

# Editorial

**Johannes A. Smit**  
**smitj@ukzn.ac.za**

**Denzil Chetty**  
**Chettd@unisa.ac.za**

Johannes A Smit focuses his research on J.T. van der Kemp's South African texts. Van der Kemp was the first London Missionary Society President of African Missions. He arrived in the Cape in 1799, and it can rightfully be said that he was indeed the inaugurator of what became known as the 'century of missions' in South and Southern Africa (during the 19<sup>th</sup> century). The impact on the indigenous populations of this century of missions has been described as the most important system which, for the purposes of this paper, we may call a system of cultural violence and deculturation. In order to address this matter, the paper starts off by briefly presenting three models of the progressive impacts of missions in South Africa, viz. that of Nosipho Majeke (Dora Taylor) ([1952] 1986); that of John L. Comaroff (1989); and that of David Chidester (1996). It then proceeds to an analysis of the impact of J.T. van der Kemp, 1799-1804. Theoretically I draw on the distinction between morality and ethics by Michel Foucault as well as his theorising of eighteenth century representational thought.

It has often been alleged that during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries European missionaries in Africa, evinced little respect for the indigenous peoples whom they evangelised and otherwise sought to influence through Christian ministry. Considerably less frequently, however, Frederick Hale argues, have such assertions been substantiated with detailed case studies to demonstrate possible attitudinal shifts over time as the missionaries in question became better acquainted with African cultures and folkways. The present article, a response to M.M. Sepota's "The Destruction of African

Culture by Christianity” which was published in the *Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies*, examines the attitudes of one key individual, Hans Astrup, who headed the Church of Norway Schreuder Mission from his arrival in Natal in 1883 until he felt confident about expanding his agency’s field into what are now Mozambique and Swaziland.

Franco Frescura’s article focuses on missionary efforts in Southern Africa during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries focused primarily upon its indigenous people, seeking to bring changes to their patterns of living. Faced with such issues as polygamy, initiation, child price (lobola), ancestral worship, beer drinking, and teenage sexual morality, most did not attempt to understand the nature of these social institutions, and chose to confront them in what they believed to be an uncompromising and *moral* Christian manner. Linked to this was an attempt to bring about changes to the indigenous built environment. This paper seeks to show that although a number of changes to local architecture are indeed present, these are largely cosmetic and the result of a pragmatic transfer of technology, leaving the cosmological core of indigenous settlement largely untouched.

Sibusiso Masondo’s article explores the meaning of conversion for African Christians in South Africa by looking at some of the indigenous terms that have populated the Christian vocabulary. The paper focuses on terms like *ukuguquka*, *ukukholwa*, *ibandla*, *ikholwa*, *igqobhoka*, *inkonzo*, and *inkolo*. These terms are found among people who speak Nguni languages. It shows how they were used in pre-Christian context and traces their evolution in Christian contexts. Research conducted in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, St John’s Apostolic Faith Mission, and Methodist Churches in Cape Town between 1997 and 2001 has indicated that conversion was not a simple religious process but involved diverse political, economic and social aspects. Conversion involved a transformation of an African Christian identity from the margins to the centre. It also involved extensive negotiation of what it means to be Christian through the translation of Christian content into an African idiom. The paper goes through various terms and how their original meanings were discarded for new ones.

Josiah Taru and Federico Settler’s article critically considers the role of religion in relation to patterns of consumption among members in two indigenous churches in Zimbabwe. Through an examination of their distinct theological orientations toward modernity and the accumulation of wealth, they set out to understand religion and materialism in the postcolonial

context. Their analysis and findings are based on extended observation and interviews conducted in two indigenous churches in Zimbabwe between 2011 and 2013. They contend that despite their common theological heritage in the protestant ethics and its bible-centred dogma, the United Family International Church and the Johanne Marange Church have in the postcolonial context, each forged distinct theological and ecclesiastical understandings of their relation to consumption and the materialism, that not only shape their members' patterns of consumption, but also raises critical questions about what constitutes religion in the postcolonial context.

The problem of encroaching sacred sites is one of the biggest challenges most developing countries face. In her article, Lilian Siwila argues that in the name of development people's sacred sites and rituals are either destroyed or relocated to other sites. She uses two cases to discuss the value of sacred sites and sacred rituals and their religious connectivity to Tonga ecology. The paper begins with a brief discussion of the Tonga ecology and the effects of the construction of the Kariba dam in the 1950s to local people's religiosity, worldviews and perceptions of environmental issues. Thereafter the paper deals with another ecological practice of the Tonga people called the *lwiindi* ceremony. Within this practice the paper employs a gender lens to analyse the value of religion in the practice and how the practice is slowly being trespassed by political interests thus overriding its significance to peoples' understating of crop production and rain patterns. This study has found that indigenous peoples' religion is embedded in their understanding of ecological sites and rituals. Therefore development programmes working in these spaces need to take into consideration the religious significance attached to these sites by the local people. This will help enhance environmental care and respect for people's religious beliefs and spiritualities. This however does not mean romanticising indigenous knowledge as though it has no ecological challenges.

Gartg Mason examines Philip Qipa (P.Q.) Vundla's Moral Rearmament-inspired (MRA) politics with a view to explicating the previously hidden currents at work in his political activism. In his analysis, he draws on the theoretical frameworks of Paul Ricoeur and Homi Bhabha. In terms of these conceptual foundations, he investigates Vundla's involvement in two foundational events in the history of the South African struggle, namely the school boycott of 1955 and the bus boycott of 1957. The official history of these two events, written by social historians such as Tom Lodge,

interprets them as the dawn of mass opposition against apartheid. However, he contends that a closer analysis of these two events via biographical material reveals a more complex history, implicitly connected to the person of P.Q. Vundla and his politics of negotiation and finding common ground between opposing ideologies. Vundla stands out within this context because he was a nonconforming ANC leader, who disagreed with the way the party leadership approached political activism. His approach was driven by MRA values, which sought political solutions through dialogue and aimed to benefit all communities within South Africa. Vundla can be seen as an early forerunner of the bridge-building politics of Nelson Mandela. It is hoped that, by examining the role of MRA values in Vundla's activism, a fuller, more complex account of politics in the 1950s can be arrived at.

Maniraj Sukdaven, Asgher Mukhtar and Hamid Fernana focused their research on a Timbuktu manuscript listed in a digital form on the Library of Congress – Global Gateway. The authors of the article were involved in the translation and exegesis of the manuscript. Of significance, aside from the translation, is the exegetical analysis of the manuscript which was translated and written simultaneously in a poetic form so as to bring forth the intended beauty of the author of the manuscript. From the eighty-eight lines, eighty-three are dedicated to theosophical ethical thoughts as well as to the spiritual sarcasm of the author. The context addresses a reciprocal relationship between God and humanity and how humanity can experience the highest form of happiness in this world and the hereafter. Therefore this manuscript is not only a mystical text but also contributes to Islamic ethics. In the exegesis of the translated work, Qur'anic verses were incorporated to lend support to the text where necessary.

The South African policy on religion education (2003) aims to recognise religion in teaching and learning in public schools in the interest of instilling a respect for diversity in learners. The policy provides one mechanism for advancing diversity via religion education; Life Orientation in the classroom. In her article, Zahraa McDonald argues however that Research suggests that embracing religious diversity in the classroom is challenging. She then examines whether this is an adequate mechanism for achieving the intended outcome of the policy. The article proceeds to examine the mechanism for advancing diversity via religion education, the classroom, in relation to integration of the post-apartheid classroom and teachers' capacity. The article finds that the mechanism to advance diversity via religion

education provided by the national policy on religion education is inadequate within the current South African context.

Johannes A. Smit  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Pietermaritzburg  
South Africa  
smitj@ukzn.ac.za

Denzil Chetty  
University of South Africa  
Pretoria  
South Africa  
chettd@unisa.ac.za