

**A cultural evaluation of the causes and
treatment of diseases and other
misfortunes among communities in the
Pietersburg and Mankweng areas
of the Northern Province**

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ABSTRACT: An investigation was conducted into the causes and treatment of diseases and other misfortunes among three groups of elite in the Pietersburg and Mankweng areas of the Northern Province. The three sample groups were derived from two hospitals, a number of churches and the University of the North. The findings of the investigation indicate an extensive co-existence of traditional and modern perceptions and practices of healing. The inquiry covered the aspects of modern and traditional healing, disease and its treatment, witchcraft, the role of the ancestor spirits, the application of traditional and modern medicines, misfortunes, and divination. The notion of supernatural causality of a large number of diseases and other afflictions predominate in all three sample groups and is highest among the university students. A distinct dichotomy was revealed in the field of disease, relating to diseases with natural and those with supernatural causation. In the former, the dispensers of biomedicine are often resorted to for healing. In the latter, the magical forces of witchcraft, the effects of ritual impurity and the actions of the ancestor spirits are the causing agents. Traditional divination and healing practices are adjusted to address this category of disorders, while also supplying herbal remedies for a large number of naturally caused illnesses.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Disease and illness are common to all human societies. However, the types of diseases that occur, the way these diseases are diagnosed and treated, and how people regard them, vary considerably from one society to another (Howard & Dunaif-Hattis 1992:571).

In different cultures different explanations are often given to these phenomena.

In traditional African cultures the causing agents of many diseases and misfortunes, as well as the treatment of these phenomena, are in the sphere of the supernatural (Dressler 1996; Du Toit 1998:146; Forde 1954; Gelfand 1957; Mbiti 1969, 1975). To adequately understand this aspect of culture one needs to understand the cosmological assumptions that shape the cultural values and perceptions of people, particularly with regard to the notions of cause and effect.

Various studies have been conducted on the nature and implications of African cosmology. According to Forde (1954:viii) important aspects of ritual and belief in a number of African societies have been most effectively described and analysed in terms of their supernatural causation. Significant contributions in this field have also been made by Congdon (1984), Evans-Pritchard (1937), Hammond-Tooke (1974), Kriel (1992), Lawuyi (1998), Malan (1988, 1989), Mbiti (1975), and others.

One of the effects of intensive acculturation is that many people live in two cosmological worlds – the modern and the traditional. This involves many more choices that must be

made in times of illness and other afflictions. These phenomena will not only be accounted for differently by different people, but the therapy will also be in accordance with the perceptions of the persons concerned. In Africa, two divergent systems of health-care which are based on different cosmological assumptions about disease and healing are offered to communities in transition. People are confronted with a choice to use either of the two, or both, depending on how they evaluate the different options. The widespread establishing of Western health-care and its biomedicine in Africa has evidently not led to a decline in traditional psycho-therapies and the demand for ethnomedicine. A situation has developed which Jahoda (1974:175) refers to as the cognitive co-existence of modern ideas and traditional perceptions in Africa. In cognitive anthropology one of the aims is to understand the organising principles underlying behaviour (Tyler 1969:3), and therefore also the new principles that evolve from situations of culture change.

This study focuses on three elite groups of rapidly changing and developing black people in the Pietersburg and Mankweng districts of the Northern Province to determine their perceptions of disease, misfortune and health-care. Since they are intensively exposed to two different systems of health-care and the averting of harmful influences on their lives, their explanations and decisions in this regard should be highly revealing on the nature of culture change and cosmological reorientation.

1.1 THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

An investigation of this nature falls within the framework of medical anthropology (Sargent & Johnson 1996). It concerns culturally determined concepts about disease and illness, and the cultural significance of the ethnomedicine and psychotherapy offered by traditional healers.

Malan (1998:49-50) says that concepts about disease and healing are culturally constructed. In African cosmology, most diseases and other afflictions which are responsible for the physical and mental suffering of people are ascribed to supernatural causes, and therefore they need to be supernaturally treated. Even though the treatment of the symptoms with biomedicine may bring some relief, it is not regarded as the final solution to the problem of the disease.

In an African context, diseases are often blamed on dissatisfied ancestors who reveal their needs to their living descendants in this way. Ancestor spirits are believed to be endowed with special powers by the Supreme Being, thus enabling them to influence their living descendants. Ancestors are reputed to have greater wisdom, foresight and power than mortal men. They are regarded as the guardians of their living descendants who must bless and protect their descendants by averting evil influences and misfortune. But the ancestors are also seen as capricious beings whose demands for regular worship by their relatives must be met lest punitive measures are taken against the descendants. The spirits are also the custodians of tribal traditions and will act angrily in cases of the breach or non-observance of these traditions (Malan 1998:48; Kriel 1992:208-282).

Apart from ancestors, the other major supernatural cause of diseases and misfortunes is witchcraft. In this regard Malan says:

The use of magic with evil intentions to harm or kill other people is a very widespread phenomenon in Africa. It is often indicated as the cause of diseases and misfortunes by diviners, thereby further promoting this belief among the ordinary people. The fact that this cult is practised with destructive and evil objectives renders it illegal in all societies. In olden times, the death penalty was imposed on everyone who was found guilty of this practice. Greed, envy, jealousy, vengeance, and a malicious heart often induce people to resort to witchcraft to realise their evil inclinations. Some men actually become sorcerers by learning the malevolent use of magical

means, while the women become witches. Because of the illegal nature of their activities, these people remain anonymous and live a seemingly normal life, trying not to behave anti-social in any way. They also do not wear special insignia and can therefore not be recognised by virtue of their appearance (1998:51).

In African cosmology there is also a category of natural diseases to which no supernatural causality is attributed. Such diseases may be caused by adverse climatic conditions, contaminated food and water, certain phases of life, the process of ageing, and so on. Kriel (1992:330-404) describes an extensive list of such diseases among the Pedi.

All societies have traditional health-care systems comprising beliefs, customs, specialists, and practices aimed at ensuring health and diagnosing, preventing, and curing illness. A society's illness-causation theory is important for treatment. When illness is blamed on sorcerers, witches, or ancestor spirits, traditional healers, referred to as magico-religious specialists, may be good curers (Kottak 1994:329).

The application of traditional psychotherapy to patients follows upon the diagnosing of the causes of disorders in terms of the prevailing cultural perceptions of cause and effect. By addressing and ritually eliminating these causes, the patient attains peace of mind stemming from the belief that his or her health has now been restored by a knowledgeable magico-religious specialist. In anthropology, the important role of culturally determined social and psychological factors as disease-causing agents is recognised (Ember & Ember 1996:332; Schneider 1981:218-224).

Should knowledge about the traditional socio-cultural setting of a patient be used in a clinical environment, this practice may be referred to as "clinical anthropology." Rush defines this concept as follows:

Clinical anthropology is the application of concepts from the field of anthropology to clinical settings. By clinical, I am referring to the use of such information/concepts in a holistic, helping and therapeutic manner... By therapeutic, I mean the educational delivery of concepts or behaviors that allow individuals or groups to reduce stress and move toward personal and group health. By holistic, I am referring to both physical and emotional health, taking into consideration the diverse factors or stressors that reduce health potential (1996:1).

The utility of biomedicine is accepted in the treatment of illness but is more or less confined to the relief of symptoms (Malan 1998:50). An added clinical dimension of psychotherapy is needed to eliminate factors causing fear and stress.

Ethnomedicine has the broad objective of restoring the equilibrium in strained social and religious relations, to combat or avert the magical effects of witchcraft, and to cure naturally caused diseases. Rubel & Hass describe ethnomedicine and the conceptual framework within which it functions as follows:

The term *ethnomedicine* was first applied by Hughes (1968) to 'those beliefs and practices relating to disease which are the products of indigenous cultural development and are not explicitly derived from the conceptual framework of modern medicine.'

Subsequently *ethnomedicine* was applied more broadly to refer to 'culturally oriented studies of illness,' and it was argued that the concern of the ethnomedical investigator was to explain 'an illness – its genesis, mechanism, descriptive features, treatment and resolution – as an event having cultural significance' (Fabrega 1974:39-43).

Consideration of ethnomedical matters in the holistic investigation of the cultural life of communities gave increasing prominence to the group's conceptualisations of illness, its causes and cures, the role of healers, and the relationship between concepts of disease and cosmology (1996:116).

A holistic approach to the study of disease and healing places these phenomena in the inclusive cosmological framework of the group concerned and evaluates and understands all phenomena in terms of the cultural values and perceptions of the people who practice

them. Du Toit (1998:146) says that healing practices are simultaneously a result of beliefs about disease causation and faith in the healing properties of products employed. African people who have retained elements of a traditional world-view believe that ancestor spirits and witches may all be causally related to ill-health. Within this cosmological framework cure requires as much a restoration in the balance of supernatural forces and social relationships as the use of medication.

The holistic framework within which health-related phenomena are to be considered in a changing situation of intensive acculturation is essentially multicultural. Apart from a synthesis that may occur between certain perceptions and practices, the concurrent functioning of two different systems is also possible. However, a sharp distinction between Western and African health systems is not always feasible or even necessary for analytical purposes.

De Wet (1998:166) blames “the artificial dichotomy *Western* versus *traditional* for blinding us from seeing that people in various parts of Africa perceive a diverse set of options for treatment and therefore use biomedicine and indigenous medicine interchangeably.” She adds that “healing therapies are constantly changing, actively adapting and incorporating new ideas and strategies to deal with a changing world, changing cultures and new diseases... It also became clear that healing therapies easily expand across cultural boundaries.” In many cases both forms of medication are accepted in treating the same disease (De Villiers 1991:69-72).

The aspect of causality is very important in any study of disease and its treatment. It has been established in some African societies that both natural and supernatural causes of

illness and misfortune are identified (De Villiers 1985:48-52). It needs to be clearly determined which diseases are ascribed to natural causes and which to supernatural causes since the remedies applied differ substantially.

When diagnosed as having a disease such as cancer, a black patient finds himself or herself within the biomedical environment (Grobler, 1998:173). However, his or her deteriorating health condition may stimulate the desire to also receive treatment from a traditional healer to address the possibility of supernatural factors that may be involved in causing the illness. The patient may also have more faith in herbal remedies if he or she does not respond to biomedicine and other therapies.

The value of biomedicine is often widely accepted (De Villiers 1993:9-16) but not necessarily to the exclusion of traditional remedies. It needs to be established to what extent the two forms of medication may be complementary.

Traditional herbal remedies are still highly regarded and intensively used by many people. Du Toit (1998:145) says that a large proportion of the world's population, probably up to 80%, still deals with traditional disease theory and an accompanying curing regimen in which they rely heavily on medicines derived from plants for primary health-care. This assumption will also be tested and its rationale determined.

In the light of the diverse agents of causality of disease and misfortunes, as well as the concurrent health-practices, information about these phenomena and any changes that may take place, will be gathered in the target communities.

One of the theoretical models that may be useful in explaining the different forms of culture change in the field of health-care is that proposed by Barnett (1953:10). New

ideas and practices taken from other cultures may, according to him, lead to the addition, elimination, substitution, or the hybridisation of culture traits and complexes. By *addition* is meant the adding of a new practice without the loss of the corresponding traditional practice (for example the acceptance of modern medical practitioners and biomedicine without abandoning traditional healers and ethnomedicine). Another form of addition is the introduction of new practices in situations where there are no correlating traditional practices with which they clash. *Elimination* occurs when a certain practice is discontinued without being replaced by another one. In *substitution* a new institution replaces the old one, while *hybridisation* represents a synthesis, or syncretistic fusion between the old and the new.

1.2 PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

This investigation is aimed at determining the various causes and treatment of diseases and misfortunes among elite groups in the Pietersburg and Mankweng areas of the Northern Province. Cognisance will be taken of changing perceptions that were introduced by modern health-care services, the preaching of the Christian religion, and tertiary education which inculcates, among other things, the notion of natural cause and effect.

It needs to be determined to what extent traditional ideas still persist, and whether traditional healers may be seen to render certain services which are not provided for by modern scientific methods of health-care and the averting of dangers. The North Sotho distinguish between traditional healers and modern medical doctors. It is not clear, however, to which extent the two sets of assumptions and practices exist concurrently or

whether a relationship of tension and clashing interests exists in which the one system is gradually being substituted by the other.

In order to adequately clarify these issues, three groups of respondents were selected from communities that are highly exposed to culture change. They are the staff members and patients in the Pietersburg and Mankweng provincial hospitals, members of ten different Christian denominations in the same area, and students from the University of the North. Their perceptions will be used to determine the level of culture change with regard to the causation and treatment of diseases and misfortunes.

It needs to be established whether traditional and modern perceptions constitute two incompatible cosmological 'worlds' within which many people are living; whether these 'worlds' are merging or moving closer to one another, or whether the one is gaining ground at the cost of the other.

Another problem relates to the conflict that may be expected in situations of intensive acculturation. How do people justify their behaviour when they reject the cosmological assumptions of one practice in favour of another, and how do those who support a synthesis between the two explain the rationale for their views?

The following hypotheses will be investigated in the research project:

1. Supernatural causes are still ascribed to many phenomena in society, particularly to diseases and misfortunes. Remedial actions must relate to these causes.
2. The imparting of rational scientific knowledge in many cases clashes with the traditional African perceptions of causality and necessitates a distinct choice.

3. Students are intensively exposed to two world-views, and this fact will have profound ramifications for their assessing of supernatural phenomena, particularly with regard to the mystical causing agents in traditional perceptions about disease and healing.
4. Patients in hospitals require a system of psychotherapy that will address their religious and magically-based fears with regard to disease and witchcraft.
5. Churches have to minister to people who find themselves in two cosmological worlds and who, more often than not, are confused and unconvinced about many of the principles and patterns of behaviour that are taught to them.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODS

Since the stated aim of this project is to determine perceptions of the causes and treatment of disease and other misfortunes in a changing situation, the target communities were selected in such a way that the nature and extent of innovations are clearly reflected. The rationale for the continued observance of traditional practices will also be tested in these groups that are all exposed to rapid culture change. The research groups for this survey are taken from the fields of scientific medical care, Christian churches, and tertiary education in which a high degree of exposure to new ideas occurs.

1.3.1 Quantitative and qualitative research

A research setting of this nature, in which one has to contend with a great diversity of opinions and practices, demands special methodological and analytical skills. This is not a strange situation for an anthropologist to find him- or herself in since many societies are in a process of rapid culture change. Situations and settings are now encountered that are unique and previously unknown. Herselman says the following about the need

for methodological adaptation to new or unusual settings:

All anthropological research settings have particular requirements that must be met by the researcher. No matter how thoroughly prepared for fieldwork, an anthropologist is more than likely to encounter unforeseen problems arising from the particular requirements of his or her chosen research setting (1995:22).

It was essential to compile questionnaires in such a way that that the objectives of quantitative as well as qualitative fact gathering could be achieved (Bernard 1994:71-101, 360-392; Pelto & Pelto 1978:123-140). In a highly complex situation of change in which people react differently to innovations, it is essential to construct representative sample groups that will yield statistically valid results. This will exclude the use of vague statements to the effect that 'some' or 'many' people behave in one way or another.

Apart from quantifying the extent of phenomena or perceptions entertained, an anthropologist also has to culturally explain the nature and significance of these phenomena, ideas and cosmological assumptions. The need for qualitative fact gathering was met by providing ample space on the questionnaires in which respondents had to explain the rationale for their choices. Many of the statements made in these spaces needed further clarification which was obtained by interviewing key informants, or by consulting published sources.

The statements and explanations by respondents are of great significance. Bernard (1994:363) says that "qualitative data analysis depends heavily on the presentation of selected anecdotes and comments from informants – quotes that lead the reader to understand quickly what it took you months or years to figure out."

Research work (briefing of assistants, distribution and collection of questionnaires, and

interviews) was done during the academic year of 1997. In 1998 all the data was analysed and during the first half of 1999 the thesis was written.

The bulk of the data was derived from the completing of a questionnaire (Addendum A) by respondents. Statistically reliable results were acquired by way of stratified and random sampling within three target communities in the Pietersburg and Mankweng areas of the Northern Province. Respondents from the major social strata of every target group were included in the sample groups, including pastors and ordinary members in the churches, doctors, nurses and patients in the hospitals, and junior as well as senior students in the university. Random sampling was done by alternating sections of congregations, wards in hospitals, and departments in the university.

In total, 578 completed questionnaires were received back for analysis. This was a very good return from about 700 distributed questionnaires, mainly because of personal contact and the collaboration by people who expressed great interest in the research findings themselves. The three target communities and the distribution of respondents are as follows:

1.3.2 Respondents in hospitals

Both medical staff and patients in the Mankweng and Pietersburg Provincial Hospitals were asked to complete questionnaires. The composition of the sample group in the two hospitals, as well as personal particulars of respondents, are as follows:

Respondents at hospitals

Number of respondents: 125

Sex

Males: 28%

Females: 72%

Qualifications

Illiterate:	6,4%
Primary education:	3,2%
Secondary education:	27,2%
Tertiary education:	63,2%

Note: Although random sampling was done among patients, very few of the illiterate ones were willing to act as respondents. However, the composition of the sample group is such that changing perceptions will more likely be reflected by the more educated respondents. Of the 125 respondents, 48 are doctors and qualified nurses. Among the 77 patients, 33 have diplomas in teaching, administration and technical fields, 32 only have secondary education, 4 have primary education and the remaining 8 are illiterate.

Age groups

15 to 25 years:	20,8%
26 to 35 years:	45,6%
36 to 45 years:	15,2%
46 to 55 years:	10,4%
56 to 65 years:	5,6%
66 to 75 years:	2,4%

Home language

Northern Sotho:	73,6%
Afrikaans:	7,2%
Tshivenda:	6,4%
Xitsonga:	4,8%
Isindebele:	3,2%
English:	3,2%
Setswana:	1,6%

1.3.3 Respondents in churches

The composition of this sample group is indicated below as well as the relevant personal particulars and affiliations of the respondents:

Number of respondents:	126
Sex	
Males:	43,7%
Females:	56,3%
Qualifications	
Illiterate:	1,6%
Primary education:	0%
Secondary education:	24,6%
Tertiary education:	73,8%
Age groups	
15 to 25 years:	62,0%
26 to 35 years:	20,0%
36 to 45 years:	14,2%
46 to 55 years:	2,3%
56 to 75 years:	1,5%
Home language	
Northern Sotho:	55,6%
Xitsonga:	30,1%
Isizulu:	6,3%
Tshivenda:	3,2%
Setswana:	3,2%
Isindebele:	1,6%

Names of churches represented

Zion Christian Church

Assemblies of God

Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Nazarene Church of Christ

Roman Catholic Church

Dutch Reformed Church

International Pentecostal Church

Lutheran Church

Apostolic Faith Mission

Anglican Church

1.3.4 Respondents at the University of the North

The composition of this sample group is indicated below as well as the relevant personal particulars and year of study of the respondents:

Respondents at Unin

Number of respondents: 327

Sex

Males: 34%

Females: 66%

Qualifications

First year: 18,3%

Second year: 24,0%

Third year: 44,3%

Post-graduate: 13,4%

Age groups

17 to 25 years:	37,0%
26 to 35 years:	51,1%
36 to 45 years:	10,7%
46 to 55 years:	0,9%
56 to 65 years:	0,3%

Home language

Northern Sotho:	65,0%
Xitsonga:	24,2%
Setswana	3,4%
Tshivenda:	2,4%
Isizulu	2,0%
Isindebele:	1,5%
Isiswati	1,5%

In addition to the case studies conducted by way of questionnaires, information was also derived from the interviewing of key informants who are experts in particular fields of knowledge. They explained certain phenomena mentioned by respondents and also accounted for ambivalent reactions.

1.4 TRADITIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF DISEASE, HEALING AND MISFORTUNE

A number of traditional perceptions and practices with regard to disease, healing and misfortunes were obtained from existing literature. This subject has been well researched by Kriel (1992) and Mönning (1967). The survey of traditional concepts is presented as background material to properly understand the process and degree of change that is now occurring in this field among changing and developing societies.

In this survey, reference will also be made to statements on general (sub-Saharan) African concepts and practices in the field of disease, misfortunes and health-care. In so doing, a wider context is given to perceptions and practices in the target area, thereby considering the phenomena in question also in terms of what may be referred to as typical African cosmology.

1.4.1 Agents of causality

Many of the diseases and other misfortunes that befall the North Sotho are ascribed to supernatural causation. The solution to such problems are, obviously, sought in the manipulation of mystical forces, rather than in empirical research and the application of modern medicines. The problems that are investigated in this survey are derived from the North Sotho's traditional concept of the causation of disease and misfortunes, as well as the treatment of these conditions. In this regard, Kriel says:

The North Sotho term *bolwetši* which is normally translated as 'illness' or 'disease' does not only refer to somatic conditions. It is an all-inclusive term which may also refer to other types of misfortune or to any train of abnormal events as well as to social disharmony. Terms like *go alafa* and *go rekola* (to heal/ cure) thus also refer to more than simply the treatment of somatic conditions. Furthermore, the North Sotho link illness and other misfortunes to impurity (ritual pollution: *ditšhila*), ritual heat (*go fiša*), the loss of ritual power (*maatla*) and the impairment of the individual's personal or shadow attribute (*seriti*) as well as to natural causes and the acts of a variety of illness-causing agents. This implies that the concept 'healing' may also denote purification (*go hlwekišal sekišal hlatswa*), cooling down (*go fodiša*), and strengthening (*go tiišal maatlafala*), as well as the restoration of relations with fellow human beings (both the living and deceased members of society) and the warding off of witchcraft and sorcery (*boloi*). In all these actions the *ngaka* (pl. *dingaka*) plays a significant role (1998:112-113).

The most important illness causing agents among the North Sotho (of which a major group is the Pedi) will now be reviewed. In terms of these beliefs the major disease

causing agents are the ancestor spirits, malevolent magic as manipulated by the witches and sorcerers, other magically caused conditions which manifest themselves in various forms of ritual impurity, as well as a wide range of naturally caused illnesses.

1.4.2 The ancestor spirits (*badimo*)

✧Kriel (1996:180) says that a large number of illness cases are associated with some external agent that has sent the illness. The two principal categories of agents associated with illness and other 'sent' misfortunes are living people and the ancestor spirits. The living people turn to the use of magic to achieve their ends, while the ancestor spirits have supernatural powers that bring about the diseases and misfortunes. ✧

The superhuman power of the ancestors renders them both beneficial and harmful to their living descendants. They are not only seen as the protectors of society but also as its most feared critics and source of punishment. The ancestors are the watchdogs of the moral behaviour of the individual, the family, the clan and the entire society with which they are associated. No serious misbehaviour among their descendants escapes their penetrating gaze. The *badimo* are in a real sense the authority figures who maintain the norms and social obligations of people and cause trouble when these are not obeyed.

✧Mönnig (1967:54) says that the *badimo* have unlimited powers over their living descendants to bless or to chastise them. ✧

✧Magesa (1997:166) says that in African religion, wrongdoing relates to the contravention of specific codes of conduct, including taboos, which are all supernaturally sanctioned. Individuals and the whole community must observe these forms of behaviour to preserve order and assure the continuation of community life. To threaten in any way to

violate these codes of behaviour, which are in fact moral codes, endangers life – it is bad, wrong or sinful. Many of these moral codes are very well known to the adult members of a given community and have been inculcated from childhood through the normal daily process of enculturation. Magesa further explains this phenomenon:

All moral customs need to be observed. Even if the moral codes involved seem to be small and insignificant, each is nevertheless important in the ethical system and the breach of any one constitutes an unacceptable act for the individual and often the entire community. Because of the inner dynamics and interconnectedness of African religion's moral codes, to refuse to give due respect to the elders, for example, may ultimately be as serious a transgression as the deliberate refusal to marry and have children, the refusal to take care of a brother's widow or a sister's widower and procreate in their name, or the refusal or negligence to offer sacrifices and frequent libations to the ancestors. Disrespect for elders implies disrespect for the ancestors as well, for the elders are their visible 'representatives' on earth (1997:167).

The transgression of traditions and moral norms is never neutral. It always has consequences for the perpetrator, and very often for the perpetrator's family and community. All sorts of calamities may befall people, whether they are social, physical, psychological or natural. These calamities may be generically categorised as affliction, which is usually perceived as illness or disease. A situation of disease prevails if no rain falls and there is no food in the land, or if too much rain falls and crops are spoiled, or if cows do not give birth and cause shortage of milk. Any calamity that befalls the individual or community is interpreted as disease. Human illness forms the deepest core of this conception (Magesa 1997:172).

The ancestor spirits are the guardians of tribal traditions, and particularly the moral obligation to respect elders. If these obligations are not honoured the ancestors themselves will feel disregarded and forgotten by their living kin. That is why they will act

against the living members to correct their deviant behaviour (Malan 1998:47-48).

✱Ancestor spirits may cause affliction because they desire sacrifice and offerings, but as a rule they do not visit death upon their descendants as they are interested, instead, with correcting wrong-doing and the well-being of their lives. But the living members of society must fulfil their obligations to the ancestors, because that is regarded as a condition for the maintaining of order in the universe (Magesa 1997:175).

1.4.3 Magic and witchcraft

The use of magical force involves the manipulation of material substances (often inadequately translated as 'medicine') and the use of verbal spells or addresses – all directed at the influencing of forces conceived of as impersonal and subject to direct human control if correctly handled – that are believed to govern the course of events. Magic may be used for either productive, protective and curative purposes or for destructive purposes. These categories may overlap in that, for instance, protective magic may be destructive in its application when, for instance, a medicine for protecting one's property or ensuring the fidelity of one's wife is intended to bring illness or even death to the thief or adulterer (Fortes & Dieterlen 1965:21-22).

Most of the evil deeds are ascribed to evil-minded people who are jealous of others and want to harm or kill them by making use of magical means. People who specialise in such actions are called sorcerers (males) and witches (females) (Malan 1998:46). In Pedi they are referred to as *baloi* (sing. *moloī*) and their act of witchcraft as *go loya*.

In most cases there is a reason why one person bewitches another. It often arises from mere domestic tensions and jealousies that are bound to occur in any closely knit com-

munity. For that reason, bewitching is reported mostly among relatives and neighbours in that one party wants to get rid of the other by means of mystical forces. Or, if something goes wrong following a dispute or quarrel, everyone will immediately suspect that it was caused by the other party through witchcraft (Mbiti 1975:167). Kriel explains this common phenomenon when he says:

Disequilibrium and social disharmony is often experienced by the North Sotho in an intensely personal and somatic way as 'an illness' or 'a misfortune'. This is one of the main reasons why 'other people' (the living dead, the elderly members of the lineage group, and evil sorcerers) are believed to be the main source of illness (1996:180).

Witches and sorcerers use incantations, words, rituals and magical objects to inflict harm on their victims. They also bury magical mixtures ('medicine') in a footpath which is often used by the victim (Mbiti 1975:166).

One of the very common techniques of the *baloi* is that of *go ješa* or *go leša* (to cause to eat). They instil in a person a compulsion to eat or drink something into which they have put some of their 'medicine'. This results in a disease known as *seješo* or *selešo*. This is not a form of poisoning but rather immediately renders the food indigestible and causing it to form a large, hard substance in the stomach, or other objects that can make a person ill and eventually kill him (Mönnig 1967:76-77).

Among the North Sotho there is a distinction which is made between witchcraft of the day (*boloi bja mosegare*) and witchcraft of the night (*boloi bja bošego*). According to Kriel (1992:298-310) witchcraft of the day is practised by people with negative dispositions such as hatred and jealousy. They will then resort to witchcraft to take malevolent magical action against the people they wish to harm or kill. The night witches, however,

harm and kill because of an inherited compulsion to do so.

Mönnig (1967:72) says that the night witches form a corporate group because they know one another very well. Their secret society hold meetings during which they combine their destructive forces against society. During their nightly feasts they pray to their ancestors, eat human flesh and discuss their combined activities. They make use of familiars, or zombies (*dithuri* and *dithongwa*), who are people who have been resurrected from their graves. They are sent by the witches to do their evil work. Furthermore, they have animals, particularly baboons, skunks, wild cats, dogs, snakes, owls and bats, collectively called *dithongwa*. They are also messengers of the witches who visit people at night to poison, bewitch or kill them. The *dithongwa* are either tamed animals or supernatural creatures that can enter closed houses (Mönnig 1967:72-74).

1.4.4 Sin, impurity and taboo

There are various magical and religious sanctions on the maintaining of traditionally instituted patterns of behaviour, and also on the observing of religious prohibitions against food, objects or people that may be considered ritually impure. In many cultures certain diseases and disorders are associated with the magical danger of not observing culturally instituted taboos (Douglas 1966).

The Pedi have a traditional concept of sin (*sebe*) which indicates the breach of tribal traditions and accepted norms of moral behaviour. In this regard Mönnig says:

It follows naturally from their ancestor worship that the Pedi are expected to maintain the natural order, to uphold the customs and the social life which they inherited from the ancestors. Any transgression against this order is *sebe*, a sin (1967:63).

Such actions will be punished by the ancestors. Closely related to the concept of sin is

the obligation to respect (*hlompha* or *godiša*), which refers to the respect due to elders – living or deceased members of the lineage. It is a punishable sin not to respect and remember them. Kriel explains the magical results of disrespect when he says:

Misfortune may also be the result of disrespect towards senior relatives both in the patrilineage and the matrilineal lineage or of a negative attitude of senior members of the kin group towards their younger relatives. This may result in a type of misfortune referred to as *dikgaba*. It is believed that *dikgaba* follows magically and automatically on any transgression against the supernatural bond uniting relatives (1996:180).

A condition that can lead to serious diseases is that of ritual impurity (*ditšhila*). This is a dangerous condition, not only to those who are impure but also for the people with whom they come into contact as they may be contaminated (Mönnig 1967:66). Kriel (1992:121) also associates *ditšhila* with the conditions of ritual heat (*go fiša*) and *sefifi* which indicates ritual darkness due to the death of a relative.

Kriel & Mapogole (1998:182-183) say that among the North Sotho any person may find him or herself in a condition which is referred to as being unclean, polluted or contaminated (*tšhilafetše*). Such impurity (*ditšhila*) is not regarded as a disease but as a period of reduced resistance against disease, misfortune and the influence of witchcraft and sorcery. A serious degree of impurity is associated with women who are menstruating, who have aborted or miscarried, who are still secluded after having given birth, as well as recently widowed women. A man who has sexual relations with such a woman may contract a potentially fatal disease known as *lekhutlo*. Kriel & Mapogole say the following about the treatment of this disease:

All spokespersons believed that *lekhutlo* is an 'African' disease which can only be cured by a fully trained traditional healer (*ngaka ya ditaola*)... Treatment in a hospital is believed to be en-

tirely ineffective (1998:183).

Another closely related concept is that of *dikidišwa*, which are supernatural interdictions concerning the avoidance of certain actions. When these prohibitions are broken they immediately invoke sanctions which are either magical, brought about by the ancestor spirits, or legal, or a combination of these. It is taboo for a man to have intercourse with ritually impure women. Persons in a condition of impurity must also refrain from working with cattle or food and from conducting religious rituals.

Mönnig (1967:69) says that the breaking of a taboo is considered to be a sin (*sebe*) which is punished by the ancestors. On the other hand, magical sanctions may also be invoked by the breaking of taboos, thereby calling for remedial measures which are both of an impersonal, magical nature *and* a personal act of appeasing the disturbed *badimo*.

The magical actions, psychotherapy and sacrifices to the ancestors that are needed to treat diseases and misfortunes emanating from sin, impurity and taboo confirm that these phenomena are of a supernatural nature.

1.4.5 Natural causes

Not all diseases are believed to be supernaturally caused. Howard & Dunaif-Hattis (1992: 581-582) say that there are two major belief systems of disease causality: personalistic and naturalistic. In a personalistic system, illness is thought to be purposefully caused by a supernatural being or a human being. By contrast, naturalistic systems explain illness in impersonal terms, attributing good health to the maintenance of equilibrium within the body. Illness results when the balance is upset by such natural external forces such as heat and cold, or internal forces such as strong emotions.

The North Sotho recognise both these systems of disease causality. Reference has already been made to the supernatural factors. Kriel (1992:528-529) says that various disorders among the Pedi are regarded as 'natural diseases' (*malwetsi a tlhago*). These diseases 'just happen by themselves' and are not 'sent' (*go romeletša*) or 'made to happen' (*go diragatsa*). They do not last very long and do not recur very often. Kriel (1992: 340-388) identifies the following categories of natural diseases: children's ailments, diseases associated with old age, diseases of the blood, dietary illnesses, diseases caused by adverse environmental factors such as cold and heat, the malfunctioning of bodily organs (including skin diseases), hereditary diseases, as well as a general category which includes phenomena such as snake bites and complications caused by the taking of wrong medication.

Mbiti (1975:164) adds that there is a category of enemies that come through nature. These are droughts, earthquakes, epidemics, famines, and calamities such as locust invasions. In their worst form they bring death to people, but more often cause much suffering. These natural enemies attack the whole community, with the result that people more or less share equally in the misery they cause. Generally, no single human or spirit agent is blamed as the mystical cause of such calamities.

1.4.6 Traditional healing

The traditional healers (*dingaka/* sing. *ngaka*) are the people who treat both naturally and supernaturally caused diseases and illnesses with their herbal remedies (*dihlare*) and other magical means. They supply both remedial and protective medicines and also do divination. Peltzer (1998:191-197) conducted a survey among traditional healers and their healing practices in parts of the Northern Province in which he also listed the

diseases treated by them during a specific period.

Mbiti says that:

...to African societies the medicine-men are the greatest gift, and the most useful source of help. Other names for them are 'herbalists', 'traditional doctors' or 'wanganga' (to use a Swahili word)... Every village in Africa has a medicine-man within reach, and he is the friend of the community. He is accessible to everybody and at almost all times, and comes into the picture at many points in the individual and community life (1969:166).

Mönnig (1967:80) says that the multiple causes ascribed to various supernatural forces give the Pedi *ngaka* great prominence. He must establish the exact source of every misfortune and disease through divination – mostly by using his set of divination bones. Apart from his function as diviner, he is also a medicine-man who must supply the herbal remedies and magical substances to his patients and clients. Furthermore, the *ngaka* is a priest who consults with the ancestor spirits to determine their wishes, and then advises people as to which actions to take to appease the *badimo*.

Modern methods of health-care do not provide any services which even remotely resemble the divination and psychotherapy offered by the traditional healers. The predominance of supernatural causes of disease and misfortune in the North Sotho's traditional perceptions of cause and effect calls for the services of traditional healers to unravel and solve severe crises associated with serious illness and other afflictions, thereby suggesting that even in a changed environment the need for these services will still occur.

Mönnig alludes to the fact that the Pedi's quality of life largely depends on the magical precautionary measures that they take against malevolent supernatural forces:

Certainly they do fear witchcraft, and supernatural forces are present in all their activities, but these are forces against which they can protect themselves by using the proper magical meth-

ods or formulae. Man, therefore, has considerable control over these supernatural forces, and depending on his own foresight in taking the proper preventative measures is left unburdened to enjoy a normal life (1967:80).

The knowledge and services of the traditional healers are indispensable to ordinary members of the public as they enable them to secure the kind of magical protection that they all need. This need stems from culturally determined cosmological assumptions that most of them hold. The degree to which these assumptions hold sway will be determined among target groups who are exposed to a high degree of culture change.

1.5 ANALYSING AND PRESENTING OF DATA

The complexity of responses in the questionnaires demands a special way of presenting the data to reflect the diverse opinions expressed by people. The basic answers to questions (affirmative, negative or uncertain) are expressed statistically to indicate the extent to which certain views are entertained by respondents. Comparative data derived from the three sample groups are given in each case.

However, it proved to be a more difficult problem to account in a meaningful way for the diverse opinions expressed by the respondents. The method was considered of merging the multiple reactions and then to discuss them in a generalised way. However, that would not do justice to the finer shades of meaning expressed by various respondents. The reasons given for responses were so meaningful that it was decided that as many of them as possible should be incorporated into the text with only minor editing. Specific words and phrases are often important indicators of cognitive constructions that reveal the rationale for a particular stand which is taken (Durbin 1973:450).

The hundreds of reasons given by the various respondents were reduced to the most common ones to exclude unnecessary duplication. The way in which they are listed in the text represents all the major arguments that were advanced in favour of, or in opposition to, a particular statement. It is hoped that the complexities of culture change which are so evident in the field of health-care, as well as the perceptions that change along with the acceptance of new practices, or of the reinforcing of old ones, will be adequately accounted for by this way of presenting the data.

In Chapter 2, modern and traditional concepts of healing are considered and debated in terms of the diverse views expressed by the respondents. In Chapter 3, various categories of disease are identified as well as the therapies needed to cure them. Witchcraft and sorcery are the subject of Chapter 4, particularly with regard to their role in causing disease and misfortune in society. In Chapter 5, the important role of the ancestor spirits as causing agents is analysed in terms of people's reactions, while the application of traditional and modern medicine to a wide range of disorders is described in Chapter 6. Misfortunes are discussed in Chapter 7, which also deals with the role of magic as well as the intervention of the ancestor spirits in phenomena of bad luck. In Chapter 8, divination is defined with reference to its vital role of determining the supernatural causes of disease and misfortune – whether they are related to witchcraft or the actions of the ancestors. The reasons for the dissatisfaction of the ancestor spirits are also determined in this way. In Chapter 9, the conclusions of this research project are presented.

Chapter 2

Modern and Traditional Concepts of Healing

Due to the process of intensive culture change, the members of the target communities must choose between modern and traditional ways of diagnosing and healing. The first choice is usually determined according to a person's own perceptions on whether a particular disease is the result of natural or supernatural causes. Decisions of this nature are often preliminary and subject to how the patient responds to the medication.

If biomedicine fails to bring about speedy recovery, supernatural causes are suspected which give rise to the need for traditional psychotherapy. From this point onwards, either of the traditional or modern forms of healing may be resorted to, or both, depending on how the person assesses his or her situation. Although divergent views have been recorded, most of the respondents wish to have access to both forms of therapy in order to maximise their chances of recovery.

2.1 THE NEED FOR TRADITIONAL HEALERS

In determining concepts of disease and healing, wide-ranging responses were recorded. In question 7 the respondents were asked: "Is there a need for traditional healers (*dingaka*) in modern society? Motivate your answer." The basic responses are reflected in Table 1. Due to the large degree of uniformity in the arguments raised by respondents from all three groups, the responses have been merged.

Sample group	Positive response	Negative response
Hospitals	71,2%	28,8%
Churches	62,0%	38,0%
Unin students	89,0%	11,0%

Table 1. Views on the need for traditional healers (*dingaka*).

2.1.1 In favour of traditional healers

The following are the arguments raised in favour of the need for the continued services of traditional healers in a changing society:

- ◆ Many of our people still hold to traditional beliefs and practices that certain diseases are not natural but inflicted through sorcery or witchcraft. Africans know very well that witchcraft is still practised, even in modern societies, and once a person is bewitched the only doctor to heal the bewitched person is a traditional healer. Traditional healers are therefore needed and trusted by many African communities for the role they play in addressing witchcraft related problems.
- ◆ They are capable of healing both natural and supernatural diseases. Diseases which result from witchcraft may be regarded as supernatural and cannot be cured by modern medical doctors. Without the help of traditional healers people affected with such diseases may die. The presence of *dingaka* ensures that diseases unknown to modern medical practitioners are best treated.
- ◆ There are some diseases that modern medical doctors cannot cure. Diseases like *hlongwana* (pulsating fontanelle), migraine, painful legs, losing of memory, mental illness and epileptic diseases can best be treated by *dingaka*. They are also very good at healing sexually transmitted diseases, and can treat infertility among women.
- ◆ There are certain services which are only rendered by traditional healers in the community. *Go thea motse* (magical protection of the homestead against witchcraft) is one of the best services provided by traditional healers.
- ◆ Eighty percent of patients in hospitals visit traditional healers prior to coming to hos-

pital. In some hospitals traditional healers are part of the multidisciplinary team who treat patients during critical times. They have access to their clients while in hospital, and sometimes with very good results. This is an indication that in some cases modern medical doctors fail to cure certain diseases and that such patients respond well to traditional medicine.

- ◆ Some patients may sometimes ask for discharge or a pass to temporarily leave the hospital to consult their traditional healers.
- ◆ The need for traditional healers is not obvious but situational in that some illnesses are the effect of traditional causes and require traditional attention. Illness caused by ancestors can, for example, be treated in consultation with traditional healers.
- ◆ We are living in a multicultural society and our beliefs differ. Most of the African people still believe in the traditional treatment of diseases because they are born and rooted in their culture. *Dingaka* were their doctors for a long time before civilisation. The need for traditional healers is a culture that one cannot remove from Africans. It affords them psychological healing.
- ◆ There are still many people who do not believe in or trust the modern medicines. Before modernisation people used medicine from traditional healers and it had no harmful effects but brought life. Even today, traditional healers still heal sick people in modern society. They cure patients with natural herbs which are very essential for our bodies. Modern medicines are mixed with certain chemicals that have after-effects in our bodies. Medicine from traditional healers is not diluted with any harmful modern chemicals.
- ◆ People have the right to get the services they require from traditional healers. It is part of the African culture which cannot be abandoned. It is important for the young generation to know the traditional healers and to understand their role.
- ◆ They know some herbs that have not been discovered by the Western scientists. It is for this reason that traditional healers and modern medical doctors must share ideas and work together in handling health problems that modern physicians are failing to address. Since both the traditional and modern doctors are capable of healing some of the diseases and incapable of healing other diseases, they must work together for the

benefit of our society. Their common goal is health – to cure the patients. The two systems complement each other.

- ◆ Their service is highly required, but they must learn to refer their clients to hospitals in the case of diseases which cannot be traditionally treated. They also need to be educated on how to prescribe their treatment in correct doses.
- ◆ In some cases diseases are caused by the forces of witchcraft and under such circumstances there is no need for modern medical treatment. Traditional healers play a major role in healing such diseases.
- ◆ They act to a great extent as psychologists for more traditionally oriented people, but not for treating ill patients.
- ◆ Traditional healers are capable of predicting things that will happen in future. In this way they help us to know what our ancestors expect of us.
- ◆ A strong belief in supernatural powers still exist in today's indigenous populations and exists alongside conventional beliefs and medicines. Traditional healers are trusted by their communities and in some cases do good work.
- ◆ They can relieve the load on health services but they must update their knowledge in certain areas and develop a mutually trusting relationship with modern health workers.
- ◆ People tend to seek modern medical help after they have failed to get help from traditional healers. The best thing is to involve traditional healers in modern health centres and teach them some important hints about health. They need to be educated about cleanliness, sterilising, and working hand-in-hand with modern medical practitioners.
- ◆ They have knowledge which is useful enough to cure certain diseases, and they can therefore assist in primary health-care if they are trained and controlled, because they are closer to the people.
- ◆ There are traditional healers who are more knowledgeable than modern medical doctors. If a woman, for example, commits abortion and has sexual intercourse with a man during that period, the man must immediately consult a traditional healer to protect his life.

- ◆ Traditional healers are of significance in any kind of society because many have been to them as patients and came out healthy and sound. They therefore deserve a place in modern society.
- ◆ Traditional healers can diagnose the cause of a disease without any information from the patient and therefore come up with better solutions.
- ◆ Using natural herbs, traditional healers heal sick people at a very low price. Most families in modern societies cannot afford to pay the medical expenses charged by the modern medical doctors for curing minor illnesses. Herbs are obtained free of charge from the bush. A traditional healer may teach some of his relatives the use of certain herbs and they can, in turn, help themselves in future.
- ◆ Through the help of a traditional healer a pregnant woman can deliver her baby at home without the difficulty of going to hospital.
- ◆ Traditional healers are human beings made in the image of God. It is through God's will that they render certain services to the community.
- ◆ They are the custodians of the religious beliefs of African people. They assist Africans to communicate with their ancestors through rituals.
- ◆ Traditional healers do not interfere with modernism but they are present to render certain services to the community. Modernisation does not mean uniformity in beliefs but represent a diversity of people with different beliefs. The *dingaka* are specialists in their field of work and will always be needed, no matter how modern the society becomes. Like modern medical doctors who went for medical training, traditional healers are graduates and professionals in their field of study.

From these responses it is evident that traditional healers are still highly regarded by a large group of the elite and the developing sector of society. The main reason for this view is the notion of supernatural causation of diseases. The agents of supernaturally caused diseases are the ancestor spirits and witchcraft by evil-minded people. The psychotherapy needed to treat such diseases is seen to be an essential part of the healing

process since the patients need the assurance that the spiritual and magical forces which are responsible for their suffering have been sufficiently dealt with.

Diseases are clearly classified into 'natural' and 'supernatural' categories. The latter are thought to be the consequence of supernatural agents and therefore need more than the mere treating of symptoms. Among them are, mental illness, migraine, loss of memory, epileptic diseases and *sefolane* – a disease resulting from contact with harmful magical substances. Traditional divination is needed to determine the causes of these conditions, followed by the correct actions to appease the ancestor spirits or to break evil or magical spells. The treatment of the symptoms is regarded as a secondary aspect of the therapy.

Another aspect of traditional healing which is highly sought after is the supplying of preventive magical potions and amulets to protect people and their property against witchcraft. Many people see themselves as living in a world which is actively influenced by magical powers and forces that can at any time be harnessed against them by evil people. They need strong magical protection against these powers. Only the traditional healers can supply these means and also foretell the unknown future to their clients.

It is generally agreed that modern medical science has a role to play in curing 'natural' diseases. Many respondents support the idea that traditional and modern doctors should work together as their practices are seen to be complementary. However, there are also those members of society who fully accredit traditional healers for treating 'natural' diseases. They have such a good knowledge of herbs that even the modern medical science can allegedly not compete with them in treating certain diseases. Furthermore, the *dingaka* are more accessible and their tariffs much more affordable to poor people.

2.1.2 Rejecting the practice of *dingaka*

From this investigation it is evident that there is a rising number of people in society who strongly reject the practice of the traditional healer. Although in all cases a minority, the strongest resistance against traditional healers was found among church people (38%) followed by the respondents in hospitals (28,8%), with only 11% of the students expressing themselves against the *ngaka* practice. The arguments raised are as follows:

- ◆ In most cases traditional healers cause conflict among members of the community. They rely on guess work. In diagnosing the cause of illness they usually accuse other people of having caused the illness through the forces of witchcraft. Such allegations are the source of witchcraft-related conflicts in many communities.
- ◆ We are living in modern times and the form of medication should be in accordance with modern trends. Technology is advancing and there are modern machines which help in diagnosing diseases for better treatment.
- ◆ Today's generation does not believe in traditional healers any more because they have a superstitious approach to disease. They and their medicines were suitable for our forefathers only.
- ◆ According to the Human Rights Constitution it is everybody's right to have proper medical care. Traditional healers do not provide proper medical care. In the first place their medicine is not hygienically clean and some *dingaka* kill other people to make medicine with parts of their bodies.
- ◆ There is no modern medical training college for traditional healers. They do not take precautionary measures when treating people. They will, for example, use the same razor blade to cut pieces of skin from all their patients for medication. They do not even wash the blade nor their hands. In this way they spread some diseases.
- ◆ Their medicine does not have measurements or a proper strength. It is not based on any empirical proof in terms of the extent to which they can cure. The effectiveness and safety of their medicine is totally untested and unproved. It would not be accepted in other modern societies. We admit a lot of patients to the hospital with an overdose

of traditional medication that poisoned their bodies.

- ◆ Traditional healers keep some patients in their homes for a long time. When they see that the condition of the patient is worsening they send him or her to the hospital. Children who were first taken to traditional healers come to hospital with distended abdomens and other complications with irreversible consequences.
- ◆ The use of herbal medicines gives rise to a high death rate because they are very toxic and destroy the organs of the body.
- ◆ I am a Christian and do not believe in such 'doctors'. God is always available to cure any disease. If people are willing to obey God by first accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour of their lives, He promises them good health at all times.
- ◆ The religious beliefs and practices of the traditional healers are against the will of God. They adore idols and spirits. The supernatural powers that they have are from the devil and as such nothing good can come from them. God has created human beings and He is the One who is responsible for their lives. Through believing in Him all health problems may be solved.
- ◆ The traditional healers are liars and very fond of money. They always claim that they can heal all types of diseases. They mislead people and keep them from consulting a modern medical doctor in time and cause a lot of deaths and suffering. They use primitive methods which can spread diseases more easily. The *dingaka* complicate minor diseases and people die because of a lack of proper medical care. They do more harm than good.
- ◆ The *dingaka* use trial and error methods to arrive at unconvincing conclusions. They create conflict between relatives by telling their clients that so-and-so is bewitching them. They may say, for example, that your father's sister is responsible for your sickness – she has bewitched you because of this and that. They tell lies and cannot be trusted. They abuse people for financial gain.
- ◆ It is difficult to differentiate between a traditional healer and a witch or sorcerer. The latter may operate under the umbrella of the former. They can cause a very dangerous situation since they are used to do strange things at night that can harm other

people. There are some diseases, such as *sefolane*, that cannot be healed by modern medical practitioners. Such diseases can only be healed by traditional healers. This is an indication that they also practice witchcraft in order to earn money from people who are affected by such incurable diseases. They confuse people by their evil deeds done in darkness.

- ◆ Civilised and educated people cannot consult a traditional healer. There are many hospitals and health centres where diseases can be easily diagnosed and treated.
- ◆ Most traditional healers treat their patients as slaves by giving them a lot of their personal work to do.
- ◆ They promote ritual killings as some traditional healers mix their medicines with parts of human bodies.
- ◆ Knowledgeable and experienced traditional healers are long dead. The remaining ones are liars who are only intent on improving their own financial position.

The respondents who question and even openly reject the practice of traditional healers base their attitudes on a number of perceptions. Some do it in terms of the knowledge gained of modern medical science and its beneficial application, others on religious grounds by denouncing the belief in mystical, supernatural powers while a number of people have, through bad experiences, developed a negative assessment of traditional healers as being liars, money-seekers, incompetent and unhygienic quacks who do more harm than good. On the extreme side of unethical conduct the *dingaka* are also accused by some people of committing ritual murders to get parts of human bodies which serve as highly potent magical substances.

There are also people who distrust the *dingaka* and suspect them of playing a double role by acting as witches or sorcerers (*baloi*) by night. In this way they poison and bewitch people, thereby causing diseases which they alone can cure. In so doing they

secure a higher income and a reputation as good *dingaka* for themselves.

A number of respondents also accuse the *dingaka* of causing severe tension in society by implicating relatives of their clients, as well as other people, in alleged deeds of witchcraft. In this way distrust is created among people, and it often leads to retaliation and witch-hunts.

2.2 MODERN OR TRADITIONAL METHODS OF HEALING?

In the light of the divergent responses thus far, it needs to be more clearly established whether the practice of the traditional healer and that of the modern medical doctor are complementary or incompatible. The following question was put to respondents: “Should one choose between modern and traditional methods of healing, or can you use both?”

The various categories of responses are as follows:

CHOICE OF TREATMENT	SAMPLE GROUP	PERCENTAGE SUPPORT
Only modern methods	Hospitals	16,8%
	Churches	18,2%
	Unin students	11,0%
Only traditional methods	Hospitals	8,0%
	Churches	0%
	Unin students	6,0%
Choose any one method	Hospitals	15,2%
	Churches	23,8%
	Unin students	15,5%
Use both methods	Hospitals	60,0%
	Churches	41,3%
	Unin students	64,5%
Use none	Churches	16,7%
	Unin students	3,0%

Table 2. Choice between different forms of treatment.

2.2.1 Only modern methods accepted

Although modern methods of healing are gaining credibility, less than 20% of the respondents in all categories would only resort to scientific medical care in cases of illness. Those who would do so base their arguments on the scientific knowledge and skills of modern doctors as well as the incompetence and guesswork of the *dingaka*:

- ◆ We are living in a modern society. Modern methods of healing are reliable and successful. Patients are thoroughly checked before medicine is given. Every procedure in the process of healing is governed by the nature of a patient's illness.
- ◆ I have confidence in the training, knowledge and skills of modern medical practitioners. They are highly scientific and one can rely on their methods.
- ◆ Operations are done in a clean environment to reduce the risk of further infections.
- ◆ It appears to be safer to use modern methods of healing since the prescriptions are based on symptoms which accurately indicate the nature of the disease.
- ◆ The medicine is advanced and measured and the equipment sterile and clean.
- ◆ Traditional healers are not trustworthy. It is a risk to rely on them as they sometimes tell lies and cause people to fight with neighbours and relatives.
- ◆ Traditional methods of healing have many complications arising from the traditional healers' inadequate knowledge. They do not know how dangerous their medicine may be to a patient. It is because of this reason that people who first consult traditional healers usually come to hospital in a dying state. Only modern medical care can help such patients.
- ◆ Traditional medicine is a mere brainwash to poor and innocent people.
- ◆ Traditional healers cannot replace the blood or water that a patient may have lost.
- ◆ Practitioners in modern methods of healing are experts. They also ask healing powers from God instead of the *badimo* as in the case of traditional methods. The *dingaka* invoke other spirits for assistance and it is a sin against God for a Christian to become involved with such spirits.

- ◆ Unlike traditional healers who do not accept failure, modern medical practitioners are very honest and will tell you if a certain disease is incurable.

2.2.2 Only traditional methods accepted

A very low percentage of respondents would only consult traditional healers. Taking into account the fact that the sample groups mainly constitute people who are in the forefront of culture change, this reaction may be expected. Those who do justify their decision to consult only the *dingaka* raise the following arguments:

- ◆ One should only use traditional methods of healing because modern methods are unable to cure spiritual diseases as well as those that result from witchcraft.
- ◆ Traditional healers use strong herbs which kill the root cause of the disease. Modern methods of healing only stop the pain for a short period while the disease continues its growth in the body.
- ◆ Traditional medicines are fresh herbs from the bush and are not mixed with other harmful chemicals as in the case of modern medicine.

2.2.3 The need to choose any one method

Another minority group (15,2% to 23,8%) insists that only one of the two methods of healing must be decided upon – not both simultaneously. They say:

- ◆ A choice must be made in terms of the individual's cultural beliefs, medical knowledge and level of education pertaining to health-care.
- ◆ Every human being has a freedom of choice and should exercise this right, but he or she should be guided in order to use the most beneficial method of recovery. A person should give one method a chance and observe how it works.
- ◆ It is not good to use both methods at the same time because they constitute two entirely different processes. The two methods contradict each other and cannot work together.

- ◆ One may get an overdose of the same drug, though in different forms. This will aggravate the disease or cause another disease.
- ◆ A person should stick to the method which yields good results. The natural diseases require modern methods of healing while the supernatural ones may require traditional methods of healing.
- ◆ One should choose the cheapest method.

2.2.4 The use of both methods

The majority of the respondents are in favour of a compromise by using both methods of healing simultaneously. The methods are seen to be complementary, thus offering the patient a better opportunity of recovery by resorting to two kinds of practitioners. The arguments in support of this stand are as follows:

- ◆ It is to the benefit of a society if more methods of healing are available. The best one for a particular disease can then be chosen.
- ◆ Both methods have the same goals, although applied differently. By using both, the healing power is strengthened.
- ◆ One method is likely to fail, in which case the other one may succeed.
- ◆ They can be used simultaneously provided the one does not interfere with the other.
- ◆ If one method takes time to heal a certain disease, and one becomes unsatisfied with it, one should use the other method immediately.
- ◆ Although modern methods fail to cure diseases completely they are very quick to stop pain. Traditional methods take a long time to stop pain, but they are capable of healing diseases completely.
- ◆ For a speedy recovery, it is best to use different methods that operate differently, since they supplement one another. I have a strong confidence in both methods.
- ◆ For the purpose of personal and psychological satisfaction one should use both methods and have peace of mind that one's afflictions have been properly attended to.

- ◆ One should use both, and finally adapt to the one method which seems to be better than the other one. One method is not sufficient to heal all types of diseases.
- ◆ Today, modern medical practitioners have the right to strike. Under such circumstances patients are dying in front of their doctors and nurses who neglect their duties in demand of higher salaries. In such cases, traditional healers must be resorted to.
- ◆ Certain diseases can only be cured by modern means and others only by traditional means. Modern methods may treat the symptoms but not always the causes of a disease. In such cases the *dingaka* must also be consulted.
- ◆ Both can be used provided the traditional ones are freed from the mystical and abstract explanation of disease.
- ◆ Some traditional healers are rendering certain services in hospitals and clinics. This practice gives us a strong conviction that traditional methods are more valuable.
- ◆ Traditional methods of healing are extensively practised in many black communities where the belief in witchcraft and ancestor worship still prevails. Modern methods of healing cannot heal disease resulting from witchcraft, just as traditional practitioners are failing to perform operations and to heal diseases resulting from accidents, such as bone fracture.
- ◆ Because I am not sure which method is best for the disease I am infected with, I try both means.
- ◆ Some health problems are too complicated to be solved by modern methods of healing, while others are too complicated to be solved by traditional healers.
- ◆ Sexually transmitted diseases require a combination of both methods.
- ◆ Traditional *and* modern methods are essential for the survival of the nation.

2.2.5 None of the methods needed

There is also marked tendency in the sample group of the churches (16,7%) as well as 3% among the students, to resort only to faith-healing. These respondents say that God is the only and best healer of all kinds of disease affecting human beings.

2.3 CONCLUSIONS

In the prevailing situation of rapid culture change among the target communities, perceptions on disease and healing are also changing. It is obvious that in the sphere of cause and effect, two different sets of cosmological assumptions are presenting themselves to people. The Western concepts with regard to the causes and treatment of diseases have a rational, scientific basis while the traditional concepts are largely derived from a notion of supernatural causation of diseases. Provision is also made for 'natural' diseases among traditionalists, but that is the smallest category. The more serious diseases are mostly ascribed to supernatural causes such as witchcraft and the intervention of ancestor spirits.

Although perceptions about natural diseases and their treatment with natural, scientific means are expanding, concepts about supernatural causation still strongly prevail among the elite in the research area. This disposition accounts for the preference given by the majority of the respondents to the simultaneous use of modern and traditional forms of health-care. The two practices are regarded as distinctly different in their methods and approaches, but nevertheless mutually supportive. The aspect of psychotherapy as rendered by traditional healers is specifically mentioned as an essential aspect of total medical care. The existence of different cultures and value-systems is recognised and everybody is allowed the right to choose the form of treatment best suited to his or her illness and other misfortunes.

This form of cultural innovation results from a process of addition. New ideas and practices are added without abandoning the old ones. Due to the big differences in the two

practices they do not merge in a syncretistic way but remain distinct alternatives.

Among minority groups of the research community, there are those who abandoned traditional methods in favour of the modern ones (substitution). This group is growing and its members openly reject the methods, practices and alleged unethical behaviour of traditional healers. People who outrightly reject modern methods in favour of traditional ones were found to be very few in the sample group.

Examples of elimination were also found, particularly in the church community. There are those among them who reject both methods of healing in favour of faith-healing.

It is obvious that many people consciously live in two cosmological worlds – the modern and the traditional. That involves many more choices that must be made in times of illness and other afflictions. These phenomena will not only be accounted for differently by different people, but the therapy will also be in accordance with the perceptions of the persons concerned. The complexities that result from situations of change are unavoidable and necessitate a quantitative as well as a qualitative assessment.

We will now further explore the concepts related to specific diseases and their treatment.

Chapter 3

Disease and its Treatment

The phenomenon of disease permeates all sectors of society and places a high premium on services to treat, cure or prevent it. The exposure of the target community to two different health systems based on divergent cosmological assumptions, necessitates the testing of changing of ideas about the causes of disease. The implications of the changed ideas also need to be established in order to assess people's preferences for either modern medicine, or traditional medicine, or both.

3.1 CAUSES OF DISEASE

In the previous chapter (2.2) it was indicated that concepts of disease are changing in that the category of 'natural' diseases is markedly expanding. More information is needed on the knowledge people have about various kinds of disease. In order to gain this information the following question was posed to respondents: "List all the things that you think can cause disease." Obviously, not all of them have the comprehensive knowledge reflected in the list below since it represents the aggregate of all the respondents.

Different categories of disease have been identified as reflected below:

Dietary problems

Unhealthy food	Poor diet	Malnutrition
Eating too much salt	Eating too much sugar	Eating food with too much fat in
Eating a lot of Western food	Eating a lot of canned food	Eating a lot of red meat
Cold drinks	Constipation	

Unhygienic conditions

Dust	Smoke	Bacteria
Germs	Unhealthy environment	Poor personal hygiene
Dirty clothing	Polluted places	Dirty toilets
Eating of rotten food	Using dirty utensils for food	Living in polluted areas
Long nails	Lack of proper sanitation	Cockroaches and rats
Swimming in dirty rivers	Littering	Living close to industries
Unhygienic squatter camps	Lack of ventilation	

Weather conditions

Exposure to cold or hot weather		
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Contagious diseases and infections

Viruses	Contaminated food	Contaminated water
Staying with people who suffer from TB	Infections through open wounds	Malaria mosquitoes
Insects	Food poisoning	Sharing of toothbrushes
Sharing clothes and towels	Animals, e.g. infected dogs	Feathers
Tooth decay		

Physical malfunctioning

Lack of exercise	Ageing	Over-working
Decreased immune system	Many hours of standing or sleeping	

Unhealthy sexual practices and abortion

Prostitution	Failure of preventive measures	Abortion
Having more than one sexual partner	Unhealthy sexual practices, for instance sex without condoms and prostitution	Sexually transmitted diseases such as Aids, gonorrhoea and syphilis

Congenital diseases and allergies

Hereditary disturbances	Powder allergies	Congenital problems
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Improper medical care

Incorrect dosage of medicine	Contaminated instruments	Expired medicine
Blood transfusion	Traditional healers who give untested medicine and who use the same razor blade on different people	

Drugs

Alcohol abuse	Cigarette smoking	Drug abuse
Dagga smoking	Drinking of paraffin	Sniffing of glue, benzene and petrol

Injuries

Physical injuries	Accidents	
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Social and psychological factors

Stress	Religious problems	Social problems
Anxiety	Tension	Malignancy
Lack of education	Depression	Loneliness
Thinking a lot	Negative attitude towards life	Frustrations
Family disorganisation	Nightmares	Shock

Supernatural causes, including ritual impurity

Sexual intercourse with a widow shortly after her husband's death	Sexual intercourse, before the normal period elapse, with a female who committed abortion	Curses and punitive measures by parents and ancestors
Violation of cultural taboos	Witchcraft	Evil spirits
Demons	Cultural superstitions	

The above list reflects a fairly extensive knowledge of a large number of diseases. Many of them are associated with contamination and infections arising from unhygienic conditions and exposure to infected people. Various diseases are specifically associated with unhealthy sexual practices, including intercourse with ritually impure women, and also with virus infections. Abortion is indicated as a cause of an unspecified disease.

Another cause of disease that is relatively new is the factor of stress that may give rise to various disorders. Conditions of this nature are attributed to the social disruptions that are typical of an industrial society, for instance the loneliness and anxiety caused by work and study commitments far from home, unemployment and poverty, as well as social rejection because of religious and ideological persuasions that deviate from that of other group members. Failure to be successful in a competitive society, frustrations of various kinds, and the high demands that are often made on students and employees also cause psychological tension that may lead to physical disorders.

3.2 APPLICATION AND LIMITATIONS OF BIOMEDICINE

The question was asked whether all types of diseases can be treated by modern medicines. If not, which diseases must be treated otherwise and by what means? The basic response was as follows:

Sample group	Positive response	Negative response
Hospitals	39,2%	60,8%
Churches	28,6%	71,4%
Unin students	23,9%	76,1%

Table 3. The usefulness of biomedicine for all kinds of disease.

Although the usefulness of biomedicine for all diseases is gaining acceptance among many people, a large majority of the respondents still believe that there are diseases of which the causes are such that modern medicine will not be effective to bring about total cure. The various reactions are discussed below.

3.2.1 Biomedicine is sufficient for all diseases

Those who maintain that all types of disease can be treated with biomedicine raised the following arguments in support of their view:

- ◆ Diseases are caused by different things. Modern medical practitioners are well trained to know the symptoms, causes and effects of diseases and therefore the correct medication is given for all diseases.
- ◆ Modern medicine is mixed with chemicals that have power to kill any infection and is administered by specialists who are trained to cure different diseases.
- ◆ Modern medicine can treat all types of disease even though modern medical practitioners take time to discover relevant medicine for certain diseases. A disease such as Aids (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is still awaiting cure and it is believed that without scientifically proven medicine by modern scientists there may be no other option.
- ◆ People must learn to consult the modern medical practitioners at an early stage of any infection. On their part, the doctors must make the public aware of the dangers caused by not taking the proper treatment.
- ◆ The advancement of technology makes it easier for modern doctors to administer relevant medicine for specific illnesses.

3.2.2 More than biomedicine is needed for healing

Most of the respondents – the highest percentage of 76,1% being among the university students – firmly believe that biomedicine fails to treat diseases with supernatural

causes. Even some of the natural diseases are thought to be more effectively cured by herbal remedies. Among these are a number of sexually transmitted diseases and children's diseases. However, the solutions to the limitations of modern medicines are not in all cases to be found in traditional healing. Some respondents stress the need for more medical research, while a few put their trust in faith-healing. Social interaction is seen as a cure for stress. The following reasons are given to substantiate these arguments:

- ◆ There are those complex exceptions which render modern technology immature. Some diseases are still a problem to cure, but with on-going medical research there is hope. Diseases such as tuberculosis, cancer and Aids are terminal in nature. But if the affected person consults a modern doctor at an early stage of the infection he or she might survive.
- ◆ Stress can be treated through communication with other people – accepting a difficult situation and receiving support from family members, friends, neighbours and other members of society with whom the sufferers come in contact.
- ◆ Heart diseases, complete spinal cord injuries and congenital diseases can only be healed through the Word of God if one is faithful to Him and honour His teachings.
- ◆ Even though some diseases seem to be natural, they have a spiritual, demonic origin. Diseases such as spirit possession and schizophrenia are spiritual in nature and require spiritual treatment. Only prayer is capable of casting the demon out of the afflicted person and set him or her free.
- ◆ Some diseases are there to take one's life to another world.
- ◆ Diseases that commonly affect babies are traditionally treated. Diseases like *hlongwana* or *thema* can, for example be successfully treated by a traditional healer. He makes small cuts with a razor blade at the back of the neck and under the arms, after which a black powdered herbal remedy is applied to the cuts.
- ◆ A swollen head (*phuane*) among babies is treated by traditional healers, unlike expensive and risky operations by Western doctors.

- ◆ Gangrene and continuous headache can only be treated by traditional medicine since modern medical practitioners never succeed.
- ◆ Sugar diabetes and high blood pressure can successfully be treated by traditional methods.
- ◆ Measles are traditionally treated by using goat dung (*dithokola*) which is poured into a dish with water, stirred well and then applied to the body.
- ◆ Asthma can only be treated through traditional methods by giving the patient an extract to drink which is made from boiled dagga.
- ◆ Chicken pox is a disease that spreads all over the body and can be treated by using traditional African herbs known as *mokgahlwa*.
- ◆ A girl or woman suffering from menstrual pains may be completely cured by traditional medicine. Modern medicine only relieves the pain and the following month the same problem recurs.
- ◆ Unlike modern doctors who cut certain parts of the body when trying to cure cancer, traditional healers cure this disease without removing any part from a patient.
- ◆ Bone diseases can only be treated by traditional healers.
- ◆ *Mafofonyane* (a possessed person) is a disease caused by a person's ancestors (*badimo*) and only a traditional healer can rid one of the *mafofonyane*.
- ◆ Diseases resulting from punishment by a person's *badimo* (ancestor spirits) are cultural and require traditional attention.
- ◆ Sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis can be completely cured by *dingaka*.
- ◆ Diseases which arise through witchcraft, such as *seješo* (caused by noxious medicine which is put in the victim's food), *sefolane* (caused by a harmful magical substance which only needs to be touched by the victim), *sekgalaka* (abscesses on the womb) and *malopo* (spirit possession) can only be treated by traditional healers.
- ◆ It is impossible for modern medical doctors to diagnose and cure diseases resulting from witchcraft. These can either be healed by the supernatural power of God or by traditional healers.

- ◆ Psychosomatic diseases need traditional methods as these methods are psychologically more supportive.
- ◆ Modern medicine does not cure disease but only helps one to minimise the pain while one is in the process of recovery.
- ◆ Diseases resulting from sexual intercourse with a woman who committed abortion is traditionally treated by *dingaka*.
- ◆ For mental illness, epilepsy and infertility traditional healers may be invited to give medication in hospitals under the supervision of a modern medical practitioner.

It is quite obvious that the domain of spiritually and magically caused diseases are thought to be completely outside the grasp of modern doctors who only subscribe to the notion of rational cause and effect, and therefore also beyond their ability to properly treat. In most cases, they can only treat symptoms and relieve pain. Traditional healers and, to a lesser extent, faith-healers are considered to be the only ones who can properly address such problems since they duly take cognisance of the spiritual or magical powers that are at work in causing a particular disorder.

For various other diseases that are not in the category of supernaturally caused diseases, traditional herbal remedies are preferred to modern medicine. Preferences of this nature arise from subjective personal experiences of successful treatment by traditional healers after modern medicine has failed.

3.2.3 The difference between modern and traditional medicine

The ambivalent reactions of respondents towards methods of healing clearly suggest that there are fundamental differences between modern and traditional medicines. Respondents are clearly confused by this issue and do not always know what is good and what is bad. Apart from distinct differences there are also pros and cons on both sides.

The supporters of traditional healers are clearly not always happy with the nature and quality of the medicines given to them. The following are the most common statements made by all groups when comparing the two kinds of medicine in terms of eleven criteria:

Views on the effectiveness of medicine

- ◆ Traditional medicine is no longer effective because most of our grandparents who were knowledgeable about herbs and the treatment of different diseases are now dead. Modern medicine is only good for people who have medical cards because their medicine is not diluted with water. They receive better treatment than the poor patients.
- ◆ Modern medicine is more effective than traditional medicines. It can cure disorders such as coughs, burns, diarrhoea, kwashiorkor, diabetes and hypertension. Users of traditional medicine claim that their medicines can cure these diseases while it is not true.
- ◆ Traditional medicine cure diseases completely while modern medicine is meant for temporary survival.
- ◆ Modern medicines are for minor diseases while traditional medicine caters for serious illness.
- ◆ Traditional medicine cures and destroys the root cause of disease while modern medicine only reduces the pain or cure for a short period.
- ◆ Modern medicine is very slow to effect change in a patient while traditional medicine is more effective and cures a patient in a short space of time.
- ◆ Modern medicine only cures natural disease while traditional medicine cures all types of disease, including those that arise from witchcraft.
- ◆ There is no difference between the two kinds as they are both used to combat disease.
- ◆ Modern medicines are always good for a person's health whereas it is not the case with traditional medicines because they are harmful and unhealthy.
- ◆ Modern medicine is prescribed by trusted physicians and is quick to relieve the pain

while traditional medicine is prescribed by untrustworthy *dingaka* and is very slow in fighting disease.

- ◆ Modern medicines have vitamins which are not present in traditional medicines.

Testing, controlling and dispensing of medicine

- ◆ Modern medicines are given per measurement according to the weight and age of the patient while the strength of traditional medicine is not measured and can lead to an overdose.
- ◆ Modern medicine undergoes several tests before being dispensed to patients and is guaranteed to be safe, whereas traditional medicine goes directly from the healer to the patient. The medicine is not tested and its after effects not known.
- ◆ Modern medicine is thoroughly checked, refined and updated, while with traditional medicine this is not the case. The same medicine may be used for more than ten years and is never inspected, refined or updated.

Safety factors and risks

- ◆ Unlike traditional medicine which often causes death to patients, modern medicine is prepared in hygienic dispensaries and seldom causes problems to patients. Modern medicine is professionally tested in laboratories while traditional medicine is only estimated.
- ◆ Modern medicine is protected from germs and bacteria in sealed containers while traditional medicine is always exposed to contamination in open containers.
- ◆ Traditional medicine is not tested for any poisonous substances which might be present in the plants or animals that are used for its preparation. Modern medicine is thoroughly tested and checked.

Different forms of diagnoses

- ◆ The dispensers of traditional medicine are able to examine a patient by means of divining bones (*ditaola*) before any treatment is given. This is done to determine the cause of the disease and the appropriate treatment. Modern doctors rely on trial and error. They may take the patient to the operating table at the risk of his life.

- ◆ The *dingaka* can determine whether a patient's ancestors or witchcraft are responsible for his disease while modern doctors cannot diagnose such causes.

Different sources of knowledge

- ◆ Modern medicine is based on science and facts while traditional medicine is unscientific and based on beliefs.
- ◆ Modern medicine is subject to the doctor's knowledge whereas traditional medicine relies on supernatural powers.
- ◆ A wide range of traditional medicine is based on supernatural powers and religious beliefs while modern Western medicine is based on science.
- ◆ The knowledge of modern medicine is acquired through research while that of traditional medicine is based on a false belief which is passed on from one generation to another.
- ◆ Modern medicine constitutes a Western approach of fighting disease while traditional medicine entails a traditional approach to disease and emanates from traditional knowledge and experience.

Medicine for different kinds of disease

- ◆ Unlike modern medicine that only caters for natural disease, traditional medicine also cures unnatural diseases resulting from witchcraft. Traditional medicine, therefore, is capable of treating all types of disease.
- ◆ Modern medicine cure only those diseases which are infectious, while traditional medicine is also concerned with psychosomatic diseases affecting the body, the mind and the spirit. Because it is holistic it also removes the causes of disease.

Pure and mixed medicines

- ◆ Traditional medicine is fresh from the bush while modern medicine is mixed with chemicals which are sometimes harmful to a person's health.
- ◆ Traditional medicine is natural while modern medicine is artificial and unnatural.

Differences in the hygienic preparation of medicine

- ◆ Modern medicine is prepared under strict hygienic conditions and the doses are correctly measured. That is not the case with traditional medicine because roots, leaves and bark from trees are just gathered in the bush, crushed or boiled and then given to a patient in bulk. The medicine is not scientifically tested nor measured and such practices may further harm the patient. Traditional medicine is dirty and may worsen the disease. The strength and doses of traditional medicine is seriously questionable.
- ◆ Modern medicines are safely stored in sealed containers. Traditional medicine is always exposed to the atmosphere because it is believed that a person cannot be cured by medicines in a tightly closed container. As a result of this perception, traditional medicine is not clean.
- ◆ Traditional medicine can cause other diseases because of the poor personal hygiene of the *dingaka* while modern medicine is prepared under strict hygienic conditions.

User-friendliness of medicine

- ◆ Modern medicine is sweetened and coloured and the medication comfortable to take, while the opposite is true of traditional medicine.
- ◆ Unlike traditional medicines which are taken raw as they are, modern medicines are refined and different modern chemicals are added to give the natural herb a new flavour. It is for this reason that most of the modern medicines are sweet and have a pleasant smell, which is not the case with traditional medicine.

The cost factor

- ◆ Traditional medicine is cheaper than modern medicine.
- ◆ One must have money to buy modern medicine while traditional medicine can be obtained from any knowledgeable person.

Professional knowledge of the dispensers

- ◆ Modern medicine is prepared by educated specialists in the field of medicine while traditional medicine can be prepared by any person who claims to be knowledgeable.

- ◆ Modern medicines are primarily handled by professionally qualified medical practitioners and nurses in hospitals, clinics and surgeries to cure patients, while traditional medicines are primarily used by *dingaka* to heal or harm other people.
- ◆ *Dingaka* receive their knowledge of making traditional medicine from Satan whereas God gives modern medical practitioners knowledge and wisdom to prepare modern medicine.

3.3 CONCLUSIONS

Significant changes in perceptions about the causes of disease have been determined. Over a wide front, people are becoming aware of the rationally explained dangers of exposure to unhygienic living conditions, the eating of rotten food, malnutrition, too much fat or sugar in the food, overindulgence in liquor, cigarette and dagga smoking, insufficient ventilation, and so on. Knowledge is also expanding about certain contagious diseases resulting from physical contact with sick people. Respondents are particularly aware of the danger of sexually transmitted diseases.

The pathogenic effects of modern society with its competitive nature, its high demands for increased productivity, the social disruptions caused by economic necessities, and its individualistic life-styles which separate kinsmen from one another, are responsible for quite a number of stress-related disorders.

The perennial perception of the supernatural causation of disease by witchcraft, evil spirits and the actions of ancestor spirits is still strongly prevalent among the emerging elite. Great confusion often arises about the real cause of a disease as many of the so-called 'natural' diseases may also be seen to be the result of intervention by supernatural agents – particularly in cases when patients do not respond to treatment by modern

practitioners. This ambivalence often leads to the practice of trying both forms of therapy in order to be absolutely sure that the real causes are diagnosed and addressed.

Perceptions about the differences between modern and traditional medicine are also reflected by this dichotomous situation. Biomedicine cannot cure supernaturally caused diseases, at least not completely. It may relieve pain and temporarily cure symptoms, but it is unable to remove the root cause of the disease. In this regard people see themselves as living in two cosmological worlds – the traditional and the modern – which necessitates the use of different therapies as demanded by the nature and cause of the disease.

Some respondents hold that a number of herbal remedies are also more effective for the treatment of certain diseases, while others would only resort to modern medicines for the treatment of naturally caused diseases. A small number of them completely reject modern medicine while on the other extreme there are those who completely reject traditional medicine. But the middle group who see benefits in both is by far the largest.

Other distinctions are also made between the two types of medicine. Due to the rising consciousness of the need for hygienic practices, even many of the staunch supporters of traditional healers are openly criticising them because of the unhygienic way in which medicine is gathered, stored, prepared, supplied, and also administered to patients. The traditional healers are also criticised because their medicines are not tested for strength and effectiveness, while their after effects are also not known or investigated.

The very apparent dichotomy between natural and supernatural diseases, and the different therapies needed for both, necessitates a more comprehensive investigation of perceptions with regard to witchcraft, ancestors and evil spirits as agents of causality.

Chapter 4

Witchcraft and Sorcery

In the rapidly changing communities of the Northern Province witchcraft (*buloi*) is still one of the major factors of causality to which many diseases are attributed. Concepts about this phenomenon need to be clearly investigated if one is to comprehend the traditional psychotherapy which is sought and applied to witchcraft-related disorders.

4.1 THE OCCURRENCE OF WITCHCRAFT

Contemporary perceptions among the more rapidly changing sector of the community are very important in accounting for the persistent blaming of witchcraft for a high number of serious diseases, mental disorders and other misfortunes. The following question was posed to respondents: "Does witchcraft (*buloi*) still occur? If so, give examples of its different forms." The basic responses were as follows:

SAMPLE GROUP	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	NEUTRAL
Hospitals	74,4%	11,2%	14,4%
Churches	67%	19%	14%
Unin students	82,9%	13,5%	3,6%

Table 4. Belief in the existence of witchcraft.

4.1.1 Statements about belief in witchcraft

Belief in witchcraft is a strongly rooted cosmological assumption that permeates modern society to such an extent that cognisance must be taken of the alleged causal relation-

ship between evil supernatural powers and disease. This belief shapes and even dictates the actions of many people who are seeking help for afflictions arising from the evil deeds of witches and sorcerers (*baloi/* sing. *moloi*) in society. The following statements were made by respondents:

- ◆ Witches and sorcerers have the ability to cause illness to their enemies. Illnesses such as *sefolane*, madness, a continuous headache, continuous menstruation and *seješo* are inflicted by them. During their nightly meetings they always discuss their enemies and the various methods of harming them. *Sefolane* results when a *moloi* mixes her medicine and places it as a magical trap in the path that is regularly used by the victim. When the victim steps on it he will first feel a pain in his foot and it will soon become swollen. The *sefolane* expands further into the body and is aimed at killing the victim slowly while he suffers from severe pain. *Seješo* is the magical insertion of a living creature into a person's body by way of magically treated food which is eaten by him. After a few days the treated food will turn into a live creature such as a snake, a lizard, a chicken or a snail and it will slowly eat the victim from the inside until he dies.
- ◆ Witches and sorcerers are also capable of:
 - inducing people to commit suicide;
 - causing accidents;
 - making children to be born disabled;
 - turning people into zombies;
 - making women sterile;
 - making people to die mysteriously (a person may, for example, hang himself with a belt inside a toilet and die);
 - using animals like baboons, cats and owls to bewitch other people;
 - sending a *tokoloshi* to harm other people;
 - subjecting people to bad luck and misfortune;
 - harming people by using lightning;

- visiting their victims at night, even by flying, to harm them;
 - stealing children while they are sleeping with their mothers;
 - using spells so that something bad must happen to the person they hate; and,
 - placing magical substances in people's houses to cause unexpected events or unnatural diseases.
- ◆ A witch may give you cooked white meat to eat, but it will turn into a live chicken when it reaches your stomach.
 - ◆ Some of the conditions which we fail to treat in hospitals are the result of witchcraft.
 - ◆ Many people are complaining that they are bewitched. Those who are suspected and accused of practising witchcraft are sometimes burnt to death by their communities.
 - ◆ The use of human parts to improve business and to achieve other objectives is associated with witchcraft.
 - ◆ Some people who abandoned their witchcraft activities in favour of Christianity have confessed about the evil work of the *baloyi*.
 - ◆ The powers of witchcraft are inherited from parents to their children. For this reason it will always occur until the end of the world when God will throw those who practise it into the lake of fire.
 - ◆ Some women bewitch their husbands to turn them into stupid people who are unable to observe their wives' immoral and unfaithful behaviour. *Moratišo* is a medicine given to a man by his wife with the view that he will always love her very much and subject himself to her authority so that she will have the final say in all matters.
 - ◆ The *baloi* are able to make their victims enjoy evil things in life. They can, for example, turn people into compulsive murderers.
 - ◆ *Baloi* are able to make themselves invisible. They may get into a person's car while he drives and make him cause an accident. They can also enter a locked house through magical means and poison the food of their victims.
 - ◆ They can fly from one place to another to harm people who stay far away from them.
 - ◆ Witches use animals to bewitch other people. Strange sounds and footsteps may be

heard within one's homestead at night.

- ◆ The *baloi* exhume dead bodies and make them alive with magical means to enslave them. In other cases a person is killed through witchcraft and turned into a zombie (*setatšana*) who is used to perform various duties for the *moloi*.
- ◆ A witch may cause death to a person by only pointing at him. A witch may also tell a person: "I will see you" and the following day the person may fall ill or die.
- ◆ Many people are killed through witchcraft-related actions. There are many inexplicable incidents which occur in the black communities.
- ◆ *Baloi* use the brain of a crocodile (*bjoko bja kwena*) to poison their enemies by putting it in their food.
- ◆ A *moloi* is capable of hindering a person's progress. A student who has neither personal nor family problems may, for example, fail to understand what he or she is reading or taught at school and as a result will fail an examination.
- ◆ The high rate of illness occurring during examination time at tertiary institutions is due to witchcraft.
- ◆ Mental disturbances and unusual nightmares are caused by witches.
- ◆ A person may grow up healthy and strong, not taking any drugs such as dagga or cocaine, but suddenly becomes mentally disturbed because of witchcraft.
- ◆ The devil or satanic spirits work through some people to harm others. Satanism is one of the best examples of witchcraft.
- ◆ The *baloi* feed on human blood and flesh.
- ◆ Some people are carrying magical substances in their pockets in the belief that their power can help them to commit crimes such as bank robberies or to deceive other people. They believe that the medicine will protect them against any evil force which is intent on harming them.
- ◆ Most people who are prosperous in life are likely to become victims of witchcraft. Progressing and gifted people at school are also likely to become victims of *buloi*.
- ◆ A person who may be found naked in other people's homestead is a witch.

- ◆ Witches use their victims at night and it is for this reason that you may sometimes feel very tired when you wake up in the morning.

4.1.2 Denial of the existence of witchcraft

Except for the sample group in churches where 19% of the respondents deny the existence of witchcraft, the percentage of a negative response in this regard is much lower among the other groups. Those who argue away the phenomenon of *buloi* say:

- ◆ Witchcraft is just a belief that has its origin rooted within African history, and may refer to many things. A person with jealousy, hatred or a wicked heart may, for example, ironically be called a witch or sorcerer. But witchcraft as explained by many people, such as killing other people by magical means, does not exist.
- ◆ Ignorance about natural phenomena which lead to death, illness or misfortune is wrongly attributed to witchcraft.
- ◆ Witchcraft is only a general belief held by many African communities that is passed on from one generation to another and is finally assumed to be true. It has no factual basis. Only people who do not know God claim that witchcraft still occurs.
- ◆ Witchcraft is propaganda that is spread by traditional healers in order to get clients and thereby make a living from their skill of healing and magical protection. Whenever a person is sick, the traditional healers attribute the illness to witchcraft. In that way, they also create conflict among neighbours.
- ◆ People are used to blaming witches when things go against their will.

4.1.3 Uncertainty about witchcraft

There are also people who are uncertain about the phenomenon of witchcraft and do not have the conviction to outright deny it. They nevertheless doubt it very strongly. They formulated their responses as follows:

- ◆ I cannot comment on witchcraft-related issues because I lack concrete proof. No precise details are known to me though many people still believe in its existence, espe-

cially in the Northern Province where stories about witchcraft often appear in the newspapers.

- ◆ It depends on a person's level of education and beliefs.
- ◆ I never saw a witch, although I grew up with such conceptions.

4.2 WITCHCRAFT OF THE DAY AND WITCHCRAFT OF THE NIGHT

Two categories of witchcraft are indicated by most of the respondents, that is witchcraft of the day (*boloi bja mosegare*) and witchcraft of the night (*boloi bja bošego*). The witchcraft of the day is the perpetration of malevolent magical acts against individuals by jealous people who pretend to be ordinary members of society. They are induced by their envy and hatred to resort to witchcraft to harm or kill people. They may use poison, magical substances and even send lightning to kill their enemies and those of whom they are jealous.

Witchcraft of the night is practised by people, mostly women, who have an inherited compulsion towards harming and killing people. They are shrouded in the mysteries of deeply mystical activities and are surrounded by zombies and magical animals such as baboons, dogs, owls and snakes that are sent out at night to bewitch or kill people. These animals can change themselves into anything else to disguise themselves and can enter locked houses. The witches of the night are also believed to come together for feasts at night where they walk naked and eat human flesh. They can resurrect their victims from the dead, turn them into zombies and use them as slaves. They delight in killing people, and this evil compulsion is transmitted from a mother to her daughter.

The following question was asked to respondents: "What is the difference between witchcraft of the day and witchcraft of the night?" The responses were as follows:

SAMPLE GROUP	DIFFERENCES RECOGNISED	NO DIFFERENCES	UNCERTAIN	NO WITCH-CRAFT
Hospitals	49,6%	20,8%	24%	5,6%
Churches	55,6%	6,3%	28,6%	9,5%
Unin students	71%	20%	7%	2%

Table 5. Comparing witchcraft of the day and witchcraft of the night.

4.2.1 Confirming the two types of witchcraft

The perceptions of most of the respondents are not very clear about the differences between the two types of witchcraft. They associated the following characteristics with these categories:

Witchcraft of the day

- ◆ It is a more dangerous form of witchcraft in that the *moloi* cannot be identified – he is physically the same as any other person.
- ◆ They do their evil work without being recognised by anybody.
- ◆ It is practised by persons who are full of hatred and jealousy. They speak badly about other people.
- ◆ They carry medicine in their pockets wherever they are.
- ◆ They smear traditional medicine to other people's property to harm or kill the owner.
- ◆ They bewitch people's footprints.
- ◆ They pour poisonous substances into people's food at wedding or funeral ceremonies.
- ◆ They cast evil spells on people.
- ◆ They go to a *ngaka* and request some medicine to harm other people.
- ◆ They harm or kill people through lightning.

Witchcraft of the night

- ◆ Witchcraft of the night is highly secret, supernatural and inexplicable.
- ◆ It is inherited from one's parents. A woman who is a witch teaches her children the art of night witchcraft when they are still very young.
- ◆ It is associated with darkness and performed at night.
- ◆ It is more powerful and effective because the evil spirits are free and ready to carry out their evil duties without any hindrance.
- ◆ They can make their enemies to fall into a deep sleep and then operate effectively.
- ◆ Night witches kill innocent people.
- ◆ They use animals such as baboons, owls and cats to do their evil work.
- ◆ They trouble their victims at night and make them sick. They also place deadly herbs at various spots.
- ◆ The movements of witches are associated with the singing of owls and the unnecessary barking of dogs at night.
- ◆ The victim cannot see or feel anything but will wake up in the morning feeling very tired or ill.
- ◆ They may come in the form of a dream and give their enemies bad nightmares.
- ◆ Witches go about naked and they can also fly.

4.2.2 Denial of any difference among the *baloi*

A minority group of respondents deny any difference between witchcraft of the day and witchcraft of the night. They say:

- ◆ Disease, misfortune and death resulting from witchcraft may take place at any time.
- ◆ All witchcraft activities are evil and harmful to people and no line of demarcation can be drawn between the two types.
- ◆ There are not two types of witchcraft; if one is a witch she remains a witch at all times.

- ◆ All witches are followers of Satan who works through the minds of people who are not born again. They share the same satanic beliefs and practices.

Of the remaining two groups, the people who registered uncertain responses merely indicated no knowledge of a distinction between the two categories, while those of the last group mainly denied the existence of witchcraft on Christian grounds. They regard these beliefs as superstitions. One respondent said that the stories about witchcraft are just fictions that people create within themselves. However, the fact that the majority believe in these malevolent magical phenomena should be taken note of since they act according to their beliefs.

4.3 PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LIGHTNING AND THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR IT

The intermittent occurrence of charging people for the practising of witchcraft after damages or deaths have been caused by lightning, sometimes leading to the execution of the alleged culprits, is an inherent part of perceptions with regard to *buloi*. In order to test these perceptions the following question was asked: “Can a *moloi* send lightning to harm or kill other people? If so, how can he be identified and what should be done to a person who is pointed out as the culprit?” The basic responses were as follows:

SAMPLE GROUP	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	NEUTRAL
Hospitals	66,4%	25,6%	8%
Churches	68,2%	25,4%	6,4%
Unin students	87,8%	8,5%	3,7%

Table 6. Perceptions on whether a *moloi* can send lightning to harm or kill others.

4.3.1 Belief in the use of lightning by the *baloi*

The overwhelming conviction, particularly among university students, that the *baloi* are able to send lightning to harm or kill people is also expressed in terms of the relevant actions that should be taken to normalise the disturbed situation. A number of alternative methods can be used to identify the *moloji* who is responsible for the disaster:

- ◆ Community members may arrange to consult a prominent traditional doctor who is capable of revealing the unknown culprit through his divining bones. Some traditional doctors have mirrors which they use to identify witches. It is difficult to identify witches because they wear protective medicine so that they should not be identified by any means. However, if the diviner has stronger medicine he can easily identify the witch by using divining bones or a mirror.
- ◆ When they go out to harm or kill people through lightning, the *baloi* smear their bodies with ashes and coloured medicine. After they have done their work they go to the nearest river or dam to wash the medicine from their bodies. Immediately after the lightning has harmed or killed a person the community members should go to the nearest river or dam and conduct a big search. They will find the *moloji* because anyone who is found bathing during such rainy weather is the sender of lightning.
- ◆ Because some people and their homes are magically strengthened by traditional medicine to protect themselves against evil actions of witchcraft, a *moloji* may be trapped and fall down if he or she tries to strike such people with lightning.
- ◆ A person who may be seen naked and has painted herself with ashes or other colours is a *moloji*.

There are a number of alternative actions that may be taken against the person who is pointed out as the one responsible for the misfortune:

- ◆ As the culprit is a murderer he, too, must be killed because of perpetrating the ongoing crime of witchcraft. This will prevent the killing of more innocent people.

- ◆ The culprit should be driven out of the village.
- ◆ He should be left alone and God will provide the solution.
- ◆ The culprit requires proper counselling and deliverance from his or her evil actions through the Word of God. He or she should repent and ask the Christian congregation to pray for him or her and then burn all his or her magical medicines in public.
- ◆ The culprit must be taken to the police station and the law will take its course. The *moloji* should be sentenced for life in a court of law. If we still had the death penalty I would recommend that the *moloji* be given one.
- ◆ The government must understand the crimes of witchcraft and make provision to deal with them in the courts of law.
- ◆ The guilty person should be given a harsh punishment that will serve as a deterrent to other witches. The witch may, for example, be stoned, necklaced, hanged or beaten to death.
- ◆ The culprit as well as his or her house must be burnt to ashes.
- ◆ The relatives of the victim should consult a traditional healer who will, in turn, revenge the victim's death through magical means by sending misfortune to the witch.
- ◆ It is hard to say what should be done to the person who is pointed out as the culprit because it sometimes happens that an innocent person is pointed out. Many people have been accused and killed for something that they have not done.

4.3.2 Denying the allegation of lightning sent by witches

About 25% of the respondents in the hospitals and churches, and only 8,5% of the students, deny any allegations of lightning that is sent by witches and sorcerers as part of their evil works of destruction in society. The arguments are:

- ◆ Lightning is a natural phenomenon and takes place without the involvement of the *moloji*. Ignorant people are brainwashed to believe that lightning can be caused by human actions.
- ◆ No person can manipulate the forces of nature of his own will. Only God has such

supernatural powers.

- ◆ Non-Christians strongly believe in the existence of witches. Scientific and educational development should help to bring an end to these beliefs.

4.3.3 Uncertainty about the causes of lightning

A small percentage of respondents are uncertain about the allegations that *baloi* can use lightning to kill people or harm their property. They simply say that they do not know.

4.4 CONCLUSIONS

The awareness of negative, destructive and evil forces in the cosmos is culturally accounted for as manifestations of witchcraft. Within this cosmological antithesis the benevolent harnessing of magical forces by diviners and traditional healers (*dingaka*) is resorted to in order to counter the malevolent application of these forces by witches and sorcerers (*baloi*).

Most of the educated people who have been intensively exposed to ideas of rational cause and effect are still firmly convinced of a supernatural realm which cannot be scientifically explained. There are too many diseases, misfortunes, calamities and strange phenomena to deny the existence of evil supernatural powers. Even though many diseases are ascribed to natural causes such as infection, there is also a clearly identifiable category of 'strange' diseases such as mental disorders, poisoning, continuous headaches and a sudden, inexplicable breakdown of a person's health, as well as the fact that these diseases defy modern healing therapies. There are also strange accidents and a spate of incidents of bad luck that a person may experience that cannot be naturally explained. All such occurrences are ascribed to witchcraft by jealous and evil-minded

people who want to harm or kill their adversaries and enemies.

Most of the Christians are also in agreement with this 'traditional' explanation of evil. They do have clear perceptions of evil, satanic forces in the cosmos and tend to ascribe the actions of the *baloi* to satanic intervention and even the possession of evil-minded people by Satan and his demons. Some even equate witchcraft with Satanism. On the solution of these problems they are divided. Some see the *dingaka* as God-ordained agents to redress disorders in society, while others regard the traditional doctors as liars and maintain that God will intervene to break the evil powers if Christians are praying.

In the case of lightning as an alleged instrument of the *baloi* to damage property and kill people, social action is also called for to eradicate evil in society. Ways to deal with the culprit vary on a continuum from soft to hard methods. These include counselling and repentance, the driving away of the *moloji*, criminal proceedings, magical counter-actions by powerful *dingaka*, and ultimately execution by the members of the society. It is commonly argued that the evil must be eradicated in the community lest more murders and evil deeds occur.

The methods used by the *baloi* remain part of a mystical realm of strange supernatural phenomena. Although some people are cynical about these allegations and even reject them as the superstitions of uneducated members of society, the majority have as yet no other frame of reference to account for the mysterious, evil and destructive works of darkness.

Chapter 5

Role of the Ancestor Spirits

One of the important factors in the causation of illness and misfortunes is believed to be the actions of the ancestor spirits. The degree to which the elite still gives credence to this belief has a big impact on popular perceptions about diseases, misfortunes and their treatment. For this reason, respondents were specifically confronted with a number of questions on this matter.

5.1 THE OBLIGATION TO WORSHIP THE ANCESTORS

In a society in which the members believe that the ancestor spirits (*badimo*) are the spiritual custodians of their lineages who have the ability to bless or chastise their living descendants, it would obviously be regarded as very unethical, disrespectful and risky not to worship and appease the spirits by praying and sacrificing to them. This obligation can only change after fundamental changes in cultural perceptions about the existence and powers of the ancestor spirits have taken effect.

The following question was asked to the three groups of respondents: "Should a person worship his ancestors (*badimo*) by sacrificing to them? If so, what should he sacrifice, where should he sacrifice, and how often?"

The basic responses to the question of whether one should worship one's ancestors by sacrificing to them, are reflected in Table 7. The nature of this relationship, and also the different occasions and forms of sacrifice are discussed thereafter.

Sample group	Positive response	Negative response
Hospitals	75,2%	24,8%
Churches	56,3%	43,7%
Unin students	87,2%	12,8%

Table 7. The obligation of worshipping the ancestor spirits through sacrifice.

5.1.1 The commitment to sacrifices

The following are specific responses to the question about sacrifices as a way of honouring the deceased family ancestors. Sacrifices can be done at the graves or at a designated area in the homestead:

- ◆ One should respect his parents for the rest of his life, whether they are dead or alive. Sacrifices to the dead indicate a continuation of such respect. The diviner will determine the type of sacrifice required by the ancestors.
- ◆ The spirit of a person continues to live after the death of his body. It is important that sacrifices be made to such spirits as they can reveal themselves to disrespectful descendants through misfortunes or bad luck.
- ◆ Animals are traditionally relevant sacrifices to the ancestors – it could be a cow, a goat or a lamb. There is always an identified area or a room specially meant for sacrifices in the homestead. Some families have other sacred places for sacrifices. It may be under a tree or at a grave. The number of sacrifices will be determined by circumstances within the family.
- ◆ A person should slaughter a goat and gather with his family members at the centre of the homestead and ask for blessings from the ancestors. This ritual can be conducted once a year.
- ◆ A lamb ewe should be sacrificed every year during the date of birth or death of a particular ancestor to ensure good fortune.
- ◆ One may also offer some earthly possessions such as money or jewellery at the grave of an ancestor once a year. Whatever one can afford must be given to the ancestors. It

may also be beer, snuff or flowers.

- ◆ Whenever there are problems such as misfortunes, unemployment or illness at home, one should slaughter an animal and brew African beer. The senior male member of the family should then place the bones and blood of the sacrificial animal on top of the grave of an ancestor and also pour some of the beer on the grave while addressing the ancestors and communicating the family problems to them.
- ◆ A goat should be sacrificed under the sacred tree of the family depending on how often the ancestors demand such sacrifices.
- ◆ Ancestors may visit a person in dreams and give instructions on when, how and what to sacrifice for them, but such instructions also need to be confirmed in consultation with a diviner.
- ◆ Sacrifices should be made to the ancestors during both happy and sad occasions.
- ◆ One should not disregard tradition but continue sacrificing to the ancestors irrespective of what Christian values require. A cow, goat or sheep must be slaughtered once a year to honour the ancestors.
- ◆ It is a traditional African practice that a goat should be sacrificed to the ancestors as many times as one wishes. The ancestor who is addressed at home or at his grave will pass the information on to other ancestors and finally to God.
- ◆ Ancestors act as mediators between the living members of the family and God. It is therefore important to honour them through sacrifice for the service that they are rendering.
- ◆ When a baby is born, a goat is slaughtered to inform the ancestors about the addition of a new member in the family. Whenever any other members of the family have achieved something great in life the ancestors must also be informed through sacrifices – for example when someone has bought a new car, when a member has obtained a university degree or during the arrival of a bride.
- ◆ The ancestors are our parents and they need to be remembered in the form of feasts and sacrifices at least once a year. Such ceremonies should be accompanied by traditional songs and dancing.

- ◆ In actual fact we do not worship our ancestors but rather venerate them at the beginning or end of the year.
- ◆ The ancestors must always know and understand that we love them and do care about them and they must, in turn, always take care of us. We strongly believe that they are always with us wherever we are and whatever we are doing. It is for this reason that lineage members must gather at the place of one of the oldest members of the lineage to make sacrifices to the ancestors. Such ceremonial gathering must take place at least once every year.

5.1.2 No commitment to worship of or sacrifice to the *badimo*

A reasonably high percentage of church-members – 43,7%, as against 24,8% of hospital staff and patients and only 12,8% of the students – deny any obligation on their part to worship the ancestor spirits through sacrifice. They say:

- ◆ When a person dies, his body rots and his soul rises up to God. *Badimo* therefore do not exist and we should not worship them through sacrifices.
- ◆ Christ was sacrificed on the cross for all the people on earth and there is no need for one to sacrifice to the ancestors if one believes in God.
- ◆ A person should worship God and sacrifice one's life to Him. God is against worshipping the dead.
- ◆ If a person is a truly born again Christian he does not worship ancestors because he knows that they are dead and cannot influence him.
- ◆ One should only keep the ancestors' graveyards clean and pray to God.
- ◆ The ancestors do more harm than good.
- ◆ For the survival of the younger generation traditional elders should stop worshipping ancestors and believe in God.
- ◆ A person should go to the church to worship and praise the Almighty God and develop a strong belief in His existence and power.
- ◆ Worshipping the ancestors is pure wickedness and a way of provoking God. He will

punish people who worship the ancestors and sacrifice to them.

- ◆ We should stick to the rules of the Bible. God (*Modimo*) said that that we should not worship other gods (*badimo*) but Himself.
- ◆ My parents are dead and have told me not to worship them.

5.2 THE ACTIONS OF UNSATISFIED ANCESTOR SPIRITS

It is important to know exactly what the ancestors are believed to be able to do against disrespectful descendants who do not live according to the traditions of their forefathers. The relevant views were tested by the following question: “What can the *badimo* do to you if they are not happy with your life?”

Of the three sample groups, 72,8% of the hospital staff and patients, 65% of the church members, and 86% of the university students affirm the ability of the ancestors to take punitive measures against disobedient descendants. Their main arguments are:

- ◆ They may sometimes visit you through dreams and warn you about unacceptable behaviour. Punishment may be inflicted in various forms. The *badimo* may:
 - cause a series of misfortunes in the family;
 - cause incurable diseases to children who bear the family name;
 - cause serious diseases to any family member, thereby forcing him to consult a diviner;
 - send you bad luck such as making you to fail at school, not getting a job or breaking your marriage;
 - torment you with nightmares, hallucinations or mental disorders;
 - make you mad or kill you in an accident or through disease;
 - curse you and make you to give birth to cripples;
 - turn against you, make your life miserable and subject you to harsh conditions;

- cause you not to progress in life;
 - make you to lose your husband, wife, child, work, livestock, or any other belongings;
 - cause you to suffer until you reconcile with them through the necessary sacrifices;
 - withhold their blessing and leave you unprotected against evil; and
 - send demons to interfere with your daily life.
- ◆ If a parent is not happy with the conduct of his child, he punishes him or her – and so, too, do the ancestors.
 - ◆ One cannot predict the anger of the *badimo*. Nothing good will come your way. They will ruin your life until you obey their orders.
 - ◆ If you are lucky, the *badimo* may come to you through dreams to express their unhappiness and also to advise you on what is expected of you. A positive reaction to their demands will ensure a happy life.

5.3 MEDICAL SCIENCE AND THE ACTIONS OF THE ANCESTORS

It needs to be established beyond reasonable doubt whether patients who regard themselves as being afflicted by their ancestors have any confidence in modern medical practices and psychotherapy to treat the disorders they suffer from. If not, they should be given the chance to speak for themselves by explaining the phenomena involved and also to offer a possible solution to their predicament.

The following question was posed to the 578 respondents in the three sample groups: “Can hospitals and modern doctors cure the disorders and diseases caused by the *badimo*? If not, why not, and what action should one then take?” Their responses are statistically reflected in Table 8. From these figures it is evident that a vast majority regard problems of this nature as beyond the capacity of modern science to handle.

SAMPLE GROUP	NEGATIVE	POSITIVE	UNCERTAIN
Hospitals	75,2%	18,4%	6,4%
Churches	71%	16%	13%
Unin students	86,9%	7,6%	5,5%

Table 8. Views about the capacity of modern science to treat ancestor spirit-related afflictions.

5.3.1 Inability of modern doctors to treat ancestor-related afflictions

The vast majority of respondents have firmly stated their conviction that modern medical science is unable to understand, treat and cure diseases and other disorders arising from the punitive actions of the ancestor spirits (*badimo*). The following are the main arguments advanced by them:

- ◆ The ancestors may sometimes require one of their descendants to become a diviner. Under such circumstances, the particular person should be initiated to become one. It is clear that hospitals and modern doctors cannot provide training of this nature.
- ◆ Hospitals and modern doctors are not knowledgeable about diseases and disorders caused by the *badimo*. Traditional healers are the only people who are knowledgeable about such diseases and disorders. Some of these diseases and disorders may be cured by simply singing traditional songs and dancing the whole night.
- ◆ Health and mental problems caused by the *badimo* are beyond the control of modern science and technology and only require the attention of traditional healers. Hospitals and modern doctors must not even take the chance of treating such diseases.
- ◆ Hospitals and modern doctors do not believe in *badimo* and think that they are better than the majority of the population who believe in ancestor worship. They rely on their wisdom regarding the causes and treatment of diseases.
- ◆ Diseases and disorders caused by the ancestors are spiritual in nature and require spiritual treatment. Hospital staff and modern doctors cannot communicate with the

badimo but traditional healers are able to do so.

- ◆ Traditional problems should be solved by traditional means. Modern doctors do not know the herbs and procedures needed to treat such people and therefore cannot stop the punishment inflicted by the *badimo*.
- ◆ Diseases and problems caused by the *badimo* must be solved by obeying their orders. The relatives of the victim should consult a diviner who will determine the wishes and needs of the *badimo*. Through the use of divining bones diviners are able to determine what the *badimo* expect of the victim.
- ◆ The patient must be treated in hospital and then released to go and sacrifice to his ancestors.
- ◆ *Badimo* are spirits and modern doctors do not have the knowledge to cure diseases caused by the spirits. One should then seek advice either from traditional healers or religious experts such as priests or pastors. God is more powerful than the *badimo* and can heal the afflicted person.
- ◆ Disorders and diseases caused by the *badimo* are demonic in nature and doctors cannot exorcise demons from a possessed person. The victim should accept Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour to avoid further complications. Only God can solve such problems if the victim believes in Him.
- ◆ Hospital staff and modern doctors are not convinced about traditional African beliefs and therefore cannot examine the root causes of ancestor spirit related diseases. The afflicted person should make sacrifices to his ancestors after consulting a diviner who will determine what is to be done.
- ◆ The *badimo* are invisible and their anger cannot be challenged by modern doctors. It is therefore important that one respects them, fulfils their needs, asks their forgiveness and adheres to the relevant procedures.
- ◆ Modern medical staff have no idea about the efforts and effects of the *badimo*. They do not even invite the power of the spirits to assist them when healing the sick.
- ◆ Modern doctors and nurses can only give the patients some tablets or medication to minimise the pain on a temporary basis, but after a few days the disease or disorder

crops up again because the power of the *badimo* is bigger than that of the living people. The relevant practitioners to be consulted are the traditional healers.

- ◆ The *badimo* are not modern and are not found in hospitals. Diseases caused by them are beyond the capacity of modern doctors to solve. Family members of the sick person must consult a *ngaka* about the problem.
- ◆ The victim knows and believes that he must do something for the *badimo*. The mind of the victim will not be prepared for modern medical treatment until he does what should be done for the *badimo*.
- ◆ Modern doctors will tell you that they do not see any problem with your health while you are suffering from severe pains. The *badimo* may end up killing you if you insist on consulting modern doctors instead of traditional ones.
- ◆ The *badimo* may sometimes require from the victim a slaughtered beast or goat, African beer and snuff instead of medication from hospitals and clinics.
- ◆ Some diseases and disorders caused by the *badimo* can be healed through the beating of drums, singing and dancing in the form of a ceremony. Provision is not made for such ceremonies in hospitals.
- ◆ A person may sometimes be possessed with one of the spirits of the *badimo*. They hate modern treatment and one can only be reconciled with them through honouring and observing the correct traditional procedures.

5.3.2 Modern solutions to traditional problems

Less than 20% of the respondents (in the case of the students only 7,6%) have expressed the positive conviction that modern medical science can heal diseases that are allegedly caused by the ancestor spirits. Their main arguments are as follows:

- ◆ There are no diseases and disorders which are caused by the *badimo*. All the diseases that are presumed to be caused by the spirits can be treated by the hospitals and modern doctors for what they really are.
- ◆ Any kind of disease is in one's blood. Modern doctors are capable of examining the

blood of a patient and identify the cause of the disease.

- ◆ It largely depends on one's belief. If a person believes that hospitals and modern doctors are helpful they will really help him.
- ◆ While taking medication from hospitals and modern doctors, one should also pray and call the Name of Jesus Christ with much faith.
- ◆ The ancestor spirits do not have the power to cause disorders and diseases. It is only a mere African belief that a person's dead parents and grandparents have a role to play over their living descendants. Since this is a deeply-rooted belief, modern doctors should not try to encourage or discourage such beliefs but rather deal directly with the illness.
- ◆ Any form of disorder or disease has its natural cause and origin, and can be easily cured by modern doctors.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

This investigation has clearly demonstrated the deeply-rooted belief in the existence and actions of ancestor spirits that still prevails in a society in transition. It is obvious that the father-child and grandfather-child relationship in the three living generations are projected into the spiritual sphere by assigning authority and power to the deceased members of the family group. As spirits, they have more powers than living people and therefore need to be respected and feared to a larger degree.

As custodians of the culture and family traditions, the *badimo* reveal a much more aggressive than a loveable and compassionate disposition in their relationship with their living descendants. In cases of disrespectful behaviour they will inflict the most severe punishments on their kin, including ruining one's health, destroying one's marriage, the loss of one's possessions and work, insanity, the death of one's children, or even killing

one in an accident or through a terminal disease. This is the reason why a person who experiences severe and continuous problems in life, or suffer from a persisting and incurable disease, he suspects his ancestor spirits' involvement in the situation.

The need to appease the spirits through sacrifices of various kinds, accompanied by prayers for forgiveness of transgressions, is regarded as a matter of great expediency for all people. Without actions of this nature, most people have strong doubts that their fate will change for the good and that their chronic diseases will be healed.

Because of these beliefs, most people strongly reject modern therapies of healing people who are afflicted by their ancestors. They maintain that Western medicine can, at the most, offer temporary relief of the symptoms and that the problem will persist until a traditional healer has been consulted and the appropriate sacrifices made to the *badimo*.

An inconsistency is evident in the reactions of respondents from the churches. Despite the fact that 71% of them said that modern doctors cannot treat diseases and disorders which are ascribed to the ancestors, a decreased number of 65% agreed that the *badimo* are able to take punitive actions against their descendants, while only 56,3% concurred with the view that one should sacrifice to one's ancestors. It seems that although they believe in the existence of the spirits, many of them hesitate to agree that one should engage in the active service of the *badimo* by sacrificing to them.

The minority group either deny the existence or powers of the spirits and declare modern treatment sufficient, or they resort to a Christian form of faith-healing.

In the light of these perceptions, more clarity is needed on traditional and modern fields of medicine.

The Applications of Traditional and Modern Medicine

In the light of perceptions about the causes and treatment of disease and illness determined thus far, a more explicit demarcation of the two fields of traditional and modern medicine is needed. The extent to which they are incompatible or complementary should also be indicated if a comprehensive health plan for the divergent cultural groups is to be devised. In this dichotomous situation, the first preference of people will be determined. Furthermore, protective magical treatment against witchcraft will be reviewed, as well as magical strengthening treatment for babies.

6.1 THE HEALING POWER OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

Respondents were asked to indicate which diseases can best be prevented or cured by using traditional medicine. Of the staff and patients in hospitals, 72,8% indicated such a category of disease while 75% of church people and 85,9% of the students in the sample groups also confirmed the beneficial use of the *dingaka's* medicine. The following are the diseases which were grouped in this category:

Thema, a children's disease characterised by black spots at the back of the neck

Hlongwana ('little head') a children's disease which refers to the pulsating fontanelle

Makgoma, an illness following contamination with ritually impure persons

Sekgalaka, abscesses in the womb that cause infertility

Irregular menstruation

Barrenness

Impotence

Sexually transmitted diseases

Hypertension	Measles
Nose-bleeding	Polio
Cholera	Chicken-pox
Headache and migraine	Epilepsy
Vomiting	Stomach pains
Diarrhoea	Skin diseases
Asthma	Snake-bites
All diseases resulting from witchcraft, e.g. <i>sefolane</i> and <i>seješo</i>	All diseases that are caused by the ancestor spirits of a person
Mental disorders	Spirit possession (<i>malopo</i>)
<i>Mafofonyane</i> , a disease which can cause hysteria and insanity	<i>Sebeubeu</i> , which is characterised by severe pains in the sternum
Hallucinations	Fatigue

6.2 THE HEALING POWER OF MODERN MEDICINE

The survey clearly revealed that the benefits of modern medicine for quite a number of diseases have been accepted by the black community. Even those who believe in the utility of traditional medicine are of the opinion that certain diseases can best be healed by modern medicine. Of the medical staff and patients 80% subscribe to this fact, while 88% of the church people and 95% of the students accept it.

Some of the diseases in this list correspond with those in the list of the *dingaka*, indicating considerable overlapping. Some respondents had better results with traditional medicine, while others found biomedicine more effective for the same ailments. There are cases in which a certain patient reacts well after taking modern medication, while another one's condition may show no improvement. Such diseases are often ascribed to witchcraft or intervention by the ancestors, inducing the patient to consult his *ngaka* on

the issue. Many of the respondents also prefer to use both kinds of medicine in order to maximise their chances on recovery. Western medicine can treat the symptoms while the advice or magical treatment of the traditional healer will serve to address the spiritual or magical factors that may also play a role. As indicated earlier (2.2) the people who subscribe to biomedicine include those who only use biomedicine, those who use it as an alternative to traditional medicine but not simultaneously, and those who use both types at the same time.

The following diseases are thought to be successfully treated by biomedicine:

Tuberculosis	Smallpox
Polio	Malaria
Cholera	Measles
All infectious diseases	Inflammations, e.g. glossitis and conjunctivitis
Ulcers	Cancer
Chicken pox	Sugar diabetes
Asthma	Hypertension
Myelitis	Anaemia
Aids	Diphtheria
Tetanus	Hepatitis A and B
Ischaemia	Heart diseases
Stroke	Renal failure
Yellow fever	Whooping cough
Sexually transmitted diseases	Various vaccines to prevent certain diseases
Mumps	Headache
Malnutrition and kwashiorkor	Typhoid
High blood pressure	Bilharzia
Hypertension	Mental retardation and other mental disorders

6.3 PROTECTION AGAINST WITCHCRAFT

Respondents make a clear distinction between remedial and protective (or preventive) medicines. Vaccination against a number of diseases is gladly accepted. This practice is also well known in traditional healing.

An aspect that needs further investigation is the protection that people need and seek against witchcraft. The following question was asked to the respondents: "Can the use of traditional medicine protect you against witchcraft? If so, give examples." The responses to the question are as follows:

SAMPLE GROUP	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	UNCERTAIN
Hospitals	70,4%	22,4%	7,2%
Churches	57%	32%	11%
Unin students	69%	27%	4%

Table 9. Beliefs about the rendering of magical protection against witchcraft.

6.3.1 Affirmation of magical protection against witchcraft

Precautionary measures against the unforeseen occurrence of witchcraft take the form of the magical treatment of people as well as their property. The lower percentage of Unin students who believe in protective measures against witchcraft, compared to other responses about questions on the existence of supernatural powers, is accounted for by the doubt expressed by some of them about the effectiveness of magical protection. Such respondents say that the forces of witchcraft are so strong that they defy the protective measures offered by the traditional healers. Respondents explain the phenomenon of magical protection as follows:

- ◆ A person is not easily bewitched if he regularly visits his traditional doctor and relates his state of health to him. Traditional healers are aware of the evil actions of witches and usually assist their clients by giving them protective means against witchcraft.
- ◆ Cuts are made at the back of the neck, on the chest and on every joint, with a razor blade after which medicine is rubbed into the cuts to protect one against witchcraft (*go hlabelwa ka dihlare go thibela baloi go go loya*). One normally consults a *ngaka* once a year to strengthen oneself.
- ◆ Unlike modern doctors who do not give protective medicine against witchcraft, traditional doctors will visit your home to provide security by strengthening it with protective herbs (*go thea motse, go thibela baloi*). When a new house is built, the sand and cement should be mixed with traditional medicine to protect the owner against witchcraft, including lightning that may be sent by the *baloi*.
- ◆ A *ngaka* may give you some medicine to sprinkle around your house so that when the witches come at night, they only see a big snake or a fire and then return home.
- ◆ Witchcraft is common practice in many African communities. The *dingaka* know the techniques and preventative measures to safeguard you.
- ◆ If you tell a traditional healer that you did not sleep well the previous night because of a noise caused by strange things dancing on the roof, the *ngaka* will give you some medicine to sprinkle on the roof, and after that no more noises will be heard.
- ◆ A *ngaka* may give you a robe that is magically treated to tie around your waste in order to protect you against witchcraft. He can also give you medicine to use when bathing to wash away the bad luck which is brought about by witchcraft. To avoid nightmares, the *ngaka* should be invited to sprinkle your house with medicine.
- ◆ At working-places it is important that one should be protected and strengthened by the medicine of a traditional healer to avoid being bewitched by fellow employees. One needs to be protected against people who are jealous because of one's progress and consequently want to bewitch him or her. Persons who hold high positions should all be protected by traditional medicine because many people will be jealous of them and try to bewitch them.

- ◆ If you are properly strengthened (*ba go thekgile gabotse*) by a 'real man' no witch or sorcerer dare touch you. The traditional medicine protects you against all evil actions of witchcraft such as bad luck, accidents and other misfortunes. A person who is protected by traditional medicine always has confidence in life and does not live in fear of witches.
- ◆ One must be protected against poisoning at wedding and funeral ceremonies.
- ◆ At the circumcision school, for example, there is always a traditional healer whose duty it is to make sure that the whole place is protected by traditional medicine against witchcraft.
- ◆ If a witch or sorcerer tries to harm any member of a well protected family, he will be found trapped and naked in the family yard the next morning.
- ◆ The *baloi* use traditional medicine to bewitch people, and they can only be countered in a like manner by stronger medicine. It is like fighting fire with fire.

6.3.2 Magical protection is a futile exercise

The practice of magical protection is rejected by a minority group of about 27% of the respondents. The grounds on which they do so include the alleged incompetence of certain *dingaka* who only do it for financial gain, the superior power of the *baloi*, and the rejection of the entire practice as superstition. Although some people reject this practice on religious grounds, only 32% of the church group do so. The main arguments are:

- ◆ Some witches and sorcerers are very powerful, to the extent that even if you and your family are magically protected by traditional medicine they may still find other plans to harm you and your family.
- ◆ Traditional medicine can only heal but cannot stop the evil forces of witchcraft to function. The *baloi* have strong evil powers that can harm you even while you are protected by traditional medicine.
- ◆ These medicines actually attract witchcraft to your house as it is one of the doors that Satan and his followers use.

- ◆ If a person is using traditional medicine to protect himself against the *baloi*, it becomes easy for them to bewitch him because they are also using traditional medicine to bewitch people.
- ◆ It is just a waste of time and money to use these protective measures.
- ◆ Traditional healers are divided into two categories: there are those who really protect a person against witchcraft and those who only rob people of their money.
- ◆ Only God can protect you against witchcraft.
- ◆ There are no witches.

6.4 THE ADMINISTERING OF HERBAL MIXTURES TO BABIES

The traditional herbal treatment of new-born babies to strengthen and protect them against diseases and evil supernatural powers is a specific form of protection and prevention that is still fairly widely used in the Northern Province. In only one sample group, that of the churches, the predominant attitude towards this practice is negative. To most of them, the dedication of the child to God is a safer method than the traditional one to safeguard him and ensure protection and blessings. The perceptions of all the respondents were tested on this issue and their basic attitudes are reflected in Table 10. Some of those who did not respond said that it should be left to every family to decide in terms of their own beliefs.

SAMPLE GROUP	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	NO RESPONSE
Hospitals	72%	19,2%	8,8%
Churches	35,7%	60,3%	4%
Unin students	68%	26%	6%

Table 10. Attitudes about the traditional herbal treatment of new-born babies.

6.4.1 In support of the traditional treatment of babies

The people who are in support of the treatment of babies by traditional healers are convinced that there are quite a number of benefits associated with this practice. The most important ones are the prevention of certain diseases, the physical strengthening of the baby, and protection against witchcraft. Their statements are as follows:

- ◆ Traditional herbal mixtures have been and still are administered to babies right after their birth. Many parents acknowledge this practice and believe that it certainly helps the baby to survive and enjoy good health.
- ◆ The medicine helps the baby to cope with his or her new environment.
- ◆ Babies should be assisted while still young to avoid health disorders.
- ◆ Since hospitals and modern doctors cannot cure certain diseases erupting after the birth of a baby, traditional herbal mixtures are essential in this regard.
- ◆ There are times and situations when babies may suffer from natural or traditional diseases if they have not been subjected to this treatment.
- ◆ It protects the child against contamination with the diseases of other people when the clinic is visited.
- ◆ Traditional herbs kill diseases in the stomach.
- ◆ Babies have a tendency of vomiting the milk sucked from their mothers' breasts through their noses. Traditional herbs help to prevent such problems.
- ◆ It helps to prevent the baby from having nightmares.
- ◆ There are jealous people who are not happy when a mother gives birth to a baby. They pretend to come and see the baby after birth, whereas they want to kill him by magical means. It is therefore important that the baby should be protected against any actions of witchcraft.
- ◆ The baby should be treated with traditional medicine before other people touch him.
- ◆ Some people may come to see the baby while they are ritually unclean. The baby will

then fall ill if he is not treated with traditional herbs.

- ◆ Some babies are born being very small and weak. Traditional medicine is used to wash the baby in order to strengthen it and make it grow bigger.
- ◆ Babies are affected by many diseases right after their birth, which modern medical practitioners fail to cure. It is important to prevent such diseases at an early stage by giving them traditional medicine.
- ◆ There are diseases that are of African origin and start immediately after birth. Such diseases can only be successfully cured by traditional African medicine prescribed by our traditional healers or knowledgeable grandmothers.
- ◆ Without proper treatment with traditional herbal mixtures, the baby may die very soon. Many babies survived because they were subjected to the prescribed procedures which were laid down by our grandparents.
- ◆ This treatment is a way of introducing the child to the family ancestors.
- ◆ We cannot run away from the essence of reality: if the baby is not given traditional herbal mixtures, he will not live a happy life.

6.4.2 No need for the traditional treatment of babies

A growing minority group of respondents no longer subscribe to the traditional treatment of new-born babies. Their arguments are based on medical, hygienic as well as religious grounds. They say:

- ◆ Traditional herbal mixtures are 100% raw and babies might sometimes be allergic to them. They are also not hygienically prepared.
- ◆ Traditional herbal mixtures are very dangerous to babies and may lead to suppressed abdominal organs. They also cause herbal intoxication, acidosis and even death.
- ◆ These herbs cause illness such as diarrhoea, vomiting and kidney failure to babies.
- ◆ I am a Christian and do not believe in traditional medicine.
- ◆ Today, babies are born in a modern society and should be treated in a modern way.

- ◆ Traditional mixtures are very strong and are neither purified nor properly measured. They are therefore not healthy and may harm the infant.
- ◆ Many babies survived without traditional herbal mixtures.
- ◆ Modern medical practitioners are more knowledgeable about the health of babies. They will give a baby medicine that is suitable for its health and its age.

6.5 THE CHOICE OF PRACTITIONERS

The very evident dichotomy in perceptions on the causes and treatment of disease also raises the question of which of the two types of practitioners should be consulted first when the need for medical help arises. Despite the strong support given by respondents to the practice of traditional healing (see 2.1), the majority of them prefer to first consult a modern practitioner when illness befall them. Traditional practitioners are mostly resorted to as a second phase if the patient does not respond well to the treatment and medicine received in a hospital or surgery. He will then suspect the possible influence of witchcraft or the anger of dissatisfied ancestors. A diviner must be consulted to get clarity on these possibilities and to determine the appropriate treatment.

The basic responses on the first choice for medical help are as follows:

SAMPLE GROUP	MODERN MEDICAL DOCTOR	TRADITIONAL HEALER	NO FIRST CHOICE
Hospitals	61,6%	22,4%	16%
Churches	70%	15%	15%
Unin students	61%	20%	19%

Table 11. The first choice for medical advice and treatment in cases of disease.

6.5.1 Modern doctors as the first choice for treatment

These reasons given by more than 60% of the respondents for choosing modern medical doctors for the first consultation in cases of disease are as follows:

- ◆ Modern medical doctors can cure 90% of natural diseases if they are consulted at an early stage of the disease.
- ◆ The modern doctor will try his or her luck using all sorts of tests to diagnose the cause and effect of a disease, as well as various methods of fighting it.
- ◆ One has to consult the modern medical doctor in order to obtain drugs for minimising the pain, and then visit a traditional healer to remove the root cause of the disease completely.
- ◆ For minor diseases such as cough or diarrhoea a modern doctor is my first choice but for serious ones such as migraine, Jesus Christ is the answer. I cast them out in His mighty Name or meditate on Scriptures until God performs His miracles.
- ◆ I am a Christian and do not consult traditional healers.
- ◆ I go to a medical doctor because we do not have 'true' traditional healers any more. The remaining ones are false and are only after money.
- ◆ I trust the modern medical practitioners because they have sophisticated equipment to diagnose and cure a disease. A person's blood is taken to the laboratory for tests to determine the type of disease one is suffering from.
- ◆ Modern medical doctors will tell you the exact disease you are suffering from, while traditional doctors will first tell you about witchcraft or the ancestor spirits before you really know what is wrong in your body.
- ◆ Health tests are conducted before prescriptions are issued.
- ◆ Most minor diseases are successfully treated by medical doctors.
- ◆ Modern medical doctors are capable of providing fast but temporary measures in treating a disease. Thereafter I can consult a traditional healer to provide me with a permanent cure.

- ◆ A person's condition should first be stabilised through modern methods, for instance rehydration by means of drips if one has lost much water, after which he or she can consult a traditional healer for proper treatment.
- ◆ The work and medicine of the modern doctors are based on research and scientific knowledge. They are professionals in the field of medicine and have insight. They can also perform operations.
- ◆ The world is developing every day. Traditional healers take a long time to adapt to a changing world.
- ◆ I visit a modern doctor because I have a medical aid card.
- ◆ I enjoy to be treated in a perfect and professional manner. The traditional healer's way of examining a patient is not confidential.

6.5.2 Patients who first resort to traditional healers

Almost 20% of the respondents indicated that they will first consult a traditional healer in cases of disease. Their main arguments are:

- ◆ I understand the traditional doctors better and know what they are all about.
- ◆ I am certain that I will receive better treatment from the traditional healers and no unknown chemicals will be left in my body.
- ◆ One gets immediate attention, while in hospitals you may die while waiting in long queues to be attended to by a doctor or to be allowed to a theatre for an operation.
- ◆ The traditional healers are honest. If they realise that they cannot cure a particular kind of disease they refer you to a hospital without any further delay.
- ◆ They are not after money. They may cure a patient on credit and only demand payment when you are healthy and working again.
- ◆ A traditional healer will tell you the nature and cause of a disease through his divining bones. He can also determine whether the disease is natural or due to witchcraft.
- ◆ Their medicine is very effective. They cure a disease completely, while with the treat-

ment of modern doctors the disease recurs after a few months.

- ◆ Although they are very expensive and require a number of things, they know their work very well.
- ◆ They are able to cure even those diseases that the modern medical doctors cannot cure. They also provide further protection if the disease was due to witchcraft.
- ◆ My parents rely on them and they are still healthy and strong.

6.5.3 The choice of practitioner is determined by the situation

Another minority group of respondents said that your situation and the nature of the disease will determine the best action to take. It will not be the same every time. They based this view on the following arguments:

- ◆ The first choice of practitioner will be determined by the nature of the disease. If the disease was cause by the *badimo* or the *baloi*, one should consult the traditional healer. But for a broken leg a person must first go to a hospital for help and thereafter to a traditional healer who will treat the leg to prevent it from causing pain during rainy and cloudy days.
- ◆ One must get advice from friends and relatives on which practitioner to consult. Both traditional healers and modern doctors are good in handling different types of disease. Traditional healers are specialists in unnatural diseases which result from the *badimo* or from witchcraft, while modern doctors are best at natural diseases.
- ◆ If the disease is not threatening, medical doctors should be consulted, but for severe cases traditional healers should be consulted. Some diseases cannot be cured with modern medicine but respond well to traditional medicine.

6.6 CONCLUSIONS

Traditional and modern medicines have in many cases distinctly different applications and healing powers, while in other respects they overlap. Traditional medicine is accredited with treating diseases emanating from ritual impurity, witchcraft and the actions of

the ancestors. While modern medicine may be useful in treating the symptoms and reducing pain, the *dingaka* are regarded as indispensable to remove the root causes of such diseases. However, there are minority groups with other convictions who do not subscribe to this view. Traditional medicine is also highly appraised for mental disorders, severe headaches and sexually transmitted diseases. Biomedicine is generally agreed to be very effective to treat inflammations, diseases like TB, malaria, polio, hepatitis A & B, and all infections by viruses and bacteria.

The magical protection supplied by traditional healers is still sought after by most members of the elite. This service includes personal protection against diseases and witchcraft as well as protecting one's homestead, possessions and working-place. Herbal mixtures are also applied to new-born babies to strengthen them, prevent diseases and to protect them against evil supernatural powers.

The respondents were also asked to indicate their first preference for medical treatment in cases of disease. The majority would first consult modern medical practitioners for a variety of reasons. A minority group would do so because they have more faith in modern science. The majority would take this action because many diseases are thought to be of a 'natural' nature and well within the capability of modern therapies. Even in cases of diseases that might be thought to be caused by the ancestors or by witchcraft, pain relief and temporary improvement in health is first sought through modern drugs after which a traditional healer would be consulted to remove the root causes of the disease.

The co-existence of two cosmological worlds in which disease and its treatment feature as different kinds of phenomena is likely to continue for a long time to come.

Chapter 7

Misfortunes

A major factor of causality with regard to disease and misfortunes has been identified as supernatural – being either derived from the actions of dissatisfied ancestor spirits or the magical force of witchcraft as manipulated by witches, sorcerers and other evil-minded or jealous people. One of the objectives of this investigation is to determine to what extent people who are intensively exposed to culture change and other notions of cause and effect, would account for bad luck in their lives.

7.1 THE REASONS FOR BAD LUCK

The following question was put to the respondents: “If you have a lot of bad luck, what could be the possible reasons for it?” From their answers it is obvious that although the fatalistic explanation of supernatural causes is still often cited, ‘natural’ factors are very prominent in the list of causes. Many people refer to human shortcomings, lack of concentration and negative dispositions such as laziness, while bad human relations, particularly with family members, are also regarded as leading to bad luck. Some of the respondents do not even refer to negative experiences as bad luck that should be related to a causing agent – they merely view such incidents as things that ‘just happen’.

The following are the most common reasons for bad luck that are mentioned in the questionnaires:

- ◆ The ancestors require some sacrifices and use bad luck in your life to attract your attention and reveal their will to you.

- ◆ Failing to respect your ancestors.
- ◆ The ancestors are not on my side. Perhaps I must do something for them.
- ◆ The ancestors are worried about your way of life. Once they turn their backs on you, bad luck of all sorts will come your way.
- ◆ Witchcraft by jealous people who cast spells on others to let them have bad luck.
- ◆ Bad luck could be the result of stubborn behaviour such as failing to listen when your parents, relatives or experienced friends try to intervene in your negative conduct.
- ◆ Not sharing your problems with other people results in bad luck.
- ◆ Failure to respect your parents and elders causes bad luck.
- ◆ Satan is trying to find a way of discouraging my Christian life.
- ◆ The devil is the cause of all evil.
- ◆ Carelessness and poor planning are responsible for bad luck.
- ◆ Laziness and ignorance lead to bad luck.
- ◆ You do not have confidence in yourself and have a negative attitude to life. Once you become positive everything will be well.
- ◆ Behind every problem there is a solution.
- ◆ Disobedience to God and failing to pray enough to Him is responsible for bad luck.
- ◆ It is God's way of bringing you closer to Him. He is challenging one's faith in Him.
- ◆ Superstitious beliefs lead to bad luck.
- ◆ The devil is playing with your life because you are not praying to God.
- ◆ You have evil spirits that need to be driven out in the Name of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ You have sinned and do not consider Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour.
- ◆ Life is not a smooth road and a person's life cannot always be full of fortunes. It is natural to have bad luck and we must accept it.
- ◆ It is your time to become uncomfortable in many things in life.

- ◆ You inherited the bad luck from your parents.
- ◆ If you have bad luck you have failed in some respects and must rearrange your life.
- ◆ The possible reasons for bad luck can only be known through consultations with a diviner who can determine the causes with his divining bones.
- ◆ It is not my day or time for happiness and good luck.
- ◆ If you have bad blood you will always have bad luck.
- ◆ You do not think critically before you act and therefore cause your own bad luck.

7.2 CONSULTING A *NGAKA* ON THE PROBLEM OF BAD LUCK

Because of the wide range of possible reasons for misfortune, many people turn to the diviners to shed light on the real causes of their afflictions, and also for help to solve those problems that may be related to supernatural causes. In order to find out how many people would take this action, and for which reason, the following question was asked to the respondents: “Would you consult a *ngaka* about your problem of bad luck?”

The result of the investigation is shown in Table 12.

Sample group	Positive response	Negative response
Hospitals	44%	56%
Churches	35%	65%
Unin students	66%	34%

Table 12. Views on the consulting of *dingaka* with problems of bad luck.

7.2.1 Reasons for consulting a *ngaka*

It is clear that only among the students, a majority of them will consult a diviner with problems of this nature. Among the other two sample groups, the potential of the *ngaka* to deal with the diverse causes of bad luck is seen to be limited. The most common

reasons why people would consult a diviner are:

- ◆ The *ngaka* will tell me the cause of bad luck as well as the necessary procedures to take to end the state of bad experiences.
- ◆ He is able to communicate with the ancestors and to find out the hidden reasons behind people's bad luck. He can also induce the *badimo* to forgive a person. He will even tell me the name of the ancestor who is not happy with me, and also the sacrifice which is needed to appease him.
- ◆ Bad luck may sometimes result from the evil forces of witchcraft. The *ngaka* will give me some medicine to remove it.
- ◆ They have medicine to wash away bad luck from a person.
- ◆ A *ngaka* knows future events and can foresee some obstacles which may be the cause of bad luck in future. He will alert you on these problems.
- ◆ The *ngaka* will bring back your good luck and protect you against further problems and bad luck.
- ◆ It is an African customary practice for one to consult a *ngaka* with one's problems of bad luck. Divining bones do not tell lies. They will determine the cause of bad luck and also provide a solution to the problem.

7.2.2 Reasons for not consulting a *ngaka*

Various changed perceptions and new attitudes to life are discernible in the reasons given by the large group of people who would not consult a *ngaka* on their problems of bad luck. Among them are many people who do consult the *dingaka* in connection with diseases, thereby clearly indicating changed ideas about the reasons for misfortune. The reasons for their negative responses are varied. Bad luck experiences are in many cases regarded as natural phenomena about which the *ngaka* can do nothing:

- ◆ A *ngaka* will not change the situation. It is natural for a person to have bad luck. One

cannot have bad luck for the rest of his life.

- ◆ A *ngaka* is a human being who also experiences bad luck. How can he prevent mine while he is failing to prevent his?
- ◆ A *ngaka* will tell you a lot of confusing stories. The possibility of him lying to you is very big because he is also a human being who want to earn a living through your money.
- ◆ They are very fond of money and demand a lot of things such as a chicken, a goat or a cow to wash away bad luck for a person. Again, the meat of the slaughtered animal that you brought is theirs. What about it if he fails to remove the bad luck?
- ◆ They are not trustworthy. They have many tricks to lie to people, also when they do not have a solution to your problems.
- ◆ A *ngaka* will tell you lies and create hatred between you and your relatives, friends and neighbours.
- ◆ A *ngaka* is the agent of the devil. I have victory and power over bad luck through Jesus Christ.
- ◆ I believe that all problems have a solution.
- ◆ Bad luck does not mean anything to me. I keep on hoping that it will soon come to an end.
- ◆ One must work harder than before and start planning one's life properly.
- ◆ I am a Christian and trust God to solve my problems.
- ◆ I will pay a visit to my ancestors' graves with some offerings and request them to forgive me in case I have offended them.
- ◆ Bad luck is not a disease.
- ◆ The *ngaka's* medicine will only remove the bad luck on a temporary basis. It will come back to you because you are born with it.
- ◆ Bad luck remains bad luck and you cannot convert it into good luck.
- ◆ It is my responsibility to deal with my problems and adapt myself to all situations.

7.3 CONCLUSIONS

Misfortunes are part of life. They have diverse origins, some of which are ascribed to supernatural powers such as God, Satan, the ancestor spirits and witchcraft, while others are regarded as the result of natural phenomena. Some of these factors and circumstances can be controlled by man himself, while others are left to chance and the remaining ones attributed to fate or forces which are beyond the capacity of ordinary people to change or manipulate. To address these factors, people may either resort to prayer (in a Christian context) or to the services of a *ngaka* (in a traditional context). The *ngaka* may supply magical means to wash away the bad luck and to combat witchcraft, or he may give directions about sacrifices to the ancestor spirits of the victim, depending on the ritually identified causes of the misfortunes.

The many possibilities of independent action mentioned by respondents clearly suggest that not all bad luck and misfortunes can be classified as phenomena which are supernatural and hence beyond a person's own control. In many cases the situation can be normalised by taking certain rational actions and precautionary measures. Even sacrifices to the ancestors are viewed as actions that can be taken without the intervention of diviners who, themselves, are often the victims of bad luck.

Fatalistic views have also been expressed of bad luck as a hereditary phenomenon which is associated with bad blood. Persons with such luck can never become masters of their own destiny and have to passively accept whatever fate has determined for them.

To a significant degree certain misfortunes remain phenomena with a clear supernatural connotation, in which cases the services of religious specialists will remain in demand.

Chapter 8

Divination

In the final analysis it needs to be determined what the perceptions are of clients and patients about the methods of divination which are followed by the traditional healers. Do they understand the methods, do they regard them as trustworthy, or do they merely rely on them in blind faith? A further question is whether it is possible at all for an uninitiated person to know and understand the mystical secrets of divination?

Should no provable foundation exist for the reliability of traditional methods of divination, the information, advice and treatment that are based on this source of knowledge might be irrelevant and erroneous. But do ordinary people challenge this source of knowledge?

8.1 VIEWS ON THE THROWING OF DIVINATION BONES

The proven support that diviners have among the members of the public (2.1) is an indication of the general acceptance of their methods of divination. To test the understanding of the respondents on this matter, the following question was posed to them: "How can the throwing of the bones and other methods of divination determine the reasons for things that go wrong?" The following explanations were given:

- ◆ It depends on a person's belief. If he or she believes in divination he or she trusts what the diviners will reveal.
- ◆ God and the ancestors provide bone throwers with supernatural powers to enable them to foresee things through methods of divination.
- ◆ The bones have meanings and names. Each one symbolises something.

- ◆ When bones are thrown, they fall in different positions and face different directions. These positions and directions have meaning to the diviner.
- ◆ The throwing of the bones and other methods of divination are similar to an X-ray because they enable the diviner to see what is hidden.
- ◆ The diviner is assisted by his spiritual power to determine the reasons for bad experiences.
- ◆ Only a *ngaka* can answer this question because he is the only one who has the ability to read the bones.
- ◆ A *ngaka* has undergone traditional training to enable him to interpret the meaning of the bones for divination.
- ◆ Traditional doctors are guided by the spirits of their ancestors in their profession. They give them power to see other people's affairs through the use of bones and other methods of divination.
- ◆ Divination is similar to the power which God gave to prophets in order to know the reason for things. The diviners are also able to predict the future.
- ◆ Diviners are always accurate in diagnosing the causes of illness as well as the proper methods of healing. They can determine what a person's ancestors want to say to him.
- ◆ Divination is like a mirror and can reveal what is hidden.
- ◆ Through divination a person may be told about his past, present and future.

A number of the respondents made remarks in which the divination methods of the *dingaka* are seriously questioned. They said:

- ◆ Divination is against my religious convictions and a practice which is forbidden by the Word of God.
- ◆ The throwing of bones and other methods of divination cannot determine the reason for things which go wrong. Belief in bones is a problem that creates opportunities for the devil and his deceiving spirits to exploit other people.
- ◆ Divination merely consists of assumptions made by the diviner himself.

8.2 THE QUEST FOR MORE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT DIVINATION

The general lack of knowledge and understanding about the secrets of divination as well as the magical powers of witchcraft was further tested by asking the respondents how one could learn more about the process of determining the nature of the powers behind diseases and misfortune. The following question was asked: “How can one gain more knowledge about supernatural powers?”

Most of the respondents do not regard it as possible for ordinary members of society to probe these powers and understand their working. They just accept the knowledge of the diviners in good faith and say that if one wants to know the secrets of the trade one must either go and enquire among the knowledgeable or go for training. The following were some of the most common remarks on this question:

- ◆ Associate yourself with people who know something about supernatural powers and ask them to explain it.
- ◆ Do research by reading books on the issue.
- ◆ The Bible has all the answers.
- ◆ Ask the *dingaka* and pay regular visits to them.
- ◆ Attend a school for traditional healers and become initiated into the cult yourself.
- ◆ Keep yourself in touch with religious specialists.
- ◆ Consult the custodians of the supernatural world such as traditional healers or pastors.
- ◆ Observe and interview people who are directly involved in such practices.
- ◆ Respect the idea that the ancestors are important and special people in your life.
- ◆ Dedicate yourself to the supernatural being you believe in.
- ◆ Adhere to traditional religion by honouring your ancestors and sacrificing to them.

- ◆ Discuss and share of ideas with senior members of the family or the community who have experience with these things.
- ◆ Some people inherit supernatural powers from their parents.
- ◆ Commit yourself to serve the devil.
- ◆ It is very difficult for one to gain more knowledge about supernatural powers.

8.3 CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that cultural ideas and cosmological assumptions that became established over many generations do not easily change. Although many of the underlying religious principles and premises sometimes seem to contradict reality, they are not easily challenged. Because of their supernatural nature and the self-declared inability of ordinary members of society to probe these secrets, they are seldom seriously put to the test. Those who do challenge these ideas do it either in terms of Biblical injunctions or on moral grounds by denouncing diviners and traditional healers for merely making subjective assumptions and serving their own economic ends.

Among most of the respondents there is no quest for more knowledge about divination and magical powers. People accept the factor of having inherited the practice of traditional healing from earlier generations and therefore make no efforts to validate it. Only those who enter training schools for diviners and healers are introduced to the secret knowledge and methods of the profession and also become initiated into the cult. People who reject or challenge them mostly do so on Christians grounds or on alleged false pretences and unethical behaviour on the part of the *dingaka*. The majority, however, recognise traditional divination and healing methods by assigning an important role to it within the total framework of health-care.

Chapter 9

Conclusions

The causes and treatment of disease and other misfortunes among the rapidly changing communities of the Pietersburg and Mankweng districts in the Northern Province are clearly not such highly contentious issues among these communities as they are in modern medical circles. The people themselves have learnt how to simultaneously adapt to two different sets of cosmological assumptions. Where possibilities of the merging of the two sets of values and practices are possible, they promote such prospects. In cases where compromises and syntheses are not possible, a perception of functional maximising is entertained which affords people alternative ways of doing things: if one method fails, then try the other one.

The following aspects of the current orientations of the phenomena of disease, healing and misfortunes have been investigated and exposed:

9.1 MODERN AND TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS OF HEALING

The rapid culture change among the target communities is also reflected in changing perceptions on disease and healing. In the sphere of cause and effect, two different sets of cosmological assumptions are presenting themselves to people: the Western concepts with a rational, scientific basis and the traditional ones which are largely derived from a notion of supernatural causation of diseases and misfortunes. A category of 'natural' diseases is recognised among traditionalists, but that is not of prime significance. The more serious diseases are mostly ascribed to supernatural causes such as witchcraft and the

intervention of ancestor spirits. For this reason, the majority of the respondents in hospitals, churches as well as the University of the North expressed explicit support for the services of traditional healers (2.1, 2.1.1). The minority group who reject the traditional practice do so on Christian considerations as well as the demonstrated benefits of modern medical science (2.1.2).

Although perceptions about natural diseases and their treatment with natural, scientific means is expanding, concepts about supernatural causation still strongly prevail. There is clearly an expressed need for both forms of healing (2.2). The majority of the respondents have a preference for the concurrent functioning of modern and traditional forms of health-care (2.2.4). To them, the two practices may be distinctly different in their methods and approaches, but are nevertheless mutually supportive. Some of the respondents, however, are convinced that because of these differences only one form of treatment should be decided upon (2.2.3). There are also minority groups who opted exclusively for modern health-care (2.2.1), for traditional methods (2.2.2) and for faith-healing and these do not engage in either of the first two (2.2.5).

It is obvious that many people consciously live in two cosmological worlds – the modern and the traditional. That involves several choices that may be made in times of illness and other afflictions.

9.2 DISEASE AND ITS TREATMENT

Significant changes in perceptions about the causes of disease have been determined as evidenced by the eleven different categories of disease that have been identified (3.1). Many people are aware of the rationally explained dangers of exposure to unhygienic

living conditions, contagious diseases resulting from physical contact with sick people, and the danger of sexually transmitted diseases. Social and psychological causes of illness and disease are also recognised as responsible for quite a number of stress-related disorders. The traditional perception of the supernatural causation of disease by witchcraft, evil spirits and the actions of ancestor spirits is still strongly prevalent among the emerging elite (3.1).

Perceptions about the differences between modern and traditional medicine reveal a strong ambivalence between naturally and supernaturally caused diseases. Biomedicine cannot cure supernaturally caused diseases, at least not completely (3.2). It may relieve pain and temporarily cure symptoms, but is unable to remove the root cause of the disease. In this regard people see themselves as living in two cosmological worlds – the traditional and the modern – which necessitates the use of different therapies as demanded by the nature and cause of the disease.

A minority group of about 30% say that modern medicine can cure all diseases (3.2.1) but the majority group of around 70% explicitly denies it (3.2.2). In a discussion on the difference between the two types of medicine a clear distinction is made between naturally and supernaturally caused diseases (3.2.3). However, traditional medicine is not limited to the treating of diseases that have been supernaturally caused. Some respondents hold that herbal remedies are also more effective in the treatment of certain natural diseases. The group who sees benefits in both types of medicine is by far the biggest.

Due to the rising consciousness of the need for hygienic practices, many of the staunch supporters of traditional healers are openly criticising them because of the unhygienic

way in which medicine is gathered, stored, prepared, supplied, and also administered to patients. They are also criticise these healers because their medicines are not tested for strength and effectiveness, while their after effects are also not known or investigated (3.2.3).

9.3 WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY

The awareness of negative, destructive and evil forces is culturally accounted for as witchcraft. The benevolent harnessing of magical forces by diviners and traditional healers (*dingaka*) is resorted to in order to counter the malevolent application of these forces by witches and sorcerers (*baloi*).

Most of the educated people who have been intensively exposed to notions of rational cause and effect are still firmly convinced of a supernatural realm which cannot be scientifically explained (4.1). Many diseases, misfortunes, calamities and strange phenomena are ascribed to witchcraft by more than 70% of the respondents (4.1.1). Of the two minority groups, one denies the existence of witchcraft mainly on (Christian) religious grounds (4.1.2) while the members of the other one are uncertain (4.1.3). However, most of the Christians are in agreement with the traditional explanation of evil. They do have clear perceptions of evil, satanic forces in the cosmos and tend to ascribe the actions of the *baloi* to satanic intervention and even the possession of evil-minded people by Satan and his demons. Some even equate witchcraft with Satanism. On the solution of these problems they are divided. Some see the *dingaka* as God-ordained agents who redress disorders in society, while others regard the traditional doctors as liars and maintain that God will intervene to break the evil powers if Christians constantly pray.

The distinction between witchcraft of the day and witchcraft of the night is still upheld by most of the respondents (4.2). The witches of the night have an inherited compulsion to kill and harm while those of the day become witches or sorcerers as a result of negative passions such as hatred and jealousy (4.2.1). The latter group are seemingly ordinary members of society who do their evil work unnoticed.

A vast majority of respondents also see lightning which kills people or animals or destroy property as having been sent by the *baloi* (4.3, 4.3.1). But there are also groups with other persuasions (4.3.2, 4.3.3). Ways to deal with the culprit vary on a continuum from soft to hard methods. These include counselling and repentance, the driving away of the *moloji*, criminal proceedings, magical counter-actions by powerful *dingaka*, and ultimately, execution by the members of the society. It is commonly argued that the evil must be eradicated in the community to prevent the occurrence of more murders and evil deeds.

9.4 ROLE OF THE ANCESTOR SPIRITS

The belief in the existence and actions of ancestor spirits is still deeply-rooted in society, as well as the obligation to worship the ancestors through sacrifice (5.1, 5.1.1). The ancestor spirits are believed to have more powers than living people and therefore need to be respected and feared to a larger degree. They are able to influence the lives of their living descendants. As custodians of the culture and family traditions, the *badimo* reveal a much more aggressive than a loveable and compassionate disposition in their relationship with their descendants. In cases of disrespectful behaviour, they will inflict the most severe punishments on their kin, including ruining one's health, destroying his marriage, the loss of his possessions and work, insanity, the death of his children, or even killing

the man himself in an accident or through a terminal disease. This is the reason why whenever a person experiences severe and continuous problems in life, or suffers from a persisting and incurable illness, he suspects his ancestor spirits' involvement in the situation (5.2).

The need to appease the spirits through sacrifices of various kinds, accompanied by prayers for forgiveness of transgressions, is regarded as a matter of great expediency for all people (5.1.1). Without actions of this nature, most people have strong doubts that their fate will change for the good and that their chronic diseases will be healed.

Because of these beliefs, most people strongly reject modern therapies of healing people who are afflicted by their ancestors. They maintain that biomedicine can, at the most, offer temporary relief of the symptoms and that the problem will persist until a traditional healer has been consulted and the appropriate sacrifices made to the *badimo* (5.3, 5.3.1).

An inconsistency is evident in the reactions of respondents from the churches. Despite the fact that 71% of them say that modern doctors cannot treat diseases and disorders which are ascribed to the ancestors (5.3), a decreased number of 65% agree that the *badimo* are able to take punitive actions against their descendants (5.2), while only 56,3% concur with the view that one should sacrifice to his ancestors (5.1). It seems that although they believe in the existence of the spirits, many of them hesitate to agree that one should engage in the active service of the *badimo* by sacrificing to them.

The minority group either deny the existence or powers of the spirits, thereby declaring modern treatment sufficient, or they resort to a Christian form of faith-healing (5.3.2).

9.5 THE APPLICATIONS OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN MEDICINE

Traditional and modern medicines have in many cases distinctly different applications and healing powers, while in other respects they overlap (6.1, 6.2). Traditional medicine is solely accredited with the treatment of diseases emanating from ritual impurity, witchcraft and the actions of the ancestors. While modern medicine may be useful in treating the symptoms and reducing pain, the *dingaka* are regarded as indispensable to remove the root causes of such diseases. However, there are minority groups with other convictions who do not subscribe to this view. Traditional medicine is also highly appraised for use in mental disorders, severe headaches and sexually transmitted diseases (6.1). Biomedicine is generally agreed to be very effective to treat inflammations, diseases like TB, malaria, polio, hepatitis A & B, and all infections by viruses and bacteria (6.2).

The magical protection supplied by traditional healers is still sought after by most members of the modern elite. This service includes personal protection against diseases and witchcraft as well as protecting one's homestead, possessions and working-place (6.3). Herbal mixtures are also applied to new-born babies to strengthen them, prevent diseases and to protect them against evil supernatural powers (6.4).

The respondents were also asked to indicate their first preference for medical treatment in cases of illness (6.5). The majority would first consult modern medical practitioners for a variety of reasons (6.5.1). A minority group would also do so because they have more faith in modern science. The majority would take this action because many diseases are thought to be of a 'natural' nature and well within the capability of modern therapies. Even in cases of diseases that might be thought to be caused by the ancestors or by witchcraft, pain relief and temporary improvement in health would be first sought

through modern drugs after which a traditional healer would be consulted to remove the root causes of the disease. There are also minority groups of people who would first consult a traditional doctor (6.5.2), and those who would take a decision in terms of the advice given to them or in terms of the nature of the disease (6.5.3).

9.6 MISFORTUNES

Misfortunes are regarded to be part of the everyday life. They have diverse origins, some of which are ascribed to supernatural powers such as God, Satan, the ancestor spirits and witchcraft, while others are regarded as natural phenomena (7.1). Some of these factors and circumstances can be controlled by man himself (7.2.2), while others are left to chance and the remaining ones attributed to supernatural powers which are beyond the capacity of ordinary people to change or manipulate.

People who wish to get external help may either resort to the services of a *ngaka* in a traditional context (7.2.1) or prayer in a Christian context (7.2.2). The *ngaka* may supply magical means to wash away the bad luck and to combat witchcraft, or he may give directions about sacrifices to the ancestor spirits of the victim, depending on the ritually identified causes of the misfortunes.

The many possibilities of independent action mentioned by respondents clearly suggest that not all bad luck and misfortunes can be classified as phenomena which are supernatural and hence beyond a person's own control. In many cases the situation can be normalised by taking certain rational actions and precautionary measures. Even sacrifices to the ancestors are viewed as actions that can be taken without the intervention of diviners who, themselves, are often the victims of bad luck.

Fatalistic views have also been expressed of bad luck as a hereditary phenomenon which is associated with bad blood. Persons with such luck can never become masters of their own destiny and have to passively accept whatever fate has determined for them (7.1).

To a significant degree, certain misfortunes remain phenomena with a clear supernatural connotation, in which cases the services of religious specialists will remain in demand.

9.7 DIVINATION

Because of the supernatural nature of magical powers and divination, as well as the manifest inability of ordinary members of society to probe these secrets, they are seldom seriously challenged or put to the test. For this reason the majority of the respondents accept the mystical practices of divination (8.1, 2.1). Those who do challenge these ideas do so either in terms of Biblical injunctions or on moral grounds by denouncing diviners and traditional healers for merely making subjective assumptions and serving their only economic ends (8.1).

There appears to be no serious quest for more knowledge about the magical practices of diviners and traditional healers. Due to the supernatural nature of these phenomena they defy rational explanations and merely have to be accepted because of the positive results that they are said to yield (8.2).

9.8 FUTURE PROSPECTS

The current rapid transition of society, accompanied by an extensive change of cultural values, has created a climate of greater liberty and openness in which individual members of society are increasingly afforded the opportunity to challenge and reject old insti-

tutions and making up their own minds on what they want to believe. Alternative ways of explaining religious beliefs and phenomena such as illness, disease and misfortunes have now become established in society and allow people the 'space' to move away from the rigid cultural frame of reference which was characteristic of traditional society.

However, changes in the field of religious thought and related perceptions about supernatural phenomena do not take root very rapidly. The tendency is rather not to openly challenge these ideas but to recognise and practice them concurrently with the new values and institutions. The very fact that supernatural phenomena cannot be conclusively verified and put to the test, render this aspect of culture difficult to change or abandon in favour of new values and institutions.

The diviners and traditional healers, the supernatural intervention by ancestor spirits and the mystical powers of witchcraft are still very much part of the everyday lives of the modern elite – those people who are on the forefront of culture change and innovation. Although new notions of cause and effect have already been firmly established in certain circles, they will, for a long time, still have to compete with the traditional ones.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Occupation of respondent (e.g. student, teacher, etc.).....

2. Age..... Sex..... Marital status.....

3. Qualifications or level of present study (e.g. Form IV, BA I).....

4. Name of school, college or university.....

5. Area of residence..... 6. Home language.....

7. Is there a need for traditional healers (*dingaka*) in modern society? Yes or No . Motivate your answer.....

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8. List all the things that you think can cause disease.....

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9. Can all types of disease be treated with modern medicine? Yes or No . If not, which diseases must be

treated otherwise and by what means?.....

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10. What is the main difference between modern and traditional medicine?.....

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11. Should one choose between modern and traditional methods of healing, or can you use both? (give reasons)

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12. Does witchcraft (*buloi*) still occur? Yes or No . If so, give examples of its different forms.....

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13. Can a *moloi* send lightning to harm or kill other people? Yes or No . If so, how can he be identified and what should be done to a person who is pointed out as the culprit?.....

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14. What is the difference between witchcraft of the day and witchcraft of the night?.....

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15. Should a person worship his ancestors (*badimo*) by sacrificing to them? Yes or No . If so, what should he sacrifice, where should he sacrifice, and how often?.....

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16. What can the *badimo* do to you if they are not happy about your life?.....

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17. Can hospitals and modern doctors cure the disorders and diseases caused by the *badimo*? Yes or No . If not, why not and what action should one then take?.....

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18. Can traditional medicine prevent certain diseases? Yes or No . Give examples.....

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19. Can modern medicine prevent certain diseases? Yes or No . Give examples.....

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20. Can the use of traditional medicine protect you against witchcraft? Yes or No . If so, give examples.....

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21. Do you believe in giving traditional herb mixtures to babies right after their birth? Yes or No . If so, give reasons.....

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22. What is your first choice in case of disease? Traditional healer or modern medical doctor Give reasons

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23. If you have a lot of bad luck, what could be the possible reasons for it?.....

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24. Would you consult a *ngaka* about your problem of bad luck? Yes or No . Give reasons.....

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25. How can the throwing of the bones and other methods of divination determine the reasons for things that go wrong?.....

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26. How can one gain more knowledge about supernatural powers?.....

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