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**Joel Cabrita. *Text and Authority in the South African Nazareth Church*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2014. xvii + 400 pp. Photographs. Maps. Notes. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. \ \$99.00. Cloth. \ \$79.00. Also E-book. ISBN: 978-1107054431.**

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African Studies Review / Volume 58 / Issue 02 / September 2015, pp 259 - 260

DOI: 10.1017/asr.2015.58, Published online: 01 September 2015

**Link to this article:** [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S000202061500058X](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S000202061500058X)

## How to cite this article:

Jonathon L. Earle (2015). African Studies Review, 58, pp 259-260 doi:10.1017/asr.2015.58

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## RELIGION

**Joel Cabrita. *Text and Authority in the South African Nazaretha Church.***

Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2014. xvii + 400 pp. Photographs. Maps. Notes. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. \$99.00. Cloth. \$79.00. Also E-book. ISBN: 978-1107054431.

This book examines oral ethnography, sermon cassettes, and English and isiZulu textual sources to explore the social and religious history of the Church of the Nazaretha, Ibandla lamaNazaretha, in twentieth-century southern Africa. Central to Cabrita's argument is the claim that spiritual legitimacy within the movement was "generated by and through the work of church texts" (347). She stresses that followers of the founding prophet of the Nazaretha community, Isaiah Shembe, used colonial and missionary literary practices to situate their community within regional and global discourses. In doing so, three contributions to the historiography of Christianity in southern Africa are offered. First, contrary to earlier studies on independent Christian movements in Africa, this well-researched work shows that Nazaretha churches were not necessarily bulwarks of timeless tradition in the face of emerging capitalism. By deviating from older practices of public healing and household honor, Nazaretha Christians saw themselves as innovators of a new ecclesial nation within which the past could be broken. Second, African independent churches have been largely overlooked within the literature on global Christianity, which Cabrita complicates by showing how Nazaretha converts were part of a crusade shaped by transnational Pentecostal and Holiness exegetical and oratory practices. Third, whereas earlier studies on Zulu cultural change tended to separate textual and oral practices into distinctive categories, this book shows how Nazaretha Christians creatively adapted both interchangeably.

*Text and Authority in the South African Nazaretha Church* is clearly written, and each chapter surveys a different theme within the history of the movement. In this respect, the volume would work well in an upper level undergraduate or graduate course in African history or religious studies. The opening two chapters situate the volume within the historiography of African Christianity. The concern of chapter 3 is the impact of Pentecostalism on the prophetic ministry of Isaiah Shembe. To contest the authority of Zulu Christian elites, Shembe used his familiarity with the Bible, shaped by Pentecostal revivalism, to assert legitimacy within Zulu communities. This process was part of a much broader conversation over gerontocratic hierarchies in Zulu society, the subject of chapter 4. Beleaguered by disobedient children who flaunted their urban earnings before rural elders, Zulu patriarchs turned to the Nazaretha church, whose prophet incorporated youths as amanuenses to bolster older types of obeisance. In chapter 5, Cabrita shows how the movement used public healing and spectacle to open biblical script for its participants. The next chapter shows how Isaiah's disputed successor, Johannes, with a team of loyal archivists, employed commercial

publication to broaden the church's canon and standardize the official liturgies and hagiographies around which Nazarethans organized their devotion. Whereas chapter 7 explores how women strategized spiritual biography and peripatetic evangelism to assert new forms of public virtue and mobility, chapter 8 investigates how chiefs turned unruly subjects into governable constituencies by participating in the appropriation of praise practices and preaching. In the final chapter, Cabrita aims to move the study of decolonization in South Africa beyond the dichotomies of resistance and collaboration (disengagement). Through the production of bureaucratic texts, Nazarethans activists exhibited political persuasion before the state, a strategy that shaped and underscored the ambiguities of apartheid. The book ends by surveying the relationship between the African National Congress and the Nazarethans Church in contemporary South Africa and argues that the unity of "this great church" may require closing its textual canon before it is torn by charismatic disputation.

Cabrita notes that the Natal-based activist Wellington Buthelezi adapted the writings of Marcus Garvey to pronounce the imminent arrival of African Americans to deliver black South Africans from white rule. We are also reminded that Isaiah Shembe's spiritual heir, Johannes, was educated at the prestigious Adams College and the University of Fort Hare. With only some exceptions, though, the book says surprisingly little about reading habits beyond church texts. Surely, however, activists were not reading only theology. And the classification of texts as either "secular" or "sacred" in such a way that the former is overlooked seems questionable, especially as the movement increasingly included university-educated literati. By the late 1950s, Christian activists throughout eastern and southern Africa were adapting global histories alongside biblical narration to imagine postcolonial futures. To recast the past, campaigners comfortably drew from both biblical and political histories; epistemological and textual boundaries were fluid. To what extent might a more expansive framework for the study of textual practices among Nazarethans Christians, in turn, help us problematize the binary categories with which scholars engage literary practice in colonial Africa? Be that as it may, Cabrita's excellent book offers powerful insights into the history of cultural innovation and global Christianity in southern Africa.

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doi:10.1017/asr.2015.58

## LANGUAGES, LITERATURE, AND THE ARTS

**Stephanie Newell. *The Power to Name: A History of Anonymity in Colonial West Africa*.** Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013. x + 255 pp. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. \$32.95. Paper. ISBN: 978-0821420324.