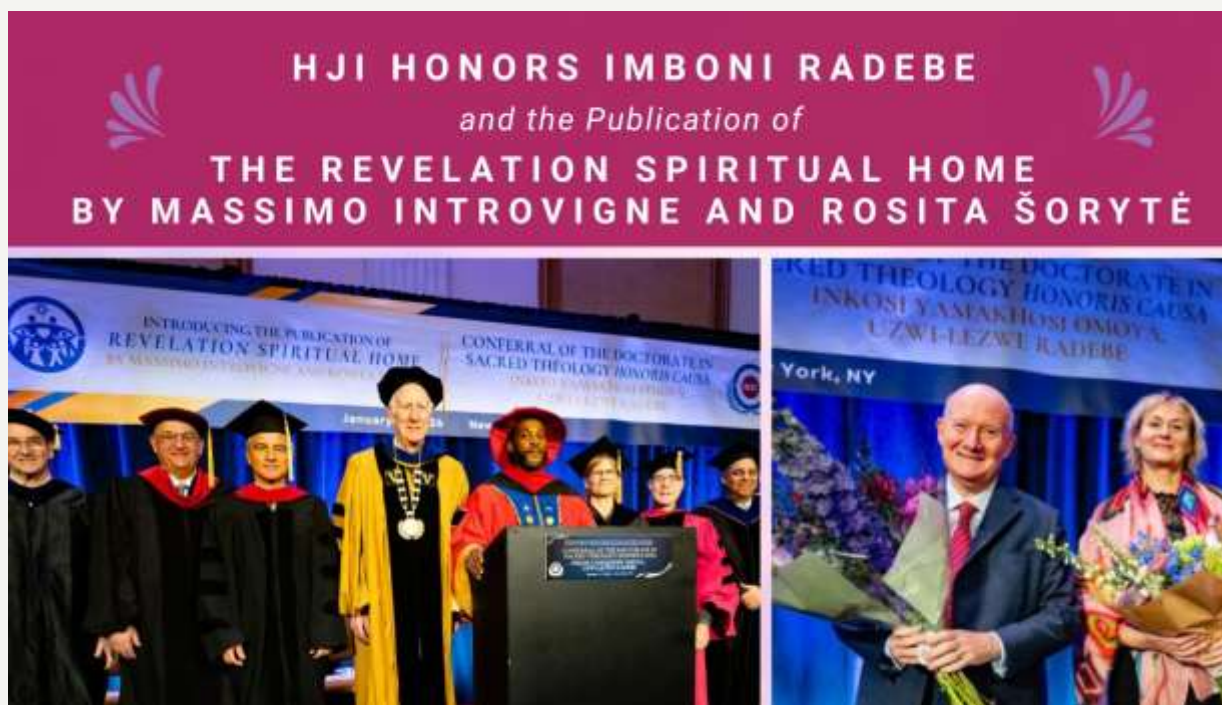


HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership Newsletter

Thomas G. Walsh
February 22, 2026



February 23, Volume III, Number 23



HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership hosted a special ceremony honoring Imboni Radebe and celebrating the publication of *The Revelation Spiritual Home* by Massimo Introvigne and Rosita Šoryté on January 17, 2026. The event included meaningful remarks from the authors and distinguished guests, highlighting the book's scholarly and spiritual significance and its contribution to contemporary religious studies. Their full speeches and reflections from the occasion can be read at the link below, offering deeper insight into the themes of spiritual home, faith, and academic inquiry.

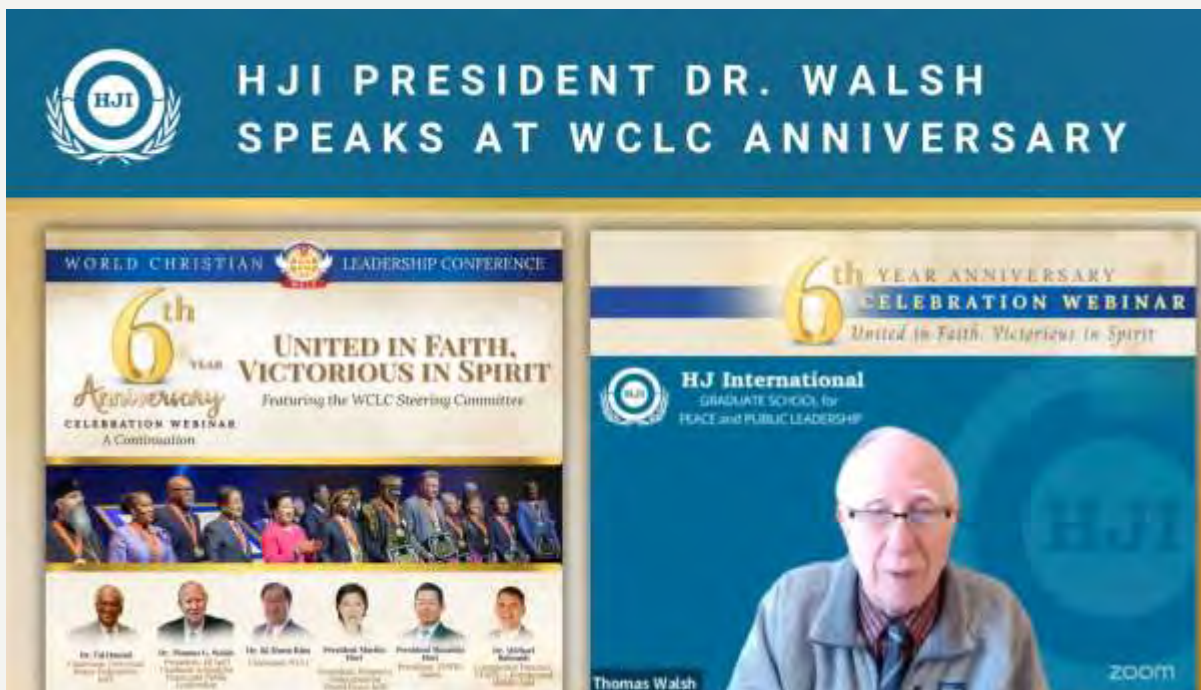
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[Read Rosita Šoryté speech](#)



We are pleased to announce the publication of *The Revelation Spiritual Home*, a significant scholarly work by Massimo Introvigne and Rosita Šorytė. This book offers important insight into contemporary religious movements and the meaning of spiritual home in today's world. Now available through Cambridge and Amazon, it serves as a valuable resource for scholars, students, and all who seek a deeper understanding of faith, identity, and spiritual belonging.

The Revelation Spiritual Home is Available at [Cambridge.org](https://www.cambridge.org) and on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com).



Dr. Thomas G. Walsh, President of HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership, spoke at the World Christian Leadership Conference (WCLC) 6th Anniversary Celebration Webinar, themed “*United in Faith, Victorious in Spirit.*” The event brought together global faith leaders to reflect on shared spiritual values, strengthen unity across traditions, and advance collaborative efforts for peace. Dr. Walsh’s presence highlighted HJI’s continued commitment to interfaith dialogue, faith-centered leadership, and engagement with global initiatives promoting religious harmony and cooperation.

[Watch the Recording on WCLC’s Facebook page.](#)

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Introducing Inkosi yamaKhosi Omoya IMboni uZwi-Lezwe Radebe

by Rosita Šorytė | Feb 9, 2026 | Testimonies Global

Today, there would be no revival of African Indigenous Spirituality without the founder and leader of The Revelation Spiritual Home.

by Rosita Šorytė*

*A paper presented at the American launch of the book by Massimo Introvigne and Rosita Šorytė “The Revelation Spiritual Home: [The Revival of African Indigenous Spirituality](#)” (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025), and the [Honorary Doctorate Ceremony for Inkosi yamaKhosi Omoya IMboni uZwi-Lezwe Radebe](#) New York, HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership, January 17, 2025.



Inkosi yamaKhosi Omoya IMboni uZwi-Lezwe Radebe's acceptance speech at the Honorary Doctorate Ceremony.

It is a profound privilege to stand before you this morning in New York, in the presence of so many distinguished scholars, spiritual leaders, and cultural figures, to launch a book and at the same time celebrate a moment of great significance: the conferral of an honorary doctorate upon a man whose life and work have already shaped the spiritual landscape of Southern Africa and whose influence is increasingly felt across the world—Inkosi yamaKhosi Omoya IMboni uZwi-Lezwe Radebe, whom I will call simply IMboni (although this name designates a function and there have been other IMboni before him) or Radebe, his clan name.

Tonight is a celebration of scholarship, of culture, of spirituality—but above all, it is a celebration of a life that has become a beacon for many. And so, allow me to take you on a journey through that life, drawing on the research that Massimo and I conducted, and on the rich documentation available, including the entry we just published in the World Religions and Spirituality Project, the most authoritative online academic encyclopedia of religions. The encyclopedia (now independent) was started at Virginia Commonwealth University and now has an entry on The Revelation Spiritual Home. I consider this encyclopedia entry, although shorter, no less important than the book. Ideally, after the British academia, with Cambridge University Press publishing our book, it is now the American academia that acknowledges the importance of IMboni's institution through its most celebrated religious encyclopedia.

IMboni was born Samuel Mbiza on November 8, 1977, in Gugulethu, Western Cape, South Africa. Gugulethu is a place of hardship but also of resilience, a place where communities have learned to survive and to hope. It was in this environment that the young Samuel began to experience what those around him recognized as signs of a spiritual calling.

Between 1981 and 1983, as a very young child, he had visions and spiritual experiences that elders interpreted as manifestations of a divine vocation. Many spiritual leaders in African Indigenous Spirituality recount early experiences of this kind, but Samuel's were not fleeting impressions. They were persistent, vivid, and transformative. They marked him as someone

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...the prevailing religious establishment they found themselves destined for a path different from that of his peers.

These early experiences reveal a pattern that would continue throughout his life: a receptiveness to the unseen, an openness to the ancestral world, and a capacity to interpret visions as messages meant for a community.



The full video of the New York event.

At the age of sixteen, in 1993, Samuel joined the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, a Brazilian Pentecostal denomination, in Johannesburg. There, he quickly distinguished himself as a gifted preacher. His sermons carried a force that belied his youth. He became known as a “boy preacher,” someone whose charisma and spiritual authority were unmistakable even to those much older and more experienced.

This period is crucial for understanding his later work. It was in that Brazilian church that he learned the discipline of ministry, the structure of leadership, and the power of organized spiritual communities. But it was also there that he began to sense that his calling was not to remain within an imported and somewhat racist religious framework. Something deeper, something rooted in the land, in the ancestors, in African cosmology, was calling him.

The decisive moment came in 2006, at the Vaal River, near Johannesburg. There, Samuel experienced a revelation that would change the course of his life and, ultimately, the lives of millions.

He saw a golden lampstand with seven colored candles, and beings with abnormally large heads—a vision rich in symbolism, resonant with African spiritual imagery, and unmistakably powerful. In that moment, he understood that he was being called to establish a new African spiritual institution, one that would restore the dignity, depth, and authenticity of African Indigenous Spirituality.

This revelation is the foundational moment of The Revelation Spiritual Home. It is the moment when Samuel Mbiza became IMboni—the Seer, the Voice of the Nation, the one who listens to the ancestors and interprets their messages for the people.

Two years later, on December 5, 2008, he undertook a pilgrimage to the Blood River. This site is charged with historical and spiritual significance. It is a place where narratives of conflict, identity, and memory converge. For the Afrikaners, it is the place of their 1838 victory over the Zulus, which they attribute to the Christian God. Radebe went there accompanied by followers, which he initially referred to as the “Three Mighty.” He enacted a counter-covenant at the Blood River, dissolving what he regarded as a curse imposed on Africans. This act was seen by followers as a turning point in African history, marking the reclaiming of spiritual sovereignty from colonial powers.

African Indigenous Spirituality is deeply connected to land, rivers, mountains, and the places where ancestors walked. By going to the Blood River, Radebe was re-inscribing African spirituality into the geography of South Africa. He was reclaiming sacred space.

Shortly later, during a night vigil at one of the main branches of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, where Radebe was conducting a service, a young boy reportedly vomited a lion’s nail. A “spiritual presence” subsequently confirmed that this signified the dominion as a consequence of the Covenant Radebe had established at the Blood River.

On March 22, 2009, the first service after the separation from the Universal Church was held in a restaurant at Gandhi Square, Johannesburg. This was followed by services held in the basement of a building on Plein Street, during which Radebe temporarily named the institution the “African Church.”





Rosita Šorytė speaking at the New York event.

These humble beginnings were quickly overshadowed by rapid growth. In April, during a large gathering at Johannesburg City Hall, Radebe and his followers adopted the name “The Revelation Church of God,” which he claimed he had received through revelation. Later, the name was changed to “The Revelation Spiritual Home” to emphasize that it is not a church, religion, or religious movement. Radebe insists that Africans do not have a religion. They have spirituality. The Revelation Spiritual Home prefers to be called an “institution,” to avoid religious references it perceives as non-African and colonial.

In May and June 2012, Radebe reported a spiritual revelation instructing his followers to enter into the Covenant with him and his Deity.

In 2014, Radebe acquired a mountain near Clocolan, in South Africa’s Free State. He concluded there a Covenant that was not new but a reaffirmation of the one at the Blood River.

In February 2015, Radebe announced the revelation designating this pact as “the Covenant of Restoration.” In June 2015, Radebe’s followers undertook their first pilgrimage to the mountain to renew their commitment to the Covenant of Restoration. This is their annual pilgrimage, even as its date and location shifted over time.

It is through this spiritual mountain that the revelations about the corrupted faith began to unfold in successive phases, guiding the restoration of African Indigenous Spirituality and African identity.

The institution insists that although the formal process of restoring African Indigenous Spirituality emerged during the 2010s, Radebe’s spiritual gifts had been present since birth, long before the institution’s founding. They explain that, like other IMboni, Radebe grew up in a Christian environment. Nevertheless, he carried an inherent spiritual destiny that pointed toward a different purpose. This inner calling distinguished him and ultimately led to the restoration work he later embodied.

The significance of this restoration lies in the recognition that African Indigenous Spirituality had always been present within him, even as it found fuller expression through progressive divine revelation and institutional formation. In fact, Radebe’s institution has consistently practiced African Indigenous Spirituality, while initially incorporating selected elements of Christianity, reflecting the historical and spiritual realities of African spirituality and religious experience.

And now, what began as a small gathering has grown into what may well be the largest African Indigenous Spirituality institution, with more than three million members and seventy branches across Southern Africa, plus one in Atlanta, Georgia, and one in Ireland.

Massimo and I were struck, during our fieldwork, by the extraordinary richness of the institution’s ritual life: the choreography, the music, the dress codes, the symbolism, the cosmology. Everything is intentional. Everything is meaningful. Everything is rooted in African Indigenous Spirituality.

To understand the institution, one must understand its founder. Dr. Radebe. He is a visionary, a strategist, a teacher, and a custodian of African wisdom.

He is also a man of remarkable discipline. Those who know him speak of his tireless work ethic, his commitment to spiritual practice, and his insistence on excellence. He is demanding, but he is also compassionate. He listens. He guides. He inspires.

In our research, we encountered countless testimonies from women and men who spoke of how their lives had been transformed—how they had found purpose, healing, identity, and community through the teachings of IMboni.

One of the most striking aspects of his leadership is his pan-African vision. His institution is not confined to South Africa. It is expanding across the continent, and its message resonates with Africans everywhere: reclaim your spirituality, reclaim your identity, reclaim your dignity.

It is a call to remember that Africa has its own sacred traditions, cosmologies, and ways of connecting with the divine. A call that stands as a powerful affirmation of African spiritual sovereignty.

Dr. Radebe’s influence is not limited to Africa. He has traveled internationally, participated in global spiritual events, and brought African Indigenous Spirituality to audiences who had never encountered it before. He has

supported the cause of religious liberty internationally. I want to remember here his moving visit last year to Mother Han in the Korean jail where she is unjustly detained. The visit moved me deeply, particularly because I, too, went there to pray with the believers for the liberation of Mother Han during a memorable Korean night.



HJ College's Dr. Thomas Walsh, Inkosi yamaKhosi Omoya IMboni uZwi-Lezwe Radebe, Massimo Introvigne, and Rosita Šorytė at the Honorary Doctorate ceremony,

And now, here in New York, we witness another milestone: the conferral of an honorary doctorate. Although he is not an academic in the conventional sense, IMboni is a scholar of the spirit. His teachings are profound, systematic, and intellectually rich. They draw on African cosmology, ancestral wisdom, symbolic interpretation, and ritual knowledge.

African Indigenous Spirituality has long been marginalized, misunderstood, or dismissed—first by colonial powers, then by missionary religions, and finally by modern secularism. IMboni tells us it is not a relic of the past. It is a living, evolving, dynamic spiritual tradition.

IMboni is the most crucial figure in the contemporary revival of African Indigenous Spirituality. He is making ancient spirituality accessible to new generations. He is demonstrating that African Indigenous Spirituality has something vital to offer to the modern world: a holistic understanding of human beings, a deep respect for ancestors, and a profound connection to nature.

Our world is marked by fragmentation, by loss of meaning, by spiritual disorientation. Many people feel disconnected—from their communities, from their roots, from themselves.

Leaders like IMboni are essential. They remind us that spirituality is not an escape from the world but a way of engaging in it. That identity is not imposed from outside.

Our book is the first academic monograph dedicated to The Revelation Spiritual Home. It is based on extensive fieldwork, interviews, participant observation, and analysis of teachings, rituals, and organizational structure.

Our goal was not to impose external categories, but to listen to the categories that the institution itself uses.

The book is, in many ways, a tribute to the richness of African Indigenous Spirituality. But it is also a tribute to the man who has done more than anyone else to bring African Indigenous Spirituality into the 21st century with dignity, coherence, and vitality. In fact, the book shows that today there would be no revival of African Indigenous Spirituality without IMboni.

If you will allow me to conclude with a personal reflection, writing this book was not only an academic project. It was a journey. A journey into a world of beauty, of depth, of meaning. A journey into a spiritual universe that is both ancient and new. A trip inside the wisdom and power of IMboni.

I am grateful for that journey. And I am thankful to be here tonight, celebrating a man whose life has touched so many.

As we honor IMboni tonight, we are not only reflecting on past achievements. We are celebrating a future—a future in which African Indigenous Spirituality continues to flourish, in which The Revelation Spiritual Home continues to grow, in which IMboni's message of restoration, dignity, and spiritual sovereignty continues to inspire.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my honor to introduce the book "The Revelation Spiritual Home," and it is my even greater honor to pay tribute to the man at its center.

Please join me in celebrating Inkosi yamaKhosi Omoya IMboni uZwi-Lezwe Radebe, a visionary, a teacher, a restorer of African spirituality, and now—

rightly—a recipient of an honorary doctorate.

South Africa, The Revelation Spiritual Home



Rosita Šorytė

Rosita Šorytė was born on September 2, 1965 in Lithuania. In 1988, she graduated from the University of Vilnius in French Language and Literature. In 1994, she got her diploma in international relations from the Institut International d'Administration Publique in Paris.

In 1992, Rosita Šorytė joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania. She has been posted to the Permanent Mission of Lithuania to UNESCO (Paris, 1994-1996), to the Permanent Mission of Lithuania to the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 1996-1998), and was Minister Counselor at the Permanent Mission of Lithuania to the United Nations in 2014-2017, where she had already worked in 2003-2006. In 2011, she worked as the representative of the Lithuanian Chairmanship of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) at the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (Warsaw). In 2013, she chaired the European Union Working Group on Humanitarian Aid on behalf of the Lithuanian pro tempore presidency of the European Union. As a diplomat, she specialized in disarmament, humanitarian aid and peacekeeping issues, with a special interest in the Middle East and religious persecution and discrimination in the area. She also served in elections observation missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Belarus, Burundi, and Senegal.

Her personal interests, outside of international relations and humanitarian aid, include spirituality, world religions, and art. She takes a special interest in refugees escaping their countries due to religious persecution and is co-founder and President of ORLIR, the International Observatory of Religious Liberty of Refugees. She is the author, inter alia, of "Religious Persecution, Refugees, and Right of Asylum," The Journal of CESNUR, 2(1), 2018, 78-99.

Languages (fluent): Lithuanian, English, French, Russian.

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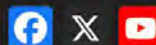
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IMboni iNkosi YamaKhosi oMoya uZwi Lezwe Radebe and the Revival of African Indigenous Spirituality

by Massimo Introvigne | Feb 11, 2026 | Testimonies Global

The founder of The Revelation Spiritual Home presents a unique approach to a notoriously elusive category.

Massimo Introvigne*



IMboni Radebe receiving his honorary doctorate in New York.

*A paper presented at the American launch of the book by Massimo Introvigne and Rosita Šorytė, “The Revelation Spiritual Home: The Revival of African Indigenous Spirituality” (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025), and the Honorary Doctorate Ceremony for iNkosi yamaKhosi Omoya IMboni uZwi-Lezwe Radebe New York, HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership, January 17, 2025.

Distinguished colleagues, honored guests, dear friends—old friends I am glad to see here, friends of IMboni iNkosi YamaKhosi oMoya Dr. uZwi-Lezwe Radebe, and you, friends of dear Mother Han who fill this hall with your devotion and your hope,

allow me to begin with a moment Rosita shortly mentioned that has already entered the shared spiritual memory of two continents. It is a moment that did not take place in a university lecture hall or a ceremonial chamber, but in a cold Korean detention center. It was there, on November 4, that IMboni iNkosi YamaKhosi oMoya Dr. uZwi-Lezwe Radebe walked through the gates to visit an 82-year-old woman unjustly and cruelly detained, a woman millions call the Mother of Peace.

I begin here because this moment is emotionally powerful—and intellectually revealing. It tells us something essential about the man we honor tonight and about the nature of spirituality itself—its capacity to transcend boundaries, unite people across traditions, and illuminate truths that academic categories often struggle to capture. When IMboni emerged from the detention center, he spoke words that many of you heard and that some of you will never forget. He said that to be there, he had “quickly left everything behind.” He said that good people plant good seeds, but in a fallen world, they often reap little. He said that when he saw Mother Han, she was shining. And he said that energy travels—that even if she could not see the faithful gathered outside, their energy would reach her, strengthen her, and give her courage.

These were not the words of a political operative. They were the words of a man who sees the sacred in the suffering of others. They were the words of a man who recognizes that authentic leaders, even when shaped by different histories and different cosmologies, speak a common spiritual language.

This moment, decisive as it was, is not the subject of my talk tonight. But it is the doorway through which I want to enter, because it allows us to understand something essential about the book that Rosita and I have written, “The Revelation Spiritual Home: The Revival of African Indigenous Spirituality.” It will enable us to understand why we wrote it, what questions we sought to answer, and what conclusions we reached. And it allows us to know why the

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showing and that condescends the reader and it allows us to know why the man at the center of that book, IMboni iNkosi YamaKhosi oMoya Dr. uZwi Lezwe Radebe, is a figure worthy of scholarly interest for universities worldwide, someone whose life and work illuminate some of the most contentious debates in the study of religion today.



IMboni Radebe enjoying the New York snow after the Doctorate ceremony.

When I published my first book in 1983, my mentor told me something I have never forgotten, and I mentioned it in a recent conference in Cape Town. He said that publishing a book is a dangerous act. If you publish a bad book, he said, it is a sin you will keep committing even after your death. Every time someone reads it and absorbs false information, you sin again. But if you publish a good book, he added, you will continue earning merit long after you are gone.

Writing about African Indigenous Spirituality (AIS) carries responsibility. It is a subject that is everywhere and nowhere, ancient and contemporary, visible and elusive, revered and dismissed. It is a subject that scholars have approached with fascination, confusion, admiration, and sometimes condescension. It is a subject that resists easy definitions, that challenges Western categories, that refuses to be neatly classified.

When Rosita and I began our research, we quickly realized that we were entering a field marked by decades of debate. Scholars have argued about whether African Indigenous Spirituality should be considered a religion, a tradition, a worldview, a cosmology, or something else entirely. They have debated whether it is unified or diverse, static or dynamic, and whether it is disappearing or undergoing a renaissance. They have proposed typologies, only to have them challenged. They have tried to map it, only to discover that it flows like a river, changing shape as it moves.

One of the earliest attempts to classify African new religious movements was made in 1967 by Harold Turner, who proposed a typology that included what he called “neo-pagan African religious movements.” Nobody would use this label today, but it had the merit of indicating that not all spiritual institutions in Africa were Christian or Muslim. Turner was a careful scholar, aware of the dangers of imposing Western frameworks on African realities. Yet even he could not escape the limitations of his categories. His quest for a typology was later critiqued by James Fernandez, who argued that theological debates—so central to Western religion—were rarely the focus in African contexts. Fernandez suggested that typologies often served Eurocentric dialogues more than African realities.

This insight became one of the guiding principles of our book. We realized that African Indigenous Spirituality cannot be understood through the categories of Western theology. It is not a system of doctrines. It is not a set of beliefs. It is not a religion. It is a living, breathing spiritual ecosystem. It is a way of being, a way of knowing, a way of remembering. It is the whisper in the wind, the rhythm in the drum, the dream that will not let you go. It is the sense that the ancestors are near, that the land is alive, that the sacred is not a distant abstraction but a living presence.

To understand AIS, we had to leave behind the libraries and enter the landscape. We had to stand in the Tsodilo Hills of Botswana, where rock paintings thousands of years old seem to pulse with spiritual energy. We had to listen to the stories of those who entered trances to speak with the unseen. We had to observe rituals, songs, dances, and symbols that carry the memory of generations. And we had to listen to the voices of practitioners, who often define their spirituality not by what it is but by what it is not. It is not religion. It is not tradition. It is not a set of doctrines. It is the breath that animates tradition. It is the fire that gives meaning to ritual. It is the experience that precedes knowledge and is different from belief.





Massimo Introvigne at Tsodilo Hills, Botswana, in 2024.

This is why African Indigenous Spirituality is so difficult to define. It is not a system. It is not a “cult.” It is not a footnote. It is a way of being, one that has survived centuries of suppression, first by Christianity, then by Islam, then by colonialism. It is a way of being that has been marginalized, dismissed, and sometimes persecuted. And yet, it is a way of being that is now undergoing a renaissance, as young Africans rediscover ancestral wisdom and blend it with modern tools. The sacred is going digital. There are Instagram posts about ancestral altars, TikTok videos explaining rituals, and WhatsApp groups for spiritual dreams. The ancestors, it seems, have found Wi-Fi.

But this renaissance is not without risks. Commercialization, misrepresentation, and dilution threaten its integrity. That is why institutions like The Revelation Spiritual Home (TRSH) insist on structure, discipline, and spiritual rigor. They understand that African Indigenous Spirituality is not merely an academic subject of curiosity. It is a site of cultural resistance, a form of epistemic sovereignty. It is a way of saying, We were never spiritually homeless. We were never waiting to be saved. We were never without gods, stories, or sacred places.

This brings me to the central figure of our book: IMboni iNkosi YamaKhosi oMoya Dr. uZwi-Lezwe Radebe. I want to repeat a comment by Rosita, since it is the center of what we are discussing today: to speak of African Indigenous Spirituality today without speaking of IMboni is impossible. He is not simply a leader. He is a seer. He sees beyond the visible, hears the voice of the spirits, and interprets the messages of the divine world for the people. His title, IMboni, describes a spiritual function as old as Africa itself.

Under his leadership, TRSH has grown with astonishing speed. It has become the largest pan-African institution dedicated to African Indigenous Spirituality. It has attracted millions of followers. And it has done so not through marketing or through strategy alone, but through the power of a leader who embodies the revival of AIS.

But TRSH is not only a spiritual institution. It is also a cultural, economic, and social force. Through Trillion Cart Holdings, founded in 2009, TRSH oversees more than seventy companies. These enterprises range from burial schemes and cosmetics to gyms, restaurants, health supplements, travel agencies, and investment advice. The Siyangakhona Burial Scheme was the first venture, designed to serve individuals excluded from other burial programs. Ubuntu Cosmetics, Black Rhino Gyms, and The Burger Joint & Grill are among the most visible enterprises. Trillion Cart also breeds racing pigeons, a passion of Radebe since childhood, and Ankole cattle, linking economic activity to African heritage and symbolism.

Leadership within Trillion Cart includes women in prominent positions, balancing the male-centered spiritual authority of TRSH. Members are encouraged to become financially autonomous through distributorships and micro-businesses. Many move from distributorships to independent companies, supported by the African Centre of Excellence, which trains entrepreneurs. TRSH also sponsors cultural and educational initiatives. The Dr. S.B. Radebe Foundation distributes food and blankets, grants and scholarships, and establishes libraries in African townships. The Trillion Dollar Kids Club promotes financial literacy among children, inspired by Radebe's own childhood experiences. Sports clubs, choirs, theatrical troupes, and publishing houses further extend the institution's reach. In 2023, Radebe was elected African coordinator of the African Forum for Religious and Spiritual Liberty, reflecting his commitment to inter-spiritual dialogue and freedom of religion or belief.

TRSH's organization is deliberately structured to replicate the spiritual hierarchy in the physical world. Just as IMboni Radebe is regarded as the head of a spiritual nation, so too is he seen as the leader of a physical community. His revelations are presented as of national significance, and he is recognized as the Spiritual Guider of Langalibalele II, the reigning king of the AmaHlubi, his ethnic group. The institution's leadership model thus combines spiritual

authority, cultural custodianship, and economic empowerment. It is both hierarchical, with Radebe at the apex, and decentralized, with local leaders managing branches and members encouraged to develop agency and autonomy. This dual structure reflects TRSH's conviction that spirituality and material life are inseparable, and that empowerment must extend from ritual to economics and from healing to entrepreneurship.



Massimo Introvigne and Rosita Šorytė receive flowers after the American launch of their book "The Revelation Spiritual Home."

Of course, no movement of this scale grows without challenges. TRSH has faced scrutiny from South Africa's Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL). In 2015, the CRL launched hearings on the commercialization of religion. Radebe refused to present TRSH's financial records, arguing that the requests violated constitutional protections. The CRL's chairperson attempted, unsuccessfully, to have him arrested for contempt. A member of TRSH was jailed for sending a spiritual warning to the chairperson. Although the CRL proposed legislation requiring all religious organizations to register and disclose finances, no such law was enacted. Scholars warned that the proposals risked undermining religious freedom. In the last few months, however, the CRL has again scrutinized religions and proposed controls. Vigilance continues to be needed. Freedom of belief in Africa, as elsewhere, has many enemies.

The anti-cult campaign in South Africa reached its zenith in 2017, with news outlets portraying new religious and spiritual movements as dangerous. Media coverage depicted TRSH as powerful and influential, often with suspicion. Critics argued that TRSH's integration of spirituality and commerce risks exploitation, while supporters insisted it offers opportunities otherwise denied to marginalized communities.

The challenges faced by TRSH reflect broader tensions across Africa. TRSH positions itself as both defender of African Indigenous Spirituality and innovator in business, a combination that attracts both admiration and hostility. As one early scholar observed, TRSH succeeds because it speaks to the hope that the city's failed aspirations can be restored, that its pollutants can be cleansed, and that the people and things lost in its streets will return home safely.

Tonight, as we launch a book and celebrate the conferral of an honorary doctorate upon IMboni iNkosi YamaKhosi oMoya Dr. uZwi-Lezwe Radebe, we are not only presenting an institution and honoring a man. We are celebrating freedom of religion or belief. We are honoring a continent reclaiming its spiritual voice. We are honoring the revival of a wisdom that colonialism tried to erase but could not extinguish. And we are honoring the extraordinary convergence that took place in a Seoul jail—the convergence of two leaders, two spiritual lineages, united by courage, by compassion, and by the conviction that truth must be defended, even when it is costly.

As scholars, moments like these compel us to reflect not only on the subjects we study but on the posture with which we approach them. African Indigenous Spirituality is not simply another entry in the catalogue of world religions and spirituality; it is a living, breathing universe of meaning. And if we, as academics, wish to understand it, we must begin by acknowledging that our usual instruments—our typologies, our definitions, our inherited categories—are often blunt tools for a reality that is subtle, fluid, and deeply experiential. Too frequently, scholars have approached AIS as if it were an archaeological artifact, something to be excavated, classified, and placed behind glass. But AIS is not an object. It is a voice. It speaks through rituals, through dreams, through landscapes, through the memories of communities. To study it responsibly, we must learn to listen.





IMboni Radebe with faculty of the HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership at the Honorary Doctorate ceremony.

Listening, however, is not a passive act. It requires a willingness to be unsettled. It requires us to take practitioners' emic perspectives seriously, even when they challenge the frameworks we have inherited from Western religious studies. When an IMboni speaks of hearing the gods and the ancestors, or when a sangoma describes entering a trance to communicate with the unseen, our task is not to translate these experiences into categories that make us comfortable. Our task is to understand what these experiences mean within their own cosmological logic. This is not an easy shift. It demands humility—the humility to admit that our academic training, valuable as it is, does not grant us automatic authority over the worlds we study.

Humility, however, is only part of the task. We must also be willing to interrogate our own tools. Many of the typologies that have shaped the study of African spirituality were developed in colonial contexts, often by scholars who, despite their best intentions, viewed African spiritualities through the lens of Christianity or secular rationalism. These frameworks can illuminate certain aspects of AIS, but they can also distort. They can domesticate what is wild, flatten what is multidimensional, and reduce what is sacred to what is merely sociological. If we are to do justice to AIS, we must be willing to ask whether our tools serve understanding or the comfort of familiar categories.

And finally, we must be courageous. To take African Indigenous Spirituality seriously is to challenge some of the foundational assumptions of Western religious studies. It is to acknowledge that the sacred does not always manifest in the ways we expect. It does not always come in the form of scripture, or clergy, or doctrine. Sometimes it comes in the form of beads worn around the neck. Sometimes it comes in the form of a dream that refuses to fade. Sometimes it comes in the form of a dance that carries the memory of generations. To recognize these as legitimate expressions of the sacred is not to romanticize AIS; it is to respect it.

This, ultimately, is what our book attempts to do. It is not an attempt to define AIS once and for all—such a task would be impossible. It is an attempt to approach it with the seriousness it deserves, to listen to its practitioners, to question our own assumptions, and to acknowledge that African Indigenous Spirituality is not waiting for academic validation. It is already alive, already evolving, already speaking. The question is whether we, as scholars, are prepared to hear it, which today means taking off our shoes and accessing the platform from which IMboni iNkosi YamaKhosi oMoya Dr. uZwi Lezwe Radebe speaks to us.

As scholars, we often speak in abstractions. But African Indigenous Spirituality is not an abstraction. It is a presence. It is a force. It is a fire. And tonight, that fire burns brightly in this room.

[Religious Liberty, South Africa, The Revelation Spiritual Home](#)



Massimo Introvigne

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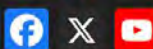
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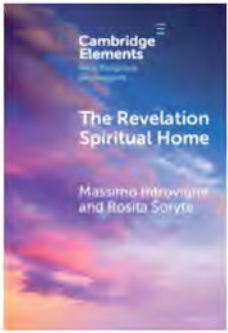
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Summary

Africa hosts thousands of new religious organizations, yet those that have attracted academic attention are mainly derived from Christianity. Less studied is the phenomenon of African Indigenous Spirituality (AIS), including new groups whose program is restoring forms of pre-Christian and pre-Islamic spirituality. After a general introduction to AIS and some historical and contemporary examples, this Element presents an ethnography of what may well be the largest pan-African AIS group, The Revelation Spiritual Home (TRSH). Founded in Johannesburg by Samuel Radebe in 2009, it now has more than seventy branches in southern Africa. Based on fieldwork in TRSH centers and interviews with both Radebe and other leaders and members, as well as with participants in other AIS activities and groups, this Element examines the history, ideas, rituals, and business and educational activities of TRSH, and discusses the reasons for both its success and the opposition it has encountered.

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