

LANGUAGE USAGE IN SOME TRADITIONAL RITUALS IN NORTHERN SOTHO

BY

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DECLARATION

I, **MANKGA RAMASELA WILHEMINA** [REDACTED], declare that the mini-dissertation 'Language usage in some traditional rituals in Northern Sotho' hereby submitted at the University of Limpopo for the degree M.A. in African Languages, was never previously submitted by me for a degree at this or other institutions. All sources implemented are acknowledged.

.....
R.W.Mankga

.....
Date

DEDICATION

This mini-dissertation is dedicated to my husband, ISAAC MOSHWEU, who encourages and supports me, to my mother-in-law, Fanny Ramokone and my mother, Agnes Kganya Madiba, who instilled the love of studying and furthering my education.

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I would like to thank God for creating me with the purpose, to give me wisdom, courage, healthy mind and body to be awarded with.

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To my family who tolerated me during this research for the inconveniences and ignorance, I salute you.

ABSTRACT

Most people feel scared and ashamed when practising their rituals and using the relevant language. The aim of this study is to be an eye opener to make people to change their behaviour and attitude. They should be free to perform their rituals with pride and dignity and regard them as valuable.

Qualitative method was used to gather the information and data in this research in which interviews were conducted. Males and females were visited at their homes from villages around Mamehlabe, Ngwanallela, gaSebotse, gaMashashane and only few were quoted. Their responses were transparent in a way that it is clear that the Northern Sotho people have their own way of using language and performing rituals.

It is recommended that in the performance of rituals and language usage, a full explanation is needed to accumulate practical implementation. The society at large need to be educated in order to transfer the information to the younger generation.

SUMMARY

Chapter one deals with the introduction, problem statement, literature review, aim of the research, objectives, research method, data collection and significance of the study.

Chapter two deals with marriage.

Chapter three deals with death and burial.

Chapter four deals with ancestor worship.

Chapter five deals with birth.

Chapter six deals with female initiation.

Chapter seven deals with conclusion, findings and recommendations.

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CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

Every society is characterised by a particular culture which is distinguished by different rituals. Rituals such as those that were used during marriage, death, ancestor worship, initiation and birth are no longer performed. They are ignored because they were practised by our forefathers for decades without meaning or explanation to the youth. They were performed without any form of specification of their value and significance.

Myberg (1991:89) stresses that "Ritualism is an important aspect in the maintenance of the right relationship both between individuals in their society and their counterparts. Rights are in fact, so common and such an integral part of primary religious that it is almost impossible even to attempt, to represent a catalogue of the types that are performed in instances where individuals or the entire group has broken a taboo or has either wittingly or unwittingly become polluted or unclean. The touching of the dead body is one such act which usually entails consequences performance or purification ritual.

The term 'rite of passage' is often used to refer to 'life cycle' which are concerned with a change of status in the lives of individuals and groups. Rituals surrounding ancestor worship, birth, initiation, marriage and death would be typical examples of life crisis rituals (Bowie 2000:64).

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Traditionally, the Northern Sotho people including other cultures, were participating fully in their rituals such as marriage, death, ancestor worship, initiation and birth. These rituals are no longer given the importance that they deserve. Language is also ignored when performing rituals. Zungu (1986:86) expresses the idea of regarding the general influence of beliefs and practices on language when he states that the type of rituals in which words are tabooed in language is a good reflection in the system of value and beliefs of the society.

Language plays an important role in performing traditional rituals. To liaise with the ancestors, regardless of culture, there is a special language to be used. When using a relevant language, there is a belief that the request or information will be accepted. It is believed that ancestors take a kindly prideful interest in the lives of their progeny. The importance of language is supported by Moto (1980:1) when he states “For the purpose of our study we regard language as the audible or visible human means of communication, i.e. language is the means by which people express their thoughts, feelings and needs in an understandable way”.

Like any other group of a nation, the Northern Sotho people have their own tradition regarding role of language. Tradition needs to be owned but transferred from one person to another. Goetz (1990:84) says “Tradition is the aggregate of customs, beliefs and practices that give continuity to culture, civilisation or social groups and thus shapes its view”. Tradition is something that is continuing and it needs to be respected at all times.

The Northern Sotho community respect the dead more than the living. They believe that there is a strong bond which exists between them and the dead. The dead are believed to go with their descendants wherever they go and care for them. Sacrifices are offered to the dead through the performance of rituals. Rituals are important to many communities in Africa. The act of performing rituals is multi-purpose.

Among some of the groups, rituals are used for the purpose of asking for fortune in the family, alleviating pain from the sick, asking for rain in the time of drought and with famine. Pemberton (2004:1) says “Africans are not alone in employing rituals of divination. The throwing of coins or sticks resulting in a pattern of catalogued and interpreted in the book of Changes was found in China”.

Bowie (2000:4) defines a ritual as “A culturally constructed system of symbolic communication. It is constituted with patterned and ordered sequences of words and acts often expressed in multimedia, whose content and arrangement are

characterized in varying by formality (conventionality), stereotypy (rigidity), condensation (fusion) and redundancy repetition”.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

This is essential part in any research project. It deals with information which has been documented by other researchers. Bless and Higson Smith (1995:22) indicate that “the process of reading whatever has been published that appears relevant to the topic constitutes the literature review”.

Mokhatla (1977:12) tackled the ancestral belief in the religion of the Black people. In his research he talks about the culture of the Tswana and the Bapedi of South Africa. His research also emphasizes the importance of the ancestors, their functions and how they should be respected. However, he does not give a detailed reflection on their language.

According to Delius (1983:63), colonialism has eroded the dignity, tradition and culture of the African people. Amongst them, the Sekhukhune people who never became a hindrance in practising their traditional rites. Rakoma (1995:97) notes (**Setšhaba sa kgobokana gwa tšwelela bana bohle e lego ba mošate go tlo topa tšholo**). (*The community gathered and the children of mošate will be called to conduct a ritual from the door in which the chiefs corpse is placed*). Delius thus deals only with the ritual part and not the language usage.

Sekhukhune based his research on ancestral worship, church domain, occupational domain, mourning domain and matrimony domain. He also focuses on the point of verbal transmission, poetic language and subsidiary custom. He also indicates that ethnography in Northern Sotho speech also reveals that according to paternity, as the following citation reveals about marriage custom as **go tsoša lapa** (*to revive the family name*) or **go nyalwa ke lapa** (*to be married by a family*). The ritual part of the marriage has been left out (Sekhukhune 1988:71).

Mokgokong's study shows that language is the product of culture. In his research (1975:106), he gives the meaning of the terms associated with marriages such as levirate or surrogate, the reason being that the research was conducted long time ago. He analyses some concepts used in marriage such as **go tsenela**. Although Mokgokong has dealt with marriage as a language, he has left out the ritual part of it. In all African tribes, death causes ritual impurity because it interrupts the normal life in the family, but the disruption is temporarily since it can be ritually cleansed. This is supported by Delius (1983:52) when he indicates that after the burial, members of the family gathered together once more to observe a ritual. The language used for the ritual is **go tloša setšhila se senyane** (*the cleansing away of small impurity*). The performance of the ritual has been left out in Delius work.

Mönnig (1983:98-99) indicates that when a woman does not show any signs of pregnancy after some months of marriage, her parents will insist that she consults a traditional healer to **bofela** (*cure her from barrenness*). As with other unfortunate events, the cause is held to lie in any one of the divining set. If the husband is impotent they say **o lomilwe ke mmutla** literally (*he has been beaten by a hare*). This means that he does not know how to cohabit with a woman. Mönnig examined only the language and left out the ritual part.

On the falling of the umbilical cord, Mönnig (1983:103) mentions that the end of the period of seclusion which is determined by the umbilical cord whereby the child is divested on the last vestige of its personal appearance. The fact is announced to all the interested parties informing them that **ngwana o gotše** (*the child is grown*). The ritual part of the period of seclusion is not indicated.

Like the Letsoalo clan, the Northern Sotho people have their own way of informing their relatives who are living far from them about the passing away of one member. They spread *coarse salt* (**letswai la dithoro**) on to the fire. It will burn up and explode in small particles and whoever is from the Letsoalo clan wherever he/she is, will be able to know that someone of his/her clan has passed away and he/she will not have people teasing or troubling him/her (Letsoalo 2009:4). Letsoalo dealt only with the ritual part and left out the language usage.

According to Puleng (1981), as quoted by Mokgoatšana (1996:129), the departed relatives have a strong bond with the living and maintain their ties through the sacrifices and offspring given to them. They are expected to reciprocate for the attention they receive from their descendance. The language used is **ka yo khunama dihlogong tša tate yo a robetšego ka hlatša sello sa pelo ka gomela gae**. (*I went to kneel at the head of my father's tomb, I presented my case and returned home*). Puleng as well dealt with the language and left out the ritual part.

Mbiti (1990:126-127) states that there are different kinds of rituals, namely, personal ritual, agricultural rituals, health rituals, homestead rituals and festival rituals. He further notes that festivals cannot be separated from rituals because they add to the grandeur of both personal and communal rituals. He also stresses that festivals for individuals accompany birth, initiation, marriage and funerals. Mbiti (1990:141) discusses the origin of death in human life, the act of dying, rituals of death and hereafter, the destiny of the soul and how the departed are remembered. He does not mention the language used on these occasions.

Although most of the researchers have dealt with rituals without reflecting on the language used for such occasions, this study intends to fill the void that has been left by, showing the role that is played by language usage in rituals.

4. RITUALS UNDER DISCUSSION

4.1 MARRIAGE AS A RITUAL AND ITS OWN SPECIFIC LANGUAGE

According to my informants, when two partners are married, a goat is slaughtered by the in-laws of the husband. A piece of an intestine, the stomach and liver are rolled around a stick and are cooked together with other meat. When the meat is ready, the in-laws of the husband leave a hand, ribs and the neck which were left uncut. Other portions are divided among the people so that they can be eaten.

When the in-laws of the husband return home, they wrap the intestines, stomach and liver which were rolled around the stick, as well as the hand, ribs in a skin of a goat.

This is called **mosomo** and should be delivered and be eaten the following day with other members of the family.

Marriage has its own special language among the Northern Sotho-speaking people. This is to ensure that culture and custom are followed. For the language to be clear and understood, the in-laws of the husband will say “**Re romilwe ke ba ga Madiba ba re re bone lešaetšana**” (*We have been send by the Madiba family to inform you that they have seen an untidy girl at your home*).

4.2 DEATH AS A RITUAL AND ITS LANGUAGE CHARACTERISTICS

When there is a death in the family, rituals are performed to symbolise Northern Sotho cultural understanding. When a man passes on, a woman will visit a royal family and perform a ritual known as **go lahla sebabi** (*to throw a bulb*). This is to avoid contamination of the people. During the time of ploughing, a part of the field is left. There is a belief that the part is for deceased husband.

When the bereaved family is visited, a special language is used, especially for greetings. The one who visited the family will say “**Re kwa mekgoši, le fodišitše, le apeile ka pitša ye kgolo**”. (*We heard your outcry, you have been cured, you have cooked with a big pot*).

4.3 BIRTH AS A RITUAL AND THE LANGUAGE PART OF IT

Culturally, when a woman is pregnant the ancestors are informed as they are part and parcel of the family. They need to be updated on any development in the family, either good or bad. The traditional healers are consulted for protection against evil things which can disturb a pregnant woman during the process of pregnancy or giving birth. The ritual is performed by using water and snuff. When the woman has gone to give birth, the language used is **o ile madibeng** (*she has gone to the river*).

4.4 INITIATION AS A RITUAL AND ITS OWN SPECIFIC LANGUAGE

In both male and female initiation, before the process can happen, initiates are secluded from the rest. The seclusion symbolises many things such as joining the stage of adulthood. When they return home, they are not allowed to communicate with anyone unless one gives them money. They open their mouth as part of interview about what they were taught during the process. They will also be requested to recite whatever they were taught such as **setlankana**. The respond will be **setšwabokwena**. Boys and girls are treated differently. Boys gather at the royal place and are sprayed with maize grains to symbolise their manhood. Girls also assemble at the chief's palace where they sing special initiation songs. A special traditional healer is invited to perform rituals before the initiatives disperse.

4.5 ANCESTRAL WORSHIP AS A RITUAL AND LANGUAGE CHARACTERISTICS OF IT

Ancestral worship plays an important role in every society. Ancestors are worshipped by performing different rituals, depending on type of culture. Among the Northern Sotho people, there is a special place believed to be for the ancestral spirits. Before the ritual can be conducted, the speaker should first introduce himself or herself to the ancestors. This is to make the situation more friendly and intimate. The speaker will greet the ancestors with a usual word of praise. He or she will pour a drop of water on the ground for the ancestors.

The language used when greetings will be **kgomo, ke nna setlogolo sa ga Madiba, ke a le dumediša balala ka moka**. The speaker then greets the ancestors with the totem **kgomo**. He or she introduces himself or herself and inform the ancestors that he or she greets them all.

5. AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this study is to investigate the role played by language in some rituals in Northern Sotho.

6. OBJECTIVES

This study seeks to look at the following:

- (a) To identify the nature of the language employed in rituals.
- (b) To investigate the impact of modernization on rituals in Northern Sotho.
- (c) To determine the meaning hidden within ritual ceremonies.

7. RESEARCH METHOD

7.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

This is the research that will be used as it gives a good explanation and description of people's knowledge. White (2003:16) defines qualitative research as "naturalistic" because researchers interact with the informants in a natural and unconstructive manner. Qualitative research helps people to understand their own beliefs, perspectives and pre-disposition".

Oral evidence will be used. De Vos (2001:268) stresses that in qualitative research, the researcher emphasizes the human factor and the intimate first-hand knowledge of setting. The researcher avoids distancing himself or herself from the people or the client he or she is studying. This does not mean the arbitrary interjecting of personal opinion or being sloppy about the data collection or using evidence selectively to support the personal prejudice, but taking advantage of personal insights, feelings or human perspectives to understand social life more fully. The researcher will thus make his or her presence explicit and sensitive to prior assumptions.

Another researcher in the field of methodology, Bazely (2007:3) states "The general objective of social sciences and the qualitative method is to understand the pattern of individuals of collective behaviour, the constraints that affect it, the causes and explanation that can help us to understand our societies and ourselves better and predict the consequences of certain situations. Such studies are never entirely objective, as they are inevitably based on certain assumptions and beliefs that cannot

be demonstrated". Slavin (1992:11) indicates that "Qualitative research (also known as naturalistic research), is research intended to explore important social phenomena by immersing the investigator in the situation for extended periods. It is intended to produce information on a given setting in its full richness and complexity".

7.2 DATA COLLECTION

In this study data will be collected from knowledgeable elders and traditional healers of the Northern Sotho speakers. According to Saheed (2007:7), data collection is not just a process of collecting, it is also a process of creation, of using information in unique ways related to the purpose of the study.

7.2.1 Primary Sources

This method occurs when firsthand information is obtained from the informants. Elderly people in the rural areas and traditional healers will be interviewed. An interview is a tool used to collect information. Cohen and Manion (1989:307) define an interview as "a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives and systemic description, prediction or explanation".

During an interview session, structured and unstructured questions will be utilised to enable the researcher to make follow ups. The respondents will be allowed to give as much information as possible without any form of limitation.

Approximately 50 people will be interviewed. The respondents will be selected as follows:

- 10 traditional healers will be interviewed in connection with language usage during marriage rituals.
- 10 elderly women will be questioned about language usage during birth rituals.
- 10 elderly women to be interviewed about female initiation rituals.

- 10 traditional healers will be interviewed about language usage during ancestor worship.
- 10 elderly women will be interviewed about language usage during death rituals.

All respondents will be Northern Sotho-speaking people who are the custodians of Northern Sotho culture. These are the people who practise these rituals and are always following their language and have a full knowledge about it.

7.2.2 Secondary Sources

This method focuses on the information kept in the libraries, i.e. both published and unpublished resources.

8. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is important because it will add to knowledge and preserve Northern Sotho cultural practices. The study will also bring a sense of awareness to the youth with regard to the understanding of values and beliefs which will help them to cope with challenges of life. Knowledge of cultural norms and values will be of significance when it comes to equipping the youth with skills.

CHAPTER 2

2. MARRIAGE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The intention of choosing this study is to find out how the Northern Sotho people use language and how they perform rituals for marriage, death, ancestral worship, birth and initiation. The ways of preserving these rituals will also be considered. The meaning and usage which are attached to these rituals, together with a sense of awareness to the youth and understanding of values and beliefs will help them to cope with the challenges of life.

The episode of this study will start by looking at how the Northern Sotho people view and interpret marriage. The study will rely on the performance and the language usage on that particular ritual. Rituals which will be focussed on are: marriage, death, ancestral worship, birth and initiation.

2.2 THE VIEWING OF MARRIAGE GENERALLY

According to the Northern Sotho people, like other cultures, marriage signifies a bond between a man and a woman. It also creates a relationship between the two families. Marriage indicates that a woman shall leave her parents and stay with her husband. The book of Mathew 19:5-6 says "A man shall leave his mother and father, and be united to his wife and they shall become one. So they are no longer two separated people, but one. No man may divorce what God has joined together". Mönning (1983:129) also elaborated that: "Marriage among the Pedi is not an individual affair legalizing a relationship between a man and a woman, but a group concern legalizing a relationship between two groups of relatives".

3. MARRIAGE COMMUNICATION

Mokgadi Mankga (2011), 73 years of age, gives the information that when a man is about to marry, he will confront his mother using the language '**ke gotše**' (*I am grown up*). This is to alert the parents that it is time for him to marry. Traditionally, man was abided by certain rules to marry within his relatives, especially paternal aunt (*rakgadi*). There was a belief that marrying within the relative will encourage respect and maintain the image of the family. The language used was '**ngwana rakgadi nnyale dikgomo di boele šakeng**' (*my cousin, marry me so that the cattle should return to their kraal*). A man had a relevant cousin to whom he was suppose to marry.

Mokgadi also indicated that '**rakgadi**' (*paternal aunt*) plays an important role in any family, and if she could be crossed, she can cause a serious curse in the family. She is a very strong person, influential figure and she is given more powers as compared to her brothers in the family. The language used when '**rakgadi**' is crossed is '**dikgaba tša borakgadi**' (*internal complaints of paternal aunt*). These complaints are very dangerous in that they can even destroy wrong doers future. She needs not to be ignored in the family.

Marriage depends on the agreement between the two families and it takes place according to the lineage. The two families will unite together and form one big family. Light and Keller (1980:383) state that: "Marriage marks the start of a nuclear family or the expansion and continuation of an extended family". According to Winny Sethosa (2011), 82 years of age, the woman's family will appoint a relevant mediator '**mmaditsela**' who will officially open the negotiations between the two families.

The mediator is responsible for delivering the message from one group to another. i.e she will liase the negotiations between two families. On the arrival to the woman's place (daughter-in-law to-be), there will be official greetings. Winny also added that mediator will formally approach the woman's parents. The conversation will be started by '**mmaditsela**' together with the woman's parents (the in-laws-to-be). The language used will be '**ke romilwe ke ba ga Mankga ba re ke tlo kgopela sego sa meetse ebile ba kgopela ditsela**' (*I have been sent by the Mankga's family to ask for a gourd of water and they also ask for the way*).

The woman's parents will act as if they are taken aback though they are aware that it is tradition. They will ask the name of the daughter-in-law-to-be. **'Mmaditsela'** will respond by disclosing the name. The daughter-in-law-to-be will be called and be informed. My informants also indicated that there is no other way in which the daughter can refuse because the parents have already accepted.

Traditionally, the parents are not allowed to make a decision alone. Their respond will be **'ga re bagolonoši, re tla tsebiša ba gabo'** (*we are not the only elders, we will inform other elders*). The two families will make an appointment on what day they will meet. **'Mmaditsela'** will return home and give a report about the outcome of the initial negotiations to her own family. When all families have reached an agreement, a message will be sent to the prospective husband's group on an appointment day when the mediator can appear before all the relatives of the woman's group.

3.1 A FORMAL MARRIAGE COMMUNICATION

When **'mmaditsela'** on the groom's side returned, she will be accompanied by two or three of her relatives. The two families will conduct formal negotiations where the discussions will take place strictly according to the rules. Negotiations will be in line with the rank of the members in the family. On their arrival, **'mmaditsela'** will request one of the groom's side. They will be welcomed and shown a special hut (**moralala**) where they can stay during the negotiations.

Sara Kanyago (2011), 76 years of age, states that **'mmaditsela'** on the groom's side will make a formal greeting to the bride group and inform them that **'re fihlile'** (*we have arrived*). Sara also indicates that **'mmaditsela'** on the groom's side will inform **'mmaditsela'** on the bride's group using the language **'ke romilwe ke ba ga Mankga ba re ke tlo kgopela sego sa meetse ebile re kgopela ditsela'** (*I have been sent by the Mankga's family to ask for a gourd of water and we also ask for the way*).

According to Salphy Manamela (2011), 79 years of age, **'mmaditsela'** on the bride's side will address the message according to their immediate superior in the family until it reaches the junior person. When the message is passed from one person to another,

the language used will be '**le a di swara, ke ba ga Mankga ba re ba kgopela sego sa meetse ebile ba kgopela le ditsela**' (*can you hear, the Mankga's family ask for a gourd of water and also ask for the way*).

My informants say that when everyone in the family is satisfied with the negotiations, the response will be '**a ba tliše re je, ke kgale re swerwe ke tlala**' (*let them give us to eat, is long that we were hungry*). Salphy (2011), 79 years of age, also discloses that traditionally, it was a taboo that cattle for **lobola** could be three or five, the reason being that three and five are odd numbers and the other cattle will lack a partner. It was therefore compulsory that even numbers should be used.

The marriage goods of the Northern Sotho people are not decided by the bride's group, but stipulated by the relative of the groom. The relative of the groom will decide on how many cattle they can contribute. The number of the cattle will be six, eight or ten, as long as it is an even number. The language used is '**thebele ya mosadi**' (*formal marriage of a woman*).

As soon as the groom's relative are ready, '**mmaditsela**' will inform '**mmaditsela**' on the bride's side and make an appointment. The parents of the groom too will contribute cattle or other goods to help their son. The prepared marriage goods will be: ten cattle, one goat, a cloth measured in metres, the walking sticks, two blankets, a jacket and a snuff. Carol Masenya (2011), 80 years of age, defines the marriage goods by saying that: 'cattle are for the bride's parents, a goat is for opening the snuff, blankets are for the bride and mother, jacket is for father-in-law, cloth is for the bride, walking sticks are for '**bakgonyana**' (*special people for marriage*). The walking sticks (**dipatla**) will be collected on the day of the wedding feast.

3.2 TRANSFER OF MARRIAGE GOODS

The next stage in the proceedings starts when the marriage goods (**magadi**) are transferred. France Monama (2011), 74 years of age, gives the information that a meeting will be arranged from the young man's family deciding on the amount of cattle they can contribute. The decision will start from the father informing the relative how

many cattle he intends to contribute. The other members of the family will follow descending orderly according to their rank, each stating how much he/she can contribute.

As soon as everything is arranged, '**mmaditsela**' on the groom's side will inform the relative that they are ready. The latter will commence with the preparations of African beer. By so doing, they also alert them that they too are ready. On the day of an appointment, the groom's relative sends five people and one of them is '**mmaditsela**'. These people are called '**bakgonyana**' (*special people for marriage*) and play an important role in the marriage as they are their group's official representatives and act as '**dihlatse**' (*witnesses*) of the transactions.

On their arrival to the bride's place, they will be holding a white flag as a public sign. This is to inform everybody about the negotiations of the transactions marriage. '**Bakgonyana**' will wear blankets. They are not allowed to enter the gate. They will wait outside singing different marriage songs like '**ba ga Madiba thibelang dimpša tše di se ke tša re loma**' (*the Madiba's family protect us from these dogs so that they cannot bite us*). Later on, they are permitted to enter the entrance after putting something down like brooch '**tlhabišo**'. They are welcomed by teenagers (two boys and two girls). Boys will collect the cattle to the kraal while girls will be accompanying '**bakgonyana**' to their special hut. Boys are also responsible for collecting '**dipatla**' (*walking sticks which 'bakgonyana' have brought along*).

Flora Mokonyama (2011), 82 years of age, indicated that on their arrival to the special hut, they will request for '**mmaditsela**' of their side. When she has arrived, they will officially pass their greetings to the bride's family and use the language '**di se re tshela tša ga Madiba**' (*let them not skip us from Madiba's family*). '**Mmaditsela**' will deliver the message to the bride's family and their respond will be '**ditlala, ditlala tša gabolena**' (*Our hunger is also your hunger*). The bride's family will carry on by using the language '**welawelang**' (*deliver what you have brought in*).

'**Mmaditsela**' on the groom's family will respond by delivering the marriage goods which they have brought to the family. Flora adds that it is tradition that all '**magadi**' (*marriage*

goods) are not delivered simultaneously. Two to three cattle can be left hidden and be revealed when the bride's side is unsatisfied with '**magadi**' (*marriage goods*). The language used to indicate dissatisfaction will be '**ga se re khore**' (*we are not enough*). The hidden cattle will be revealed and the language used will be '**le re khorišitše**' (*you have made us satisfied*). The bride's family will ululate to show their satisfaction.

Cate Mothapo (2011), 83 years of age, says that after the transference of '**magadi**', the groom's side is given a special goat. '**Mmaditsela**' on the bride's family will inform '**mmaditsela**' on the groom's side that '**ba ga Madiba ba re sešebo sa lena se se**' (*Madiba's family says here is your relish*). The process of slaughtering and cooking is performed by '**bakgonyana**'. The crowd will also have its special meat.

Food for bakgonyana is prepared by young girls. Before they are provided with food, they are given hot water as part of their treatment. Before water can be normalised, '**bakgonyana**' are expected to give them brooch or bangle. After the completion of eating, people are supplied with mabele beer. Transference of marriage goods is followed by traditional wedding.

3.3 TRADITIONAL WEDDING

After the process of transferring marriage goods is concluded, the two families will come together and arrange the date for traditional wedding. One of my informants indicates that the traditional wedding occurs in the absence of the groom. Before the day of the wedding, '**mmaditsela**', '**bakgonyana**' and the bridesmaids will officially come to collect their bride. The language used is '**go tšea ngwetši**' (*to collect the bride*). On their arrival, they will sing with confidence some marriage songs like '**phutha re tsamaye ga ra tlela bosawana**' (*pack and lets go, we are not here to play*). The grooms family will be given a special hut to stay.

During their stay, '**bakgonyana**' and the bridesmaids are completely ignored by the relative of the bride. This is a sign to show that the bride's side have no standing amongst them because they are separating them with their daughter. The groom's side will also undergo a treatment called '**go phura leboto**' (*to chew the wall*). This is a

process of no food and drink during their stay. Although they have refused with food, they will keep on singing the marriage songs and dance. On eve of the wedding, the bride is smeared with '**letsoku**' (*a ground maroen stone mixed with fats*) all over the body.

One of my informants, Cate Mothapo (2011), 83 years of age discloses that when a bride goes to '**bogadi**' (*husband's family*), her parents perform a ritual called '**serwalo**'. This is a process of cutting at the middle of the head with a razor, leaving hair from both left and right side. When blood comes out, they smear with traditional medicines uttering the words '**ga go yo a go nyatsago**' (*no one should disrespect you*). There is a belief that they protect her not to be teased by the grooms relatives and she should always be respected and dignified.

Mary Mathobela (2011), 75 years of age, states that the following day the bride's relative presents a special goat to the relative of the groom to be slaughtered. This is a thanksgiving to the parents of the groom for fulfilling their obligations. When the meat is ready, a ritual is performed. They roll the intestines around the stick and the head together with the hands. They are wrapped with a skin of the goat. '**Mmaditsela**' of the groom will cook a special porridge called '**bogobe bja ngwana**' (*child's porridge*). It will be put into a basket (**seroto**). This porridge together with the wrapped meat will be taken to the groom's family when they return home.

A cow will be slaughtered for the crowd. Food is prepared and supplied to everyone at the wedding. '**Bakgonyana**' are supplied with food by young girls with the instruction from '**mmaditsela**' of the bride's side. They will also receive some treatment where they are given hot water which will require them to put something before bringing it to normal. Presents or gifts like brooch, bangles or necklace will be given to these young girls.

The bride will prepare herself for wedding. She is smeared with '**letsoku**' for the second time. She wears a skin of a cow, traditional bangles on hands and legs, and covering the body with a blanket. The bridesmaids also wear skin of a cow. Mary adds that the bride and her bridesmaids will crawl with their knees on '**legogo**' (*reed mat*) to

'**mošaša**' (a special hut for the wedding). On arrival, the bride is given a name by her father's elder brother (**ramogolo**). The name will be the one which the relative has agreed upon.

One of my sources indicates that the bride may formally be named '**Mmamolatelo**' for example, which means that the bride has followed '**rakgadi**' (Father's sister). The name will be called by all people, especially family members. The name should be followed by a special cattle '**kgomo ya leina**' from the one who is naming her. People will ululate to express their happiness. During the wedding, the bride parents are expected to give their daughter some marriage laws like: '**hlompha ba bogadi**' (respect your in-laws), '**monna ge a boile bošego, o se ke wa mmotšiša gore o tšwa kae**' (when the man arrives late, don't ask him where he comes from). Others will follow and present their different presents.

After the completion of the wedding, the bride, her **mmaditsela** and bridesmaids will prepare themselves to '**bogadi**' (husband's home). The language used is '**go iša ngwetši bogadi**' (to take the bride to the husband's home). '**Mmaditsela**' on the groom's side must ensure that all the necessary goods and walking sticks are collected before they leave. When they leave, the bride's relative perform a ritual by spreading them with maize grains. This symbolises that the groom's relatives are separating them with their daughter.

3.4 HOME COMING OF THE BRIDE

Traditionally when the bride goes to '**bogadi**', she will find her in-laws ready for acceptance and ensure that she lives with her in-laws until they are separated by death. The language used is '**lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi**' (the grave of a woman is at her husband's home). Flora Sepuru (2011), 82 years of age, discloses that they perform a ritual by taking a grass and weave it to make a grass ring. They also mix traditional herbs with a lion's fats. They smear a ring with that mixture. They dig a hole at the entrance, put the grass ring and cover it with soil. There is a belief that the bride will understand their behaviours, manners and she will leave according to their wish. She will not disclose evil things to either friends or family.

On their arrival, the groom's family welcome them by ululations. This is to accept her as part of their family. They will sing different marriage songs and dance. Some of the songs will be '**mmatswale ngwetši ke ye o e amogele**' (*mother in-law here is a bride, accept her*). Everything which is brought by the bride family will be delivered to '**mmaditsela**'. Their guests from the bride family will be taken to a special hut. On the eve of the wedding, the bride will be smeared with '**letsoku**'. '**Bakgonyana**' will not receive a treatment because they are at their respective home.

Early in the morning the bridesmaids will clean the yard and prepare water to bath. People will be supplied with porridge and meat which were brought from the bride's family. Before supplying '**bogobe bja ngwana**' (*child's porridge*), '**mmaditsela**' will cut a piece and eat. The language used is '**go ntšha sehlare**' (*to take out the medicine*). This is to proof that there is nothing poisonous. Everyone will be supplied with that porridge.

The bride and bridesmaids will prepare themselves for wearing wedding clothes. The bride will be smeared with '**letsoku**' all over the body and wear traditional clothes. After completion, the bride will crawl with her knees to '**mošaša**' (*special hut*) followed by her bridesmaids. '**Rakgadi**' will perform her duty by giving a bride the name. She will name her '**Mmamoyagabo**'. The name means that the bride has come to her own family. People will ululate as a symbol of happiness. There will be marriage laws directed to the groom in his absence. Some of the laws will be '**o hlokomele mosadi yo**' (*take care of this woman*). Relatives and neighbours will follow to give marriage laws until the end on that day. People will be served with '**matsoku**' (*a special African beer for the wedding*). Although a bride has been formally transferred into a new group, she will still turn back to her parents for the birth of her first child, unless if is a second child.

3.5 TO POUR OUT THE BRIDAL

To pour out a bridal is a process whereby a bride return to her home for few days. It symbolised that a bride has been accepted by her in-laws and therefore she must return home to receive final laws from her parents. The language used for the process is '**go tšholla bongwetši**' (*to pour out the bridal*).

Rosina Tjale (2011), 79 years of age, indicates that the process of pouring out a bridal is not undergone by every woman, but only those who are married. After the woman has performed all her relevant duties, she return home. **'Mmaditsela'** on the groom's side will cook a special porridge known as **'bogobe bja ngwana'** (*child's porridge*) and prepare a snuff. She will accompany the bride to her maiden home. On their arrival, they will request **'mmaditsela'** on the bride's side. Formal greetings will be passed and will formally inform her that **'ke romilwe ke ba ga Mankga go tliša mmarena go tšholla bongwetsi'** (*I have been sent by the Mankga's family to bring our mother to pour out her bridal*). The message will be delivered to the family.

The following day, all the women who were taking part during the wedding, will be invited. When they arrive, **'mmaditsela'** on their side will deliver porridge which was brought from the groom's side. **'Mmaditsela'** will be the first to cut a piece of porridge and eat. This is to ensure that there is no poison in it. The language used is **'go ntšha moya'** (*to take our air*). Everyone will be supplied with porridge and snuff. After a month, she will turn back to **'bogadi'** accompanied by her **mmaditsela**. Her in-laws will formally accept her.

Rosina adds that after the bride has returned home, she will come back with something from her parents that will strengthen the love. She will come with a powdered medicine called **'moratišo'**. This is a traditional medicine prepared by a traditional healer so that the two must stay together and avoid conflict that might occur between them. The wife will cook the meat and when it is ready, she uses her left hand to spread the powdered medicine on the meat. She mixes it together in **'thiswana'** (*a traditional plate used specifically for relish*). The bride and groom will eat together. By so doing, there is a belief that a husband will not think of outside affair and no conflicts can occur between them.

4. TYPES OF MARRIAGE

4.1 TO BE MARRIED BY A FAMILY

Traditionally, every woman was compelled to be married. To be married by a family '**go nyalwa ke lapa**' play an important role in the past. This is a type of a custom whereby a woman marry other women for herself because there is no one who will look after her. The wealth belongs to the bride. The in-laws are the one to carry all the responsibilities. The bride will look for a man of her choice who will give her children. The children are named after the relative of a supposed father. The aim is to perpetuate the standing name which is likely to die out.

4.2 TWO OR THREE WOMEN MARRIED BY ONE MAN

This type of marriage played an important role in the past. Nowadays it is rare to practise it because of transformation. The marriage has been replaced by an adoption. It is a marriage where a man is bound to marry two or more women because of some reasons. The language used for the marriage is '**go nyalwa segadikana**' (*to be married by one man*). The marriage occurs if the principal wife does not bear children. It also took place because of large number of women. The marriage was practised in order to maintain the image of the principal wife who did not conceive. Children born in such type of marriage should give a principal wife a full respect.

4.3 LEVIRATE CUSTOM

This type of marriage took place when the husband had died. This a custom where a younger brother of the deceased is appointed to enter into levirate union with the wife of the deceased. The language used is '**go tsena ntlong**' (*levirate custom*). This means to have relation with your deceased brother's wife. The children who follow together with those born of the late husband, were all referred to the children of the deceased and were named after his family. The children would be supported and respected by the family.

4.4 TO CLEANSE THE THIGHS

According to one of my informants Elizabeth Manamela (2011), 80 years of age, this type of marriage occurred when a principal wife did not bear children. She also added that most cultures were practising this type of marriage including the Tsonga. When a woman was unable to produce children, it was compulsory that a man must marry her younger sister who would bear children on her behalf. This type of marriage is known as '**hlatswadirope**' (*to cleanse the thighs*). This is to cleanse the thighs of the sister who is not procreating. The two wives would stay together. The principal wife should not be ignored because of her bareness. She must be respected and be loved.

4.5 GONE FOR THE HOUSE

Elizabeth (2011), 80 years of age, defines this type of marriage as the one that the younger sister is married by her sister's husband after her death. The marriage is known as '**seyantlo**' (*gone for the house*) of the deceased sister. Traditionally, after the death of the wife, a husband could not live alone. He needed someone, especially from the wife's family who would look after him and the children. There was a belief that the younger sister would feel pity for her sister's children. She would take responsibility like their biological mother would do.

5. CONCLUSION

Traditional marriage played an important role in the Northern Sotho culture in the past. Everything which was practised, showed respect and dignity. Everyone was having a relevant family to marry. African marriage was encouraging family members to interfere whenever there were differences, with the aim of protecting the image of the relative. The decision of the marriage was in the hands of the parents. The woman stays at '**bogadi**' until she is separated by death.

The Western marriage has disadvantages when compared to the African marriage. The Western marriage is full of divorces, separations and protection orders. Everyone has

the right in the family. Civilization has brought disasters in the families where a husband can kill the whole family.

CHAPTER 3

3. DEATH AND BURIAL

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Fowler & Fowler (1991:297) define death as the final cessation of vital functions in an organism, the ending of life. Like any other culture, the Northern Sotho has its own way of using language and performing different rituals when there is a death in the family.

Death signifies that a person is no more existing on earth and the attaining of eternal life. In all Africans, death causes ritual impurity just as it interrupts the normal life, but the interruption is not for permanent since it can be ritually cleansed and normal life be restored. Death is always associated with bad things or regarded as curse.

3.2 DEATH COMMUNICATION

When death is about to occur in the family, there are number of signs which indicate that something bad is coming. These signs among others include unusual crying of a dog. Michael (2011), 78 years of age, indicated that the dog will be chased away so that it can completely stop crying because it is irritating. The language used for crying is '**go hlaba modi**' (*a bad omen*). Death can be symbolised by a baby spending a sleepless night and crying.

Michael also added that when someone is informed about death, he/she spits the saliva. This symbolises that something bad has happened, and it should be spitted out so that it can be easily forgotten. Saliva symbolises purity and cleanliness.

The first people to be informed about death are the close relatives and the neighbours. They will assemble in the bereaved's family in order to mourn with them. There will be a representative from the family who will be responsible for attending anyone who visits the family. Any type of a language used, will have a response. Cynthia Kola (2011), 82

years of age, explained that on their arrival, they have special greetings. The language used will be:

'Le fodišitše' (*you have cured*). This language is used when a person was in long illness. It means that he/she has recovered from the illness.

'Le apeile ka pitša ye kgolo' (*you have cooked with a big pot*).

'Re kwa mekgoši ya lena' (*we heard your shouting*).

The information about death is spread and in that way it is known to other people.

'Re lotšhang?' (*what do we greet?*). We need not to greet for what has happened.

'Le dirile eng?' (*what have you done?*).

Mourning in the form of a rhetoric question.

The respond for the language will be:

'O fodile' he / she is cured.

'Re tloga re apeile ka ye kgolo' (*we have indeed cooked with a big one*).

'A tša rena ga di fele' (*ours do not end*).

'Ke ge re ka reng: (*what can we say?*).

'Go diregile' (*it has been done*).

According to Hilda Maponya (2011), 85 years of age, when they want to inform the close affected relatives who are too far about the death, they perform a ritual by making fire and spread coarse salt on it. When salt begins to burn up and explode in small particles, they call the names of people to whom death is informed saying **'Lesiba, Matome, Mokgadi bjalo bjalo, tsebang gore malomewalena Phofedi o hlokafetše, le hlabje ke phefo'**. (*Lesiba, Matome, Mokgadi etc. know that your uncle Phofedi has passed away*). There is a belief that the ritual will protect them from being teased by people.

When there is a child at the bereaved family, the message will be delivered during the night while he/she is sleeping. The language will be **'Malose, tseba gore papago o hlokofetše, o ka se sa mmona'** (*Malose, know that your father has passed away and you will miss him forever*). This is to avoid the child from asking frequently about the deceased and will forget him easily.

3.3 THE DECEASED BODY

When the neighbours arrive at the affected family, Hilda (2011), 85 years of age, indicated that they will pull arms and knees in towards the corpse and ensure that the corpse's eyes are closed. They perform a ritual by taking sand, coarse salt and make them wet, put the corpse on that wet sand. They took a coarse salt, cover it with a cloth and make it wet. They put the one on the navel (**mokhuba**) and the other on the throat (**mogolo**). The ritual is performed in order to protect the corpse from being decomposed. It will last for two to three days without being decomposed.

On the second day of the death, they make thorough preparations for the burial. If the deceased is a woman, they slaughter a cow, and if is a man, they slaughter an ox. One of my informants, Frederick Phaka (2011), 78 years of age, states that they perform a ritual by taking a hide (**mokgopha**) of that slaughtered cow or ox and wrap it around the deceased. The language used is '**kobo ya gago še re go apeša yona gore o se ke wa bolawa ke phefo**' (*here is your blanket, we are making you to wear so that you cannot feel cold*).

The '**diphiri**' (*men who are responsible for digging the grave*) dig the grave in the kraal. They are called the hynas because they perform the duty of digging during the night and they are not expected to be seen. Frederick Phaka added that the grave will be digged deep and deviates from its position. This is to ensure that the corpse is protected from the soil.

3.3.1 Burial

During the burial, the corpse should be positioned in a cave (**legaga**). They will use big stones to support the corpse so that it must not roll. One of '**diphiri**' will announce that '**etlang le mo felegetše**' (*come and accompany him/her*). The relative will perform a ritual by pouring the soil into the grave. When the process is completed, '**diphiri**' will refill the grave with soil using spades. They take two big stones and put one on the head, and the other on the feet of the grave. One of the relative will perform a ritual by

putting a gourd full of mealies on the grave. This is a symbol that they will eat everything with him.

When the crowd returned home of the deceased, they will find water at the entrance and everyone who comes from the burial is expected to perform a ritual by washing his/her hands. Selina Legodi (2011), 84 years of age, discloses that this ritual is performed in order to avoid '**makgoma**' (*contamination*) to their families. They will be supplied with porridge and '**mogoga**' (*funeral meat cooked without pouring salt*).

4. THE PERIOD OF CLEANSING

Agnes Lebelo (2011), 86 years of age, states that in the following day, they invite a traditional healer who is an expert in healing widows/widowers. On arrival, the language used will be '**e tla o ntšhe motho makwateng**' (*to heal a widow/widower*). Before the process commences, he will give the close relatives '**seruma**' to drink. This is a traditional herb poured in water after the night of the burial. This is to ensure that they forget about the deceased.

The traditional healer performs a ritual by making fire and take '**magala**' (*charred wood*) and put them into '**lengeta**' (*broken clay pot*). Charred wood are mixed together with traditional herbs. The widow and her last born child will '**arabela**' (*covered themselves with a hide of a cow so that they can inhale the circulating smoke*). After the process, the ashes (**melora**) are ground and mixed with a cow fats, and leaving other to be licked (**latswiwa**) by the widow and her last born child. The widow, together with her last born child are smeared with that mixture of medicine (herbs) all over the body. This serves to everyone that the widow's husband has passed away. The remaining unmixed ashes will be used by the widow and her child daily until it is finished. The child will wear '**bolokwana**' (*traditional necklace*) around his/her neck. There is a belief that '**bolokwana**' will protect the child from slumbering.

4.1 TABOOS DURING THE MOURNING PERIOD

This is a special period where the unnecessary occupations cease. The period will be observed and respected by the family. Edith Sepuru (2011), 79 years of age, discloses that during this period, rejoicing (celebrations) which were in preparation before the death (mourning period) are postponed. The language used for the period is '**go ilelwa**' (*period of refrains*). The widow is restricted to many things such as: not to make noise, not to arrive home after the sunset, not to greet people first, stay away from sex etc. There is a belief that the widow can pass her contamination (**makgoma**) to people.

Edith also added that before the widow can enter into the field, she must throw '**sebabi**' (*traditional bulb herb*). This is to ensure that all planted seeds or crops grow well. During the time of ploughing, a certain portion of the field remain unploughed. The language used is '**go kgetlola tšhemo**' (*to cut the field*). There is a belief that the portion is left for the deceased and a symbol that when people pass next to the field, they can realise that the head of the family has passed away. The widow is not allowed to enter into the cattle kraal, the reason being that she can disturb the cattle to procreate because of her contamination.

One of my informants, Rosina Phadu (2011), 81 years of age, states that a widow is not allowed to use a dung mixture during the day unless at night to patch the damaged portion of hut wall. There is a belief that the family is still mourning as such public decorations need to be avoided. Married women are prohibited to enter into the widow's hut. The main reason is that their husbands are still alive and they will be contaminated. The hut of the widow is not allowed to be kept closed and without a light inside because the darkness already exists in it.

4.2 TO BRING THE DEATH HOME

After a month, a widow is expected to return to her maiden home accompanied by two or three women of her paternal relatives. The language used is '**go iša lehu gae**' (*to take the death home*). According to the information, the process is undergone by only married widows. This is to inform her relatives formally about the death of their son-in-

law. The language used for the process is '**go timelwa ke mollo**' (*passing away of the husband*).

All the relatives will be invited. On their arrival, '**rakgadi**' (*paternal aunt*) is the one who is responsible for addressing the crowd. Letsoalo in her thesis (2009:25) indicated that women, especially the paternal aunts (**borakgadi**) are very strong and are given more powers as compared to their brothers. The language used will be '**ngwana wa lena šo o tlišitše lehu gae**' (*here is your child, she brought the death home*).

The two families will spend the day together and the husband's family returns home in the afternoon. The widow must make sure that she arrives home before the sunset. This is to respect one of the laws which are given. Food will be prepared and be supplied to people. People will be given permission to give her presents like brooch (**tlhabišo**) and traditional necklaces (**dipheta**).

4.3 CLEANSING AWAY OF THE IMPURITY

This is a normal period when a widow can be released from a mourning period to a normal life. The period occurs after a year. The date and the month for the ritual should correspond with the one that the deceased passed or buried on it.

Frank Maleka (2011), 77 years of age, gives the information that the two families will come together and agree on the date the ritual can be performed. He also adds that a relevant mediator will be sent to the maternal family to deliver the message about the ritual. The language used will be '**ke tlo le botša gore ke nako ya gore ngwana a boele makwateng**' (*I am here to inform you that is time that the child is returning to the people*). One of my sources mentions that everything is prepared by the widow's parents, the reason being that she is their daughter, as such they need to contribute.

The preparations of '**mabele**' (*sorghum*) beer will commence. During the process, before '**mabele**' (sorghum) can be cooked, they perform a ritual by informing the deceased that here is sorghum beer, we are preparing '**tlhobošo** (*ritual*) for you. They only use water and snuff for the ritual. The deceased should be informed about any step taken during the preparation. This is to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

On the day of cleansing, a specialised traditional healer will be invited to perform the necessarily rituals to be undergone by a widow. The widow and her last born child are given '**moidišo**' (traditional herbs) which will prevent them from being contaminated (*kgomiša*). The language used is '**go ntšha makgoma**' (*to take out contamination*).

Frank Maleka discloses that on the day of cleansing, an African beer will be put on the centre of a courtyard where a widow is expected to choose a male among family members who will take care of her from now henceforth. The widow will perform a ritual by taking '**sego**' (*gourd*) with her left hand and fetch African beer. The left hand symbolises that her husband who was representing her right hand, had passed away. She will take a sip, and after that give one of a man whom she is interested. If she is not interested in anyone, she will indicate that by pouring African beer on the ground. This means that she will make her own choice of lover outside the family members, even though it was rarely practised in the past.

5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter that deals with death and rituals, it was apparent that language used and rituals performed, bear certain significance and meaning to the Northern Sotho culture. The performances of these activities used during and after death and burial, should not be ignored because they play a vital role.

If one compares the death from the past and nowadays, one may realise that they completely differ. In the past, death was regarded as a monster. The statement is supported by the language '**o tšerwe ke phiri**' (*he/she has been taken by a wolf*).

Long ago, people were so creative in a way that they made their own mortuaries. Children were taught how to respect death and there was a belief that they would also disappear.

Nowadays, death is no more regarded as a monster. Everyone can attend the funeral irrespective of age. A country is full of mortuaries which is one of the effective businesses around the world. Deceased spent a long period at the mortuaries and families are preparing descent funerals. Funerals are regarded as competitions, especially coffins and food. Death is no more a monster, but a commercial. '**Mogoga**' (*meat cooked without salt*) has lost its value and it is now replaced by delicious food. Descent catering dominates more in funerals i.e. the so-called after tears.

CHAPTER 4

4. ANCESTRAL WORSHIP

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The ancestral worship plays an important role in any society. Ancestral worship has benefits to those who consider it seriously. It is the responsibility of the ancestors to console their dependants whenever they are in a stressful condition. Like any other culture, the ancestral worship of the Northern Sotho people should be thanked for their blessings and to be fed through sacrifices. The living and the departed relatives have a strong bond. Ancestors have power over life and death and can bring drought to their descendants. The influence that the living has on their ancestral spirits forms the basis of all rites connected with their ancestors.

Ancestral worship is the veneration and respect shown to the dead in many cultures. It is one of the human history's oldest and most basic religious beliefs that when a family member dies, he/she joins the spirits no longer burdened with bodies and are thought to be very powerful, possessing the ability to help or harm in the living world (Spencer 1995:402).

The ancestors does not have a direct conversation with the living. They have a power to visit people in their dreams which can be frequent in a way that it can threaten the individual. The traditional healer is the only one to give a direction because he/she has knowledge of interpreting through his/her diving bones.

4.2 THROWING OF BONES

In the thesis of Phoshoko (2006), Cooper (2004:1) is quoted as defining bone throwing as a process which involves ancestral spirits and enables the healer to investigate the cause of a disease and the method of treatment by casting bones. The bones are from animals and are of various shapes and sizes, some with special markings. The bones speak to the healer according to the position in which they fall. They tell how to resolve

disputes, how to get rid of an enemy and many things. In order to combat sickness, bones are cast to discover which bad spirits are affecting the patient and causing illness and how this bad influence could be removed.

According to Paulina Mokobane (2011), 75 years of age, throwing of bones is conducted by a person who is a traditional healer. Before an individual is given a permission to enter the special hut, he/she is compelled to remove the shoes. This is to respect the ancestors. Before the throwing of bones can occur, the individual is expected to put money down. The language used is '**maphuthollathebele**' (*the official opening of the bones*).

Before the process of throwing bones can occur, the individual should first pour air in the bag. The language used is '**go tshela moya**' (*to pour air*). This is done in order to make the dead bones alive because they are from dead bones and should be able to give the correct information. According to Khosa (2009:84), the blowing of some air is like blowing life to those dead bones so as to make them alive in order to give the required information.

Paulina also added that the individual will be informed to take the bag '**mokotlana**' of the bones and put it on the head using the language '**hlogo ke yona ye, ke nyaka go tseba gore bothata bja lapa la ka ke eng go se na le tšwelopele, re botše hlako, re ntše re phasa lena balalafase**' (*here is the head, I want to know what is the problem with my family because there is no progress, tell us the divining bones while performing ritual for you ancestors*).

The bones need to be recited by the owner while they are on the floor. There is a special language used when praising:

'Ke boMalope, ba re bofa sehlako se tie o se be monyatšaleeto go tšwafa wena mosepedi'.
(*Malope says tie your shoes tightly and don't be lazy to take a journey*).

The traditional healer will point them individually and gives the interpretation. To identify where the problem comes from, the language will be '**di re makgolela**' (*paternal side*). This means that the individual is threatened by the ancestor on the paternal side.

The traditional healer will give a full description that the ancestors complains that 'I want to be brought back home' (**ntlišeng gae**). Betty Sekonyana (2011), 79 years of age, discloses that this is a situation where an ancestor who died long ago and was not formally buried, maybe because of war during that period, wanted to be brought back home. The person will be advised on how to perform a ritual and which resources to be used.

Sacrifices satisfy the ancestors in order to keep them from interfering with the lives of their dependants. The ancestors are regarded as part of their families and have the right to be respected and updated of any development in the family. The ancestors have the right to be given whatever they demand. Mokhatla (1977:1) indicates that this cult comprises the belief that there exists bond of relationship between an individual and the 'dead' of the lineage. The dead are believed to exist in their own world and are responsible for their living descendants.

After the information has been delivered from the traditional healer to the recipient, it will be spread to the relatives so that they can start with the preparations. Relatives are important because their ancestors are related. They are also regarded as active participants for the performance of rituals. When the living are united, it makes the ancestors to be happy.

4.3 PERFORMING A RITUAL

All people who will participate in performing a ritual, will wake up early in the morning. Paulina added that the ancestors are worshipped in the morning, the reason being that they are still available with us. There is a belief that when the sun rises, they disappear. Ancestors do not discriminate their descendants. They respect them all and ensure that they always give them whatever they request.

John Kganyago (2011), 83 years of age, who is a traditional healer, gives the information that there is a special place for every family for conducting a ritual. They will take a goat, African beer and snuff to that special place. All the participants will cover their shoulders and heads as a sign of respect. The paternal aunt (**rakgadi**) is usually the first to start with the performance. She will kneel down, take a sip of African beer and spits to the four cardinal points. This is to involve their ancestors from all the directions.

John also added that '**rakgadi**' (paternal aunt) will clap hands while introducing herself to the ancestors. By so doing, she will be honouring the ancestors. The language used will be:

**'Ke a le lotšha balala ka moka, ke thoma ka wena
Phuti. Nna ke phudufutšwana meloko ga ke e
tsebe. Ke nna setlogolo sa lena Chuene.
Re kgopela tše dibotse ka mo lapeng, e be letsididi.
Bana le bona ba šome gore ba le direle meriti.
Le ba hlabiše phefo. Pudi ye khulong še re ja le lena.
Motšoko šo fodišanang le rerišaneng ka mathata a
lapa le'.**

*(You Phuti. I greet you and all the ancestors of this family.
My name is Chuene your grandchild. We are requesting
good things for this family, jobs for the children so that
they can make shelters for you. Here is a brown goat,
eat together with us, snuff to smoke while discussing
about the problems of this family*

Sacrifices appease the ancestors in order to avoid them to interfere with the lives of their descendants. Performance of rituals differ from family to family, depending on their needs. Sekhukhune (1988:49) gives the evidence by using the language:

**'Hlabirwa wa Bauba, ke nna Phatudi, ke tliło go
phophotha. Ke kgopelela ngwana thari. Aga, le
yena kua a lego gona gaMphahlele. Ke go swaretše
maphoroma šea, ke nwa nago. Motšoko šo, ke soba
nago. Nama ya lešimego le yona še, ke ja nago'.**

*(Hlabirwa wa Bauba, here am I Phatudi, I came to
pray to my barren daughter to procreate. Give
her peace and prosperity in her place of
domicile-Mphahlele. Here is a measure of grain for you,
please drink with me this unstrained beer. Take with
me this snuff. Share with me the sosatie).*

Margaret Mojela (2011), 79 years of age, indicated that after paternal aunt '**rakgadi**' has made a conversation with the ancestors, others will follow according to their rank in the family. When they have completed, the goat will be slaughtered by one of the relatives. He will perform a ritual by putting coarse salt in his mouth. This is to avoid contamination for those who will eat the meat. The blood will remain on the floor for those who will be late in order to perform a ritual.

The meat and porridge will be cooked and everyone will be supplied. People will be requested not to chew bones as informed by a traditional healer. Bones will be collected. The close relatives will wake up early in the morning to deliver the bones to the ancestor whom the ritual was directed to. On arrival, they perform a ritual by digging a hole behind the head of the ancestor's grave. The language used will be: '**a ke marapo a pudi ya gago re ja le wena, re robalele boroko**' (*here are the bones of your goat, eat together with us and sleep peacefully*).

4.4 TO BRING THE DECEASED BACK HOME

This is a process where the deceased has died in the bush. No formal burial was done to the person. The deceased will be expected to be brought home by the family after they have encountered some problems. The language used is '**go iša mohu gae**' (*to take the deceased home*). This can be revealed through dreams and interpreted by a traditional healer to give advice on how to bring him/her back home.

One of my informants Paulina added that the traditional healer will indicate a method on how to perform a ritual. She adds that they slaughter a goat in the bush. They cut a tree called '**mošu**' (*a tree full of sharp thorns*) and put the goat on it. The goat represents the deceased. The language used will be '**wena Koena, re go tloša nageng re go iša gae**' (*Koena, we remove you from the bush to home*). When the thorns pierce the goat, there is a belief that '**dikgaba**' (*complaints*) of the deceased will be avoided. No communication between the people who carry the deceased until they arrive at home.

Margaret (2011), 79 years of age, says that on their arrival at home, they perform a ritual. This is to inform the deceased about a home which he/she was looking for. The language used will be '**mamohla tseba re go tlišitše ka gae bjalo ka yo mongwe wa leloko**' (*be informed that today we have brought you home as one of the family*). They will dig a grave and bury a deceased goat in it. Whenever they want to perform a ritual, they go direct to the grave. The ancestor will be updated for any development in the family like others. People will be served with African beer.

5. CONCLUSION

The performance of rituals and language usage of the ancestral worship serve as a key to respect and honour upon our ancestors. Sacrifices that are conducted for them, indicate that we don't ignore them. They are important members of our families. Interpretations received through traditional healers are important because an ordinary person cannot interpret. Many people don't believe in ancestral worship, that is why we have many amazing deaths. This practice can only be preserved when people understand their symbolic meaning and respond by practising them with pride and dignity because we are Africans.

CHAPTER 5

5. BIRTH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Birth of a child is an important event to the Northern Sotho culture. It is considered as a gift from God. It also means that the mother and father have attained the status of parenthood. Barrenness is regarded as the most feared condition in the life of a woman. If the woman does not conceive, the language used is '**moopa**' (*unable to conceive*). If is a man who is impotent we say '**o lomilwe ke mmutla**' (*he has beaten by a hare*).

5.2 PREGNANCY PERIOD

This is a sensitive period especially during the first months. The woman will have many different signs which shows that she is pregnant. Some will vomit, feel furious or insulting people without reasonable reason. The language used when the woman is in such a condition is '**go gantšhiwa**' (*to be against*). If a woman misses her menstruation, she is regarded as being pregnant. The language used is '**go tshelwa ke kgwedi**' (*to miss the month*). If the woman is on that stage we say '**ke mogolelwa**', '**ke moimana**', '**o imile**', '**o mmeleng**', '**ke motho wa kgobe**'. All these expressions mean that she is pregnant.

The period of pregnancy lasts for nine months. Patricia Legodi (2011), 77 years of age, indicates that during the first months, the husband is permitted to have relations with the wife. There is a belief that the relation is very important hence the language used '**go kgwahlisa phuwana**' (*to strengthen the middle part of the head*).

Pregnant woman should always stay away from rain because there is a belief that if it can fall on her, the child will stammer. The language used is '**go kowakowa**' (*stammering*). The woman is also restricted to distant herself from people with disabilities and animals that can frighten her. There is a belief that when the baby is

born, he/she might have features of that particular person or animal. The language used is '**go ba le seetšo**' (*to have features*).

5.3 BIRTH OF A CHILD

Birth of a child is important in the Northern Sotho culture. When a married woman is about to give birth, she is taken to her relatives. Meriam Mahapa (2011), 79 years of age, states that traditionally, it was a taboo for a daughter-in-law to give birth to her first born child with her in-laws. This is to ensure that she is cared for by her relatives, taught how to handle a baby and other important laws of being a mother. The language used during the period she is at home is '**go ya setswetsi**' (*confinement*).

The process of confinement take place in the hut of her mother. The mother, together with one of the relative will help. Meriam adds that women who offer help should not be menstruating, have grown upwards teeth first '**lešeka**', pregnant and recently involved in sex. There is a belief that they are impure and will affect the baby. My informants also disclose that after the process of '**motse**' (broken water) occurred, it alerts the helpers to be ready because the baby will arrive soon. This process is known as '**go ya madibeng**' (*gone to the river*). They will make preparations by lying '**mmutedi**' (*dunghill*) on the ground and inform the pregnant woman to sit in a squat position and when she feels '**lešoko**' (*labour pains*), she must push in order to support the baby.

5.4 AFTER BIRTH

After the baby is delivered, everyone will feel happy because the process is regarded as a risk. A woman might loose her life and the language used is '**go jewa ke ntlo**' (*eaten by the house*). Rebecca Tefu (2011), 80 years of age, gives the information that the baby must cry. The crying symbolises that I have arrived, help me. The helpers perform a ritual by cutting '**sa morago**' (*afterbirth*) with a razor and take a reed to wrap it around. They will keep it safe while waiting for umbilical cord '**kalana**' to fall.

The message of a new born baby will be spread to people by the language '**re filwe ngwana**' (*we have been given a baby*) '**re filwe motho yo moswa**' (*we have been given a new person*). The response will be '**ke mong**' (*gender*) and '**ke makhura**' (*those are fats*). All these expressions indicate that the baby is welcomed. The baby should not be provided with food. The baby is breastfed and be given '**diša**' (*traditional herbs*). There is a belief that '**diša**' help to build the baby strong.

5.5 THE FALLING OF UMBILICAL CORD

The falling of umbilical cord is an important process because the baby is grown up. The language used is '**go wa ga kalana**' (*the falling of umbilical cord*). This process reduce some of the restrictions. My informant gives the information that there is a ritual which is performed. They take afterbirth which were wrapped on the reed. The umbilical cord is also wrapped. They dig a hole, throw them and cover with soil. Some put them at '**mathuding**' (veranda) of the hut. In future, when a person is asked where he/she was born, the language used will be '**mo kalana ya ka e wetšego**' (*where my umbilical cord has fallen*).

Sophy Mothapo (2011), 82 years of age, indicated that after the new moon rises, they perform a ritual by taking the baby and stand at the entrance facing directly to the position of the moon. The language used will be '**kurr, monkane wa gago šole**' (*look, there is your friend*). There is a belief that the baby will receive fortune and blessings from the ancestors and will grow well.

6. CONCLUSION

If one analyses the method of giving birth in the past, it can be regarded as a punishment. There were no contraceptives in the past, but women were procreating more. When the woman was unable to conceive, the language used was '**go bofela**' (*using traditional herbs*) that can help. God was the only one who could stop the process of conceiving.

Nowadays, it is a taboo for a woman to give birth at home. There is a lack of knowledgeable women to handle the situation. When a woman is in labour pains, for one to stop the process of delivering they '**bofa lehuto**' (*tide a knot*) from the woman dress. This serves as an obstacle for the arrival of the baby at the irrelevant place. When they arrive at the clinic or hospital, they untie the knot so that the woman can give birth. Pregnant women are less restricted compared to the past. The umbilical cords are no more kept safe. They are thrown into the toilets. People are not aware where their umbilical cords has fallen.

CHAPTER 6

6. FEMALE INITIATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Initiation is a process undergone by a girl or a boy. In the past, they were compelled to be initiated in order to attain a responsible adulthood. The process of initiation plays an important role in any culture. The language used for initiation is '*go rupa*' '*go wela*' '*go ya komeng*' (initiated). Everything which was practised at the initiation was secretive. There was a belief that if one discloses the secrets, he/she will have mental problem. Before the process of initiation commences, a permission should be granted from the chief. The period of initiation last for a month.

Initiation is a social and cultural event of great, even paramount importance, as a means of tribal survival and self nurture. There is a pattern for understanding initiation as an individual and inner process of growth individuation, (Louise, Nancy Christopher & Michael 1998:311).

The process of initiation have a special time to occur. The right time for initiation is winter. Elias Mothiba (2011), 80 years of age, says that winter season is preferred, the reason being that the weather is good and cold for initiation to take place. The cold help to reduce the pains and there will be no complications for the wound.

In the past, initiation was practised by the whole world. Skaine (2005:161) states that according to Masaai culture it was a taboo that a girl be married while she has not undergone the process of initiation. It doesn't matter what the girl's age is, the man just place an order that he needs to marry the daughter. The father agrees. They bring the woman to be circumcised. The circumcised girls and women wear a blue dress to designate that they have been circumcised.

The process of initiation should be observed and respected from the beginning to the end. There is a belief that any attempt to manipulate during this important process could prevent any type of inner transformation.

6.2 AT THE INITIATION

On arrival, new initiates are welcomed by old initiates. To ensure that they are welcomed and feel at home, a special language used is '**ngwale o tswetše ngwale mongwe**' (*you are welcome to the initiation*). Louise, Nancy, Christopher & Michael (1998:29) say:

Learning a language of initiation means finding in the inevitable of our lives, certain types of ordeals.....the spiritual crisis, the solitude and despair through which every human being must pass in order to attain a reasonable genuine and creative life if the initiatory character of those ordeals is not apprehended as such remain true nonetheless that man becomes himself and woman becomes herself.

Matlou Mathekga (2011), 75 years of age, gives the information that on the following day the new initiates are taken to '**madibeng**' (rivers) accompanied by old initiates. She also adds that this is where the secrets of female initiation are disclosed. While at the river, they perform a ritual. They burn a wire and write the number 11 on the left thigh of the initiates. This is a symbol that they are grown up and are familiar with '**sešane sa basadi**' (*women's secret*). When women share ideas about initiation, they can be able to join them. In the evening they are taught how to make folk tales, riddles, reciting initiation laws and how to respect.

During the process of initiation, there are people called '**ditleetlee**' (*special women*) who smear their faces with ashes. They are there to guard and monitor the place of initiation so that people must not come near to them. The elderly women who had already been initiated, are called '**batapi**' (*people who take care of initiates and bring them food*). Every initiates will have her own '**motapi**'.

6.3 COMPLETION OF INITIATION

One of my informants Selaelo Mahlare (2011), 75 years of age, gives the information that this is a process where everything has come to the end. She adds that there is a language called '**go emela thobjana**' (*sleepless night*). '**Thobjana**' is practised by

initiates whom their totem is '**Bakone**'. They sing the whole night until the sun rises while others are sleeping. On the eve before the initiates disperse, they perform a ritual called '**go fiša moloto**' (*burning of everything which was used during the process of initiation*). After the process, no one should look back while initiates are going to the river to bath. If you can be seen looking backward, you will also be burnt.

Selaelo also added that initiates will wake up early in the morning and wear their traditional clothes. They will be accompanied by those who were singing to the river. On their arrival, they are compelled to bath. The language used is '**go tlogela bošoboro ka nokeng**' (*to leave uninitiated in the river*). There is a belief that after bathing, they have left uninitiated in the river.

Jane Lebogo (2011), 80 years of age, discloses that there is a ritual which is performed. They cut their hair on the left and right hand, leaving only the middle part. The part which is left will be smeared with '**letsoku**' (*a ground maroen stone mixed with fats*). This type of cutting is called '**go kota tlopo**' (*to cut both left and right sides of the head*). Their last process is to visit the tribal council (**mošate**) in order to greet the chief and use the languages '**bana ba lena ba re re boile**' (*your children say we are back*).

6.4 ARRIVAL AT HOME

On their arrival at home, they walk as a group singing different initiation songs like '**njananjana ka diforesela ijo banna**' 'Aye ayee'. No one is allowed to talk with them unless you give them '**leseka**' (*bangle*) or '**tlhabišo**' (*brooch*) in order to communicate with them.

Jane Lebogo adds that anyone who gives them brooch or bangle, is permitted to stand in front of them and draw a line using the language '**mothalwana wa tseleng**' (*line of the road*). Initiates responds: '**mothalwana wa tseleng ga se o thalwe ke nna o thadilwe ke bokubu le bokwena le bomona ba ka o thala batho ba kgona dilo**' (*I am not the one who drew the line of the road, it is drawn by hipopotamus and*

crocodile even '**bomana**' can draw it people know things). '**Setlankana**' (where are you from). Initiates respond '**setšwabokwena**' (we are from the river).

The initiate's parents will come together as a group, wait for their children to arrive at a family which was agreed upon. They will prepare food for the initiates. At night, they will play traditional games, reciting folktales and riddles. The following day before they can disperse to their own home, they go to river to bath.

6.5 DEATH OF AN INITIATES

If it can happen that one of the initiates die at the initiation, it is a secret. Only old people would be notified. Selaelo Mahlare indicates that food will be cooked by relative everyday as if nothing has happened. If one of the initiate die before the burning of '**moloto**', an initiate will be buried secretly, but if she dies when '**moloto**' is about to take place, she will be burnt with it.

The information is disclosed on the last day before initiates disperse. Selaelo adds that they take '**sedibelo**' (broken clay which was holding '**letsoku**') at the home of the deceased. Two women will arrive and there will be no communication. They will enter and perform a ritual by breaking '**sedibelo**' on the ground. This is a symbol that your daughter has died. No formal burial will be conducted and no mourning period is allowed.

7. CONCLUSION

Initiation is one of the rituals which play an important role in the Northern Sotho culture. Uninitiated women are called '**mathumaša**'. Initiation is important because it prepares the young ones to be responsible adults. Initiated woman can be able to make a right decision and face challenges which they can encounter in life.

CHAPTER 7

7. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to identify the nature of language employed in rituals, to determine the meaning hidden within ritual ceremonies. Furthermore, it aims to investigate the impact of Westernisation on rituals practices by Africans, in particular Northern Sotho people and to evoke sense of awareness in the youth about values and beliefs in their traditions.

We must stress the information to the younger generation that ritual is an evitable component in human life. This brings to the conclusion that rituals cannot be separated from human life. Rituals do not need any compromise and will not suffer any substitution from our memory. Men and women are regarded as active participants in the process of tradition and the role models who should transfer their activeness to the young ones.

7.1 FINDINGS

7.1.1 From this study it has shown that language usage in the marriage ritual plays an important role. It has come to my realisation that it is mostly '**rakgadi**' (*paternal aunt*) among all the members who is considered more important by ancestors in the family. Marriage of her brother's children is revolving around her. She is responsible for giving a bride the name during marriage.

7.1.2 From this study it has been discovered that there was no compromise with regard to death ritual in the past. Language usage in death, proves that the Northern Sotho people follow their own culture. They respect death in all aspects of life. The language used when death occurred, the greetings and rituals performed before and after death, show that tradition is practised with full respect.

- 7.1.3 It indicates clearly that **'rakgadi'** is involved in many activities that are happening in the family. Ancestors cannot be worshipped without her. She is the one who commences to speak with the ancestors before others can follow.
- 7.1.4 The study also proved that birth rituals plays an important role. The expectant woman should avoid things that can affect the baby. The woman should be respected at all times. Language used during her expectancy such as **'o imile'** **'o mmeleng'** etc should not be ignored in order to show respect.
- 7.1.5 From the study, it has been discovered that initiation ritual was also given a full respect. Language like **'o ile go rupa'**, **'o ile komeng'** means that someone has gone for initiation. Different rituals are performed and need to be respected and be given attention at all times. The woman who attends initiation is regarded as an important person because she was given more value compared to uninitiated one.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher would like to propose the following:

- 7.2.1 The Northern Sotho people should practise their traditional rituals with pride and dignity. Language usage should be considered more essential. These people should be proud of their tradition and be able to transfer the knowledge to the younger generations. i.e. this tradition should be passed from one generation to the next in the Northern Sotho people.
- 7.2.2 The younger generation should not feel ashamed to visit libraries to look for books and oral interpretations in order to obtain more knowledge and skills on the issues of rituals in their tradition. The Department of Education should introduce subject (learning area) which deals with knowledge on how to practise different rituals which will instill the knowledge to our generations.

7.2.3 People should not feel scared or belittled on performing rituals, they must know the relevant language suitable for the ritual and should not regard them as evil things. For our traditional rituals to be practised with pride and dignity, the Northern Sotho should avoid '**di a ila e hwile**' (*taboo*) as it is gone long ago. We should be able to explain the importance and the role played by rituals and how they are practised in our lives. Young generation should be encouraged to practice this tradition with pride, without undermining it.

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