means it is a ‘threshold’, and it relates to the word limes which means ‘limit’*”. Westerveld (2010:5), refers to this limit as not being a finishing point, but it being the middle which is in between two points and can allow crossing over. The image above (Figure 3.1) is part of a depiction of what the study analysed. The grey and black circles depict the initiation journey of the *sangoma* entering and leaving *ukuthwasa* which in this research is regarded as a liminal space. The notion of the liminal or threshold is evident in the ritual of *ukuthwasa* as the trainees undergo, pass through or engage in a threshold which, in this instance is the ritual of *ukuthwasa*. According to Victor Turner (1969:26), Van Gennep (1960[1909]) focuses on and analyses three phases with regards to rites of passage: separation, transition and incorporation. Thus, there is a pre-state, a transition state and a reintegration (and changed) state. In short, the trainee exists in the pre-state, is called to become a *sangoma*, enters the transition state to go through the initiation and then is reintegrated or incorporated into the community as a ‘called practising *sangoma*.’

The specific community which is being referred to for this project is the *sangoma* community, which is also part of the Bophelong community in the Vaal Triangle. This is a community, which has a liminal space, but there is another normal community that is a *sangoma*

community. The normal community carries on with no problems; it has its structures but suddenly there are problems in the community. The community has a system or a structure to solve problems. When this system fails to resolve the problem, the community experiences a crisis or a “breach”, as Turner (1967) puts it. This breach or crisis refers to misfortunes and illnesses. This is when the liminal space comes into play. The liminal space is part of the society but is associated with being separated from the rest of the community. In this instance, the liminal space would be the ritual of *ukuthwasa*, if the structures put in place are not helping in the normal community, a court of law, or *lekgotla*¹, or a consultation with the leaders or elders takes place.

However, for the ‘called’ trainee, this phenomenon is a stage where the *sangoma* is just a normal member of the community before undergoing *ukuthwasa*. The potential trainee *sangoma*’s life is ordinary until they start experiencing misfortunes like illnesses and things start falling apart either personally, academically or in the workplace. Xaso (2015:36) refers to this series of misfortunes as *inkathazo*² and she classifies these as physical phenomena of sickness, anxiety and disruption of personal and social affairs. In the case of a potential *sangoma*, these misfortunes are signs or a poke from the ancestors that it is now time to heed the call. Since the trainee-to-be is still just a member of the general community and the community has structured systems in place to resolve these problems, the called, sometimes, will attempt to solve the problem using western conduct (for example), such as medical health facilities and undergoing psychological therapy sessions. By way of example, in the interviews, Participant 9 shared her misfortunes:

When I started my training to become a traditional healer, I was sick. I grew up as a troubled, sick child. I got sick to a point where I had a stroke, the stroke even led to a walking disability. I could not walk properly with my left foot. That is when I went to the place where I was supposed to do my training. I finally accepted that I have ancestors and a calling.

Participant 8 also mentioned the fact that she did not finish school, due to the calling; she goes on to explain why:

I did not get to finish school because I would get nose bleeds every time I opened a book when the teacher was about to give a lesson. My book would get blood stains, they

¹ Sesotho word for court.

² Isizulu word for Trouble (Xaso 2015:ix)

would then take me outside to pour water on me to try to stop the bleeding, but it never worked. They would then decide to send me home and the nosebleed stopped immediately when I got there. They would decide to keep me home for two to three days, the nosebleed would only begin when I went to school.

These statements clearly explain the moment where a person from the community would experience a crisis and would need to go into a liminal space to solve these problems if the structures put into place are not assisting. These individuals are drawn into the liminal or holy space where rituals within rituals are performed (the black circle in Figure 3.1). Rituals are performed to enter, during and again to exit the liminal space. The trainees are not separated from the rest of the community, they are allocated a space that is designed as being separate. This takes one to Van Gennep's (1960[1909]) second phase in his book *Rites of passage* (1909). Turner (1969) is interested in and focuses on this phase, which is the transitional state. Van Gennep's (1960[1909]) *Les rites de passage* was first introduced in 1909 and it was later appropriated by Victor Turner. Van Gennep (1960[1909]:viii) defines rites of passage as rites, which go with each different set up, state, social position and age. Inherently, these rites of passage radically deal with change in all forms, whether psychological or physical. According to thesaurus.com, "*change is a verb that is used with an object to make the form, nature, content, future course, etc., of (something) different from what it is or from what it would be if left alone; to become different; to become altered or modified*". Anything or any being that endures a transition must be different after undergoing such; therefore, rites of passage, transition and change are attuned. According to Tzanelli (2011:3932), the concept of rites of passage was first utilised in anthropology to frame rituals undergone by an individual or a group of people with regards to going through a transition, which could possibly alter their status and the idea (or theory) was later introduced in other disciplines. Rites of passage are also frequently observed in Christianity and other world religions and societies. These rites of passage involve the transferring of groups or certain individuals' social statuses and mark their incorporation into a typically higher or more valued status, such as when a student ceases to be an undergraduate and becomes a graduate (Forth 2018:1). Rites of passage have a specific model, continuum and prerequisites that flow through in order for an individual to move from one stage to another, which is higher or more advanced, therefore, undergoing alteration or modification, so to speak.

In the South African context, the dynamics of rites of passage are practised in almost all aspects of life including cultural, traditional, religious practices, birth, death and coming of age moments. According to Golomski (2012:3), rites of passage include human's 'periodic' communion in the various aspects of human life with regards to their environment. Generally, the symbolism and connotation of rites of passage include binary opposites, such as birth and death. In most South African ethnic groups, for example, when a baby is born, there are certain rites of passage or a series of rituals that must be performed for a child to be a fully-fledged family member and to additionally be accepted as a member of the community. The baby is not to be seen by outsiders for the first three months after being born; this is done to protect the baby from malevolent forces, it is believed. (The researcher is married into a Zulu family and has experienced such practices). An animal³ must be slaughtered to introduce the child to the family's ancestors. This is labelled as the *imbeleko* ritual in the Zulu and Xhosa tradition. Ngcongco (1996:9) describes *imbeleko* as a welcoming of the new-born to the family and to introduce the baby to the family and the ancestors. Should this ritual be ignored, then the child will not be recognised by the ancestors and will experience illnesses and a series of misfortunes. In effect, following Turner, this might be considered both a breach and a crisis for the child (and the family). In instances where the child does not belong to the family and is considered illegitimate, should a ritual be performed for this child, then the mother would have exposed the child to danger as the ancestors would not recognise this child as their own and therefore reject the baby, which would be detrimental to the child. This will (could) result in the child being ill with no western remedy to mitigate the child's ailment and this would require a 'consultation'. In the case of a family member who passes on, there is a ritual of collecting the deceased spirit. The deceased spirit must be collected before the actual day of the funeral to avoid their spirit from roaming the streets and terrorising the living – a crisis for all concerned. The person may be dead but is still in between the world of the living and the dead. Therefore, until such a ritual is performed, the deceased will remain in a liminal state. Forth (2018:2) reiterates that a deceased person will not gain access into the after-world until such time as certain rites of passage have been performed. (Forth:2018)

Victor Turner's work on liminality draws from Van Gennep's (1960[1909]) triadic model described in *Rites de Passage*, which he elaborates to include cultural phenomena. Turner was interested in the second phase of Van Gennep's theory, which is referred to as liminality as mentioned earlier – this is the state of being in between two worlds. The one world is known

³ A sheep or a goat

but the destined world is not known (by the person in crisis). This may evoke emotions of fear, uncertainty and anxiety because of the unknown. Therefore, liminality may be the state of the unknown for the uninitiated. Turner (1969:359) explains that liminal existence is neither here nor 'there; it is a stage of being in between and not belonging somewhere. The ambiguous state of these rites of passage is evident through symbolism in various communities who ritualise social and cultural transitions. When a group of individuals undergo the same experience at the same time, they are bound to build relationships amongst themselves because they share the same space and involvement at the same time. Turner (1969:360) refers to this phenomenon as *communitas* and furthermore elaborates that he prefers *communitas* over community to differentiate the social relationship from an area of common living (1969:360). The distinction between structure and *communitas* is not simply the familiar one between secular and sacred or that, for example, between politics and religion. Certain fixed offices in tribal societies have many sacred attributes; indeed, every society has some sacred characteristics. This sacred position is acquired by the incumbents of positions during rites of passage, through which they change position. In his classic essay, *Betwixt and between*, Turner (1967) portrays the liminal period as the pattern of an 'understanding ritual,' which is an inner process of growth and self-interpretation.

According to Turner (1969:359), liminal space has no hierarchy and there is no obvious structure. Turner (1969:359) describes the status of trainees:

They might be veiled as beasts, wear just a portion of attire, or even go exposed, to show that as liminal creatures they have no status, property, badge, mainstream clothing demonstrating rank or character, position in a kinship framework – to put it plainly, nothing that might recognize them from their associate beginners or initiands.

When the trainees enter into the world of *ukuthwasa*, their status is stripped away and therefore they do not belong anywhere but are suspended in the liminal space until they 'find' themselves, or the *idlozi/amadlozi* speak through them as to what should happen next. It could, therefore, be argued that in the *communitas* of the liminal space, the trainees, the training *sangomas* and the *idlozi/amadlozi* work together to move towards reintegration or temporary separation.

When the liminal space is dissolved and the crisis has been resolved, there are two potential outcomes: the one is re-integration, where those in the liminal space, having gone through the

process, are reintegrated into a community but in a changed state; the other one is separation, where those that were in the liminal space cannot be reintegrated because of their changed state and are banished⁴. (It can of course be argued that the trainees are excluded from ‘normal’ society but are integrated into the *sangoma* community. By the same token, it can be that the ‘trainee’ is not integrated into the *sangoma* community and is therefore banished from it but is reintegrated into the ‘normal’ community. This latter situation is unlikely if the trainee has been called.)

3.2.1 The tensions between the liminal and the liminoid

The dynamics of the liminoid are very similar to the dynamics the liminal but the liminoid has no sacredness associated with it. This implies that the dynamics – that is to say, the physical processes, strategies and trajectories – of the liminal are stripped of their sacred underpinnings – one can recognise aspects, strategies and practices of the liminal but not the sacredness that goes with them in the liminal⁵. As an artist, the researcher worked with sacred symbols in the beginning but as the journey of changing the designs continued the symbols became seemingly stripped of their sacredness in such a manner that the later designs have now become secular, profane or commercial, so to speak.

Between the liminal and the liminoid there is a transition that takes place and where this transition materialises lies, speculatively, is the tipping point. The notion of the tipping point is taken from the work of Malcolm Gladwell (2000). Gladwell’s thesis is that change, or transformation, can suddenly take place in a rapid manner (Kratus 2007:42). For this study, it is conceivable that the changes made to the designs of the cloth and the symbols have cumulatively transformed away from the liminal and at a critical moment, have changed into the liminoid. The establishment of the precise moment of transformation from liminal to liminoid was determined by the *sangomas* in a ritual moment and documented through the focus group (see Chapter 5 for a description of this ceremony).

⁴ As was encountered in the focus group engagement with the redesigned cloths, similar dynamic occurred, where some of the changed designs were ‘reintegrated’ into the *sangoma* domain (speculatively, therefore, considered as IKS elements), but some were expelled and became part of the global or other domain. The point of the research was to attempt to identify and describe these decisions.

⁵ A further example illustrates this tension. There is a process of attending a religious church service or ceremony and a process that occurs during and after the religious ceremony. These processes are mirrored when attending screening of a film in a cinema. The former is steeped in the sacred. The latter, although following the same set of actions, is steeped in the everyday or the profane.

Turner's theory of liminal and liminoid has been reviewed and used by multiple scholars to frame their research projects. There has been a critique of the work though; Spiegel (2011:11) deems that Turner's criteria to make a distinction between liminal and liminoid "*created a tendency towards it being used to perpetuate a crude and by now passé primitive-versus-civilised/modern distinction of societal types*". Spiegel utilises a distinct number of examples, such as the 2010 FIFA World Cup that was held in South Africa, the Mother City Queer Project and the Cape Minstrels Carnival parade. Spiegel (2011:12) views these events as (secular) rituals in which everyday rules and behavioural patterns are suspended and replaced by others. Spiegel claims that Turner's dichotomy of liminal and liminoid is a fallacy, since he (Turner) created and categorised the liminoid as different from the liminal and "*thus fixed both [in] an apparent structural binary*". It can be argued that the criticism of it being a binary is valid and useful one as it notes that the strategies undergone in each are comparable, but the motivations differ. This opens the tensions, not between the liminal and the liminoid, but between the sacred and the profane (accepting that this is, in itself, a binary). Furthermore, Spiegel's critique does not engage with the possibility that there may be a cardinal moment (or tipping point) when the one set of experiences moves into the other set of experiences (and back again, one might add).

3.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS: TURNER (AS PART OF RITUALS) AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (AS PART OF OWNERSHIP)

The liminal and liminoid (as part of rituals) and IKSs (as part of ownership) are theories used in terms of visual analysis to support and elaborate more on the research topic. In this sense, both theories rely on symbol analyses to explain the processes of engagement and decision-making. The notion of the continuum between the liminal of the ritual and the liminoid of the commodified was central to the theoretical underpinning of the project. As such, the following binaries have been interrogated and in the relevant sections: the liminal and the liminoid, the sacred and the profane, the ritual and the commercial/commodified, the indigenous (as in IKS) and the global/universal and as an artist, the imitative and the creative.

Indigenous knowledge focuses on the ways of knowing, seeing, doing, making and thinking, with regards to human inquiry, that are passed on orally/visually from generation to generation and are claimed as indigenous by that community. Hammersmith (2007:26) describes IKS as the content and context of complex knowledge that have been compiled by indigenous communities as they engage with their surroundings over the years. Warren (1991:1) explains that this kind of knowledge is passed on orally from generation to generation. Warren (1991:1),

furthermore, states that it is the basis for local-level decision-making in societal activities in most rural communities. The South African Intellectual Property Laws Amendment Act (28 of 2013) defines, where relevant for this project, IKS as:

(d) tangible expressions such as material expressions of art, handicrafts, architecture, or tangible spiritual forms or sacred places. 'Indigenous work' means a literary, artistic, or musical work with in an indigenous or traditional origin, including indigenous cultural expressions or knowledge which was created by persons who are or were members, currently or historically, of an indigenous community and which literary artistic or musical work is regarded as part of the heritage of such indigenous community.

Intellectual property that has been recognised as IKS has risen from years of experience and innovative ideas that belong to certain cultural or ethnic groups (Mukuka 2010:14). Authors such as Hoppers (2002) have engaged in arguments with regards to IKS and IP from an international rather than a national perspective only (Mukuka 2010). Mukuka (2010:14) points out how western laws of trade, both on a national and international level, have continually infringed upon the rights of indigenous people by commodifying this local knowledge. Mukuka (2010:14) bases his argument on “*present intellectual property systems being at odds with indigenous cultures*”. Each cultural group has its own specific traditions, artefacts and symbolisms that belong to it and in this instance, IKS must be emphasised as these ideas that are significant and unique to these given cultures. This kind of practice, where symbolism is a prime aspect of the ritual, gives value and meaning to the people who practice these rituals. However, as has been argued, change occurs as people engage with the demands of a context and so it becomes hard to define or determine originality of ideas or practices that have come to where they are now. Thus, to claim originality for IKS is a difficult endeavour. This research project offers one system, which is based on comparison, as presented by the community who claim originality, in that the community itself decides when something needs to be protected by IKS and when it moves into a public, shared, domain.

Obura (2018:2[World Bank 1997]) states that the adversity of the approaching disappearance of indigenous knowledge is generally clear to the individuals who have created it and earn enough and managed to survive through it. The World Bank (1997) states that the basic component of any country's knowledge system is its indigenous knowledge, where skills, insights of people and experiences are applied to maintain or improve their livelihood. This

project attempts to engage with the potential approaching disappearance (or change, in this case) from the lived experiences of the *sangomas* and their community. This research project may be explained better by an African quote, which most Africans abide by: “*If you do not know where you come from, you cannot know where you are going*” (Hoppers 2002:53). This goes back to the question of tracing the trajectory designs of the symbolism in the *sangoma* cloth – if one does not know the original meaning and attributes of these symbols, how would one know where the meaning comes from initially?

Mlisa (2009:3) states that when placing *ukuthwasa* under the IKS umbrella, it simply indicates that it is an indigenous practice, which is culturally rooted. The researcher supports Nel’s (2005) argument that knowledge widely used, or knowledge used cross-culturally, may affect different cultural groups even if these different cultures use different terminologies to refer to the same phase or object. The bottom line is that these cultural groups all have their own belief systems. In these particular belief systems, there are common characteristics, which embody this sacred knowledge. Mlisa (2009:4), furthermore, states that *ukuthwasa* is also a progressive process that is influenced by time, circumstances and context. It becomes influenced by worldwide changes. These changes are also affected by geographical areas regarding the ritual of *ukuthwasa* and other rituals as it is argued that rituals performed in urban areas are not as ‘pure’ and ‘original’ as rituals performed in the rural areas, commonly known as *emakhaya*⁶, as people in rural areas still maintain and respect (their) culture. The ritual of *ukuthwasa* does not only belong to Amazulu⁷ but is also practiced in other cultural or ethnic groups like Basotho, Amakhosa etcetera (Mlisa 2009).

⁶ *Ekhaya* (singular) is a Zulu word for home. *Emakhaya* (pl) in this context refers to the rural areas, as people in the city often do (Mlisa 2009:xxv).

⁷ IsiZulu speaking people

3.4 INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (IKS) AND GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (GKS)

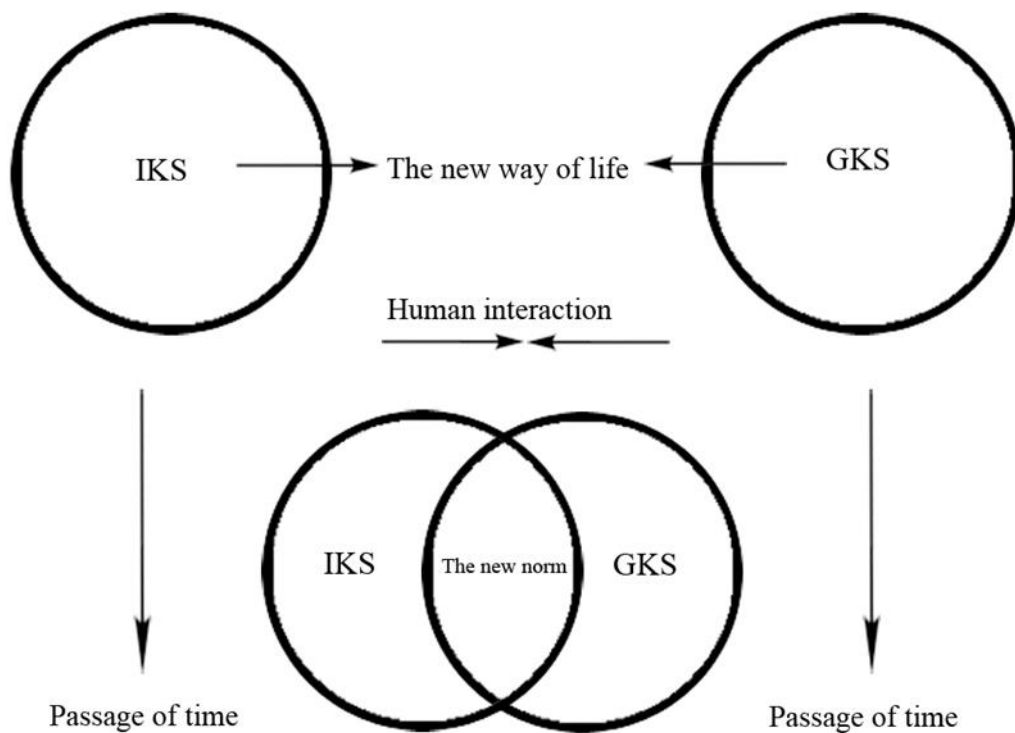


Figure 3.2: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2020. *Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Global Knowledge Systems spheres of influence.*

The IKS and GKS circles above are representations of the tension between IKS and GKS can be seen as all those systems from outside the IKS and would include matters that come from colonial, capitalist, secular, oppressive and other systems and are often spread through domination, mass-communication manipulation and advertising, for example. Mok (1998:25) refers to global knowledge as being “*beyond local or indigenous context*” There is an indigenous knowledge that belongs to a community, but there is also a conception of everything else, which is global. What basically happens as people move through life (human interaction vs passage of time) is that these two circles (IKS and GKS) start coming together and they start overlapping (see Figure 3.2). What is claimed as indigenous knowledge is very often influenced by the GKS and vice versa. Just to put culture forth, as an example, the purity of a culture changes over time; if we can compare our culture now and in the next 20 to 30 years, it would have changed even though it is still seen as the same – due to influences (human interaction); things start becoming a new norm. Critically, however, the new norm does not necessarily take

away the sacredness of something⁸. This IKS circle and what belongs to this community meets with GKS through the interaction of the community with others over time. This leads to one of the main probing questions of this study: At what stage does IKS become part of GKS and vice versa? The researcher used the circles to demonstrate the transitional movement from IKS to GKS and vice versa. When the IKS (*sangoma* community) meets GKS (general community), there is a movement between these two communities; the purposes of this dissertation are to attempt to decide at what stage do people let go of the one thing in order to go into the other circle, to suggest that there might be a different way of making that decision and to determine at what stage these sacred cloths (might be seen to) become part of the secular and profane world. This was determined during a focus group and will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter 5.

3.5 THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE

Originally, trainees given time to undergo the ritual of *ukuthwasa* without interruptions. Based on the subsequent *ukuthwasa*, one goes to work while under initiation and dress code can become a problem in some companies, as explained in Chapter 1. Occasionally, this hinders progress to proceed to the next level due to the fact that trainees leave the sacred domain and enter into a profane periphery, which tampers with their process to connect with the ancestors. One of the *ukuthwasa* rules, which has been passed on orally, states that one is not supposed to leave the *mpande*⁹ unless you are done and have graduated. But nowadays, we see *amathwasana* going to work while still undergoing *ukuthwasa*. The current (perhaps Westernised) status quo does not release *ithwasana* to take leave from work to undergo the process of *ukuthwasa*. On the contrary, one may argue that perhaps the existing conditions have accepted *ukuthwasa* as part of ‘the new norm’ to allow employees to freely clock in and out while heeding the call of their ancestors. Gogo Makgomo (Figure 3.3) is currently (2020) undergoing *ukuthwasa* and has a day job as a cashier. The researcher met her at a local shopping mall. The researcher approached Gogo Makgomo who agreed for her photo to be taken and her brief story to be published as part of this research. Gogo Makgomo was wearing a *njeti sangoma* cloth wrap around her waist and her hair was beaded with white and red beads. The purpose of the photo is to show how the new norm has affected the old way of life. The

⁸ In this sense, it can be argued, the *need* for sacredness, much like the need for belonging, does not alter, but the way it plays out, or is practised, or even rationalised, changes.

⁹ “A school where training occurs”. (Mokgethi 2018:5)

“common core understanding, treatment and training. Healers belonging to an *mpande* are seen to come from the same ‘root’ and seen as *Izangoma* family.” (Rogerson 2017)

ithwasana gets exposed to both the sacred and the profane world simultaneously during the *ukuthwasa* process when travelling to and from work every day where they (*amathwasana*) are at times exposed to negative energies, which was the sole reason in the past for *ithwasana* not to leave the *mpande* premises under any circumstances.



Figure 3.3: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2020. Gogo Makgomo Photograph (Published with permission). Vanderbijlpark.

The sacred and the profane are the two binaries that knot this study together in that the cloth in question moves from being holy to being secular due to it being misused or commodified by the general public and not being released by the owner, which is the *sangoma* community (or perhaps more correctly for this study, the *amadlozi*). These two binaries are formed from the notion of the liminal and the liminoid. Hundley (2020) believes the nature of that which falls under sacredness is difficult to understand. Everything that is sacred, even if the characteristics differ, is considered to be more superior to things that are profane. By way of example, when we view the sacred and the profane through a spatial lens, Hundley (2020:162) describes space as:

...only an actual area with no social worth to a person. A space might be common or moulded by human hands; it turns into a place when it is credited worth by people, turning into an area made by human experience. Since individuals react to and assess space in an unexpected way, one space may all the while be numerous spots. For instance, a spring at once might be a holy place of profound force, a position of normal excellence or a chance for abuse.

When the space is deemed to be filled with a spiritual power, it becomes sacred. When that spiritual power is not recognised, is stripped away, or is redefined by people, the space becomes profane. *Sangomas* have a sacred space called *indumba*¹⁰ where consultations and healing take place. *Indumba* is a hut or a small shack or rondavel that is a sacred place for a *sangoma* to consult in. The researcher had the honour of interviewing most of the participants in their sacred spaces. Mokgethi (2018:54) describes the *indumba* as a pure space. Most of the *indumbas* visited by the researcher contained the following: straw mats and no chairs, the cloths in question hung on the walls and/or were displayed as table cloths and shelved transparent jars containing *muthi*. The researcher regards *indumba* as a physical liminal space as this is where the *amadlozi* are said to reside and where the trainees spend most of their time while in training. Mokgethi (2018:62) states that this implies that the expulsion of the person from their ordinary environmental elements to the *indumba* serves to establish a climate that considers the comprehension of the *amadlozi* just as the gift that they have. This is where all the consultations take place; hence, it is considered holy. Hundley (2020:161) states,

. . . in each culture and for all intents and purposes each individual, some spaces are more uncommon than others. Each space is extraordinary for various reasons, and every strict and social custom depicts, characterizes, and delineates these spaces in an unexpected way. Researchers frequently mark uncommon spaces related with religion 'hallowed'. Characterized differently or not in the least, consecrated or heavenly space extensively alludes to an actual space where the human and heavenly converge. Conversely, normal, profane or common space alludes to typical human space. For instance, a congregation regularly is considered consecrated, while a supermarket is unholy.

The sacredness of a specific place is tied to a person's belief with regards to context and frame of reference about the event/s that took place in that space. Hundley (2020:161) furthermore elaborates that the Kaaba is the holiest spot in Islam, as it denotes the altar devoted by Abraham and Ishmael to Allah. Lourdes is the third most visited journey site for Roman Catholics since they accepted that a young lady experienced the Virgin Mary there in 1858, an experience followed by extraordinary healings. Hundley (2020:161) states that humans belong somewhere, they are not just in existence but somehow belong to some kind of institution. Hundley (2020) views sacredness from a religious perspective, his focal point being social

¹⁰ "a sacred room for the ancestors where divination takes place" (Mokgethi 2018:53)

structures. He furthermore elaborates that the words sacred and profane are good examples of classifications of how humans categorise or characterise everything. These two domains are “*the distinctive trait of religious thought*” (Hundley 2020). Thus, it can be seen that a sacred space is defined by its ritual elements and particularly, following Turner, by its liminal characteristics. A profane space, thus, loses that sacredness, by definition; therefore, can be seen as a liminoid space. Using Hundley’s examples, a sacred space is used for acquiring redemption or healing, for example, whereas a supermarket is used for acquiring groceries.

Modern-day *sangomas* carry out consultations online, given the technological advancements, *sangomas* are also becoming innovative to accommodate their patients. Durie (2005:301) explains that despite the fact that colonisation and globalisation have frequently eroded indigenous ways and economies, globalisation and electronic correspondence have, likewise, given more noteworthy freedom to indigenous systems to enter the universal scene and to engage with one another. Does this then alter the consultation procedure, where both the *sangoma* and the client have to be in the same space (as it is/was traditionally practised, as part of IKS)? This is demonstrated in Figure 3.2, where IKS and GKS are blended to accommodate the new norm¹¹.

3.6 THE RELIGIOUS AND THE COMMODIFIED

The concept of the religious and the commodified is drawn from an America theologian, Vincent J. Miller’s book *Consuming religion*. Miller (2003) compares two fundamental interactions, namely religion and consumerism. Miller argues that religious people are now consumers of religious products such as religious ideas, images and other products. Miller (2003:13) focuses on commodification, which he refers to as a “decline and loss”. He argues that when we identify with culture and religious traditions as products, they lose their ability to illuminate the substantial practice regarding life. Miller (2003) furthermore clarifies that this record of conduct by which religion, stories, images and practices are incapacitated in the culture of progressive capitalism does not really assume that sometime in the past these components of religion precisely informed the practice regarding everyday life. Maftukhatusolikhah and Rusydi (2018:37) explain that the action of “*commodification of religion*” shows the importance of religion that has economic magnitude. Maftukhatusolikhah and Rusydi (2018:38) explain that this phenomenon uncovers various deliveries of religion,

¹¹ The questions as to whether this is acceptable sacred practice or not is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Nevertheless, it is feasible to use a similar methodology in this dissertation to answer that question.

which can be seen from the conduct or activities of religious adherents. The idea of commodification and the economic influence on these above-mentioned arenas of life strips them of their true function and connotation. The researcher found it fitting to include these binaries as part of the study because they answer the question on consumerism and suggest that culture itself has also become a commodity. The ritual of *ukuthwasa* has many sacred symbols, which have now become part of the consumer world but also result in the exploitation of the *sangoma* community at large. These exploitations are evident in many aspects of the ritual; for example, there are many fly-by-night *ukuthwasa* schools as this ritual requires money for a trainee to be assisted; another example relevant for this study is examining the reckless use of the *sangoma* cloth since it has become easily accessible to anyone. Fashion designers are capitalising on these cloths without being considerate of the ‘owner’, which is the *sangoma* community (see Chapter 1).

Traditional medicine or herbs is a very sensitive topic and infuriates most *sangomas* when touched upon. A well-known young *sangoma* and *gobela* from the Vaal in Gauteng, South Africa, shared his concerns about African medicinal herbs and how they have become a commodity which whites, Indian and Chinese exploit and benefit from resulting in fewer black people benefiting from it, yet much of this knowledge comes from black *sangomas*. He states that traditional medicine makes about 2.9 billion rands annually, which forms 5.6 percent of the national budget (Alcock 2015:26). According to Sibanda and Mothibe (2019:1), the World Health Organisation defines traditional medicine as the aggregate of information, abilities and practices in indigenous culture, beliefs and experiences to various societies, whether logical or not, that are utilised to keep up with the wellbeing, to curb, diagnose, improve and to treat physical and psychological instability. The commodification of all the fields mentioned above undermines the authenticity of these fields.

3.7 THE TIPPING POINT

Malcolm Gladwell (2000) illustrates the idea of the “tipping point” that occurred in America and makes distinct examples to explain this concept through various narrations, one of them being the famous Hush Puppy shoes. Gladwell (2000:3) narrates that between 1994 and 1995, Wolverine – a company that produced Hush Puppies – considered eliminating the suede shoes, which had once put them on the map. The sales had gone down to plus minus 30 000 pairs sold annually. Then, at that point, something abnormal, out of nowhere, occurred: Hush Puppies’ owners – Owen Baxter and Geoffrey Lewis – ran into a New York beautician at a photograph shoot who told them that Hush Puppies were beginning to trend in clubs and bars of downtown

Manhattan. Hush Puppies abruptly turned into the most stylish trend pattern with well-known designers and retail stores requesting them in large numbers. The Wolverine company advanced from selling 30 000 to 430 000 pairs in a single year, and the sales escalated each year until Hush Puppies prospered once more into turning into each youthful American's closet 'must have' item (Gladwell 2000). In another anecdote, Gladwell (2000:5) explains that ,Brownsville, New York unexpectedly turned into a lonely town due to crime. Crime spread throughout New York and Brooklyn, such that group fighting, murders and drug deals were rife in these areas. Then something strange suddenly happened that resembles the story of Hush Puppies – the crime rate suddenly declined. Over a period of five years, the crime rate dropped by 64.3 percent and Brooklyn started buzzing with life again as children played in the streets and senior citizens went back to enjoying resting on park benches and stoops. Gladwell (2000:5) parallels both these stories to an epidemic fashion of spreading rapidly without any traces of what triggered the rampant escalation of crime. This rapid spread is categorised into three characteristics: contagiousness, little causes can have huge impacts and that change happens not bit by bit however but by dramatic moment. This dramatic moment in an epidemic when everything can change at once is called 'the tipping point'. Gladwell portrays the secret of how various things in regular day-to-day existence can cause the tip, for instance messages (verbal), items, perspectives and thoughts and these spread in a viral way and thus the correlation of an epidemic. The three key points of this theory are: contagiousness; Little causes having big effects; and change happening in a dramatic fashion (Gladwell 2000:9).

Gladwell (2000:12) asserts that the expression of the tipping point first came into use in the 1970s to describe the migration of white people from older cities of northeast America to the suburbs. When a popular neighbourhood was occupied by African-Americans, sociologists confirmed that the community would tip; hence, most white Americans started to relocate. Gladwell (2000:12) regards this as “*the moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point.*”

This study is a good example of what the researcher has just articulated, through artistic mediums, which the researcher has manipulated according to their perception of the changing or possibly emerging new meaning of symbolism in the *sangoma* cloth (thoroughly explained in Chapter 4). The cloths in question have gone or are undergoing various changes with regards to meaning and ownership. The cloths have reached a point where the general public is now making a fashion statement using these cloth designs or iconography associated with the cloth designs. Various South African music artists appear on television wearing similar designs to

the cloth in question. These cloth designs are now trending in the fashion and graphic design industries. Nontobeko Gumede is a fashion student who has incorporated these cloth designs as part of the modern *sangoma* range. Another is a designer from Cape Town who also incorporated the cloth designs as part of his designer label called Butan. When asked to explain and describe his label in an online *Soweton Lifestyle* (Stockenström 17 May 2018) interview, the founder of Butan responded in the following manner,

“If you take a look at our brand today, you can't help but notice the Afro-centric signature that runs through all of our collections. Undeniably, hip-hop culture still serves as one of our inspirations, but it is African narratives, culture and heritage that we aim to proliferate through our designs”.

Various national and international celebrities appear on television shows and events with the latest Butan range. This somehow disregards the ritual of *ukuthwasa* rites of passage and the *sangoma* community at large. The cloth design itself or the iconography contained in these cloths have somehow ‘tipped’ from being sacred to being profane and from being utilised by the *sangoma* community to being used by the public who have not undergone the rite of passage to gain access into owning, redesigning or wearing these cloth designs. This researcher has engaged with the *sangoma* community to seek permission for redesigning and the *sangoma* community granted permission based on the condition that once the designs are complete, they are to be viewed by the *sangoma* community before they go public.

Through the researcher’s own artistic approach, the tipping point has been located between the liminal and the liminoid, sacred and the profane and religious and secular. Some of the symbols the researcher utilised have been viewed through a lens that engages with a liminal, sacred and religious domain because that is where the symbols were originally located. On the other end of the continuum they are being viewed through liminoid, secular and profane lenses because they have undergone a series of changes as a result of the researcher’s manipulation as an idiosyncratic artist. The manipulation and the analysis have been achieved through the use of semiotic readings. The research project, therefore, is to determine that tipping point, by asking the *amadlozi*, through the *sangomas*, where that point might be located in the designs.

It was speculated that the continuum to which the researcher referred resembles Turner’s explanation of liminality as these symbols have undergone a journey of change from their original and sacred function to what they are metamorphosed into, as this journey is perceived

to be by the ‘owners’ of the symbols. The series of prints have undergone one phase of *Transition* where a tipping point has been identified by the *sangomas* (in a focus group) through the aiding and sanctioning from the ancestors. The central point of departure is that the knowledge of these symbols belongs to the ancestors, which is part and parcel of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). As the designs change, the *sangoma* has moved through the breach, the crisis and into the liminal ‘undecidability’ phase of the tipping point and has emerged after that demonstrating that the cloth (or, more accurately, the symbolic designs) may have ‘lost’ its sacred value. Thus, the symbols are either reclaimed and reintegrated into the liminality of the *sangoma* IKS or they are rejected and move into the domain of GKS, the profane or the commodified.

3.8 THE ENGAGEMENT OF THE NGO WITH THE COMMUNITY

Bophelong Emfuleni Traditional Healers Forum is a good example of improvisation or threshold. Considering the fact of their sacredness as traditional healers, they are going through a transitional point of liminality to reach the goal of gaining acceptance into their communities, but their identity markers – the cloth – appear to be creating an obstacle. They are trying to break away from their ‘holiness’ to become one with the community but still valuing and respecting their identity markers.

As soon as one recognises a place of initiation in the township by *sangoma* cloths hanging on the fence of the house, one immediately assumes that is a ‘no-go area’ unless one is experiencing difficulties in one’s life and one requires clarity. Previously, *sangoma* huts were not situated amongst the community houses and neither were the initiation schools. They were considered to be sacred and had to be secluded from the rest of the community. Mokhethi (2018:24) states that trainees were subjected to social isolation so as to extend or expand the comprehension of dreams, senses, ailments and ruminations which are the *amadlozi*’s methods of passing on knowledge to the trainee. Nowadays, their houses are based right in the middle of townships and improvisation takes place in a sense that they make space for rituals and engaging with society on an everyday basis. The practice of *ukuthwasa* is now being commercialised in such a way that consultation appointments can take place or are booked online as mentioned earlier. *Makhosi* Amanda Qcabashe is a good example of this commercialisation. Qcabashe has an online consultation site titled ‘*Mphuthungwane*’ (www.Mphuthungwane.co.za) where bookings, consultations and payments for consultations take place. One would critically engage with the genuineness of this conduct with respects to *Amadlozi*, which resides in the *sangoma* who needs to make physical contact with their patient.

The sacredness of the *sangoma* ritual is now potentially being compromised and commercialised as the internet is open for everyone to interconnect with. Modern *sangomas* have now substituted the *indomba* with the internet for consultations. As traditions evolve, culture is on the same time frame. Appropriation and improvisation of culture are rapidly manoeuvring into societies of which the changes are done by members of the very same societies. Hallam and Ingold (2007) clearly state this in the introduction of their book titled *Creativity and cultural improvisation*: There is no script for social and cultural life. People have to work it out as they go along. In a word, they must improvise. Hallam and Ingold (2007) make four points about improvisation:

improvisation is the manner in which we work, not just in the customary direct of our regular daily existences, but also in our investigated reflections on these lives in fields of craftsmanship, writing and science (Hallam & Ingold 2007:1).

Hallam and Ingold (2007:3) explain that the world we occupy is not complete or ready-made but rather spontaneously or gradually develops as humans go. Things may look complete but as humans interact and influence each other, what looks ready-made and complete can only be altered and affected by the human interaction through the passage of time (Figure 3.2).

Critically, the views and actions of this NGO do not fall far from the aim of this project. They are an NGO that, some may argue, has moved into the profane, based on the fact that they are trying to reach out to the community and in so doing, combating the stigmas of society's view that traditional healers are horrendous individuals who are not to be spoken to unless consulting them about one's misfortunes. This NGO is involved in various projects which include sports, art, heritage and agriculture, which are all part of their vision and mission to get young people off the streets and improve their communities in terms of engaging the youth in various activities. Xaso (2015:2 citing Papastergiadis) notes that cultural purity is itself a misconception as societies endlessly develop and interact because of globalisation.

3.9 THE DYNAMICS OF UKUTHWASA RITUAL

According to Xaso (2015:2), *ukuthwasa* comprises various rituals that the trainee undergoes before graduating to become a fully-fledged *sangoma*. Xaso (2015:7) states that undergoing *ukuthwasa* is a process of identity formation, which is constructed by the knowledge acquired throughout the process. In this regard, the training is seen as a liminal state as identified by Turner (1967), namely as a process of psychosocial development and identity achievement that

reintegrates an individual who has gone through struggles and misfortunes into an in-group. Presently, *sangoma*, *inyanga*¹² or *umthandazeli*¹³ can be defined as traditional healers. The World Health Organization classifies a traditional healer as someone who is perceived by the local residents near where he/she resides as skilful to give medical services by utilising vegetable, animal and mineral substances and different techniques of healing (Pretorius, de Klerk & van Rensburg 1993:5). According to Washington (2010), *umthandazi* or faith healers are based in the Zion and Apostolic churches and they form part of a very complex blend of African religion and Christianity. An *umthandazi* has the gift of prophecy and heals using holy water and ash, steaming baths and enemas. Washington (2010) elaborates that although both *abathandazi (pl)* and *sangomas* communicate and consult with ancestors their training is very different. This is where the researcher fits in. The researcher has the *umthandazi(s)* calling and belongs to an Apostolic church. How this came about was that the researcher's parents were not joined in matrimony and they soon separated after the researcher was born. However, the researcher was raised between her biological mother and her paternal grandmother. At an early age, the researcher started experiencing different types of sicknesses, which western medicines could not heal. The researcher finally made it to high school where everything manifested in the dreams she had of an elderly woman. When the researcher explained this to her paternal grandmother, she (the grandmother) explained the history of how she had named the researcher after her cousin who was a prophetess – this is the woman who appeared in the researcher's dreams. The prophetess died in 1985, yet the researcher was born in 1986 but meticulously and thoroughly described the prophetess's appearance, which she had seen in her dreams. The researcher described the elderly woman from her facial appearance, height, body weight, right down to the clothes she was wearing. This is when the paternal grandmother decided to take the researcher to the Apostolic church where she got help in terms of the misfortunes and illnesses she had been experiencing. Therefore, it was manageable for the *sangoma* focus group to trust the researcher with regards to sharing sacred information as they considered her to be one of them. As an *umthandazeli*, the researcher had the full rites of passage to engage with the *sangomas*. However, the researcher will only be focusing on the ritual of *Ukuthwasa* and *izangoma*, since these are what the researcher had been researching previously.

Contrarily, according to Amanda Gcabashe, a South African *sangoma* herself (Radio 702. 92.7 MHz. 2012. *The Daily Maverick*. [Radio programme] 19 October), a *sangoma* and an *inyanga* are approximately of the same calibre because most of them – between both parties – ought to

¹² A herbalist

¹³ A prophet/faith healer (Washington 2010)

undergo the process of *ukuthwasa*. However, *sangomas* can be said to have in-depth knowledge of the diagnosis process and both prescribe and provide *umuthi* (singular)/*imithi*(pl), whereas an *inyanga* has an in-depth knowledge of herbs and various *imithi*. Therefore, a *sangoma* would be equivalent to a general practitioner/doctor, whereas the *inyanga* would be equivalent to a pharmacist (Radio 702. 92.7 MHz. 2012. *The Daily Maverick*. [Radio programme] 19 October). In this case, the researcher will only be utilising the word *sangoma* as most of the participants are referred to as *sangomas/izangoma*.

According to most of the participants, the calling initially manifests itself during adolescent years in the form of *inkathazo* or troubles. These troubles plague the life of the person with the calling until they acknowledge it. The process of acknowledging that one has a calling is not an easy one (speaking from experience) since one enters a state of uncertainty, the unknown and stepping on a bridge between the known self and the new self, which is on the other side of the bridge. The bridge would, therefore, be the process of *ukuthwasa*. The crossing over that the above cause refers to, applies to the trainees. Turner's concepts around ritual and the liminal capture a journey: Breach, Crisis, separation (the liminal) and re-integration. The researcher's own artistic journey is the same but seen backwards, from global artist, to working in the service of the *sangoma*. In terms of a social setting, liminality resembles an intermediate phase of being in between where an individual is stripped of their original identity (Fisher 2012).

Ukuthwasa ritual is mainly centralised around the aspect of the ancestors or *amadlozi* (pl) *idlozi* (s). Kyalo (2013:34) states, “*rituals are symbolic, routine, and repetitive activities and actions*”, which we use in order to connect with higher powers (the sacred). These are linked or connected to places or events we consider to be important to us. The term ‘ancestor’ or *idlozi* refers to a deceased person/s who continues to communicate with the living through dreams, premonitions and visions. According to Mkhulu Ntshingisa, a cultural activist in South Africa, (SABC 1. 2018. *Imvelo Season 1*¹⁴. Episode 30. [TV programme] 27 April):

“An ancestor is a person that is no longer alive. They exist spiritually. However, this is a person that was once alive and lived here on earth. They passed on are they are now regarded as an ancestor.”

Doctor SM Hlathi, president of SADC United Traditional Healers Practitioners Association (SABC 1. 2018. *Imvelo Season 1*. Episode 30. [TV programme] 27 April) elaborates;

¹⁴ Imvelo is a Television show on SABC 1 (The South African Broadcasting Corporation) that focuses on African Traditional Practices that are done at various traditional rituals and events.

“ancestors are spirits that protect us [humans], they show us the way. They visit us in our dreams, and they warn us against bad spirits.” Additionally, Gogo Dineo Ndlanzi (SABC. 2017. *Imvelo Season 1*. Episode 30. [TV programme] 27 April), a South African *sangoma* and well known *gobela*, reiterates:

. . . (A)s Africans, we do not believe that a person is completely dead. We believe that they are sleeping and at some point, their soul will return spiritually as an ancestor. That is why it is important for us to get cleansed after the passing of a loved one. This is a transition process for those who are still alive to acknowledge that the loved one is no longer alive. The spirit that passed on needs to be aware of that as well. The soul should not be conflicted, but it should know that it is an ancestor now and accept that.

According to Edwards, Makunga, Thwala and Mbele (2009:1), the term ancestor can be characterised as anybody from whom an individual has descended. Edwards *et al.* (2009:1) explain that the concepts have many connotations, meaning that ancestors can be conceived in many ways, ranging from the total heritage of contemporary humanity, through direct linear relations in families, to social constructions with special psychological and religious meaning. As mentioned previously, the ritual of *ukuthwasa* is centralised around the concept of ancestors – there is no *ukuthwasa* without the ancestor(s).

On the contrary, Participant 9 stated that not all *sangomas* have undergone the ritual of *ukuthwasa*. *Sangomas* who are referred to as *amagedla* (pl) *igedla* (s) have a vast knowledge of *imithi* or traditional medicine. All this knowledge is obtained through dreams (*amaphupho*) of constant communication with *amadlozi* or through teachings from another *igedla*. The general community refer to *amagedla* as *sangomas* because they (*amagedla*) also utilise the traditional cloths in question even though they have not undergone *ukuthwasa*.

Sangomas can be said to have certain powers of unravelling the past, foretelling the future and healing the sickly. This is done through communication with aid from the *idlozi/amadlozi*. There is an intimate relationship between the living and the *amadlozi* with regards to the ritual of *ukuthwasa*. Podolecka (2020:10) affirms that *amadlozi* or ancestors are not worshiped by *sangomas* but are communicated with, seeking wisdom and inquiry. This also includes the idea of spirituality in a sense that the spirits of the deceased continue to live in *sangomas*. *Umphefumulo* (soul), *umoya* (spirit) and *isithunzi* (shadow) are all concepts that are utilised in the *Ukuthwasa* ritual (Mlisa 2000:xxii-xxvi). To become a fully-fledged *sangoma*, there are various rituals or rites of passage that must be performed. To amalgamate all these rituals and

to serve as confirmation that indeed all these rituals have been properly performed, one needs to do *umsebenzi*: this is a ritual performed to inform, plead, appease or thank the ancestors and this is done by slaughtering a beast with the inclusion of *umqombothi* (traditional beer).

Ukuthwasa is a complex ritual of training and involves various stages in which the novice is required to dress up in distinct cloths during and after initiation. In her monologue (Utube TEDxJohannesburg 2016), Amanda Gcabashe describes *Ukuthwasa* as a parallel universe where someone who has the calling of *ubungoma*, becomes a *sangoma* and starts a journey with a teacher (*ugobela*) to actually get to the point where that someone would be recognised as *isangoma*. She reiterates that it is a lifelong process beginning from before birth and continues right through life. Some of this knowledge is passed on orally and somehow gets altered or fragmented along the way; therefore, it is crucial to record every aspect and detail of this much ignored or unknown history.

UbuNguni novices are trained the traditional Nguni cultural way, the ancestors form part of the trainee's bloodline. According to the online dictionary.com, Nguni (noun) refers to "A member of a group of culturally and linguistically related peoples of Southern and Eastern Africa, including the Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele and Swazi". Alternatively, the *ubuNdau* are from the North, West and Central parts of Africa and according to them the ancestors do not have to form part of the blood line (Mlisa 2009:153). According to Professor Velaphi Mkhize of the *Umsamo* Institute¹⁵ (2015), there are two kinds of *ukuthwasa* for the most part found in the Southern parts of Africa, namely *IsiNguni* and *Isindawe*. *IsiNguni* from Kwa-Zulu Natal. *IsiNguni* has two notable 'spirits-*imimoya*' – *Umndiki*¹⁶ and *Umndawe*. *IsiNdawe*¹⁷ came to Kwa-Zulu Natal through the Shangaan individuals during the times of King Shaka, originating from Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia and other different nations in Africa. They are the solitary individuals who know and understand *ubuNdau* (Mkhize 2015).

Ukuthwasa has been categorised as an act of primitivism and mediocracy (Mokgethi 2018:12). Given the world's current situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional health practitioners were not allowed to take part in the situation even though their methods of curing

¹⁵ "Umsamo Institute is comprised of indigenous African Healers and researchers who are able to provide our clients with insights into the African spirituality. We strive to be recognised as the foremost brand and preferred partner in adding value to our clients' lives, families and Workplace by successfully integrating the principles of African Spirituality." Information retrieved as is from the institute website (<https://umsamo.org.za/>)

¹⁶ "A person who died in the family in an unpleasant manner and is within you needing to be cleansed or requires a living individual to take on the name of the late person (Mokgethi 2018:4).

¹⁷ "Known as water ancestors" (Mokgethi 2018:4)

flus and colds were utilised. Solly Nduku, the General Secretary of National Unitary Professional Association for African Health Practitioners of South Africa, affirmed his disappointment during his City Press interview (News24. 2020. *City Press* [Online Interview] 27 March)¹⁸,

It is regrettable that our sector has not been engaged and even given clarity on protocols affecting their practice and rights of patients in accessing our services that include but [are] not limited to operating of our herbal shops and pharmacies.

During the South African COVID-19 lockdown, *sangomas* demanded to be recognised as an essential service by the government as there are many people who are reliant on their services. During a live interview (African Alliance. 2021. *COVID-19 Conversations: Solly Nduku*. [Pre-recorded video session] 6 April)¹⁹ Mkhulu Solly Nduku²⁰ added:

...our practitioners, like any other pharmacy, provide medication but these [are] herbal medical and herbal teas used for influenzas and colds,” he said, adding: “Our people should be granted permits to be able to open their medicinal shops so that people who are in dire need of them can access them. We guide against hoaxes and charlatans who will claim they have a vaccine and cure for Covid-19.

3.9.1 Stages of *Ukuthwasa*

For one to undergo *ukuthwasa*, there needs to be a series of events that take place, for example, one needs to be summoned first by the ancestors. Some will get premonitions as part of their signs and some will have *amaphupho* (dreams). Some experience a series of misfortunes as a sign from the ancestors that they are unhappy about the current state. The “chosen” is born as a *sangoma* but will need to undergo the process of *ukuthwasa* to receive training so that he/she can communicate with the *idlozi*. Some can be given signs by the ancestors to undergo the process of *ukuthwasa* but the ancestors can indicate that they do not want that specific person to necessarily become a practicing *sangoma*. One can undergo the process to fix or to correct

¹⁸ Source: <https://www.news24.com/citypress/trending/we-spoke-to-a-traditional-healer-about-covid-19-20200327>

¹⁹ Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JppoMsrLxto>

²⁰ The Traditional Health Practitioners (THP) Sector leader and Deputy Chairperson for the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) and Civil Society Forum

past mistakes that happened within the family or to fill a void that was never filled by the deceased. Subsequently, one can go back to their normal way of life.

It is by birth that one is a *sangoma*, but there is a need for a trained *sangoma*, referred to as *ugobela*, to teach you various things, namely the basics of *ukuhlola*²¹ or how to read and interpret the bones, *ukuphahla* (which is a formal communication with the ancestor), the songs of your *idlozi* and *ukugida*²² (dance) – normally done by *Amanguni*, how to use *imithi* and to basically make sure that your *idlozi* does not have any issues, which will impact on your ability to work with them. These activities are very important: for instance, the activity of *ukugida*, which is done in order to show your respect to the *idlozi* and to awake the ancestor (*ukuvusa idlozi*) and to praise and acknowledge them. Many describe the calling as harsh because one will be tormented by the ancestors if one does not heed the call.

Most participants shared their stories of misfortunes and endless illnesses. The ancestor's way of letting you know that it is time to heed the call is by sending a series of misfortunes. In all the interviews there is somehow a pattern of dropping out of school, illness, isolation from other people and endless dreams that consist of visits from the deceased. In all their dreams or premonitions, their ancestors appear to them dressed in the cloths in question.

- The first phase

Participant 1 states that *Ukungongoza*²³ is the first phase where the chosen goes and knocks on the door of the *sangoma* or *gobela* who must take them through the initiation process of *Ukuthwasa*. One must be shown a place where they have to *thwasa* but presently it has been a different case where *gobelas* just take trainees in without the trainee being shown that they indeed have to undergo *ukuthwasa* at the particular *gobela's* place. In some instances, the *gobela* will also be informed by the ancestors in the form of dreams about the potential trainees who are on their way. One has to fully accept the calling – this is called *ukuvuma idlozi*. Some of the participants mentioned that their cases were somewhat different. Traditionally, one does not choose a place where you want to be trained as a *sangoma*. The ancestors must inform you as to where you are supposed to be trained. Some have woken up and disappeared into the night, only to be found lying at the gate of the *sangoma* that is chosen by the ancestors to be the trainer.

²² "rhythmic stomping of feet during a ritual" (Mokgethi 2018:5)

²³ Isizulu word meaning 'knocking'.

Participant 1 shares her experience of being shown where she will undergo ukuthwasa:

My late grandmother visited me again in my dreams and said, "I gave you the gift, you can now go. I have to show you where you will do your training, where you will put on the beaded necklace because the woman who is assisting you is a prophet, so you have to put on those beads". I replied and told her that I would be very happy if she took me to the beads. She came to me at night, woke me up and accompanied me to where I was supposed to go. I walked a distance that could be likened to the one from here²⁴ to Vereeniging, but I did not see anything. Everything became clear in the morning. I was sitting outside Mamosia's house by the gate. The traditional healer that trained me is Mamosia, she was born of the Mapele clan in Lesotho. I did my training at QwaQwa, Bolata. Mamosia heard me singing ancestral songs outside her gate, my ancestral song went like (singing).... When Mamosia came outside, she took me in and welcomed me by taking her sangoma drum and singing.

There are different versions when it comes to how the different participants answered the calling. During the whole process, the most important and critical aspect is the *amaphupho* or dreams, which the ancestors use as guides to communicate with you or deliver a message.

- The second phase

This phase is called the white phase. In this phase *ithwasa* will be required to wear their cloths, which have been prescribed through dreams by *amadlozi* depending on the type of *ukuthwasa* you are undergoing. During this time, you are taught *ukuphahla*, which is to communicate with *amadlozi*. Gogo Dineo states:

Most people burn impepho when they communicate (phahla) with the ancestors. To phahla is to pray, it is simply a way for us to pave our path for our ancestors. So, at times you find people saying they can't do it or speak their home language because they were raised in model C schools. I meet a lot of people that say that. The intention is really for you to properly introduce yourself (ancestors). It's important for you to call them out as those that give life, heal and those that are in

²⁴ Bophelong Extension, which would be a distance of approximately 22 km.

the light. You shouldn't call upon those who were disregarded at some point because some ancestors did bad things. Pull in those that are in the light and tell them that you'd like that to guide you in the right way.

During this phase you are also taught your method of *ukuhlola*, which is the way in which you are going to consult with your patients, be it by reading *amathambo* (bones) or whatever method your *idlozi* presents. Trainees also take part in exercises, which strengthen their sixth sense. One of the activities undertaken with *ithwasa* is *Ukufihlelwa*, where objects will be hidden from *ithwasa* and he/she must find them or tell what it is and where it is hidden.

Basic medicines or herbs and disease and symptom identification and treatment are also taught in this phase. Once the white phase is concluded, *ithwasa* starts practicals where *ugobela* makes sure that the trainee is learning the language of their *dlozi*. Once the initiation is complete, the family of the trainee must present *ugobela* with a certain fee before the trainee can go home. In some instances, the trainee stays longer due to financial issues. *Ugobela* is not supposed to let the trainee go before the initiation fees have been fully paid.

Animals that are included are the pigeon, chicken, goat, cow and sheep. These animals all have different purposes in the different phases of *Ukuthwasa*. *Ugobela* has to slaughter a cow to welcome *amathwasana*. Once the trainee joined the ritual you have to stay there until your *idlozi* had taught you everything you need to know. One cannot willingly decide to go home without completing the initiation; this might infuriate the ancestors and might lead to what the West might call schizophrenic reactions, commonly known as *amafunfunyana*.

There is no telling how long one will be *ithwasa*. Once one has joined the *ukuthwasa* ritual, there are certain rules and regulations that have to be followed. The family of *ithwasa* will also be made aware of these rules as they also include restrictions for both the *ithwasa* and the *ithwasa's* family. Some of the restrictions include no sexual intercourse or desire through the period of *ukuthwasa* as one has to maintain a clear mind through fasting physically and psychologically; the trainees are not supposed to consume intestinal meat, pork or sea food; the trainees are not allowed to visit home at all; the trainees must always be submissive to the *gobela* as a sign of respect to both the *gobela* and the *gobela's idlozi* and so forth.

- Graduation phase

During this phase, the initiation fee must have been fully paid so that the trainee can go home. The *ithwasa* needs to buy a goat and a cow. The process of slaughtering the goat and a cow is

very important because it is a ritual on its own. This ritual is referred to as *intwaso*. *Intwaso* is where the *ithwasa* drinks the blood of the goat and the cow and is referred to as ‘*ukudla inkunzi*’²⁵. The *intwaso* takes place on the first day of the graduation where the whole community is allowed to watch when ‘*ukudla inkunzi*’ takes place; however, there are some activities that are done in secret where only the community of *sangomas* is allowed the privilege (Participant 2 2016).

During the second day, the family of the *ithwasa* can take part in some of the activities such as *ukufihlelwa*, where the family hides an object and the *ithwasa* has to guess what that object is and where it is hidden. It is during this stage where the *sangoma* cloth plays a pivotal role. The *ithwasa* no longer wears plain white and red cloths, they can now wear the different coloured cloths that have been prescribed by their ancestors.

According to participants 1 and 7, at times the kind of cloth that a *sangoma* wears will depend on their totem, for example, the *Bakwema*²⁶ totem is a crocodile – a *Bakwena sangoma* will wear a crocodile cloth. Some trainees are given cloths by their *ugobela* in order to acknowledge them as their teachers even if you are a *Mokwena* and your *ugobela* is from the *Bataung*²⁷ clan. As your *ugobela*’s spirit child, they can present you with their totem cloth; this is done with regards to the *ithwasa* acknowledging the *idlozi* of their *ugobela* who has trained them. The *ithwasa* cannot willingly choose which cloth they want to have or utilise. During the initiation, the *amadlozi* of *ugobela* have to be in connection with the *amadlozi* of the *ithwasa* to avoid conflict of interest and to assure the smooth sailing of the initiation.

Participant 2 states that at these graduation ceremonies, both *Amanguni* and *Amandau* will be present, as the activities do not differ that much since some trainees undergo both *ubunguni* and *ubundau* at the same time. It is at these ceremonies where the cloth plays a vital role since an *ithwasa* and *ugobela* will get a different type of treatment and acknowledgement. The type of cloth they wear will indicate their status in the *sangoma* hierarchy.

There are Sangomas who are trained as Mnguni, which is the traditional Zulu cultural way, and Sangomas who are trained as Mundawo. I was trained in the Mundawo way. When we greet one another as Sangomas, we are greeting the ancestor inside one another. If I see a trainer I will kneel down and say,

²⁵ To eat the beast (translated by the researcher).

²⁶ *Bakwena* (pl) *Mokwena* (s) This clan is represented by the Crocodile.

²⁷ *Bataung* (pl) *Motaung* (s) this clan is represented by the lion.

“Thokozani”, which means “blessed one”. The Sangomas trained in the Mnguni way will say, “Makhosi” when they greet you. It means “the chieftaincy”. When I greeted Hlengiwe, I knelt down and greeted her in my way. I said “Thokozani”, and she greeted me with “Makhosi”. I learned that moment that we had been trained differently, although we all embrace the spirit of the ancestors (Nkabinde 2008:102-103)

This extensive description of the training process of *sangomas* was offered here for three reasons. First, the intimate relationship between the trainee, the trainer and the ancestor needed to be presented. Secondly, the point needed to be made that decisions around the calling, the training and the competencies of the *sangoma* are reliant on the ‘demands’ of the *amadlozi*. Thirdly, one of the manifestations of the *sangoma* can be found in the cloths that are worn and these cloths are determined by the *amadlozi*. In this sense, therefore, the cloth carries the symbol of both the *sangoma* and the protective *idlozi*.

3.10 GARMENTS THAT DELINEATE REPRESENTIVITY

The *sangoma* cloths are referred to as *amabhayi*²⁸, *amahyiya* or *masala*, depending on language. They often have different animal motifs or the solar system symbols printed on them and their common colours are white, black and red. The ancestors still speak through the *sangomas* with regards to new cloth designs. Participant 8 states:

I had a vision of a cloth I had never seen before; it was a goat cloth and it was shown to me by the ancestors. An old woman appeared in my vision wearing the cloth, it was such a beautiful cloth with the goat at the centre and next to it were its kids.

3.11 THE MEANING OF THE COMMON COLOURS AND ANIMAL MOTIFS

- Red is mainly worn by the trainees during the first phase of *ukuthwasa*. The red cloth is usually tied around the waist in a skirt-like fashion (Simmons 2008:86).
- White is associated with purity and light. White is additionally the actual physical trait to the spirits of the *amadlozi*; thus, healers are clothed with white fabric when they are deceased (Simmons 2008:88). The white is also used for ceremonies performed at the

²⁸ *Ibhayi/ihya* - a cloth used as a physical representation of an ancestral animal. The colour schemes are an indication if the person wearing the cloth is still training or has completed. (Mokgethi 2018 :4)

river; this statement is confirmed by Simmons (2008:88) and Participant 2.

- Black is associated with mourning. This is a form of compensation to mourn the main *idlozi* if it was not properly mourned after its departure. So, the trainee wears this colour to make amends with the spirit of the main *idlozi* (Simmons 2008:87).

The different animal motifs are crucial in terms of both the type of animal represented and whether the animal is seated, standing, open-mouthed or has a closed mouth. This indicates the type of *idlozi* that occupies the *sangoma*'s body. In past times, those who underwent the process of *ukuthwasa* wore snake, crocodile and hippo skins or hides, including feathers and skulls. Western civilisation took its toll when certain fabrics were designed representing these animals because the innovation of drawing these animal skins had started due to the scarcity and obstacles of attaining those animals²⁹. Participant 1 states that *sangomas* refer to their cloths as their “weapons” in this spiritual journey as there are many enemies in this line. Other cloths have the representation of the celestial bodies – the sun, moon and the stars. The following are some of the explanations of the different types of meanings and representations:

- White Lion *ibhayi* represents immense power, royalty, light and innocence. According to Participant 7 (2016), this cloth is often used by the Motaung (singular) or Bataung (pl) clans. *Tau* in Bataung means ‘lion’ – the trainee can still utilise the cloth even if he/she is not a Motaung but there needs to be a clear reason why the trainee is using the cloth. One reason would be that there is a link between the cloth from the maternal or paternal side of the trainee. The other would be that the trainee has received training from the Bataung clan, therefore, the trainee needs to acknowledge the *idlozi* he/she received training from and lastly, for protection.
- Snake, fish, crab and crocodile *ibhayi* represent water spirits (Participant 6:2019). Participant 6 states, “*the ancestor who had showed me the way to the cloth said, ‘I am giving you the crocodile because you are of the Kwena clan. It will always protect you. Call upon us when you get inside the water and we shall protect you from those who try to harm you. Always use this cloth’.*” According to Participant 2, mostly water spirits are linked to *amandawo*. *Amandawos*' most important form of training takes place by the river/dam or lake. This is where *amandawos*' ancestors are said to reside. The ritual

²⁹ The movement from the acceptance of the original animal or reptile skins as sacred coverings, to the acceptance of the cloths as sacred representations of the same animals and reptiles is an indication of the way that IKS moves with the changing of time and the concerns with the lived conditions of the people who use the sacred coverings and symbols.

of receiving training by the river is called *ukuparola umundawo*. Every *mundawo* has the cloth of the snake due to the fact that the snake is considered to be the owner of the rivers and lakes where *ukuparola idlozi* takes place. The crocodile cloth is mostly used by the Bakwena clan. 'Kwena' in *Bakwena* means 'crocodile'.

- Cultural *ibhayi* like the *thebe* (shield): this *ibhayi* comes in red or blue. It is used by both *amanguni* and *amandawo*. The *thebe* is utilised for protective reasons. Both *amanguni* and *amandawo* can make use of this cloth. Participant 1 supported the above statement: "When my grandmother gave me this cloth, as we are Zulu, she said 'I am giving you the shield cloth so that you can be able to battle whichever storm that comes your way.' She continued by saying, 'I will make with a beautiful colour but the most important thing here is the shield'."
- The Ndebele, Swati and Shangaan coloured print *ibhayi* represents their culture or ethnic group. Simmons (2008:95) explains that there is an event where an *idlozi*, which was associated with *Amaswati* (Swati people), even though may have not been Swati themselves, may want a fabric portraying king Mswati.
- *Kgaka* (Guinea fowl) *ibhayi* is used by both *amanguni* and *amadawo* and this represents *amadlozi* that are really fast like the speed of the guinea fowl. This means that the *ithwasa* is fast in grasping everything, like learning how to read the bones or communicating with *idlozi*.
- According to Participant 6, the chicken *ibhayi* represents the early hours of the morning; the chicken cloth helps trainees wake up before sunrise. The chicken is supposed to serve the purpose of an 'alarm clock' for the *ithwasa* as the chicken crows in the morning. Participant 6 claims that she was given the cloth by her grandfather: "I give to you the rooster cloth". Participant 6 states that she was surprised by the cloth because she was still a trainee. Her grandfather carried on to say: "Yes, so that the rooster can wake you up at 3am. You have to wake up at that time every morning so that you may mix up your herbs".
- The sun, moon and the stars *ibhayi* represent the heavens. They also represent the four cardinal points. Both *amandawo* and *amanguni* can utilise this cloth.

- The *Impalo*³⁰ and *injiti*³¹ *ibhayi* are only used by *Amandawo*. According to Simmons (2008:219), these cloths are dedicated to the *Ndau* ancestors and can be found in most *Ndau*-owned *indumba*.

3.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focused on the literature review with regards to the different theories that frame the study holistically. Victor Turner's theory of liminality, which was drawn from Anorlnd Van Gennep's (1960[1909]) theory of the *rites of passage* was discussed. His focal point from Van Gennep's (1960[1909]) theory of liminality was the second phase, which was the transition phase. Turner's theory was also utilised as part of the ritual concept and the inclusion of indigenous knowledge as part of ownership since new designs have emerged from this study. IKSs were, furthermore, discussed and put into contrast with GKSs to a point where the two are beginning, theoretically, to merge because of changing ways of life. To furthermore support the study, binary opposites, such as the sacred, the profane, the religious and the commodified were discussed. The engagement of the NGO with the community is also explained in this chapter to give a better understanding of the NGO's background and purpose. The dynamics of the ritual of *ukuthwasa* were discussed to put the study into context. The notion of the tipping point by Malcolm Gladwell was discussed as this was the theory used for the deliberation of the designs during the focus group. The chapter ended with an introduction to the symbols and symbolic meaning of the motifs and colours present in the sacred *sangoma* cloths.

The following chapter provides a journey into the making, printing and display of the designs in preparation for the focus group. It describes the making process of five series of designs that start with the original sacred cloth and then, through a process of creative and idiosyncratic adaptation, these designs change in each series. In the chapter that follows, the interaction of the *sangoma* community with the changing sets of designs is discussed with the purpose of determining where the tipping point, from sacred to profane, might occur in the series.

³⁰ *Impalo/mpalo/palu/palo*, depending on language and pronunciation: A blue and white checked cloth (Simmons 2008:x)

³¹ A white background cotton cloth with an enclosed foreground of maroon repetitive grid-like shapes (Simmons 2008:x)

CHAPTER 4: DESIGN MAKING, PRINTING PROCESS AND DISPLAY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is focused on the making and display of the designs. The first phase includes the choosing and appropriation of the cloths on Adobe master suite using Photoshop. Markellou, (2013:145) refers to “*appropriation is the practice of using pre-existing works of art, to the technique of borrowing ‘found’ images and re-contextualizing them*”. Korte (2018:1) describes appropriation as an artistic strategy that has been utilised by artists since the existence of art; it is the use of previously existing material, tangible or intangible, into new art works. One of the interesting appropriations in the history of art involved Marcel Duchamp’s use of Leonardo da Vinci’s Mona Lisa (1919). Duchamp appropriated the Mona Lisa by adding a beard to the art piece. Markellou (2013:145) reiterates that Duchamp is considered to be the father of appropriation as he was one of the first artists to legitimise the idea of appropriation. In this case the researcher ‘borrowed’ the existing *sangoma* cloth designs to create new designs¹.

The notion of ‘appropriation’ will be used in this chapter in three senses. First, the designs and symbols of the original cloth will be ‘transferred’ (or appropriated) to another medium (first in Adobe Photoshop and then onto other cloth and print processes). In this sense ‘appropriation’ means ‘medium transfer’. Secondly, ‘appropriation’ will refer to the incorporation of other, possibly related, design practices and symbols into an ‘designed original’ cloth. Here the *sangoma* ‘original designs’ will be changed through an act of appropriating other symbols and by changing or distorting those (and related) symbols. Finally, as an artist, the researcher ‘appropriated’ her own idiosyncratic and artistic insights and inspirations to apply these to the ‘original cloth designs’. This last is a central concern for this project, as it will ask the question as to who owns those idiosyncratic insertions or adaptations to the original. Put another way, at what stage would the copyright for the *sangoma* cloth move to the copyright of the artist? Furthermore, at what stage may GKS appropriate the original or adapted designs? This last question may suggest that the artist/researcher can be seen to be the representative of the GKS dilemma.

¹ Although this chapter will refer to the act of designing it must be seen as a creative act and, therefore, an artistic act. This allows the project to fall into the domain of the Fine Arts. The decisions made in the changing process are, to a large extent, drawn from the initial worldly stimuli (of the cloth designs) and adapted by the intervention through the artistic and creative drives of the artist/researcher. In traditional design, adaptations would be drawn from particular community research projects, whereas this project relies on the artistic training and insights of the artist in the adaptations. Finally, designing is an act of planning and execution and, therefore, is similar to the act of planning and executing an artwork.

This chapter is divided into two phases of engagement. The purpose of phase one is to describe the designing process and to trace the journey of the development of the cloth design continuum as the researcher/designer/artist undertakes it. The chosen cloth designs include the cloth of the sun, shield, snake, lion and the Big Five. Drawing on the information gathered during the individual interviews, these designs were appropriated through Photoshop, which is an Adobe product that is a photo editing software. The choosing of the cloths was also dependent on the researcher's own personal experience with regards to the interaction with the NGO members and past experiences from previous degrees. The information presented is drawn extensively from the researcher/designer's personal and potentially idiosyncratic² engagement with the subject matter at hand. As such, the engagement is both with the nature and strategies of design and artmaking and with the particular subject matter. To achieve this, the chapter draws on the information contained in chapters one to three in the design process.

The second phase of this chapter mainly focuses on the printing process, which was achieved through digital printing on paper and silkscreen printing on a cloth. Silkscreen is a surface printing technique where ink is transferred through a stencil onto a surface of either paper or cloth. The third part of the project was an exhibition display curated for the private viewing of the focus group; this will be considered in Chapter 5, where the reactions of the *sangomas* to the changing designs presented in this chapter are engaged with.

4.2 PHASE ONE

The researcher had started working on the designs during the second year of her Fine Art diploma when she started paying close attention to how the different *sangomas* dress. The researcher's interest grew even more when she noticed people who had started wearing this cloth but were themselves not *sangomas*. Although this was not the researcher's point of focus at that point in time, this raised critical concerns as the researcher dug deeper in the ritual of *ukuthwasa*. For this study, the researcher selected the cloths so that she can create new designs. The cloths were worked on through Photoshop utilising the technique of appropriation.

The *sangoma* cloths (as material cloth with designs embedded on them) replaced animal hides, which were initially worn as traditional healer attire. According to Simmons (2008:96-97),

² It should be noted that, within this project of working with the *amadlozi*, defining exactly what is idiosyncratic and what is inspired from them, is very difficult.

animal hides had different functions that went according to a hierarchy; live-stock hides were utilised by the general villagers, while the undomesticated wild animal hides were utilised by shamans/traditional healers for *muthi* and prominence. Simmons (2008:102), furthermore, states that, in the late 1900s, the use of the cloth became prominent through Arab trade in South Africa and neighbouring countries like Mozambique. Simmons (2008:68) explains that in the late 1940s, traditional healers opted for a more 'hygienic' version of these animal hides, which would serve the same function but were more sterile. In the early 20th century, the traditional healers started the conversion process from the animal hides to the depiction of the animal images with the assistance of the entrepreneurs in the Minty and Patel stores in the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Mozambique (Simmons 2008:105). The common colours used in these cloths were white, red and black, which were the most important colours to the healers. These cloths included the representation of an indigenous animal with a central cartouche³ positioned on a plain background and geometric patterned borders. Presently, these fabrics are found all over South Africa (Simmons 2008).

The researcher appropriated the same indigenous cloth but did not break away from the original authenticity of the cloth designs (throughout the redesigning project the researcher was continually aware of the 'presence' of the authentic designs and their meanings). In the discussions of the design process that follows, with particular reference to the symbolic meaning of the colours and the symbology used, the information was provided in the extensive interviews with the *sangoma* community, both before the design and during the focus group assessment (which is presented in the next chapter). Where the information did not come from these sources, the literature was accessed and referenced. It should also be noted that none of the *sangomas* had access the completed series until the day of the focus group session, however, they had access to the original cloth designs.

³ An ornate frame around a design or inscription (*Online thesaurus*)

4.3 Ilanga/ Letsatsi/ Sun original

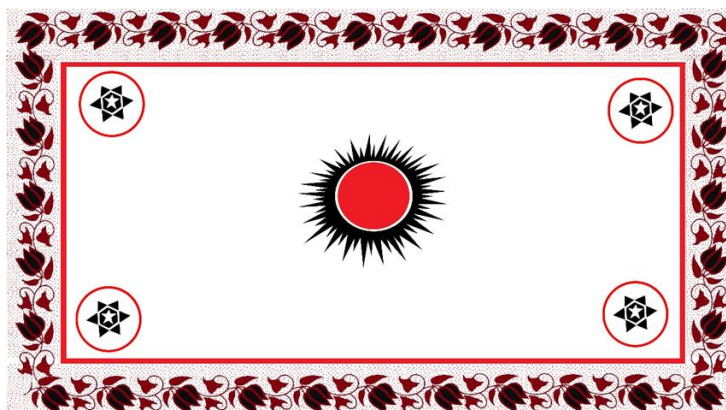


Figure 4.1: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series original*.

40cm x 60cm Digital image

The first image (Figure 4.1) of this series is the original *sangoma* sun cloth. In this specific series the researcher is dealing with the sun cloth, which represents light. According to participant 2, his specific cloth can also be found with a red or black background. Most of the sun cloth designs are designed in a similar way; the common colours used are white, black and red. A decorative border and repetitive pattern with geometric shapes and floral representations is depicted around the borders of the cloth. The centred motif is the most fundamental part of the cloth, which is what the cloth represents. As shown above, there is a decorative border and a white background with a floral pattern in red and black; a typical motif of the sun is located in the centre of the cloth, which is the focal point. According to Dhlamini (2016:9), the colour white symbolises purity, light and new beginnings. This cloth can also be worn or used by trainees who are starting to join the *ukuthwasa* initiation school, also known as *Impande*. The cloth that has a red background can be worn by graduates and the black one is worn by the *gobelas* who own initiation schools. However, the rules regarding these cloths differ according to the different types of *ukuthwasa* and *Impande*.

The researcher has chosen to begin with the sun cloth as she believes that it will ‘shed light’ as to what and how to go about the design and which direction to take as an artist. Put another way, this was the start of the entire redesigning process, therefore, can be seen as the start of the liminal artistic working process; the researcher has also taken this study as a form of initiation due to the information gained. In the beginning stages, the focus group members informed the researcher that she also has a calling, a fact the researcher knows and acknowledges.

4.3.1 Sun One

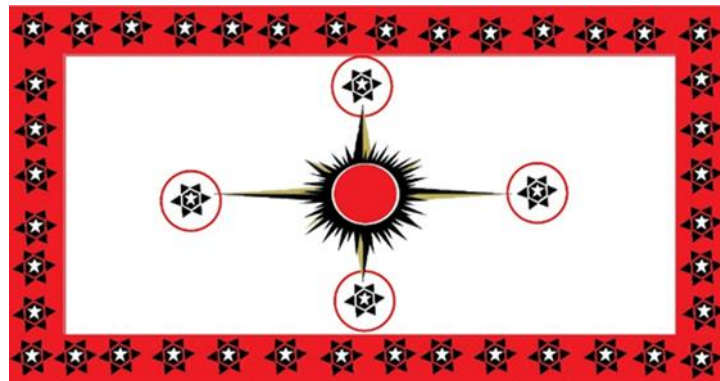


Figure 4.2: RADEBE, M. Lebohang, 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 1*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

Moving from the original design, the researcher decided to eliminate the floral border and shifted focus to the stars, as they fall under one heading with the sun, which is celestial. The reason is that the stars can also bring light into the dark. The red border symbolises a new stage of entering the world of the trainees, the liminal and threshold of the trainees. Normally, when the novice or trainee enters the ritual of *ukuthwasa*, their first set of clothing should be a red cloth wrapped around the waist and a white vest. The red border is wrapped around the white background and gives a representation of the red skirt worn by trainees. The systematic distribution of the stars represents the different *amadlozi*, which the trainee still has to make a connection with. The novice or trainee will wear these until they are shown which cloth to wear by the ancestors. The researcher has rearranged the four main stars into north, south, east and west, due to the fact that the trainees are taught where to face when praying, which is east, where the sun rises (*Mpumalanga*). The stars are again arranged in a linear manner to also represent the sequence that presents an orderly fashion of what the *idlozi*⁴ wants from the trainee. The researcher also included a compass concealed by the sun to emphasise the importance of the stars respectively and direction, as the stage of entering *ukuthwasa* is the step in the right direction aided by *amadlozi*⁵. The use of the colour black also represents *mabala a kahare*⁶, covertly attended by anyone with a calling. This will not be explained further due to ethical reasons.

⁴ Sing.: ancestor

⁵ Pl.: ancestors

⁶ This is a private ceremony/ritual. This is only known to the *sangoma* community and other individuals who are said to have a calling.

4.3.2 Sun Two

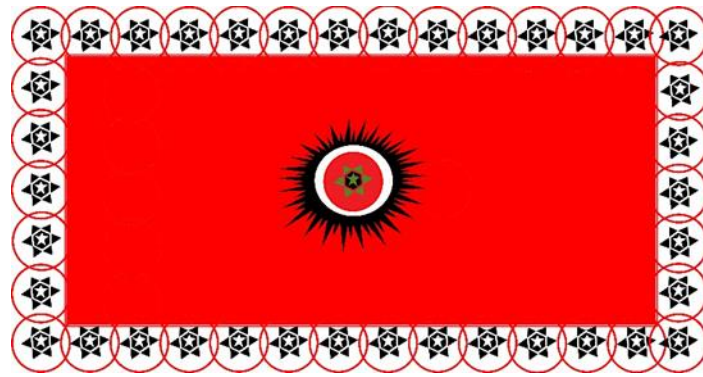


Figure 4.3: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Iilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 2*.

40cm x 60cm Digital image

On the third iteration of the series, the researcher created a pattern with the stars but in this instance, the colour red on the centre of the design represents the maturity of the trainee as they have reached a stage of drinking the goat's blood, according to Participant 2. On the borders of the design the red circle that enclosed the black star represents *idlozi*. The fact that the red circle bands overlap emphasises the connection between the *amadlozi*, whether the *amadlozi* are from the trainees' paternal or maternal side. The pattern created on the border is also for aesthetic purposes. The green star in the centre of the sun is significant. Most of the *sangomas* work in two ways, as *sangomas* and as prophets in the Apostolic and Zionist syncretic churches, which the researcher is also part of. The most common colours worn in Zionist and Apostolic churches are different shades of blue and white and different shades of green and white. The green colour on the star represents the Apostolic and Zionist church. This is done to acknowledge *isithunywa*⁷, which some *sangomas* have. Consequently, some *sangomas* will undergo the process of *ukuthwasa* and *ubuprofeti* at the same time. *Umprofeti*⁸ is a faith healer and a diviner who is Christian and believes that their powers come from God and use prayer, holy ash, oil and water for healing (Xaso 2015).

⁸ A faith healer, a person who has a gift of prophecy (Mlisa 2009:xxvi)

4.3.3 Sun Three



Figure 4.4: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 3*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

The design purpose in this cloth was to rearrange the symbols but still have the original and authentic feel of the design and give them (the cloths) a new (potentially) profane meaning. The sun can have many connotations and, in this instance, for the researcher, this means and represents fire and warmth; hence the colour changes to an orange colour and fire on the centre on the design and changing the opacity of the centred sun motif to be a lighter colour as if the sun has started a crown fire in the background. The sun border is for aesthetic purposes. The sun gives birth to a fire, which may also represent the character of some *amadlozi*.

4.3.4 Sun Four



Figure 4.5: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 4*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

This is the advanced stages of the sun cloth as the researcher is now (deliberately and consciously) playing the part of an idiosyncratic artist. The colour black represents the final stages of the *ukuthwasa* training. The pattern of the sun represents the celestial sign, which the

sangomas abide by and the arrangement is for aesthetic reasons. The red belt on the black border represents a rite of passage that a trainee must go through before being a fully-fledged *sangoma*; it represents a threshold or a breach, as Turner (1969) describes it. The sun motif in the middle represents the three colour stages of *ukuthwasa*, white being the beginning stage of *ukuthwasa*, red being the training process and black being the graduation. There is a common pattern of misfortunes that all the Participants have spoken about, namely a series of misfortunes, which is common to all the participants if one refuses to heed the call from the ancestors; these misfortunes will follow you. The researcher regards this series of misfortunes as painful and unpleasant, hence the use of the fire that is depicted behind the sun, as the sun can also start a crown fire when the temperature is too high.

4.3.5 Sun Five



Figure 4.6: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 5*.

40cm x 60cm Digital image

This is the final sun design that has been appropriated. The sun cloth is now the fire cloth with the sun turned into an eye. The eye is the focal point of this design. When a trainee enters *ukuthwasa*, a lot of things are blurry and unclear. But when the training is now settled and over a lot, everything is now luminous and undimmed, hence the eye in the middle of the sun, which provides light for the eye to see clearer. The flames on the border are the result of the flames from the fire in the centre of the design, which represent spreading out – the trainee is now integrated into the community as healer and will serve as an eye, a seer. The fire has now been included as part of the border, which may also represent punishment from the ancestor should they be side-tracked into doing as they please.

4.4. Thebe/ Isihlangu/ Shield Series original



Figure 4.7: RADEBE, M. Lebohng. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series original*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

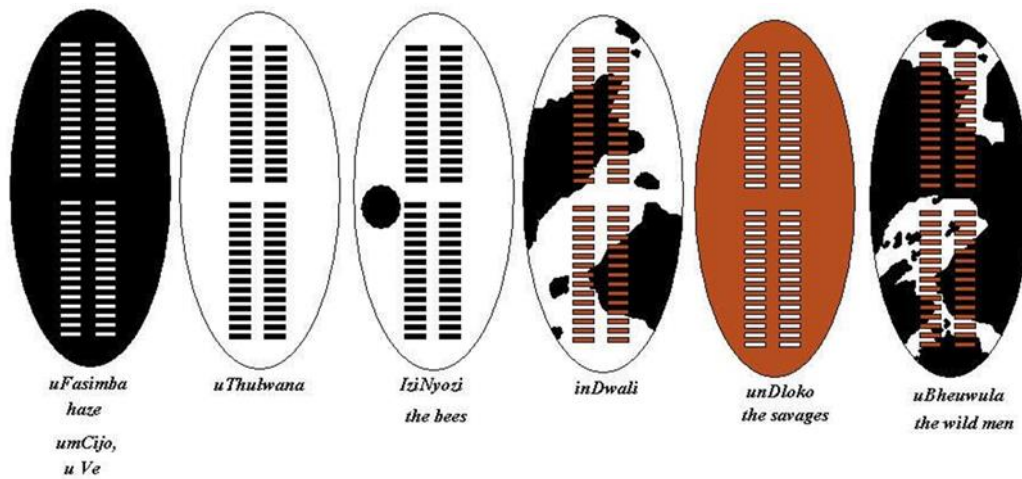


Figure 4.8: ALLE, C.R. 2014. *Shaka's regimental color-coded shields*. Fort Leavenworth:
Kansas (Allen 2014:15)



Figure 4.9: Zulu bride with Shield traditional attire.

Source: <https://www.yellosa.co.za/company/946412/passion4fashion>

The researcher has chosen this cloth since this is one of the cloths that confused the researcher and raised the question: Does this cloth belong to the Nguni people as a whole or the *sangoma* community? This cloth is common among *sangomas* who have undergone the Nguni initiation but, lately, has been used on the television series *My perfect wedding*⁹. Brides (Figure 4.9) are shown wearing the shield cloth during the traditional wedding and yet, it is also worn by *sangomas* to acknowledge their Nguni ancestors. The type of shield depicted in the shield cloth could be one of the two shields, which were utilised by King Shaka's military men who were referred to as the *Umbhewula*¹⁰ (Figure 4.8) shield as both shield designs are asymmetrically balanced with a black and white colour scheme.

The shield design normally comes in red and in blue. Most *sangoma* cloths are basically the same when it comes to the design and pattern with the main motif centred and the decorative and geometric patterns depicted on the borders of the cloth. In the *sangoma* context, the shield represents protection from evil people, spirits and other malevolent forces. Participant 1 states,

When my grandmother gave me this cloth, as we are Zulu, she said 'I am giving you the shield cloth so that you can be able to battle whichever storm that comes your way'.¹¹

King Shaka of the Zulu nation (Figure 4.13) is often depicted with this shield, which served as protection against the missiles of thrown spears from the enemy. These shields were made of

⁹ South African Broadcasting Cooperation. Mzansi Magic. Channel 161. Production company: Connect TV.

¹⁰ Translation: The wild men (Allen 2014:15)

¹¹Participant 1 delivered the statement in Sesotho. The translations were done by the Vaal University of Technology in the African Languages and Development Unit (2020)

cowhide and came in different colours, which distinguished the different *amabutho*¹² (*plural*). The researcher found it fitting to also acknowledge her Zulu ancestors by including the shield design as part of the study.

4.4.1 Shield One



Figure 4.10: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 1*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

This design is still similar to the original design with regards to colour and patterns, the only difference is the multiplication of the shield that one of the Participants stressed is the most important aspect of this cloth. The reason behind the multiplication is to represent the four-cardinal points of the compass and the Nguni diaspora. The Nguni people dispersed into different parts of Southern Africa (Mvenene 2014:59).

¹² The Zulu warrior/regiment: *ibutho* (singular). *Amabutho* (plural) (Allen 2014)

4.4.2 Shield Two



Figure 4.11: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 2*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

The researcher changed the colour from blue to red as these are the common colours that this cloth comes in. There is a transformation from the four big shields to sixteen small shields to represent equal presence of the ancestors from the paternal and the maternal side and may be seen to depict a DNA strand. The composition of the shields in the inner borders is arranged in such a manner that they correspond with the shields on the outer border of the cloth to create balance and rhythm at the same time.

4.4.3 Shield Three

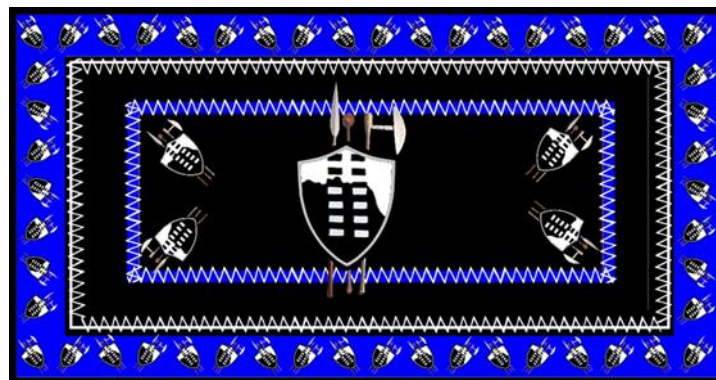


Figure 4.12: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 3*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image



Figure 4.13: ALLEN CR. 2014. *Portrait of King Shaka*. Fort Leavenworth: Kansas (Allen 2014:8)

On this design, the researcher introduced the medieval heater shield, which originates from the European continent (Edge & Paddock 1998). The design is changed back from the red to the blue colour for aesthetic reasons as some of the designs were made for experimental purposes. The grey shield looked appealing to the eye of the researcher as opposed to using a red background. The introduction of the heater shield represents the interaction between the Europeans and the Nguni people. The heater shield is redesigned and depicts a Zulu shield with the cow hide incorporated and the Zulu traditional weapons forming part of the heater shield. The black background in the middle ground of the design represents misunderstandings. In the context of the Nguni people, the settlers did not consider *sangomas* as healers but considered them as witches. The coloniser viewed *sangoma* practices as heathen¹³ acts and associated the practice with sorcery (Mlisa 2009:8).

¹³ "An individual of a people that does not acknowledge the God of the Bible; a person who is neither a Jew, Christian, nor Muslim; a pagan." *Source:* <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/heathen>

4.4.4 Shield Four

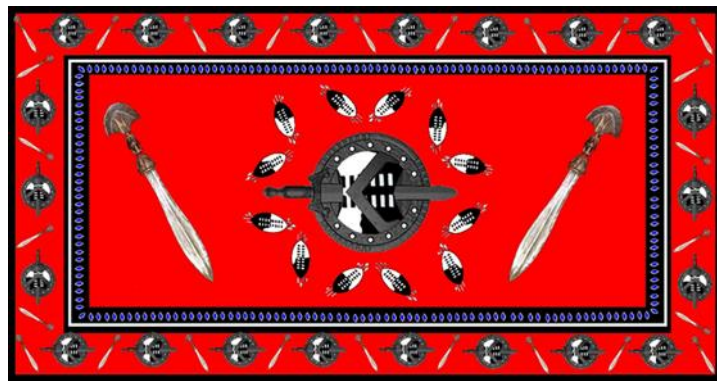


Figure 4.14: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 4*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

On this design, the heater shield transforms to a spartan shield with a sword as hoplites also carried swords. Some of the symbols and objects incorporated in the designs, like the sword, are covertly used by *sangomas* in another space and time. This specific cloth will only make sense to those who have undergone the process of *ukuthwasa* and were required to join the additional spiritual journey of *mabala a kahare*, as mentioned early. This specific design will not be discussed in detail due to ethical reasons with regards to the *sangoma* community.

4.4.5 Shield Five



Figure 4.15: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 5*
40cm x 60cm Digital image

This design incorporates all three different types of shields. The colour has now moved from the typical red and blue to magenta colour. This colour represents all women who have undergone *ukuthwasa* and the women who still have to undergo *ukuthwasa*. The researcher memorialises all the women who have undergone *ukuthwasa* and have been abused by their

gobelas. There is so much secrecy around the ritual of *ukuthwasa* resulting in some trainees being taken advantage of by their *gobelas*. Numerous newspapers have published horrific stories of young women being allegedly raped by their *gobelas*. One of the young women who came forth is Andiswa Khosa who related her story to the *Sowetan*, a well-known and reputable local newspaper, of being repeatedly raped by her *gobela* (Soweton- 16 July 2019). The researcher has incorporated all three shields as a metaphoric protection from the Christian God (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and the ancestors.

4.5 Inkanyamba/Noha/Snake series original

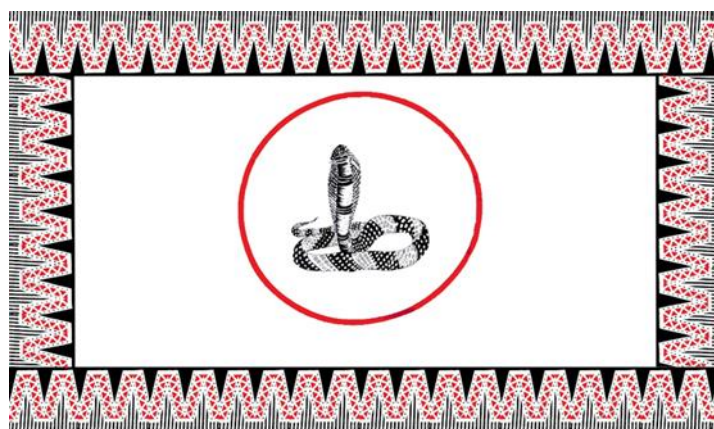


Figure 4.16: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series original*.

40cm x 60cm Digital image

This cloth has different names attached to it, depending on the language. According to Participant 9, this cloth represents the water spirits, which are common among the *Ndau*. Other cloths with symbols that represent water spirits are the fish and the crocodile cloth. Like all the other cloths used in this study, the design is a typical one with the main motif depicted in the centre of the cloth. The main motif is a simply sketched cobra snake design as this is the type of snake that is commonly seen by people who have been called to be *sangomas*. The colours used in this design include black, white and red. The dominant colour is white. The border consists of a black and white striped border with red triangular geometric shapes to create a zigzag border. The reason why the researcher chose to appropriate the white snake instead of the red or the black snake is to retain consistency in the trajectory and because this colour is used by some trainees at the beginning stage like *amathwasa* when they enter *ukuthwasa*. Since the designs will be appropriated in a form of a series, the researcher found it fitting to choose the white original cloth at the beginning stages of the series. Participant 9 states that the

predominantly black snake cloth represents the water snake. The white cloth snake is used for other rituals when they visit the river.

4.5.1 Snake One

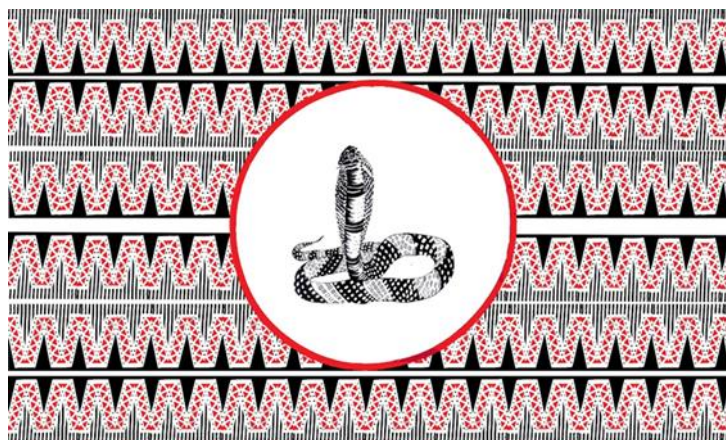


Figure 4.17: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 1*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

On the first part of the snake series, the white background is horizontally overlaid with the original design of the decorative border, thus removing the vertical borders on the right-hand and left-hand side of the cloth. The focal point of the cloth, which is the snake, has been also overlaid as a foreground over horizontal borders. The main motif still has the white background. The horizontal borders are positioned in such a way as to create other white lines between the borders. The borders are flipped and placed in such a way that the black and white stripes create patterns and a rhythm and thus achieve symmetrical balance. There are three white lines created by the borders. The three white lines represent the beginning, middle and the end of the initiation practice of *ukuthwasa*. The upper and lower lines are much narrower than the middle line, which is a bit wider. The first upper white line is narrower because of the anxiety and curiosity floating around the trainee, based on the fact that they have to leave their home and learn to adapt to new surroundings and people. The middle white line represents the frame of reference – knowledge – and how much the trainee has acquired since the beginning of training. The lower white line represents the journey of the trainee thus far and goes back to being narrow due to the fact that the trainee is near the end and has to go back to the community where they left as just a normal¹⁴ person and come back as a *sangoma*.

¹⁴ This must not be seen to imply that *sangomas* are not normal people, as they are extraordinary beings with a special gift and, in most cases, they only realise this after undergoing *ukuthwasa*.

4.5.2 Snake Two

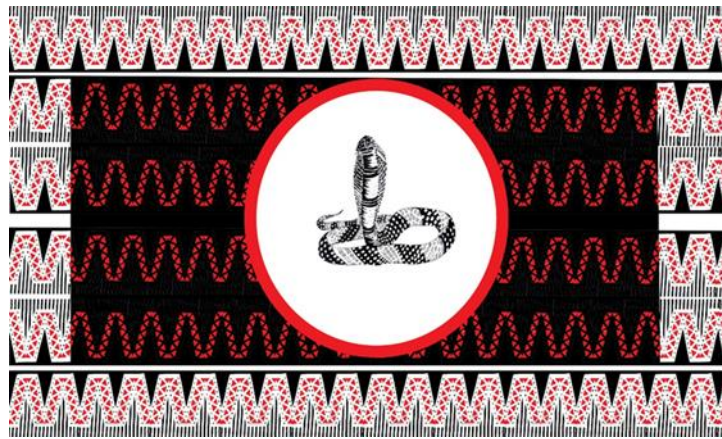


Figure 4.18: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 2*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

On this design, the researcher wanted to obtain a black background on Photoshop. The researcher used the selection tool to select the area, which needed to be painted black but ended up with a black background with the triangular geometric shapes in a zigzag shape still exposed. This was not the intention, but the design ended up being appealing to the eye of the researcher/designer. The idea was to go back to the typical design of the motif being in the centre and having a border around it. This time the border is different, as it is the continuation of the horizontal border on the left-hand and right-hand side of the design.

4.5.3 Snake Three

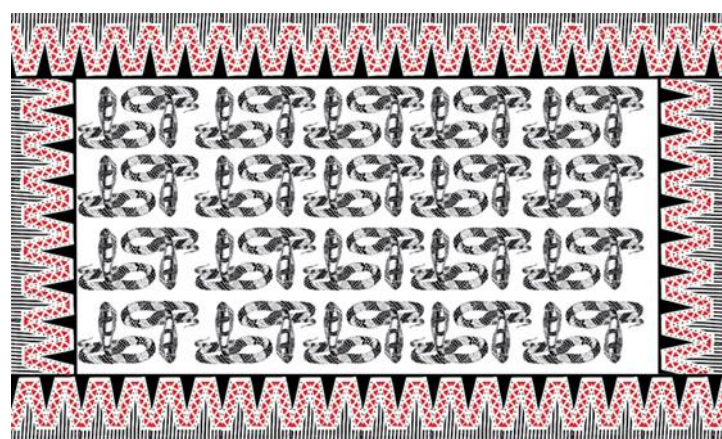


Figure 4.19: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 3*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

The researcher decided to go back to the original snake design. The intention here was to completely break away from the typical centralised main motif and decorative border design. To achieve this, the researcher adjusted the scale of the main motif and removed the red border around the main motif. The scale of the snake was minimised and juxtaposed to create a pattern, with an alternating orientation of the snake symbol.

4.5.4 Snake Four



Figure 4.20: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 4*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

This design was all about creating pattern. This was inspired by the *seshweshwe* designs commonly worn by the Basotho people who can also undergo *ukuthwasa*. The rosewood colour used was inspired by the ochre body colourant that some trainees use to smear on their face and body during certain stages of *ukuthwasa*. The juxtaposed snake pattern was rotated to a 90-degree angle for experimental and aesthetic reasons. The design and uncut horizontal borders are created to depict a roll of cloth since the *sangomas* can now use these cloths for tailor made clothes. This creates a further sense of continuity and not containment, as the rigid borders in most of the other designs presented. This design also depicts the idea of the *isishweshwe* cloth designs.

4.5.5 Snake Five



Figure 4.21: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 5*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

On this specific design, the design completely removed the snake pattern and replaced it with a realist snake motif, which is the African cobra but maintaining the dark hues as part of the design. The reason for the stars and the black border is due to the fact that some of the rituals are carried out during the night. The researcher opted for a purple background for experimental purposes as it is one of her favourite colours. The snake cloth is common among the *Ndau* who in the present day occupy the southern parts of Africa, which includes Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and South Africa.

4.6 Ingonyama/Tau/ Lion series Original

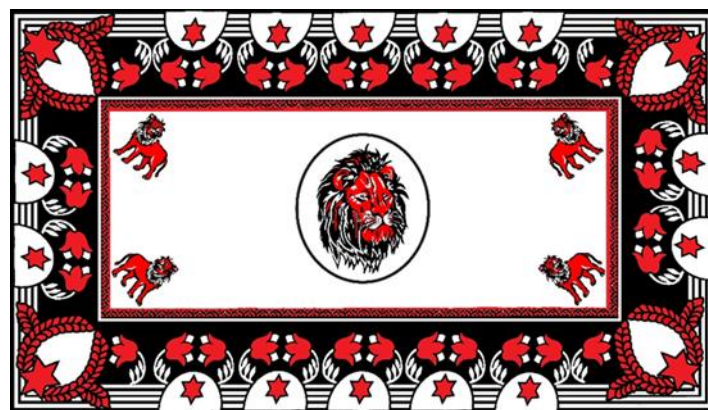


Figure 4.22: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series original*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

According to Participant 1, the lion cloth represents the land spirits and can be used by both the *Nguni* and *Ndau*. Participant 5¹⁵ states,

I also got the lion cloth from the ancestors. When I had just come out of the river for my training, I saw it there and the ancestors told me that I have to buy that cloth. They told me that I should wrap it around my waist because it will give me strength and power. That if nothing is going well, I should take the cloth and wrap it around me. It will protect me from many things including bad spirits.

The researcher has chosen this specific cloth because she dreamt of the cloth numerous times as she is also part of the *Basia*¹⁶ clan, which are referred to as *Batubatsi*¹⁷. The researcher's maternal grandparents' totems are represented by the cat family, such as domestic cats, lions, leopards, cheetahs, jaguars, tigers and so forth. The common cloths used for the wild cats contain the lion, tiger and cheetah. Participant 1¹⁸ states,

*My grandmother gave me a blanket and told me that it belongs to where I come from, which is home (Totem praise)¹⁹. She said she did not want me to leave the Mosia household naked, that I put on the shield cloth. I wore the blanket. We carried on with the training. She said: 'I also wish you would make me a part of you. I want to always be a part of you so that I can help you and show you that I can help you overcome things that they cannot help you overcome. I will give you this blanket (lion). I give you this blanket from the Bataung clan *totem praise*. I give you this blanket so that you may wear it, those are the blankets I am giving to you so that you do not walk around naked. Should anything happen to them, you will have to replace them as you have to always wear them.*

¹⁵ Participant 5 delivered the statement in Isizulu. The translations were done by the Vaal University of Technology in the African Languages and Development Unit (2020)

¹⁶ *Basia* is a clan name, *Plural* of Mosia.

¹⁷ Feline family.

¹⁸ Participant 1 delivered the statement in Sesotho. The translations were done by the Vaal University of Technology in the African Languages and Development Unit (2020)

¹⁹ A short poem to pay homage to the ancestors. A totem represents an animal that can have a significance important to either a clan, person or a specific cultural group and can provide a protective function. A totem can also be related to an ancestor who has passed on. The reason why African people recite totem praises is to honour and respect the totem animal and the ancestors (Mashige 2011)

A totem is an emblem in which an animal represents a specific clan, for example, a lion (Sesotho: *tau*) can represent the *Bataung* clan (Mtuzze 1999:29)

This specific design is what the participant 1 was referring to. She received the cloth from her *gobela* who trained her to be a *sangoma* and the *gobela* gave the lion cloth to her to acknowledge her (the *gobela*'s) ancestor.

The main colour of this cloth is white with a lion motif centred. There are specifications from the ancestors on whether the mouth of the lion should be open or closed, seated or standing etcetera. The mouth of the lion is closed on this design. There are four standing lions on each inner corner of the rectangularly-shaped background. The black and white striped outer borders consist of red stars enclosed in half circles and the inner black border consists of decorative organic shapes of flowers.

4.6.1 Lion One

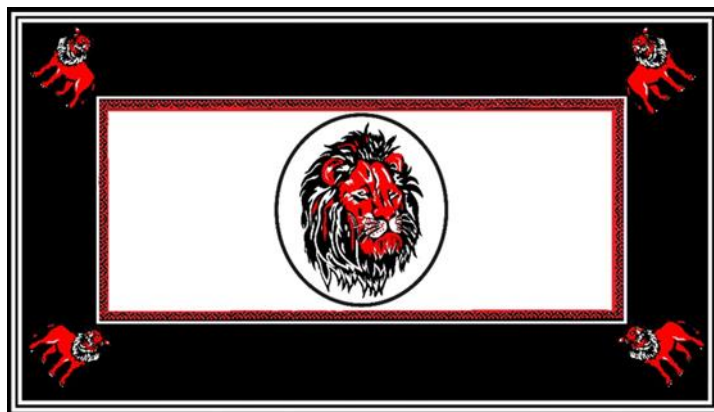


Figure 4.23: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series 1*.

40cm x 60cm Digital image

When entering into the ritual of *ukuthwasa*, some things are not clear and some struggle to make a connection with the ancestors. There are certain foods that are not supposed to be eaten and certain activities one should refrain from taking part in, for example sexual activities. One's mind should remain pure to allow and give space to your ancestors, hence the original lion cloth has been stripped and left plain with only the lion motif in the centre. The four standing lions have been moved to the black inner border and the black and white stripes have been reduced to only two stripes as there are some activities one should not be a part of. This symbolises the things one has to let go of when entering training. Hence, the point of emphasis is only on the main motif.

4.6.2 Lion Two



Figure 4.24: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series 2*.

40cm x 60cm Digital image

The researcher then decided to go back to the original cloth and change the motif of a closed-mouth-lion to an open-mouth-roaring-lion. According to Sithole (2018:10), the *Ndau* originate in the areas of Zimbabwe that stretch out to Mozambique and South Africa. The researcher has put this forth through the vibrant use of different bright colours to portray the foreign ancestors through the different Southern African countries' flag colours.

4.6.3 Lion Three



Figure 4.25: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series 3*.

40cm x 60cm Digital image

The background has now been changed into a black colour and the inner and outer borders are created using two yellow lines. This is done to create contrast between the two colours. The reason behind the black colour is to show the wrath of the roaring lion and this is with reference to the principles and elements of design, using the element of colour to create contrast between:

black and white; light and dark; positive and negative space. The lion cloth also provides protection: Participant 5²⁰ states,

I also got the lion cloth from the ancestors. When I had just come out of the river for my training, I saw it lying on the ground and the ancestors told me that I have to buy that cloth. They²¹ told me that I should wrap it around my waist because it will give me strength. That if nothing is going well, I should take the cloth and wrap it around me. It will protect me from many things including bad spirits.

Participant 5 did not physically see the cloth with the naked eye but is referring to the spiritual eye. Most participants stated that the lion will help you fight battles due to its vigorous nature. The borders consist of lion paws and claws to portray its potent and fatal ability. The white roaring lion colour remains white as this is still the focal point of the design.

4.6.4 Lion Four



Figure 4.26: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series 4*.

40cm x 60cm Digital image

The researcher decided to leave the background black and to get rid of the typical rectangular border. However, the background of the design is now asymmetrically divided since the study is dealing with the theories of liminal and liminoid where the same thing can be viewed in liminal and liminoid lenses and can have a different meaning. If folded in half, the space will

²⁰ Participant 5 delivered the statement in Isizulu. The translations were done by the Vaal University of Technology in the African Languages and Development Unit (2020)

²¹ *Amadlozi*

be balanced equally due to the asymmetrical colour balance on the lion. Participant 8²² confirmed that the ancestors specify whether the mouth of the lion should be open or closed:

At night as I was sleeping, on the same wall, a lion cloth was laid; they then said, 'here is your ancestral blanket'. I had dreams about this for five consecutive days, just with different cloths, but they said 'the lion cloth should not have its mouth closed. It should be the lion with its teeth showing'.

The main motif has been colour-reversed to create balance in colour since the unreversed motif appeared to be darker and the foreground blended into the background. The main motif is still a lion but a different one with a closed mouth this time.

4.7 Big Five design original



Figure 4.27: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series original*.

40cm x 60cm Digital image

This design consists of the Big Five animals in South Africa, which are the lion, African elephant, African buffalo, leopard and the rhinoceros. This is also a typical design where the main motifs are printed in the centre of the cloths with a decorative floral border. The Big Five gained its name from over a 100 years ago during big-game trophy hunting expeditions. Since the *sangomas* used these animals hides, they now have a cloth, which includes all five of these animals. The researcher found it fitting to include this cloth as, during the research, it was discovered that the *sangomas* also have their very own Big Five, which are all the animals that are used and slaughtered in most of the rituals performed. This series deals with the types of animals that are used during the ritual of *ukuthwasa* (Riggio 2014).

²² Participant 8 delivered the statement in Sesotho. The translations were done by the Vaal University of Technology in the African Languages and Development Unit (2020)

4.7.1 Big Five One



Figure 4.28: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series 1*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

This series is treated in such a way that the South African Big Five will be gradually replaced with the *sangoma* Big Five. The first replacement is the two pigeons, which will replace the lion since it is the first one. The pigeon is used for the *isishiso*²³ ritual. The background is replaced with a red-orange colour that has a connotation of fire since *isishiso* has to do with fire. There are four silhouette pigeon sets, with two in each set, on each corner of the rectangular-shaped design to create a point of emphasis on the pigeons, thus making the pigeon the focal point. There is a pattern of fire created on the black borders for aesthetic purposes. The researcher did not use a realistic fire due to printing problems, which were experienced earlier on in the sun design.

²³*Isishiso* is an Isizulu word meaning to burn. The ritual will not be discussed into detail due to ethical considerations, but to describe it briefly, the pigeons are burnt as a form of sacrifice.

4.7.2 Big Five Two



Figure 4.29: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series 2*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

This design deals with the replacement of the elephant by the goat. The goat is used for the *Intwaso* ritual by both the *Ndau* and *Nguni ukuthwasa*. The red-orange colour is changed back into a pure red colour, which is worn when *ukudla inkunzi* ritual takes place. *Ukudla inkunzi* means to drink the blood of the goat. Participant 2 states: “*The red is for when we eat meat from the slaughtered bull and drink the goat’s blood*”. She furthermore states that the colour white is used in the *Ndau* ancestral dance, hence the borders have changed from black to a white colour as these cloths are interchangeably used.

4.7.3 Big Five Three



Figure 4.30: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series 3*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

The colour on this design remains constant since it deals with slaughtering that has to do with blood. The Buffalo and the leopard are simultaneously replaced with the sheep and the chicken. The sheep is used for the ritual of *ubuprofeti* by *sangomas* who have *isithunywa*. Some slaughter a sheep along with chickens and the number of chickens will depend on the *sangoma*. The border is black with the inclusion of a pattern of candles. Candles are often used during consultations, ceremonies and performing rituals. The colour and number of candles used will depend on whether a ritual is taking place during the day or at night.

4.7.4 Big Five Four



Figure 4.31: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series 4*.
40cm x 60cm Digital image

On this last design, the rhinoceros is replaced with a cow, which is slaughtered during the graduation ceremony. This design includes all the animals that are involved in the ritual of *ukuthwasa*. They are the pigeons, goat, sheep, a chicken and the cow; the researcher refers to this specific cloth as the '*sangoma* Big Five'. A rope design has been added as part of the border around the animals as when the animals are purchased, they are tied up until the ritual takes place. The rope also metaphorically plays a role in the blood spill, as it 'ties up' or joins the trainee to their *idlozi/amdlazi*.

4.8 PHASE TWO: PRINTING PROCESS

There were two printing techniques utilised in this study. The first technique is digital printing, the second is silkscreen printing. The reason for digital printing was to minimise the costs and time, as it is time and cost effective. The other reason was that the researcher received inadequate financial assistance, which could cater for travelling for the purpose of conducting interviews, therefore, 80 percent of the designs were digitally printed whereas 20 percent were

silk-screened. The digital prints were printed and sponsored by Tshungu Multimedia Enterprises. According to Biegeleisen and Busenbark(1941: 1):

Silk screen stencil printing is essentially a process in which the stencil bearing the design to be reproduced is permanently affixed to a screen or ground consisting of silk, organdy, or metal cloth. Paints or other printing mediums are forced through the stencil and deposited on the printing surface, thus forming a facsimile of the original design. The method is known as the silk screen process because, originally, silk was exclusively employed for the screen.

The costs of the silk screen process were sponsored by the researcher. The description and rationale of these techniques are thoroughly discussed in chapter two.

4.8.1 First process: Washing of screens

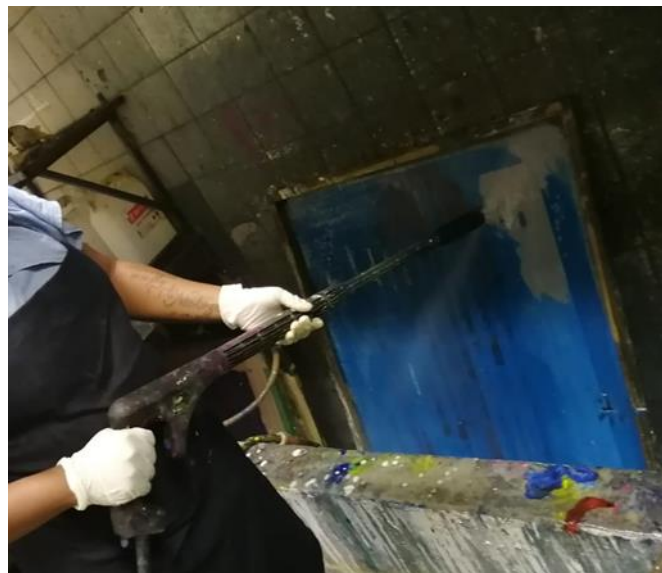


Figure 4.32: RADEBE, M. Lebohng. 2019. *Cleaning of screens* Photograph. Vanderbijlpark



Figure 4.33: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Drying of screens* Photograph. Vanderbijlpark

The size of the silkscreen prints is A2; the reason for this was that the printing facility used could only cater for this size as a maximum size. The screens were big enough to go beyond A2 size, but the squeegees used for the printing process only catered for A2 size printing.

The screens were washed using screen cleaning products and left to dry overnight. The materials used included:

- De-coat powder
- De-coat paste
- Pregar C-4 liquid (red in colour)
- Pregar paste
- High-pressure water spray

4.8.2 Second process: Coating of screens and exposing

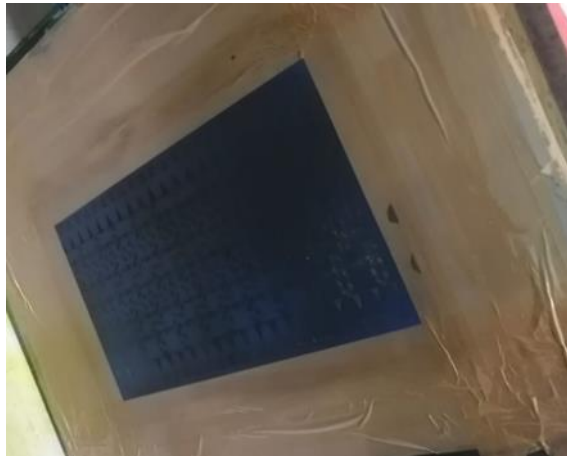


Figure 4.34: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Azucol emulsion coated screen with Sellotape* Photograph. Vanderbijlpark

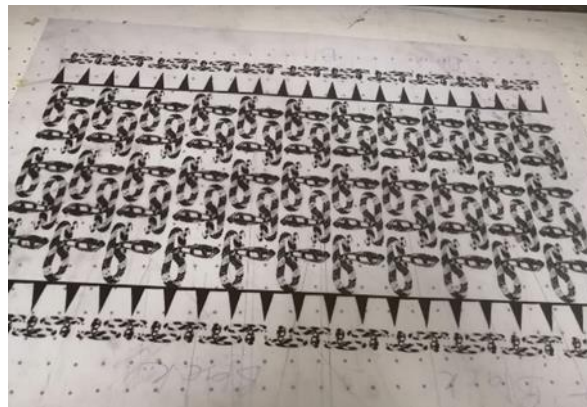


Figure 4.35: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Transfer film paper preparation* Photographo. Vanderbijlpark



Figure 4.36: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019 *Transferred image from film paper to coated screen* Photograph. Vanderbijlpark

Once the screens were dry, a photo emulsion (Azucol Polyplus SRX) was applied onto the screens using an aluminium scoop coater. The photo emulsion is light sensitive and hardens on to the screen when exposed to light and becomes water resistant, so the screens were placed in a dark room for 72 hours.

The images to be printed were converted into positives using Photoshop software. The images were then printed on to film paper. The printed film paper, which contained positives, was then exposed and transferred onto the coated screens using a vacuum and a UV exposure machine. The screens were then washed down after exposure leaving the design area (positive) clear of emulsion.

4.8.3 Third process: Printing



Figure 4.37: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Silkscreen Printing Photograph*. Vanderbijlpark



Figure 4.38: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Heating ink after printing Photograph*.
Vanderbijlpark

The printing process could have taken place over a duration of two weeks but spread out in a period of six weeks due to the limited amount of materials and load-shedding in the area of Vanderbijlpark. The printing took place at the facilities of the Visual Arts and Design Department in the Fine Art printmaking studios.

Polycotton is the type of material used for the printing – the rationale is thoroughly discussed in Chapter 2 under Section 2.6.2 as to why this specific material was chosen for this study.

Chemosol Plastisol ink was used as the researcher was advised by the credible printing material supplier that this is the best ink to use on poly-cotton material.

First, the material was cut accordingly and placed on the printing tables using Piratact contact spray adhesive to prevent the cloth from moving during printing. The screen was placed onto the cloth for making measurements. The application of ink was carried out using a squeegee to apply and spread the ink evenly to print the exposed (positive) print area of the screen (Figure 4.37). The screens positives were separated according to colour and were strategically separated and printed from lighter colour (white) to a dark colour (black). The printed cloths were placed under a flash dryer for drying (see Figure 4.38).

4.8.4 Last process: Preparing prints for exhibition



Figure 4.39: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Final Printed cloth* Photograph. Vanderbijlpark



Figure 4.40: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Burning of impepho to prepare cloths for focus group* Photograph. Vanderbijlpark

When the printing process was completed, the researcher gathered all the designs and burnt *impepho* (sage) to thank the ancestors for the strength and guidance they provided during the printing process and to furthermore inform and to tell them (ancestors) about the activities to follow regarding these cloths.

4.9 PHASE THREE: FOCUS GROUP



Figure 4.41: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Preparing for focus group* Photograph. Bophelong



Figure 4.42: RADEBE, M. Lebohang.2019. *Focus group performing the Phahla ritual*
Photograph. Bophelong

Once the designs were completed, they were presented for private showing to the focus group of *sangomas* as part of an exhibition. The *Sangoma* collective was invited to conduct a ritual so that they can be aided by the ancestors to make the decision as to the tipping point. There is no known method for this practice, but the closest one is perhaps the notion of a focus group. During the focus group the deliberations and the decisions were captured. “Focus groups or group discussions involve several – usually somewhere between four and ten - respondents brought together to discuss the research topic as a group” (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:37).

The reason for utilising a focus group is to offer the *sangomas* a more naturalistic setting than in-depth interviews as this has allowed them to share meaning in interrogating the cloth in question. Working with a collective also indicated a sense of transparency towards the *sangoma* collective, as there might have been sacred information, which could not be disclosed. A detailed description of these methods is discussed on Chapter 2 under Section 2.7.1.

4.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focused on the design making, printing process and the display of the designs. The series of designs were thoroughly discussed and unpacked. In the first phase, the designs were discussed individually using the elements and principles of design as a rubric and the *sangomas*’ knowledge to unpack the meaning of each design. The second phase included the discussion of the printing process. Digital printing and silkscreen were utilised to carry out the printing process. The third phase was the display of the complete designs for the private showing to the focus group of *sangomas* as part of an exhibition and to determine the tipping point. This phase and the analysis of the focus group are presented in the next chapter. The final chapter provides the analysis, findings and the discussion of the project.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the interactions of the *sangomas* with the redesigned cloths and to attempt an analysis of those reactions leading to potential findings and the discussion. This was carried out through engagement with the focus group of *sangomas* specifically to attempt to determine the tipping point in the designs. Two critical points need to be made here. First, it is fully accepted that the concept of a focus group (as outlined in Chapter 2) is a very awkward term (and a deeply western research method concept) to use when describing what is a highly spiritual engagement, not only with the *sangomas*, but through them, with the *amadlozi*. Nevertheless, the researcher used the term as it provides a type of analytical approach to the project. It may perhaps be argued that the term is embedded, therefore, not in an IKS understanding, but in a Global Knowledge Systems (or GKS) approach. Secondly, the ritual that is described here is deeply sacred and spiritual; therefore, there must inevitably be sections or moments of the ritual that may not enter the public domain. The researcher, therefore, has attempted to be as respectful in the analysis, in pursuit of presenting the wishes of the *amadlozi*. If the researcher has overstepped, she asks for their forgiveness.¹

The first section involves the setting up of a private exhibition for the focus group and this was achieved through a clear presentation of the trajectory of the continuum of the cloths. The second section involves a narrative of the focus group exploration and discussion of the appropriation of the cloth designs. The third section includes an analysis of the individual design sequence. Critically the purpose of this chapter is to attempt to ascertain not only the tipping point, but, if possible, the reasons for the decision of that tipping point. The researcher discussed in detail what the chapters of the dissertation will entail, from ethics, aims, objectives of the study and the theoretical frame works. It was a difficult task for the researcher to explain all the aspects of the study thoroughly in a language that all the participants would understand. The researcher felt the need to explain herself to the focus group of *sangomas* to put them at ease and to assure them that nothing that was discussed off record would be disclosed.

¹ In the same breath the researcher implores those who might use the findings and the material in this dissertation to be equally respectful in the way that they deal with information. You might not agree with what is presented, and that is your right, but the researcher can only ask for dignity and respect.

5.2 PRIVATE EXHIBITION

The final exhibition was held at Bophelong library as this is the area where the majority of the participants reside. The initial arrangement was to exhibit the designs at Bophelong hall. The reason for the venue was because most of BETHF events take place there. The researcher found it fitting to host the focus group members there as they are all familiar with the place and it is central to everyone. However, due to the problematic conditions of the hall and the electricity problem, the researcher decided to use the study area at the local library, which is in the same vicinity as the initial venue. The researcher decided to use the space since it is private and not everyone has access to this space (it might also be argued that this assisted in attempting to make the exhibition space a neutral and unfamiliar space). Krueger and Casey (2015:2) state that a focus group environment should be non-threatening so that the participants can be relaxed and free in sharing information with regards to the topic being discussed.

The study area was a fairly large space, which was big enough to exhibit the body of work done by the researcher and the 10 focus group members, as well as to fit all the equipment used for the recording. The equipment used included a Canon 100NCD60 camera, p30 light cell phone (for backup), one camera tripod and four sand bags. This equipment belonged to the Visual Arts and Design Department at the Vaal University of Technology and was obtained through seeking permission so that it could be utilised beyond the university's premises.

After the walkabout, (as explained, below) the participants were placed/seated by the north side of the room where the natural light of the windows came from the east and south side of the room as no lights were utilised. The camera was fixed on a tripod with sandbags and placed on the southwest side of the room to simultaneously capture both the focus group participants and the researcher.



Figure 5.1: RADEBE, M. 2018. Lebohang *Untitled* Photograph. Tshepiso



Figure 5.2: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2018. *Untitled* digital Photograph. Bophelong

The digital prints were displayed on a fishing line to depict the way *sangomas* display these cloths in their sacred *ndumba* space (see Figure 5.1)². The silk screen prints were displayed on tables like tablecloths as *sangomas* also use these cloths as tablecloths in the *ndumba* (see Figure 5.2). This type of dual display carried out by the researcher also served to provide a different perspective on the cloths, in that these were displayed horizontally, while the others were displayed vertically. Significantly, this also affected the responses, as the vertical presentations could be viewed by the participants standing together, while the horizontal ones required the participants, at times, to circle the table.

Upon their arrival, the *sangomas* were each welcomed by the researcher who then placed them in a separate room from the exhibition so that they could wait for other participants to arrive. Some focus group members were dressed in their full *sangoma* regalia and the rest only wrapped the cloth in question around their waist. Most of the participants wore the well-known common colours of the *sangoma* cloths, which are red, black and white. Most of the cloths that were worn by the participants were the cloths that were appropriated by the researcher for this specific research project.

² Fig. 5.1 & 5.2 are examples of how the cloths in question are displayed or utilised in a *sangoma*'s sacred space of consultation.

5.2.1 Participants' attire

The diversity of the attire demonstrated the full spectrum of obedience to each *sangoma's* individual *idlozi*, but also an acceptance of the current world in which we live. In other words, the participants are ready to look 'outwards' to the process of the focus group and the discussion of the cloths, but also inwards to the necessity for spiritual guidance. These cloths are regarded as an important component of the *sangoma* community. Therefore, the discussion that follows provides a depiction of how each *idlozi* would like to be represented as they³ are the ones who determine how they would like to be portrayed, be it through dreams or premonitions and for some, to acknowledge the *idlozi* of your *gobela* or the initiation school the *sangoma* underwent *ukuthwasa* at.

Participant 1 was dressed in a predominantly red attire, which consisted of the blue *thebe* (spear), which she had tailor-made herself. Her belt was a handmade beaded Zulu belt, which consisted of blue and white beads with rhombus shaped patterns. On her head, she wrapped a white snake cloth, which she had explained during previous interviews as having been given to her by her grandmother in her dreams.

Participant 2 wore a black attire with a red, black-and-white checked cloth. She also explained in her interview that most *Ndau sangomas* wear black as it is their leading colour. She wore a black Xhosa *doek* decorated with red and white beads to acknowledge her Xhosa ancestors. Her neck piece was heavily beaded with red and white beads. She has undergone *Ndau ukuthwasa*, hence the black attire. Black is the dominant colour in the *Ndau ukuthwasa*.

Participant 3 wore a red *sheshweshwe* dress that is commonly worn by the Basotho people. Her upper cloth wrap was the red *thebe*, which symbolises protection. Her lower cloth wrap was that of a snake with the dominant colour being white.

Participant 4 wore an African textile printed dress; both her upper and lower cloth wraps were the burgundy red with yellow trimming Mswati *thebe*. She wore an African textile cloth as a head band and tied up her dreadlocks, which are common among *sangomas*, in a ponytail.

Participant 5 wore regular modern black attire, which consisted of a black skirt and a black long-sleeve top, which she rolled up a to expose her red and white beaded *sangoma* bracelets.

³Amadlozi

Around her waist she wrapped a cloth that displayed predominantly white standing-tiger triangular and circular shaped patterns. She also wore a red and white *Zulu* beaded neck piece.

Participant 6 also wore a brown *seshweshwe* dress with a red *thebe* lower cloth wrap. She wrapped a white guinea-fowl cloth around her head. During previous interviews, Participant 6 had stressed the importance of the chicken family in biological terms, as she also had a rooster as part of her cloth wrap collection. The significance of the cloths in her collection indicates that her *idlozi* is a very fast one. Usually a rooster wakes up before sunrise and makes a loud noise and a guinea fowl is known to be ground-nesting bird that runs up to 35km/h when alarmed. So, participant 6 always makes sure that she includes either a rooster or a guinea fowl as part of her regalia to acknowledge her ‘fast’ *idlozi*.

Participant 7 wore normal modern-day clothing, which consisted of a pink long-sleeved top and a rose-pink skirt. She had a beaded neck piece that had a small container hanging from it, known as *igona*⁴ that contains *muthi*. Her wrists and ankles had red and white beads tied around them. She wore a black and white (with a touch of red) ‘standing’ cheetah cloth. Whether the cheetah is seated or standing is very important because it indicates the status and position of their leading *idlozi*. This cloth is exceptional as it contains two equally important symbols in one cloth. The centred black and white cheetah is depicted inside a spiked red and black sun.

Participant 8 wore a modern indigo shirt and skirt. She wore a plain red cloth wrap on her head, which signifies blood. Her lower cloth wrap depicted a roaring lion. A roaring lion indicates wrath and protection from the ancestors. The colours white, red and black were evenly used, so there is no dominant colour.

Participant 9 exposed her grey tangled-up hair tied up in a knot, with a powder blue *seshweshwe* cloth, which matched with her dress. She wore a yellow and black cheetah cloth wrap, which covered her abdomen and wrapped around herself in a Greek-like cloaked fashion going under her right arm and over her left shoulder.

Participant 10 wore a fashionable modern-day shirt and an off-white and black striped dress. She wrapped a dominantly black lion cloth with red and white as supporting colours. The cloth was wrapped like a towel just under her arms from the armpits and came down to her knees.

⁴ Usually for protection reasons.

Before leaving the room in which they had been waiting before entering into the main exhibition, the focus group, together with the researcher, held a prayer session in which one member from the focus group led the prayer.

5.3 FOCUS GROUP EXPLORATIONS AND DISCUSSION

5.3.1 The *phahla* ritual

The focus group entered the room where the cloths had been exhibited. They immediately knelt in the form of a circle by the entrance to communicate (*phahla*) with their ancestors and to open the exhibition officially. There was a murmuring of sound as they spoke in different languages and most of them clapped their hands to honour and invite their ancestors. The communication with the ancestors went on for a duration of about three minutes. Once they were done, the *sangomas* who had gone under the *Ndau ukuthwasa* all let out a ululating sound as done by most of the *Ndaus* to praise their *Ndau* ancestors. (*ululululuuh Ndauweeh*)

5.3.2 The walkabout

The focus group stood up to walk around the room to view the cloths; they were discussing and murmuring amongst themselves and pointing at the cloths as they walked around the room. The researcher held the camera to capture each moment as the participants walked around. The participants were instructed by the researcher to view one cloth at a time as a group to avoid individuals scattering across the room as this would result in some of the information and reactions not being thoroughly captured. The researcher did not dwell too much in the making process with regards to the different symbols as they moved from cloth to cloth. As the participants also asked questions with regards to how the researcher treated each design and the transitions in the series, the researcher briefly explained and avoided giving a detailed response as this would have led to an influence on the discussion to follow.

After the walkabout the eight members of the focus group sat down on chairs placed by the researcher, while two of the members knelt to thank the ancestors for the endeavour that was undertaken by the researcher. The focus group invited the ancestors to be part of the discussion, introducing themselves through the *amadlozi*, the *amadlozi*, basically speaking through the participants. For the discussion, eight members of the focus group sat on chairs and the two members opted to sit on the floor as they were already seated on the floor after the *amadlozi* had introduced themselves. The activities in the exhibition space were not rehearsed, which somewhat astonished the researcher, like the act of the *amadlozi* introducing themselves. This

was a great honour and privilege as this does not happen under normal circumstances. The researcher would like to acknowledge *amadlozi* for their presence as this was no coincidence.

5.3.3 Sun series

The Sun series evoked a lot of concerns among the *sangoma* focus group as there was a heated argument pertaining to the second half of the series. The first design is the original sun design, which the researcher later appropriated according to the information obtained from the individual interviews and the researcher's frame of reference as an idiosyncratic artist. The first design is the original sun design, which will be referred to as the original, for example, Figure 58 is Sun series original; this naming approach will be used throughout this chapter, where the original of each series will be referred to as original. (By way of example, Figure 58 Sun series original; Figure 59 Sun series 1; Figure 60 Sun series 2; Figure 61 Sun series 3; Figure 62 Sun series 4; and Figure 63 Sun series 5.

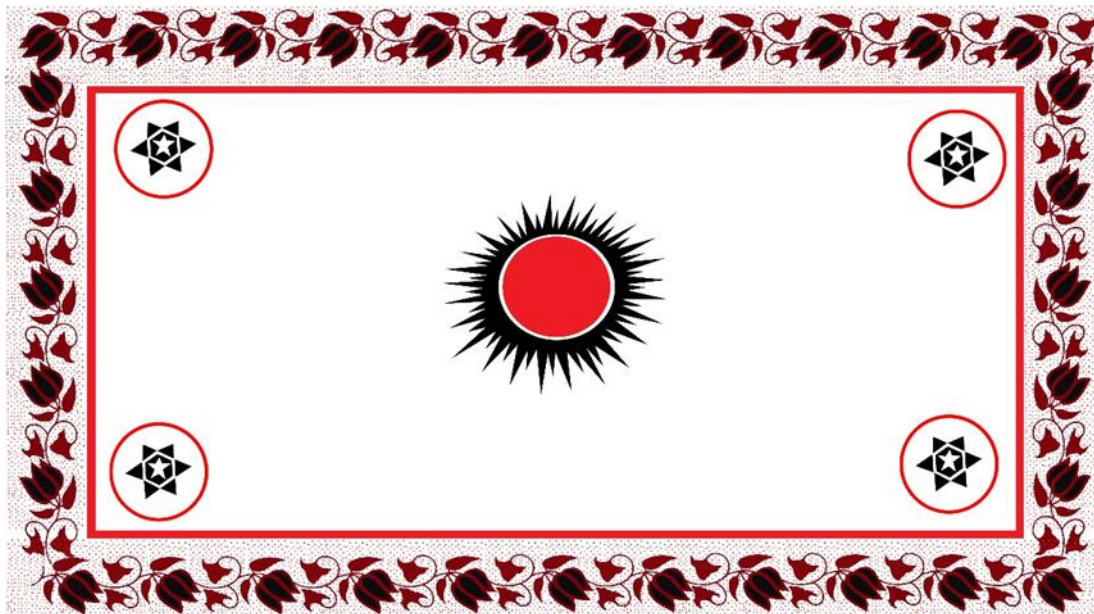


Figure 5.2: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series original*.

40cm x 60cm Digital print

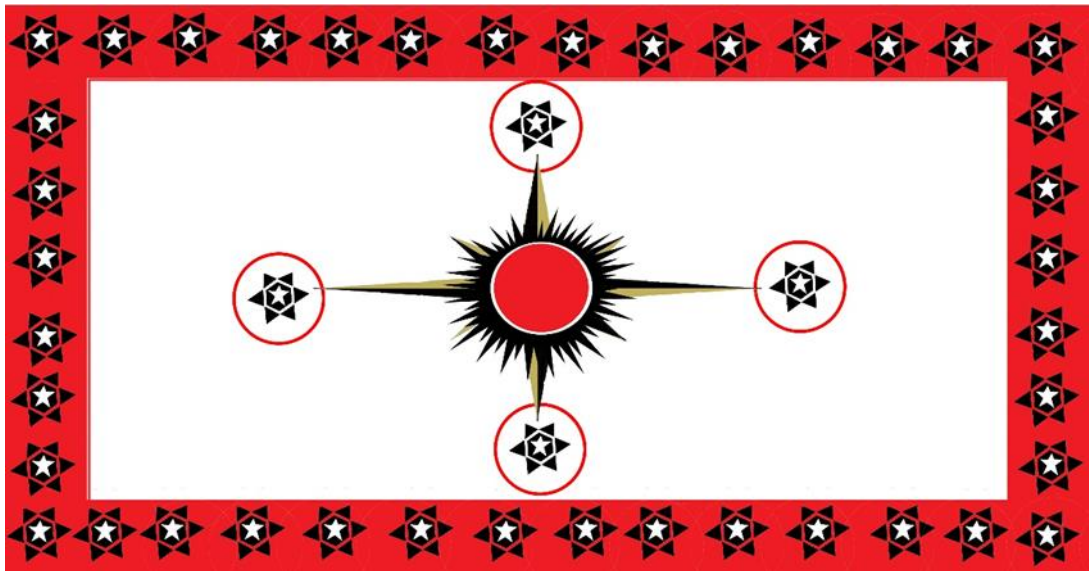


Figure 5.4: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 1.*
40cm x 60cm Digital print

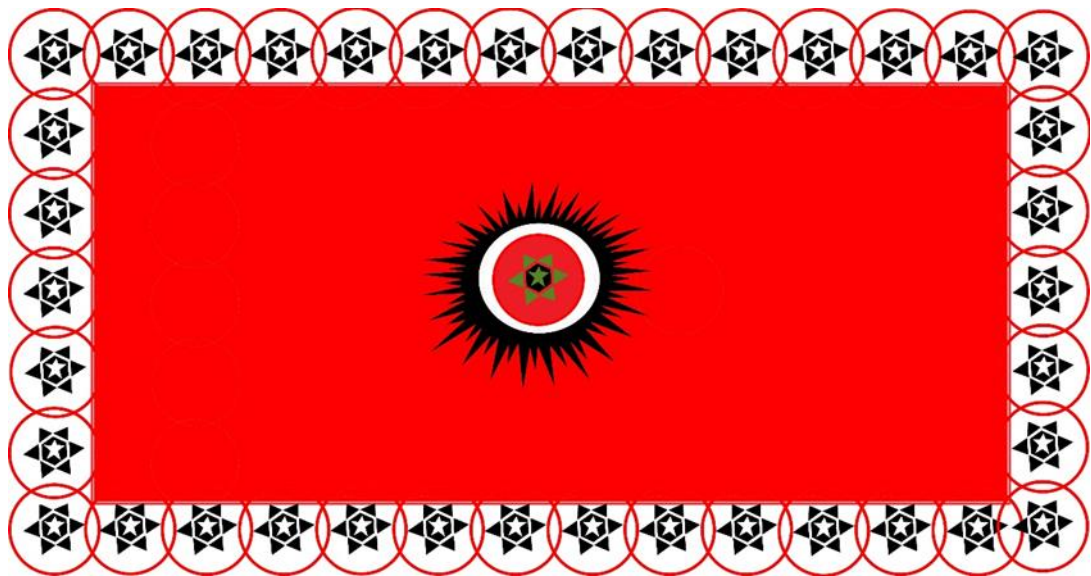


Figure 5.5: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 2.*
40cm x 60cm Digital print.



Figure 5.6: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 3*.
40cm x 60cm Digital print

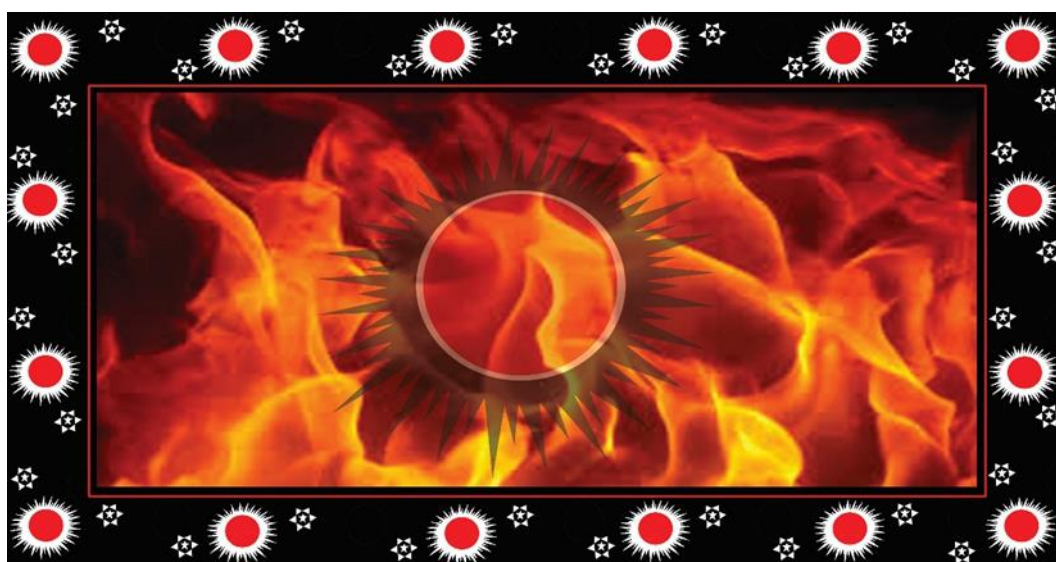


Figure 5.7: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 4*.
40cm x 60cm Digital print



Figure 5.8: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ilanga/Letsatsi/Sun series 5*.
40cm x 60cm Digital print

The focus group felt very strongly about Figure 5.4 and suggested that they would like it to be part of the existing *sangoma* cloth range due to the compass and the cardinal points added, as it unites and acknowledges all the ancestors, which is according to the focus group's analysis and interpretation of the design. The focus group stressed that even though the symbols used were not part of the existing cloth designs, there is an important part and meaning they represent. Figure 5.5 was also labelled as sacred by the *sangomas* due to the symbol of the star playing a very important role among the *sangomas* who also have *isithunywa*. Participant 8 could not suppress her amusement as she excitedly disclosed that she had dreamt about figures 5.6, 5.7 and 5.8, as she explains, "*We are extremely happy with some of the cloths. We are particularly happy because we see some of the cloths here that we could not find in stores. They sometimes appear to us in visions, but we do not know where to find them, that is why we are this happy.*" However, for other participants, figures 5.6, 5.7 and 5.8 seemed to raise concerns due to the use of the fire incorporated as the dominant portion of the designs. Participant 10 had difficulty explaining why the symbol of fire is so significant and yet precarious, "*Eish...! It carries a lot of weight.*" Participant 10 hysterically stated, "*uya si veza gogo*⁵" According to the focus group, fire is one of the elements that is considered to be important, but the focus group did not explain how and why it is significant. Participant 10

⁵ Direct translation from isiZulu to English; "You are revealing us, gogo". *Gogo* is a way in which most Zulu speaking traditional healers address *sangomas*." *Gogo* can also refer to an elderly woman.

furthermore added, “*but then again if you do not have the gift, you would not know what the cloth is used for.... Only those who have the gift would know*”. This is to say that anyone who does not have the gift of healing would not know how to interpret this particular series and in the same vein, anyone with a ‘gift’ may not know how to interpret this design unless they have had a premonition about it or had gone through the correct rites of passage to acquire this sacred knowledge. Participant 5 explains, “*But as for you who does not have the gift, you will only see a nice cloth, but you will not know what the cloth is used for.*” However, at this stage of the interaction, it did not seem to grant permission for these sacred cloth designs to be misused and disregarded by the public.

It seems that fire is a very significant part of the *sangoma* tradition, as it somehow has ambiguous connotations, which can be either good or bad, depending on the context it is filtered through, as fire can either bring warmth or agony. As a sense of reluctance and hesitancy roamed the room, the focus group all agreed that this series does not have a tipping point as only the owners of this knowledge know what this specific series communicates but someone from the ‘*outside*’⁶ will view these designs through a generic lens, unlike someone who has already undergone *ukuthwasa*, therefore, no tipping point was established in the sun series. The *sangomas* claimed all the symbols on this series are used by the *sangoma* community in one way or another. The fire symbol included on the second half of the series plays a very pivotal role in rituals due to its potent nature even though some of these rituals are not done in full view of the public, but its use is in existence.

5.3.4 Shield series

Not much discussion took part when the focus group reached the shield series. As much as the shield plays the role of serving as a major protective tool for the *sangoma* community, as discussed by the *sangoma* participants in previous interviews, the shield also plays a pivotal role in the Nguni⁷ community but yet there is a lot of ambiguity around it in terms of ‘ownership’ between the Nguni groups and the *sangoma* community. There was a query among the focus group participants as to whether this cloth/design belongs to the *sangoma* community or the Nguni cultural groups. This discussion will follow after the designs below

⁶ Someone who does not have the calling.

⁷ Referring to the Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele and Swati nations.



Figure 5.9: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series original*.
40cm x 60cm Digital print

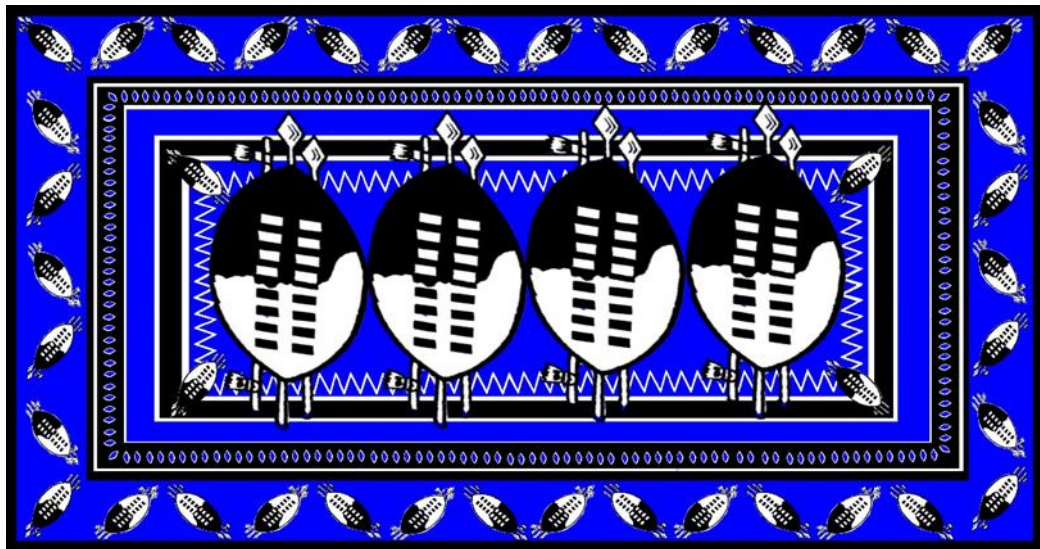


Figure 5.10: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 1*.
40cm x 60cm Digital print

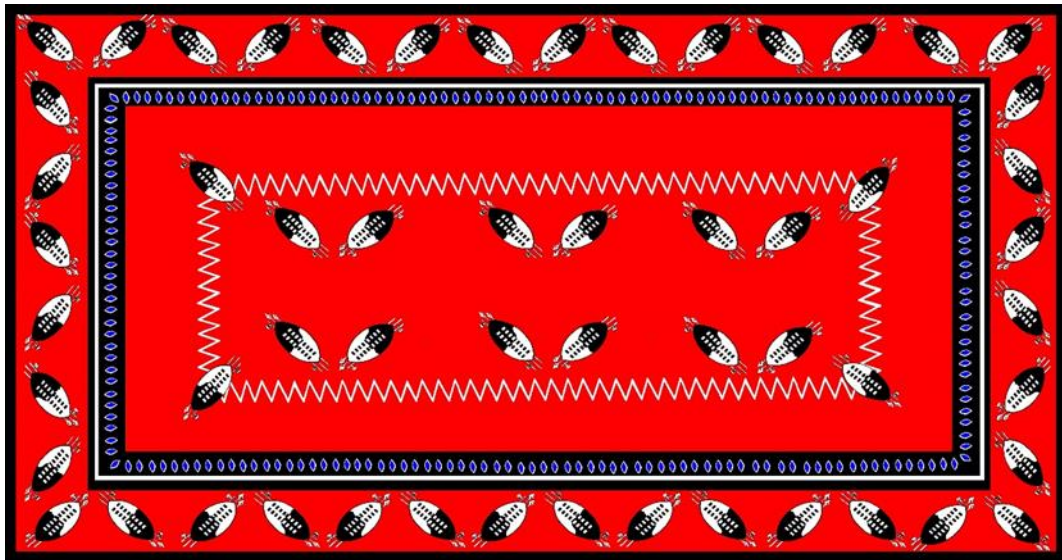


Figure 5.11: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 2*.
40cm x 60cm Digital print

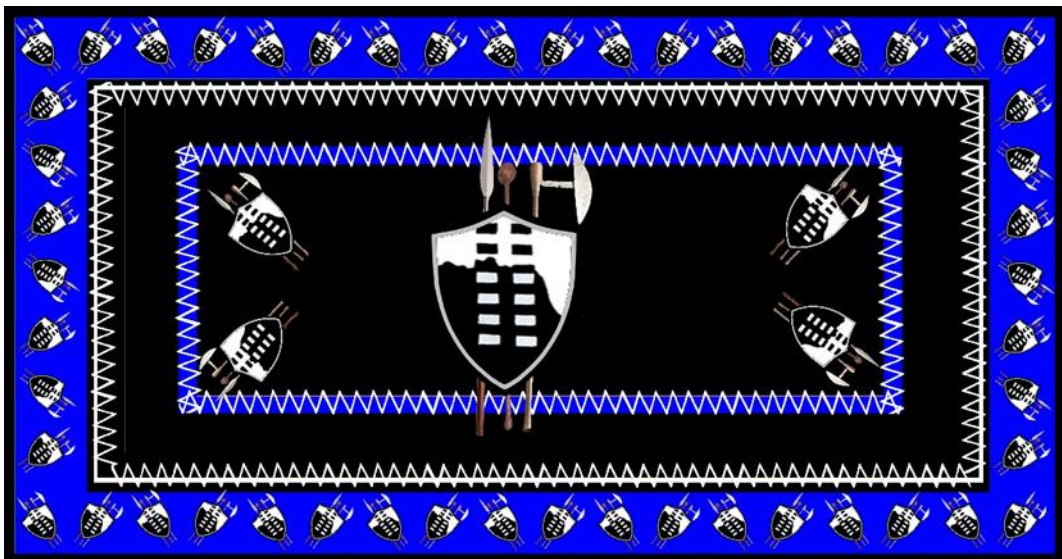


Figure 5.12: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 3*.
40cm x 60cm Silkscreen print

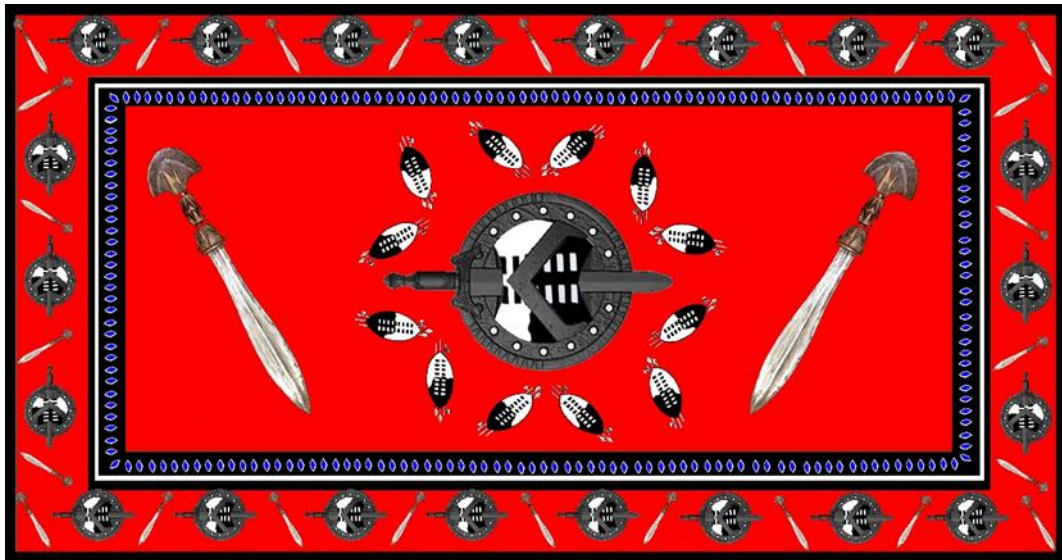


Figure 5.13: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 4*.
40cm x 60cm Digital print



Figure 5.14: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Isihlangu/Thebe/Shield Series 5*.
40cm x 60cm Digital print

When the researcher posed a question of ownership, it was unclear as there was one contradicting statement as a response. Participant 8 vented out her frustration:

“Our cloths as traditional healers have lost dignity. We even bump into young women wearing these cloths standing with their boyfriends, yet they are not healers. Some of them even go as far as using the cloths in their wedding dress designs even though they are not healers. Some people

*wrap a moswati [type of a cloth worn by traditional healers] around their waists even though they do not know what it means. **These cloths also have their own meaning....***”

The bolded statement affirms that indeed this cloth has meaning within the *sangoma* context and the researcher fully acknowledges that, but Figure 5.9 also has meaning again within in the Nguni groups as a whole (to be discussed later in 5.4.1.2) due to the fact that the participant mentioned the Swazi group, which fall under the Nguni groups. With regards to the symbolism, patterns and colours used from figure 5.10 to 5.13, some of the focus group members were very protective of the designs as they transitioned. However, there was a brief off-record discussion about Figure 5.13, which had the hoplite shield combined with the colour coded *ubheuwula* Zulu shield designed by king Shaka which was utilised by his army during combat (Allen 2014:15). Figure 5.13 raised concerns as the participants explained that it exposes another *sangoma* sacred world, which the participants revealed material to the researcher that they forbid the researcher to reveal. The focus group argued that if one does not know what these symbols mean until one becomes part of this ‘other unknown world’ one would not be able to decipher the symbolism and meaning embedded in this design, but this does not grant permission to anyone to freely use these symbols out of context. Nonetheless, the focus group concluded that the beginning of this series was not sacred to begin with as this cloth is worn by the Nguni people, including the Swati people, which also form part of the Nguni cultural group. Therefore, there was no tipping point established on the shield design as the *sangoma* collectively stated this series has no tipping point and can be used by both the *sangomas* and the public from the original figures 5.9 to 5.14.

5.3.5 Snake series

The snake design is common among the *Ndau sangomas* as it represents water spirits, which is the most important aspect of the type of training they undergo. More than half of the participants of the focus group had undergone the *Ndau ukuthwasa*. The participants stated that figures 5.16 and 5.17 are sacred as they still included the central motif of the snake; in most designs, the central motif is the most important aspect of the design. However, the collective clearly stated that figures 5.18 and 5.19 can be freely used by anyone who wishes to utilise the design. It has been made evident that the typical composition of centring the motif plays an important role as none of these two designs contains the main motif, which is the snake, even though the pattern includes the snake throughout. However, there are other cloth designs such as the *mpalo*, which is white and blue checked and the *Njeti* designs, which are common among

the *Ndau sangomas*. These designs do not have the central motif, as the name given to a specific cloth goes with the focal point of the design or what the cloth represents. *Mpalo* is the IsiZulu name for checked.

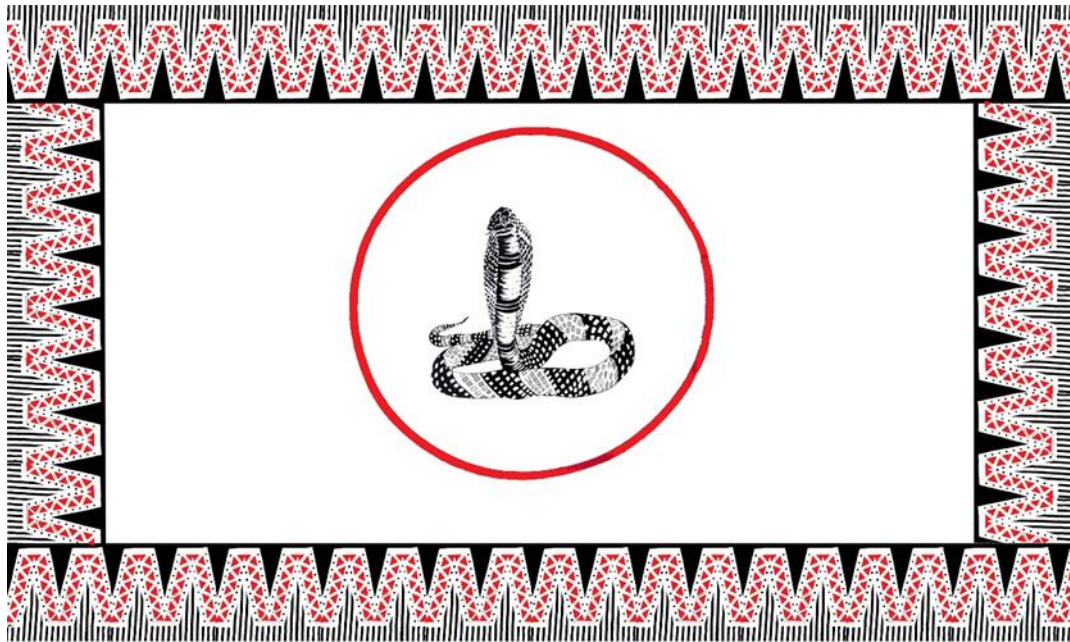


Figure 5.15: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series original*.
40cm x 60cm Digital print

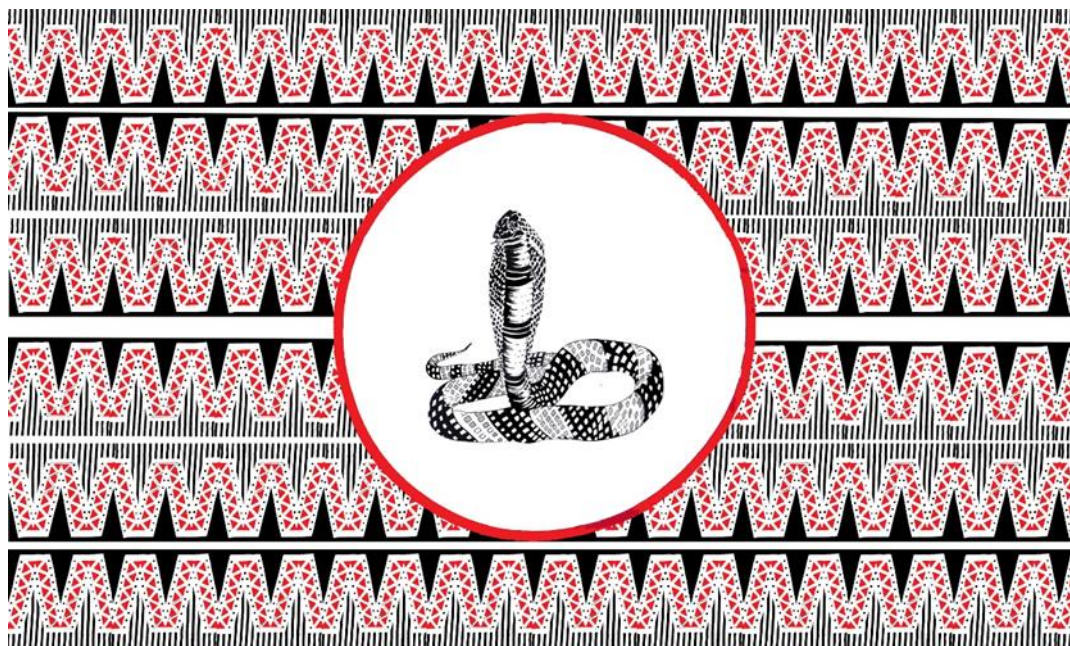


Figure 5.16: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 1*.
40cm x 60cm Digital Print

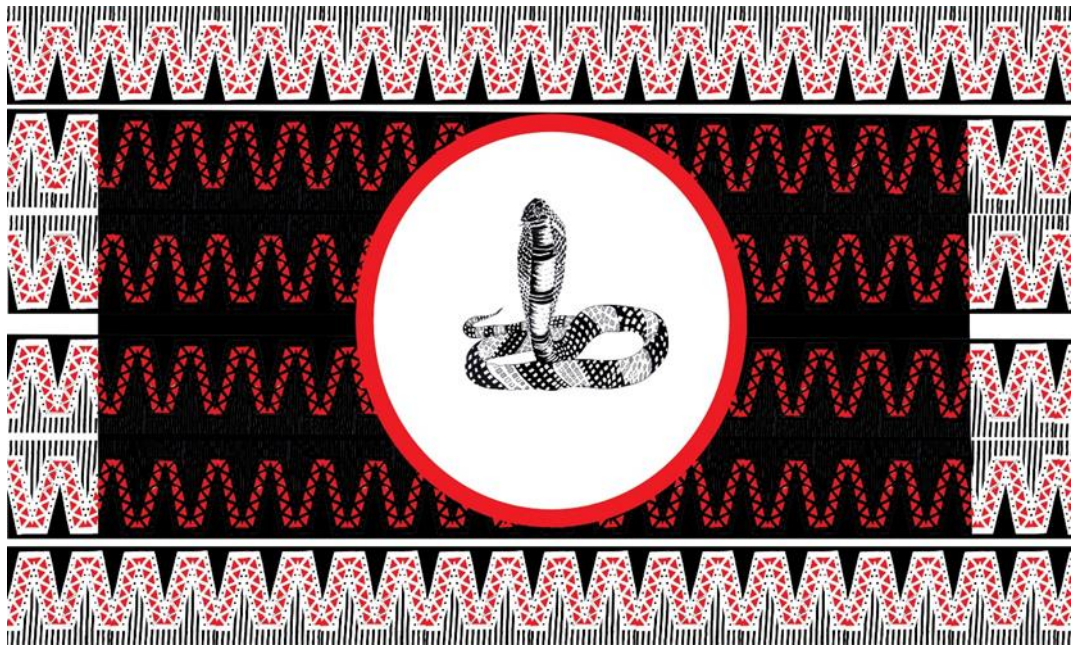


Figure 5.17: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 2*.
40cm x 60cm Digital print

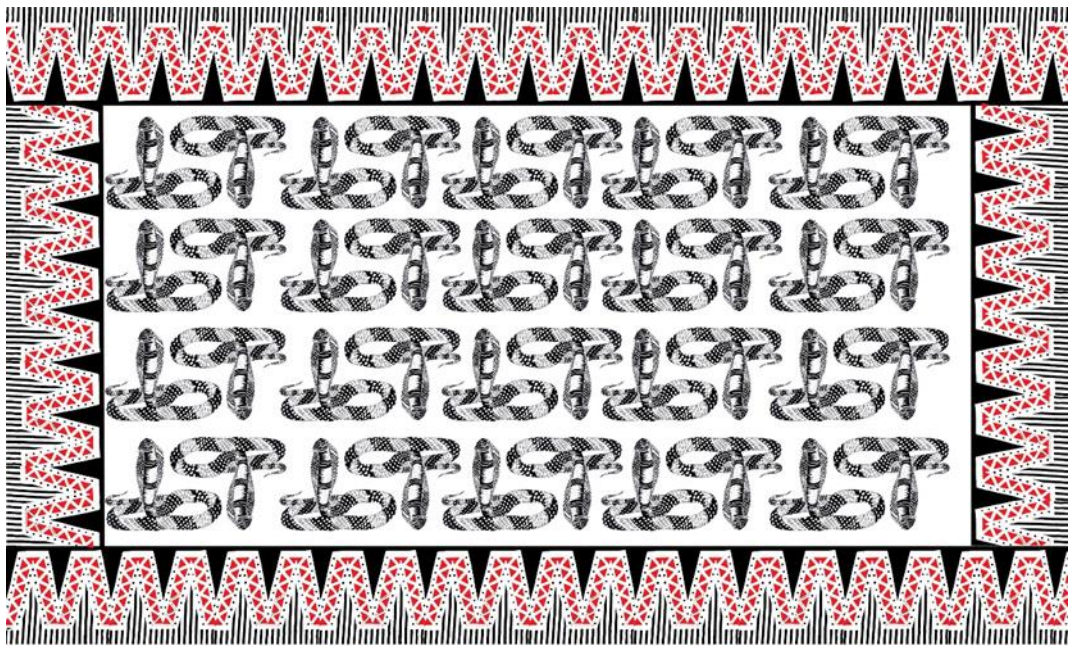


Figure 5.18: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 3*.
40cm x 60cm Digital print



Figure 5.19: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 4*.
40cm x 60cm Silk Screen print

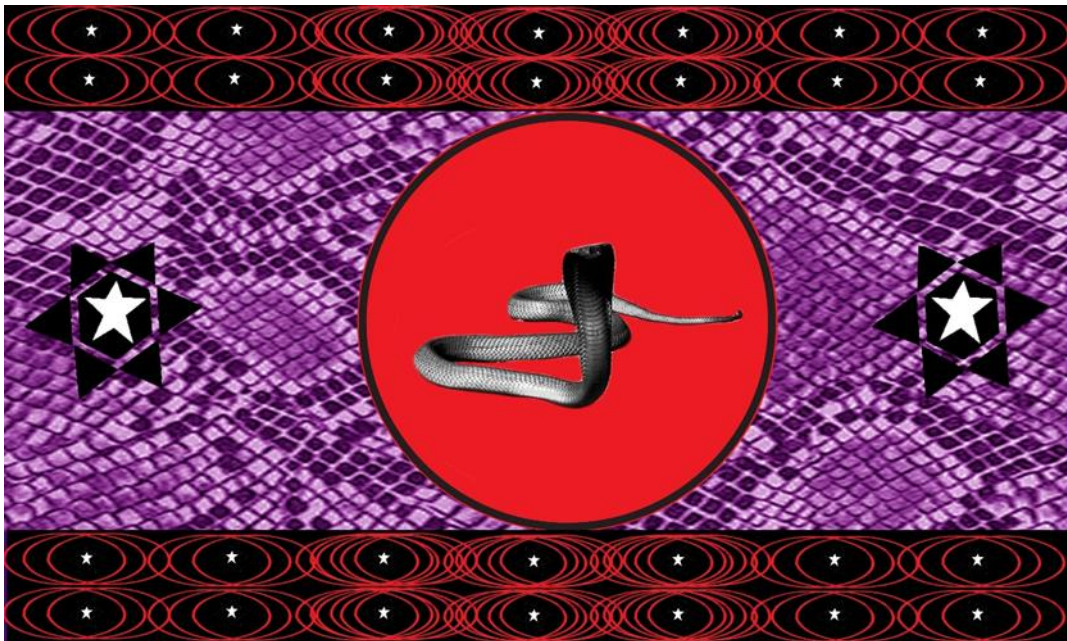


Figure 5.20: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Inyoka/ Noha/Snake Series 5*.
40cm x 60cm Digital print

After a lengthy discussion, the participants stated that Figure 5.20 contains most of the symbolism used by *sangomas*. Even though the design extensively changed from the original, the *sangomas* explained that it contained a lot of sacred symbols, colours and patterns utilised by the *sangoma* community. The focus group claimed that the composition of Figure 5.20,

which includes the shapes, colour and patterns, communicated vast dimensions of sacred knowledge, which is not to be exposed beyond the perimeters of the *sangoma* community. Most of the symbols unknowingly utilised by the researcher in Figure 5.20 were claimed to be sacred by the focus group. When the researcher asked about the significant function of the purple colour on this design, the participants were reluctant to answer – tension prowled the room as they all mumbled something to each other, which the researcher could not make out. Participant 6 finally stated, “*It is beautiful, but I feel like you should change that purple to white.*”. Participant 4 added, “*You can make it white not purple.*” From this analysis, it was deduced that the colour purple seems to play a crucial role and the participants were undoubtedly protective over the casual use of this colour. The tipping point of the snake series was established in Figure 5.20 due to the use of the colour purple and the overall design. Participant 9 stipulated, “*This cloth (Figure 5.20) is carrying a lot of information that must be withheld which is very important. I am afraid, we cannot discuss some of it. Do you understand Bogogo⁸?*” Participant 8 added, “*they (sangomas) do wear that snake skin, but it is not purple and does not have the stars*”. The symbol of the stars was mentioned earlier on in the sun design as sacred and it appears again now on the snake design. It seems that the composition or combination of these elements play a pivotal role and had the researcher utilised any other colour, like white, the design would not have ‘tipped’.

5.3.6 Lion series

The lion series and the one to follow (big five), consists of only five designs as the researcher was trying to break away from the pattern of having the middle half, between design 2 and 3 like in the previous series, as just a space or threshold into the second half of the series. In this specific series, the middle is the design itself, which is design 2. This was done for reasons of validity with regards to the design process and in the decision making of the *sangoma* collective. Hypothetically, if the *sangoma* collective, in most designs, established the tipping point between design 2 and 3, which is just negative space, would this automatically imply that in this specific series the tipping point would be design 2, or before or after design 2? This is to also establish if the researcher had unconsciously created a pattern of excluding any profane symbols, which do not belong to the *sangoma* community right in the middle of the series. A known method for this decision is referred to as the Likert scale. Bertram (2006: 1) defines the Likert scale as a psychometric feedback scale that is used in questionnaires to gain the participant’s choice of judgement with a statement or set of statements. According to Joshi and

⁸ Plural of *gogo* in isiZulu.

Pal (2015:397), the Likert scale is a non-provisional scaling technique that allows the participant to provide feedback of judgement with a given statement by way of an ordinal structure. The researcher utilised both the symmetric and asymmetric types of the Likert scale where the sun, shield and snake design had an even number sequence, which had no neutral point and provides autonomy for the participant to make a balanced symmetric decision, as opposed to the Lion and big five, which have the odd number sequence consisting of a neutral asymmetric point where the middle was not just a void but a design (Joshi & Pal 2015:397)

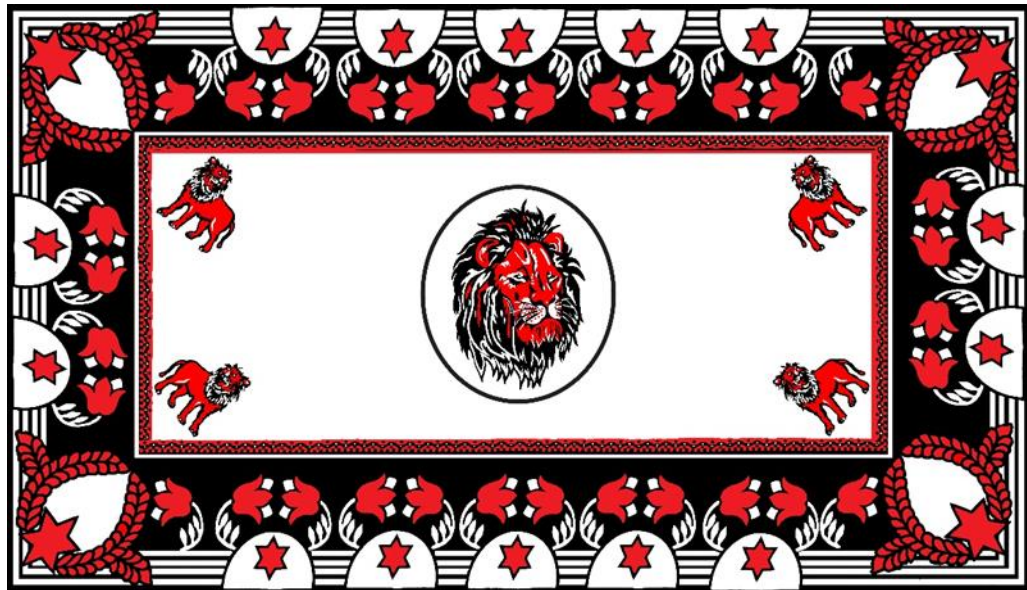


Figure 5.21: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series original*.

40cm x 60cm Digital print

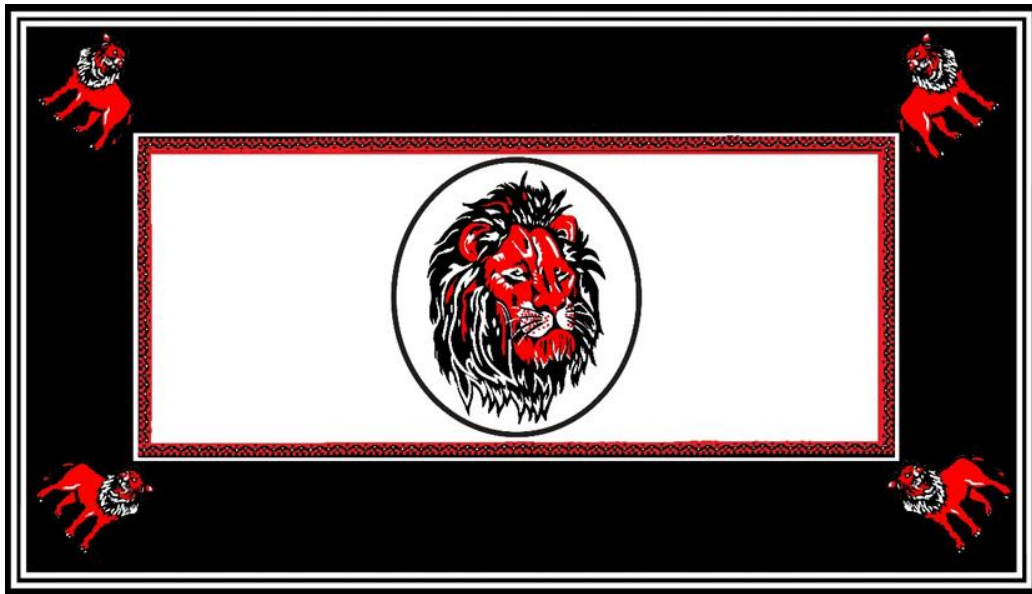


Figure 5.22: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series 1.*

40cm x 60cm Digital print



Figure 5.23: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series 2.*

40cm x 60cm Digital print



Figure 5.24: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series 3*.

40cm x 60cm Digital print



Figure 5.25: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Ingonyama/ Tau/Lion Series 4*.

40cm x 60cm Silkscreen print

After analysing the lion cloth silently, there was a slight pause seemingly to return to a tranquil moment before the discussion of this series when participant 3 broke the ice by pulling out a container of snuff (*Ntsu*⁹) from her bosom, stating that the lion cloth is very powerful. After a moment the members started mumbling something among themselves. Most participants had

⁹ The name of the snuff that most *sangomas* use for communicating with *amadlozi*.

the lion cloth in their possession during the individual interviews, hence it has a huge significance among the group. During the walkabout concerning this cluster, the focus group had a lengthy discussion, pin-pointing certain areas of the designs. The collective claimed that Figure 5.22 is still sacred since it was approximately similar to the original design. The only difference on Figure 5.22 from Figure 5.21 was the removal of the organic shapes from the border and leaving the main lion motif. There was suddenly frantic mumbling and restlessness when the discussion reached Figure 5.23, which included the original design appropriated with rich vibrant colours, so much so that, when the focus group was already seated, participant 9 stood up from her seat and walked to Figure 5.23 to have another closer look at the different hue combinations within the design. When participant 9 returned to her seat, there was a moment of silence again among the focus group participants. None of the members wanted to speak, they all seemed very reluctant to speak about the Figure 5.23 with assorted colours. It seems as though they were waiting for one participant to say something again. Participant 9 eventually explained, *“That cloth has a mixture of different things or worlds. It is a mixture of a church and other things I cannot disclose, and I am afraid we cannot mention some of the things.”* There was an intense off-record discussion regarding Figure 5.23 due to ethical reasons. On record, the focus group mentioned that the colours used do not only apply to *sangomas* but to prophets as well. Participant 6 states, *“This cloth looks like a flag, but I cannot say which one, I do not know how others see it”*. The participants all agreed with participant 6. The participants went on to analyse figures 5.24 and 5.25, which were also claimed to be sacred by the *sangoma* collective. Therefore, no tipping point was established, as all the aspects of the lion series were claimed to be sacred.

5.3.7 Big five series

During the individual interviews, it came to light that some *sangomas* would like to own cloths of the animals utilised or slaughtered in rituals by the *sangoma* community, hence the researcher appropriated Figure 5.26 cloth to a new version of the big five. Not all the animals seen on the new big five (Figure 5.30) are utilised by *sangomas*, some are used by prophets. The reason for using the animals that both the *sangomas* and the prophets use is that the majority of the focus group participants have the calling of being both a prophet and a *sangoma*. Participant 4 was happy to announce, *“This one (Figure 5.30) is good. It is first class because it has all the things we use. The goat, chicken, sheep and a rope for tying up the animals just before the slaughtering takes place.”* The border of each design corresponded with the animal that was being replaced in the design.



Figure 5.26: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series original*.

40cm x 60cm Digital print



Figure 5.27: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series 1*.

40cm x 60cm Digital print



Figure 5.28: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series 2*.
40cm x 60cm Digital print



Figure 5.29: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series 3*.
40cm x 60cm Digital print



Figure 5.30: RADEBE, M. Lebohang. 2019. *Big 5 Series 4*.

40cm x 60cm Digital Silkscreen print

To begin the discussion, the researcher posed a question of : “Different types of cows, chickens, goats etc, how does one know which one to slaughter?” The reason for this question was in connection with the borders of the designs and the animal being utilised by the researcher in terms of shape, colour and type. Participant 9 responded by saying, “*There is a difference Gogo because each and every person who has to undergo the training, is shown which animal to use and that has which type of horns. The animals we have to use will never be the same. Be it a cow or a goat. The other person will tell you that the horns of the animal she used are straight, some will tell you that they are skewed. It all depends on the animal you are shown.*” The tipping point occurred on figures 5.27, 5.28 and 5.29. the symbolism and colour scheme used in this series are somehow important and connected to the *sangoma* community, but the composition did not have meaning due to the animal combinations used in the designs. The different tints of the red hue remained constant in all the designs as this design is centred around slaughtering and spilling of blood. However, the *sangoma* collective made it clear that figure 5.30 is sacred due to the colour schemes, composition and the different types of animal motifs that bring meaning to the design. All the animals on Figure 5.30 are part of the ritual practices carried out by the *sangoma* community, therefore are considered to be sacred.

5.4 ANALYSIS

In this analysis, it was initially insinuated that a complete design would work out as a potential tipping point. The original idea or the research question was that the researcher would develop a sequence that would move from the sacred to profane. However, through the interaction with the focus group, the researcher discovered that even at the beginning of the continuum there were some cloths that were secular in a sense that they could be used by the public and some of the designs tipped in symbolism and, in the same vein some designs remained sacred even after the researcher appropriated the designs. The symbols used in these designs might be seen in everyday life settings outside the *sangoma* periphery, however, putting these symbols together in a composition makes them have a totally different meaning other than when they are seen individually and in a different setting that might make them to have a different connotation. In this instance the symbols are viewed from a sacred lens by a collective who have undergone the correct rites of passage.

5.4.1 Design series analysis

5.4.1.1 Sun series analysis

The manner in which these designs was made was not to make major changes as the designs transitioned but to gradually add and arrange the elements to make the beginning completely different to the end of the continuum, which was speculated that a tipping point would lie somewhere in between the continuum.

The addition of the compass in Figure 5.4 brought a positive effect on the *sangoma* collective as its significance has a lot to do with geographical area as it represents the four cardinal points. Participant 9 stated that, “*The sun works gogo, many people train under it. It has two sides. Ikhampasi ibonisa a magumbi a mane wo mhlaba, ni ya zwisisa bo gogo, lapho sihlangana khona*¹⁰”

The major element that made the collective protective over Figure 5.5 was the stars used, stars can have many connotations but for the *sangoma* community, the star plays an important role.

The element that caused a major debate was the use of fire from figures 5.6 to 5.8. The *sangoma* collective mentioned that this is where they live as *sangomas* but were not specific where this

¹⁰ Translation: A compass shows the four cardinal points of earth, do you hear me fellow traditional healers, where we all meet (as traditional healers). (Translated by researcher)

place is and whether this statement means they live there physically or otherwise. Participant 9 states, “*can you see that sun made a circular motion and went back to the middle, that is why I am saying that when we ask from our ancestors, I cannot tell how we should stand...* [Information cannot be disclosed due to ethical considerations] *It is something that is there and that we love and also see it on our bodies wearing it. We live in that area.*” Fire also has its own connotation, but the *sangoma* community use it for ritual purposes.

On this specific series there was no tipping point, meaning that all the symbols used here are openly and secretly used by the *sangoma* community. Even though the researcher used some of the symbology, which might have a link to the *sangoma* community but not necessarily sacred, like the compass being a tool for navigation, the *sangoma* community have their own use and interpretation for it. This series is partial proof that these cloth designs are indeed sacred and should not be misused by the public.

5.4.1.2 Shield series analysis

*“When my grandmother gave me this cloth, as **we are Zulu**, she said ‘I am giving you the shield cloth so that you can be able to battle whichever storm that comes your way’. She continued by saying, ‘I will make it with a beautiful colour but the most important thing here is the shield’.”*

After so much confusion regarding the original shield design, it was made evident by participant 1’s above statement that the Figure 5.9 belongs to the Nguni cultural group as a whole and not only the *sangoma* community. The bolded words ‘We are Zulu’ are a clear indication of this finding. The shield design style, composition, colour and patterns are similar to most of the *sangoma* cloth designs; hence, the cloth was confused to belong to the *sangoma* community. Some *sangomas* wear this cloth to pay homage to their particular *Nguni* ancestors and not only their spiritual ancestors or *amadlozi*. During the focus group, participant 8 also made a comparison between the Nguni shield design and the Mswati design, which is approximately the same as the Zulu shield design, which are worn by the general public during weddings cultural events in Swaziland (see figures 5.31, 5.32 & 5.33).



Figure 86: *Swati ceremony* Source:
<http://www.stockphotos.ro>



Figure 87: *women in Swati attire*
 Source: <http://www.stockphotos.ro>



Figure 88: *Swaziland flag*
 Source: <http://www.stockphotos.ro>



Figure 89: *Mkwanazi sisters dressed for a traditional wedding* Photograph.(published with permission) Source:
<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2940545472643330&set=pb.100000637176556.-2207520000>

Figure 5.9 is the most publicly over-used cloth design by the Nguni cultural groups. Figure 5.32 is a photo shared on Facebook by someone who is not a *sangoma* and has no relation to *sangomas*. The attire worn on Figure 5.34 is that of Figure 5.9, which also comes in the red colour. The ladies presented on Figure 5.34 are the Mkwanazi Sisters who are Zulu and the attire they have on was for a family wedding in February 2020. There are many of these photos of the same design on social media and most of the people who have this cloth design on are not *sangomas* but belong to some Nguni communities – some do not even belong to the Nguni group but tailor the design for traditional ceremonies.

5.4.1.3 Snake series analysis

This specific design series demonstrates that the centred motif, which is the focal point, plays a dominant role in the composition of the existing cloth designs. The main centred motif portrays the animal, which most of the designs represent, which is the snake in this instance. The snake was centred throughout the series from the original Figure 5.15 to Figure 5.17, which the *sangoma* collective regarded as part of the *sangoma* community due to the typical shape of the geometric borders and the centred snake motif. The tipping point was reached on figures 5.18 and 5.19 where the *sangoma* collective concluded that these designs can be openly used by the general public. However, figures 5.18 and 5.19 still have the original snake used as a pattern, like most typical *seshweshwe* cloth designs (see Figure 5.35) where pattern is created through juxtaposing the organic or geometric shapes.



Figure 5.35: *Seshweshwe designs.*

Source: <https://www.pinterest.fr/pin/462815299180850500/>

Figure 5.20 is not totally different from Figure 5.15. However, the colour purple made the focus group conclude that this type of design cannot be used by the general public due to the colour purple. The researcher struggled to get an explanation from the collective as to why the colour purple is not to be used by the general public. The star symbol also contributed with regards to the collective not agreeing for this design to be used by the public. The two major aspects in design 75, which the focus group was protective over are the snake motif, purple snake pattern and the stars.

5.4.1.4 Lion series analysis

The lion series had no tipping point as the focus group members all agreed that the composition and symbolism in the series contains most of the symbols used by the *sangoma* community. The main problem in Figure 5.23 was the colour usage. The designer had kept the original composition as it was, but the only change was the colours from black, white and red to the bright multi-colour scheme, which the focus group mentioned that this particular colour scheme resembles one that is used by *sangomas* elsewhere. Participant 6 stated, “*when I look at it, it looks similar to a flag of a certain place. I do not know how others see it.*” Participant 9 supports participant 6’s statement, “*that cloth has a mixture of different things just like gogo has said. It is a mixture of a church and...*[Information withheld due to ethical considerations with regard to the *sangoma* community]..., *we cannot mention some of the things.*” The symbols along with the design composition and combination of colours on Figure 5.23 is considered to be sacred.

The reason why the focus group refused for Figures 5.24 and 5.25 to be used by the public is due to the fact that these designs still contain symbols that are considered to be sacred in the *sangoma* community as most of the language used is visual. Figures 5.24 and 5.25 still have the centred lion motif as part of the focal point. The lions are different therefore, they communicate different messages. One might see simple and meaningless designs and not understand this language as there are rites of passage put in place in order for one to understand the language of *amadlozi*. Participant 8 states, “*The cloth that has a lion with an open mouth (roaring) also has its own meaning, the lion is fighting.*”

5.4.1.5 Big five series analysis

The big five design series did not change much in terms of colour during the appropriation process. The major changes were done on the animal motif combination and the border design, which corresponded with the animal that was being replace. The tipping point was established on figures 5.27, 5.28 and 5.29 as the focus group all agreed that the symbology contained in this series was sacred, but the composition was not sacred. However, Figure 5.30 was claimed to be highly sacred due to the animal composition utilised, colour scheme and the border.

Initially when this project commenced, the tipping point was perceived as the whole cloth design, but during the focus group the *sangoma* collective proved that it can only be the

individual elements of design used as part of the composition that can determine the tipping point, the tipping point cannot be the whole design/cloth

Centrally, as the designs changed, so, speculatively, was the signification change and the initial purpose of the study was to find the point where the sacred signification changes to the profane signification, based on the judgement of the specific group of ‘owners’ of the IKS. Based on the idea that the *sangomas* decided on one cloth that was the tipping point, but it may have been that one cloth contained most of the secular.

The different compositions on the designs communicated to the participants in a positive way even though some of the designs aggravated them. The focus group concurred with one another that most of the designs are aesthetically appealing but there is a need for an interrogation of the designs to fulfil the purpose of the study. From the new designs, most of the participants spotted the designs they have dreamt of but have not seen the designs in any of the shops selling these cloths. Participant 8 explains, ‘*We are extremely happy with the cloths. We are particularly happy because we see some of the cloths here that we could not find in stores. They sometimes appear to us in visions, but we do not know where to find them, that is why we are this happy*’. These cloths have an arranged composition where each symbol within the composition may convey a message individually. Without defeating the purpose of the study, Participant 8, particularly referring to the designs that include a composition that communicates to the *sangomas*, which appeared to some of the participants and the researcher, unknowingly portrayed them as part of the series.

5.5 PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIONS

With regards to the general meaning of the cloths, the participants stated that they do not have knowledge of all the meanings of the cloths and that each *sangoma* has knowledge of the cloths they own and those they have learned about while in training. Anyone who does not have the rite of passage of *ukuthwasa* does not have the right to purchase and wear these cloths. In addition, no fashion designer has the right to use these sacred cloth designs as part of a fashion parade that has nothing to do with the *sangoma* community. Conversely, Participant 8, however, clarified that there are people called *amagedle*¹¹ who have in-depth knowledge of *imithi*¹². Participant 9 states, ‘*There are people we call Amagedla, Sotho people refer to them as dingakachicha, they also use cloths, right? So, we cannot argue about that. That is how they*

¹¹ Igedle(singular), amagedle (plural)

¹² Herbs/traditional medicine.

got their gift. Some of them do not even have to go for training yet they have the gift.” Most of *Amagedle*¹³ can be found in small business development locations with their *muthi* on the floor displayed on grass mats. These are the kind of people the *sangomas* do not have a problem with, with regards to them utilising and wearing these cloths as they serve the function of healing even though they have not undergone the process of *ukuthwasa*. Nevertheless, some of the ‘new’ designs done in this research project brought about a sense of relief to the *sangomas* as there are designs, which ‘speak’ to them personally. Contrastingly, some of the new designs evoked a sense of mixed emotion and being flabbergasted in some of the participants due to the types of compositions of the sacred symbols, patterns, shapes and colours used. Furthermore, the healers stated that they do not support the idea of the cloths being tailored into clothes by people who are not *sangomas*. The casual use of these cloths undermines the *sangoma* community and the ritual of *ukuthwasa* as these cloths are obtained through this ritual. The meaning and symbolism of these designs has already been explained in previous chapters (Molebatsi 2007).

5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided the analysis discussion of the focus group with regards to the private exhibition that took place at Bophelong Library, which is a central place for most of the participants. The participants attended the focus group wearing their full regalia as expected and wearing the cloths in question. A thorough description of these cloths was fully carried out to put the study into context and to provide visual reference. A discussion was drawn from a clear presentation of the trajectory and responses of the focus group to the exhibition of the continuum of the cloth. The notion of the tipping point by Gladwell was introduced as a major tool with regards to determining if the design (or elements of each design) was sacred or profane. It was inferred that the tipping point would lie somewhere in between the trajectory sequence of the series of the designs. A clear analysis of the different series strongly suggested that the different compositions’ elements and principles of design can bring about different meaning through the distinctive arrangements of the individual symbols and that one symbol can compromise the whole. The following chapter presents the findings of the study, documents the shortfalls in the study and indicates the application of the findings to society and to further research.

¹³ An example of *Amagedle* can be found in Johannesburg CBD at Kwa Mai-Mai, a famous *muthi* market place.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS

6.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the study, to indicate the application of the findings, to document the shortfalls in the study, to provide possible further research concepts and to provide the researchers experience during the study.

This study is based on the *sangoma* cloth, which is part of the *sangoma's* identity that distinguishes them from the rest of the general public and is also a classification factor among the different *sangoma* communities themselves. *Sangoma* is a common term used to refer to traditional healers in the Zulu context. Berglund (1976) was one of the fundamental researchers on Zulu how people regard to their way of life and customs. According to Gillow (2003:175), the cloth was first presented in southern parts of Africa around the 19th century through bartering undertakings between the African indigenes and European pilgrims. Initially, *sangomas* used different animal hides as part of their dress code (Mutwa 1996:28). As time went by, *sangomas* wanted a more eco-friendly and hygienic option from the animal hides as these also attracted pests (Simmons 2008:68). According to Simmons (2008:102–104), this arrangement was made possible through communication between the *sangomas* and the Asian fabric store owners in South Africa. Consequently, *sangomas* presently dress in these modern cloths that are imprinted in various animal patterns, which replaced the animal hides *sangomas* initially dressed in. Other aspects incorporated in these cloths are the celestial signs and the four cardinal points; they are also made in various designs that comprise of different colours, patterns and animal motifs, which have emblematic portrayals. These ancestral cloth wraps may be worn by being wrapped around the waist or tossed over the shoulder/s (Burglund 1976:176).

These cloths are obtained through the ritual of *ukuthwasa*. Mlisa (2009:x) describes *Ukuthwasa* as a spiritual journey that is specially constructed by ancestors for those who have the gift of healing. These cloths play an exceptionally critical part during the time spent in *ukuthwasa* as every cloth has its own particular importance and capacity and in the *sangoma* hierarchy during and after *ukuthwasa*.

Currently, these cloths are being casually misused by the general public as they are also being tailored into wearables by individuals who have not gone through *ukuthwasa* and this does not sit well with the *sangoma* community. The ancestral cloth has become part of the contemporary

SA fashion industry where fashion designers like Nontobeko Gumede (Modern Sangoma Range 2011) and Butan (a South African clothing label) have incorporated them as part of their designs. As a result, these ancestral cloths are rapidly losing their sacredness and slowly becoming part of the profane/secular world due to their casual use.

The main aim of this study was to explore the symbolism in the *sangoma* cloths and the potential changes in symbolism that might occur and that might be sanctioned or be allowed by the *sangoma* community. The main research question is: What methodology approach can be used to determine the moments where the sacredness of the *sangoma* cloth symbology, which is part of the indigenous knowledge system (IKS) of the *sangoma* community, changes to the profane or secular usage of the cloth found in global knowledge systems (GKSs)?

To set the theoretical frame for the analysis the researcher has employed Victor Turner's (1969) writings on rites of passage (drawing on Arnold Van Gennep's (1909[1960]) theory). The central argument being made is that the trainees go through a process from the ordinary, everyday life, that starts with a breach of that life (a calling), a crisis (that makes the response to the calling seem inevitable) and then enter a liminal space where the transition from the everyday to the *sangoma* life is made, followed by a reintegration into the world, in a changed state, to practice as a *sangoma*, under the protection and guidance of the *amadlozi*. As such, the *sangoma* looks inward to the teaching of the *amadlozi* and the practice of being a *sangoma* and outward to engage with the problems of the world. As such, the sacred practices of the *sangoma* are made effective in a profane/secular world. These sacred practices and signs of their sacredness are present and are presented in the cloths that the *sangomas* use and wear. In fact, many of the sacred symbols are 'given' to the new *sangomas* by the *amadlozi*, which in turn, emphasises their sacredness.

Parallel to this argument, this dissertation suggests that the ownership, therefore, of the cloths can be theorised around the notions of IKS and GKS. IKS argues that there is an ownership of certain things as these are seen to belong to and are used by certain communities. GKS, on the other hand, suggests that these certain things have 'lost' their original ownership and have entered the public domain, to be used by everyone. Drawing on the understanding of the role of the cloths and the symbols used, the dissertation argues that the sacredness of the cloth can be connected to the IKS of the *sangoma* (and therefore, by extension, the relevant *amadlozi*) community as owners of the cloths and the symbols. Therefore, it can be argued that there comes a time when the sacredness of the IKS may move into the profaneness/secularity of the everyday world. The purpose of this dissertation, therefore, was to determine whether there

was a way of determining when this transition might occur in the changes to the sacred cloth designs.

To explore these, the study used two methods to collect data, namely ten individual interviews followed by a focus group method. The first data set provided a clear understanding of the relevance and meaning of the cloths and their symbols and the second set provided a review of the changing and changed cloth design and symbol usage, as generated by the researcher/artist. Thus, the first set of data provided the inspiration for the changing cloth designs and the second set provided a reaction to these design changes. In doing this, it was hoped that the focus group of *sangomas* could pinpoint the moment when the sacred became profane/secular, or, alternatively, when IKS became GKS.

The design/artmaking methodology utilised in this study is rooted in a practice-led research approach, within the framework of qualitative research methodology in the fine arts. Haseman (2006:3) characterises practice-led research as essentially experimental and comes to life through the exhibition and display of work created by the researcher. One of the methods used by the researcher involved creating artworks using the information obtained from the desktop research and interviews. The first method carried out was through desktop research and a photo shoot. This was implemented to retain all the important images of the cloth relevant to the study.

Thus, data collection was carried out through the use of one-on-one interviews with ten participants using open-ended semi-structured questions, which permitted the researcher to broaden the questions, in light of the appropriate responses provided by the participants. The selection criteria for these participants were based on how long the participants have been practising as *sangomas*, as this would be an implication of the in-depth knowledge acquired through the years of practice. Other criteria included, gender, age and geographical area and the fact that they all belonged to an NGO¹ based in the Vaal, where all the participants reside.

The interviews were carried out at the participant's residences. Most of the participants allowed the interviews to be conducted in their sacred spaces known as *indumba*, where they usually do consultations. The interviews were video- and voice-recorded to provide visual reference crucial to the study. The information was transcribed and translated into English because the interviews were conducted in Sesotho and isiZulu, which are the languages the participants are

¹ The researcher was also part of this NGO: Bophelong Emfuleni Traditional Healers Forum

fluent in. The reasons for conducting the interviews in vernacular was to capture the essence of meaning in the participant's statements.

Following this the researcher/artist combined, analysed and made the art works in the form of five sets of cloth designs. The data gathered was for creating new artworks from the original cloth designs. This is known as appropriation, where an existing art work is borrowed for the purpose of creating another artwork from the original (Korte 2018:1). Therefore, each set consisted of a capturing of the original design and then, through a process of appropriation driven by the artistic interventions of the researcher, gradually changed and adapted through four or five redesign phases. Technically, this appropriation was achieved through the use of Photoshop. There were two printing techniques used namely, digital printing and silk screen process. The digital printing was done by Tshungu Multimedia and Enterprise and the silk-screen process was carried out by the researcher.

The fourth phase involved the viewing of the cloth designs by the focus group. Upon completion of the design phase the designs were privately exhibited for the participants, which now formed a focus group dynamic consisting of the ten originally interviewed participants. The purpose of the private showing was for the focus group to assist in determining the possible tipping point from sacred to profane/the secular, or from IKS to GKS. The tipping point is a concept developed by Malcolm Gladwell (2000) where he discusses how things can 'tip' and develop into bigger or different things, conditions or situations. The theory of the tipping point was employed to assist in answering the main research question. This would reveal the move from IKS to GKS, it was anticipated, for the *sangoma* (and *amadlozi*) community.

During the focus group, the participants started with the *phahla* ritual to invite the *amadlozi* to be part of the decision-making of the tipping point. After the *phahla* ritual, the researcher guided the participant through a walkabout to view all the designs, then a lengthy discussion of the individual cloths was carried out. The finding of the study will be presented 6.2.

6.2 FINDINGS OBTAINED

It should be noted that the original conceptualisation of the project suggested that the focus group/*sangoma* community would be able to decide exactly which complete cloth belonged to the community and which did not (and, therefore, was allowed to become part of the secular or GKS world). This did, in fact, not happen in the engagement with the exhibited cloths. What did come about was that certain elements in certain cloths with certain symbolic value were

identified, as the discussion below indicates. Nevertheless, it seems important that a dedicated attempt was made to determine such tipping points, therefore, it could be argued that at least the methodology used offers much potential for future engagements in determining IKS. The specific findings are presented.

- The process of determining sacred IKS is suggested by the methodology used in this dissertation. The focus group has argued that, to claim IKS, one has to make an enquiry with the community who owns the IKS to determine what is allowed and that consulting the source of the IKS is important, which, in this case, was the *sangoma* community that was consulted through the focus group method where permission and disapproval came into play. What might make this particular study unique, however, is that, because the focus group consisted of *sangomas*, it must be seen to be inevitable that the *amadlozi* were consulted through the engagement with the *sangomas*. Seen through western methodological eyes this development might be seen to be less ‘scientifically trustworthy,’ however, as the rest of the findings indicate, it became a central determining factor.²
- It is impossible to determine that one single complete cloth design is sacred, but there are elements in some of the cloths that are sacred and so many elements that are not. Thus, to claim an entire design as IKS is very difficult. The idea that a complete design can be determined as the tipping point is not sufficient, but other aspects need to be considered. The findings, therefore, suggest that a blanket, or complete, decision is not possible. The complexity of determining IKS is revealed and the need to engage in minute detail is made important.
- There are certain design elements that are sacred and cannot haphazardly be used, for example, the colour purple, which is covertly used in other practices connected to *sangomas*. Out of all the elements of design, this colour was definitely concluded to be an element that plays a major role from the rest. The colour of the clothing is considered a language of its own and the ones who will be able to speak this language fluently are the ones who have undergone the *ukuthwasa* training. This, in itself, demonstrates the importance of engaging with the people who speak the language of the community to decide the IKS decisions and claims. If one connects the people to their guiding

² What the western equivalent of engaging with the *amadlozi* might be is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

principles, these decisions, it is felt, become embedded in a feeling of the sacred. As such, the findings suggest the importance of looking beyond the visual design to the language that goes with the designs.

- This language issue became one of the most important findings for this researcher. The *sangomas* produced this wonderful and forgiving insight that it is understandable that people, who have not undergone *ukuthwasa* (that is to say, have not learned the language of the *sangoma* and the *amadlozi*) will use the cloth designs as they see fit. The *sangomas* decided that it is for those who do not know the language to decide and so there will be times when the cloth is sacred and there will be times when the cloth is profane and that is fine. It is not the *cloth*, therefore, particularly, it is the *person*, that counts. Therefore, one can see that the rigid control of IKS and the seeming threat of GKS is dealt with, with wonderful wisdom, by the *sangomas* and *amadlozi*. In other words, the *law* cannot determine the tipping point, the *person* determines the tipping point. Put another way, one cannot legislate the liminal, but that viewing the *sangomas* as representatives of *amadlozi* is important. Cultural beliefs are part of IKS, seeing IKS as arising from a notion of the cultural liminal means that the dynamics of the liminal need to be considered in making conclusions on what belongs to whom.

6.3 SHORTFALLS/ LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- This study used a particular *sangoma* community that, on the surface, had begun to ‘move with the times’ in the community and can, perhaps, therefore, not be seen as unbiased. There was only one *sangoma* group used as a focus group, therefore, the researcher had to trust that the *sangomas* were sharing the message from the *amadlozi* themselves and not their own messages. Nevertheless, the fact that full rituals were conducted as often as one could to invite the *amadlozi* to be present assisted, it was argued, to make the findings believable.
- It could perhaps be argued that one needed more variety in the designs. Initially, there were 10 iterations chosen by the researcher. However, this number was reduced to five series and that each series only used five or six variations.
- It could be seen that, because the researcher had been called a prophet this might have skewed the data. A GKS approach to research would require that the researcher needed to verify the presence of the *amadlozi*, which is, inevitably, impossible. But

working within the IKS of the *sangoma* community, their presence is taken to be inevitable.

6.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

- One of the shortfalls was the use of only one focus group from a not so rural area, as it could be argued that customs and traditions in rural areas are still ‘pure’ and not diluted. As a future study, the researcher would consider using the same methods to conduct research but using both rural and urban as a point of enquiry. The same methodology might be used elsewhere, comparing ‘deep rural’ *sangoma* groups with more urban *sangoma* groups might provide different results.
- Future research would need to broaden the scope of the designs and the artworks presented, as this project set out to establish a working methodology.
- Finally, the methodology used worked with the *sangoma* cloth and its symbology. However, there are other domains where such a methodology might be applied. Such a domain might be in the use of traditional medicine for the engagement with any disease, such as is present in the COVID-19 pandemic.

6.5 PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

This study has been both a life-changing experience and an eye opener with regards to my own spiritual journey. While pursuing this study, the hardships and misfortunes I have experienced are similar to what most of the participants have experienced. This study has removed all the doubt I had regarding my own ‘gift’ and this is proven by how the ancestors have allowed me to carry out this study and even gain access to this sacred knowledge. This has also made me come even closer to my own ancestors, as anything that had to do with this study had to be done through asking for permission from my own ancestors and this has now become a norm – to consult in everything I do. I praise and thank them.

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To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that I, the undersigned, have language edited the **dissertation** of

Mavis Lebohang Rankou-Radebe

for the degree

MAGISTER TECHNOLOGIAE: FINE ART

entitled:

***SYMBOLISM IN SANGOMA CLOTH: A SOUTH AFRICAN PRINTMAKING JOURNEY
FROM THE LIMINAL TO THE LIMINOID***

The responsibility of implementing the recommended language changes rests with the author of the document.

Yours truly,



Linda Scott