

**DECONSTRUCTING SPEECH RITUALS WITH SPECIFIC
REFERENCE TO NORTHERN SOTHO: A UNIFIED APPROACH
TO DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

By

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(i)

DECLARATION

I, Kgabo Frans MANAMELA, declare that the dissertation **DECONSTRUCTING SPEECH RITUALS WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO NORTHERN SOTHO: A UNIFIED APPROACH TO DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**, has not been previously submitted by me for any degree at this or any other institution, that this is my own work in design and that all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.



SIGNATURE

25/11/2005

DATE



DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the following:

- * My wife : Sharlot Manoko.
- * My daughters : Raesetja, Makgabo and Kwena.
- * My son : Chuene
- * My late grandmother : Machuene Thobekga Mabokela
- * My uncle : Joseph Maleka.

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ABSTRACT

This research study deals with deconstructing speech rituals with specific reference to Northern Sotho by focusing on three domains, namely, marriage, death and religion.

The study shows that one should use terms and expressions relevant to the situation as far as marriage is concerned. For instance, one is expected to use expressions such as *sego sa meetse*, *mpšanyana* and *lešaetšana* when asking permission from the girl's parents to marry her. If such expressions are not utilised, the parents might feel belittled and undermined and they may not be confident that their daughter will have a successful marriage.

The study also emphasizes appropriate language use pertaining to death. For example, Northern Sotho speaking people treat death with respect, hence their preference for euphemisms indicating death such as *monna o robetše* (the man has slept), instead of *o hwile* (he is dead), *mabu a utswitšwe* (the soil/land has been stolen), instead of *kgoši o hwile* (the chief/king is dead). If expressions such as these are not employed, the bereaved family members might feel offended as they might interpret it as a lack of empathy. The study argues for the use of correct death terminology associated with death at all times.

Lastly, the study focuses on speech rituals applicable to religion. As religion is a vast topic, the study concentrated on speech rituals of one of the most important religious groupings in Southern Africa, namely, the Zion Christian Church. Thus, the study gives ample examples of speech rituals of the Zion Christian Church according to the following subheadings:

Z.C.C. congregations, objects with divine powers, and prayer groups. These religious groupings can only function harmoniously if appropriate terminology is used. Should this be ignored, miscommunication would occur resulting in negative consequences. For instance, *mogolo* (elder) refers to any male person and not females. A female who does not know and understand this term might find herself in areas where females are not allowed.

In conclusion, the study gives a summary of the research and makes recommendations on the findings of the study.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Speech rituals are specific types of speech that are uttered during the performance of certain rituals. A ritual is an established procedure for a religious or other rite (*Random House College Dictionary*, 1992:1162). Within the scope of this definition, it can be concluded that rituals are mainly religiously and culturally bound. Of course, it is given that religion is an aspect of culture. Therefore, speech rituals and culture are intertwined. A particular ritual exists within a particular culture and, therefore, one can hardly treat the two independently. It is also significant to note that a ritual can also be performed within the use of a particular religious language as Ferguson, cited by Spolsky (2004:49) assumes “that all religious belief systems include some beliefs about language.”

There is no doubt that language plays a critical role in many aspects of religion and culture. Because of this fact, Spolsky (2004:51) finds that the full sociolinguistic matrix of situation and functions for any specific organized religious group can in fact, be very complex.

Language and culture are tied together, if a language dies, so does a big part of culture it is associated with. Linguists predict that if the current trends of language extinction continue during this 21st century, the world will go from having 6 000 spoken languages to 600 (Myles, 2005:62). The importance of this study cannot, therefore, be overemphasised.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

South Africa is a rainbow nation as it is both multicultural and multilingual. After the repeal of the apartheid laws such as the *Group Areas Act* (Act 41 of 1950), *Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act* (Act 55 of 1949), South Africans are now largely found in mixed areas or suburbs. It is, therefore, not surprising to observe that people live together in the same society. One street, especially in the townships and suburbs, may contain several cultures and languages. Because these people live together, they often attend social functions together. The primary instruments of socialization in South Africa include the family, the school, peers, tertiary institutions, television, the church, burials and weddings. Hence, it is in these societal structures where discourse or communication problems start.

To be able to integrate well in such a society, it is imperative that members of such a society should have a background of the cultures and customs existing within such a society. If this is not taken into account, miscommunication and misunderstanding between various communities is bound to occur. For instance, as far as death is concerned, different cultures view it in different ways. Each culture has its own way of viewing death and each expects its members to behave and talk in a particular manner. This is one of the reasons why many Africans do not believe in cremation, contrary to the Western and Asian cultures.

To add to this, in Northern Sotho speech community, expressions such as *le di kwele naa?* (did you hear the news?), *re lotšhang?* (for what are we greeting?), *re dio kwa tše tša gabō lena* (we just hear news from you), are a few examples of the expressions used when there is death in the community. To the non-Northern Sotho speakers, it will be a problem to understand such expressions if not made aware of their meaning. It is imperative that children and adults be taught such

expressions so that they will be able to transfer this culture to the coming generations and be able to communicate among themselves.

Furthermore, because South African communities are mixed, there is a great possibility of inter-marriages. Marriage, like death, also has its own expressions that are used by different cultures. It is thus crucial that one knows the appropriate marriage expressions in various South African cultures. If these expressions are not understood, they may become meaningless and even sound vulgar as evidenced in the following Northern Sotho expressions: *re tlile go kgopela segwana sa meetse* (we have come to ask for a small calabash), *re romilwe ke ba ga Manamela ba re ba bone mpšanyana ka mo* (we have been sent by the Manamela family to inform you that they have seen a puppy in your home), *re tlile go kgopela lešaetsana* (we have come to ask for a filthy little girl).

All these expressions mean that the messengers have come to ask for a host's daughter's hand in marriage. Expressed as they are, they may be problematic if interpreted literally. For example, one may be annoyed to hear that one's daughter is called a puppy (*mpšanyana*), filthy girl (*lešaetsana*), or even a calabash (*segwana*).

Apart from marriage, all religions have their own concomitant specific rituals and as a result, they employ different speech rituals. Ferguson (1982) as cited by Spolsky (2004:48) points out that:

The distribution of major types of writing systems in the world correlates more closely with the distribution of the world's major religions than with genetic or typological classification of languages.

For instance, given that most of the Northern Sotho speakers belong to the Black Independent Churches, speech rituals found amongst them will differ from those of the Mainline Churches. Most of the expressions used nowadays in the Black Independent Churches have roots in traditional culture of such churchgoers as illustrated in the Northern Sotho expressions below:

(1) *Go nyakišiša.*

(To search for the truth.)

The traditional African will, in some cases, consult a traditional doctor to be divined through the bones (*ditaola*). After this divination, he/she will be able to know whether he/she is being bewitched, ill or even the standpoint of his ancestors. Moreover, the afore-mentioned expression, if used in the Black Independent Churches, would be interpreted to mean that one will also be able to tell what could have been divulged by the traditional doctor.

From this brief discussion, it is evident that there are various communicative problems associated with speech rituals, and it is therefore, necessary that a study of this nature be undertaken.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research is to analyse discourses found in the three domains, that is, religion, death and marriage, in order to provide a thorough understanding of the sociolinguistic approach. In order to achieve this aim, the following research questions will need to be answered:

- (a) In which context are speech rituals applicable?
- (b) What are the consequences of ignoring speech rituals?

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The rationale behind this study is to enable people living in mixed South African societies to communicate properly and to tolerate one another's cultural communication. If language is not properly understood, it would be difficult for different people of different ethnic groups to communicate, and thus leading to cultural intolerance.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it would enable some communities in South Africa, especially the Northern Sotho speakers, to communicate effectively with one another.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

The qualitative method will be used in this research.

1.6.1 Collection of information

1.6.1.1 *Primary sources*

The researcher is a member of the Northern Sotho speech community and will collect information from individual informants with the use of the tape recorder. Old members of the communities in the rural areas, as well as members of the Independent Churches (mainly from the Zion Christian Church and St. Engenas Zion Christian Church) will be interviewed as these churches are still deeply rooted to Northern Sotho tradition. This then entails the use of both purposive and random sampling methods. Purposive sampling is relevant here as only the

Northern Sotho speakers, and members of the Zion Christian Church, and St. Engenas Zion Christian Church will be respondents. Once this has been done, random sampling will be utilized as stratum such as males and females, bishops and ordinary churchgoers, will not be used. A sample population of 30 Northern Sotho speakers, 30 members of the Zion Christian Church, and 30 members of St. Engenas Zion Christian Church will be interviewed. Unstructured questions will be utilised in the interviews. The following questions will however, receive prominence in this research:

- (a) What are speech rituals?
- (b) Are speech rituals necessary?

1.6.1.2 *Secondary sources*

Publications such as dissertations, theses, books, articles, newspapers, periodicals and the Internet will be consulted.

1.7 **DELIMITATION**

This research will be limited to the Northern Sotho language as spoken in Limpopo Province, and its focus will be on speech rituals pertaining to marriage, religion and death.

As far as religion is concerned, the study will be limited to the main types of religion, namely, traditional African religion and Christianity.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

There are various scholars of sociolinguistics who have already researched on discourse analysis. Sekhukhune's (1988) research focuses on speech registers, pragmatics of discourse, and language and sex. In this study, he also touches on *magadi* (lobola) and other marriage goods. Sekhukhune looks at this domain as is practiced around Sekhukhuneland and not in other places such as West and East of Polokwane. In addition, Sekhukhune does not analyse the discourse that is invoked in Christianity as he only puts emphasis on ancestral worship. Despite his shortcomings, Sekhukhune's study is important as it gives a good introduction to Northern Sotho discourse.

Another important study is the one conducted by Lukhaimane (1980) on the establishment of the Zion Christian Church (Z.C.C.) in South Africa. Although Lukhaimane's study is mainly historical and not sociolinguistical in nature, it is useful as it gives insight into the workings of the Zion Christian Church.

Mönnig's (1967) study on the Pedi will also be helpful as it sheds light on the Pedi worldview in ancestor worship. For instance, according to the Pedi's worldview, the earth is a far permanent place for all human beings as there is no heaven or hell. This work is, however, inadequate as it concentrates on the Northern Sotho people in the Sekhukhuneland, and not West and East of Polokwane.

Besides the aforementioned scholars, Mbiti (1975) emerges as one of the most important scholars on African religion. According to Mbiti (1975:126-140), there are different kinds of rituals, namely, personal rituals, agricultural rituals, health rituals, homestead rituals and festivals. Mbiti (1975:136) asserts that festivals cannot be separated from rituals because "festivals add to the grandeur of both personal and communal rituals." He (*op. cit.*) goes on to emphasise that festivals

for individuals and families may accompany birth, initiation, marriages and funerals.

As far as marriage is concerned, Mbiti (1975) discusses this institution from a religious and cultural perspective. He points out that it is a “must” for one to be married in African culture. Marriage is, therefore, according to him, an obligation. He states that the obligation to get married is, therefore, the only means of human survival as far as the views of African people are concerned (Mbiti, 1975:99).

In this work, Mbiti (1975) also discusses the origin of death, how death is caused in human life, the act of dying, rituals of death, the hereafter, the destiny of the soul, and how the departed are remembered. It is in this work where death rituals receive scrutiny.

Mokgokong (1975) is another scholar who shows that language is the product of culture. In his analysis, Mokgokong (1975:106) gives meaning to the terms associated with marriage. There are certain kinship words that he does not highlight, especially those that are derived from ‘unrecognised marriages’. It should be remembered that at the time of his research, certain types of marriages, such as liverate and sororate, were not recognised by the government as official marriages. This gap will be filled by the current study. Although he does not discuss marriage as a ritual, he, however, analyses some terms used in marriage. For example, he mentions the concept of *go tsenela* (Venda: *u dzhenela*) as a custom where a brother is expected to bear children from his brother’s widow. He does not elaborate on which brother is entitled to do this task, and what are the criteria of choosing such a brother and not the other brother.

Furthermore, Mokgokong (1975:123-124) discusses some concepts associated with death rituals, namely, *makgoma* (a kind of illness following upon contamination with impure persons); *mogoga* (a beast slaughtered at burial), *tlhoboša* (a beast slaughtered at the end of mourning period – usually a year).

Although Mokgokong's study does not give an in-depth analysis of religious rituals as presented in the Zion Christian Church, it is nevertheless useful as it discusses the terminology associated with the Black Independent Churches. He explains what Anabaptists and Zion refer to, for instance, in Northern Sotho speech communities.

Similarly, *Maphaphathisi/Lephaphathisi* is a religious fanatic, a member of the sect that believes in total immersion in their baptismal ritual. Usually members of this sect congregate around pools or dams for the ritual. Similarly, to the average Northern Sotho speaker, the name *Sione* (Zion) no longer means Jerusalem but is used to refer to the headquarters of the Lekganyane sect (Z.C.C.). Hence *Mosione* is the follower of Lekganyane sect (Mokgokong, 1975:143).

Another study worth-mentioning is the one undertaken by Van Deventer (1989:66) on the impact of religion, death and poverty among the Vhavenda. In this work, Van Deventer emphasises that the Venda people believe that there is life after death. Of utmost importance, he elaborates on the burial speech at a Venda funeral. He shows that it is in this ritual where language spoken reveals the belief of the Venda people in life after death. Van Deventer (1989:71) indicates that the content of the majority of the sermons and speeches emphasise that there is still life after death:

The closing rituals of burial ceremonies reflect very clearly the believe in life, both in and after death. Wreaths are presented and the corresponding cards read, with emphasis on “we will miss you until we see you again”, and “good bye, we will join you soon.”

Although Van Deventer’s work is based on the Venda people, it will be relevant to this study as the Venda ritual speech can also find resonance in the Northern Sotho ritual speech.

1.9 CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that many scholars approach the topic of rituals from a historical and anthropological perspective, rather from a linguistic or discourse analysis perspective. This study will, therefore, be important as it will highlight rituals from a sociolinguistic viewpoint.

CHAPTER TWO

2. MARRIAGE

This chapter aims at analysing discourse pertaining to the customs pertaining to marriage amongst the Northern Sotho speaking population. In order to achieve this aim, the chapter will concentrate on the following aspects: the significance of marriage, marriage gifts, the establishment of relationships between families, wedding ceremonies and festivals, speech rituals in marriage, choosing a marriage partner, engaging the intermediary, *magadi* and other marriage goods; *go hlabišwa*, the wedding feast, different kinds of marriages found amongst the Northern Sotho people, as well as divorce.

2.1 DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF MARRIAGE

There is no general definition of marriage as it is a societal phenomenon because marriage is a cultural phenomenon. Because cultures differ, they may also differ in how they define marriage.

In South Africa, there are two forms of marriages recognised by law, namely, customary marriage and civil marriage. A married couple will have one or both forms of marriage. Although many Black people may have a civil marriage amongst themselves, they also have to undergo customary marriage.

Marriage is a legal institution whereby a man and a woman pledge to live together. In customary marriage, which is indigenous in Africa, the aim is procreation. There are legal requirements for a valid customary marriage, namely, the consensual agreement between the two family groups and the transfer of the bride by her family group to the family of the man (or to the man himself) (Olivier, Bekker, Olivier and Olivier, 1998:17).

The traditional law of Black people of South Africa provides for polygamous marriages, that is, a man is legally allowed to have more than one wife. Polyandry (the type of marriage where a woman is married to more than one man) is never allowed in any form of marriage amongst the Blacks.

According to Mbiti (1990:130), marriage is a complex affair with economic, social, and religious aspects which often overlap so firmly that they cannot be separated from one another. According to Christianity, marriage is an honourable state, instituted by God for the continuation of the race and the mutual conform of men and women. This is one of the reasons why, according to the *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* (1950:681), ritual defloration is the main requirement for a formal marriage.

In a traditional society, there is no age requirements for a legal marriage, but the principle generally applied is that the two individuals must at least have reached puberty. In some communities in the Limpopo Province, there are special initiation ceremonies to mark the passage from childhood to marriageable age and adulthood. Amongst the Northern Sotho people, girls had to undergo *go binelwa kgopha* or *go ragola* and boys could be allowed to marry only after circumcision. No girl could be married if she did not pass the initiation known as *go binelwa*, which was preceded by clitoridectomy and *lešoboro* (uncircumcised).

Most Africans live a communal life, so is their traditional marriage. They do things together, they eat together, they share sorrow together – hence they pass statements such as *motho ke motho ka batho* (man lives better because of the existence of others). This is the reason why a traditional African marriage exhibits a more communal, concrete and ceremonial character than the Western-type of marriage.

According to Mbiti (1990:130), African marriage is the focus of existence. It is not only a communal occurrence where people meet, but it involves even the departed, the living and those yet to be born (*op. cit.*: 130). The departed are involved in naming the bride, for example. According to Mbiti (1990:130), persons who are unmarried are looked down upon in African communities. Such people are given derogatory terms such as *kgope* (bachelor), and *letlitla* (spinster) in Northern Sotho. Because such people are rejected by society, they are often not given high positions in the community. A bachelor, for instance, cannot be throned to be a chief even if he is the first born son of the chief. If he is unmarried, he may not be crowned. Even at wedding feasts, there are songs which verbalise the rejection of a bachelor. For example:

- (1) *Kgope se nkgatele mosadi,*
Ka diputsu tša maratha.
(Bachelor, do not touch my wife,
with your stinky boots.)
- (2) *Kgope eja o robale.*
(Bachelor, eat and sleep.)
- (3) *Kgope o robala le dikhuru.*
(Bachelor, you sleep with your knees.)

These songs confirm that marriage among the Northern Sotho is a fundamental requirement without which society will be rendered useless.

In a traditional Northern Sotho society, when the bachelor dies, he would be inserted with a burning splinter between his buttocks during burial. This burning splinter was an indication to the ancestors that the bachelor left the earth with no child born from him. The process was a sign of rejection of unmarried men by the

society. Unmarried women (spinsters) are also treated with negative attitudes. *Letlitle* is one who is unmarried but have children born out of wedlock. *Lefetwa* is an unmarried woman who does not have children. To be unmarried and divorced are treated equally negatively in most African communities. In rural areas, such people are not even recommended by the School Governing Bodies to be principals of schools. New areas where there are many such people are often given derogatory names. Such areas are called *Hlala Mpša* (Divorce a dog). When completed it says *hlala mpša o nyake ntlo* (divorce a dog and buy a house). 'A dog' here may refer to a husband. Other names are UDF which refers to Unmarried Divorced and Frustrated people. All these names are mere indications of the rejection of unmarried people by their respective communities.

As stated above, marriage is looked upon as a sacred duty which every normal person must perform. According to Mbiti (1991:104), failure to do so means in effect stopping the flow of life through the individual, hence, the diminishing of mankind upon the earth. In Northern Sotho tradition, when a child is born, it is given a particularly relevant name. If a woman is married but already having a child born out of wedlock who already has a name, it will be given another relevant name when its mother arrives at the groom's family. For example, if a father's name is *Kgabo*, his son's first born child is going to be named *Kgabo*. If *Kgabo* (Senior) dies, *Kgabo* (junior) remains behind. *Kgabo* (junior) is then regarded as *Kgabo* (senior). If *Kgabo* (Senior) was a traditional healer or *sangoma*, he will give *Kgabo* (junior) all his healing tools the time when the former becomes an ancestor. If there are no children born out of marriage or one person decides not to be married, then it is said *motho o hwa le leina* (a person dies with a name). Marriage is, therefore, a continuation of life. A person continues to live because he/she is regenerated by his/her child. Therefore, marriage and childbearing are the remedies against death (Mbiti, 1991:105).

Marriage establishes relationships between families. A family whose children are all married will have more relationship ties than a family whose members are unmarried. In Northern Sotho communities, if a person has been married and calls people of his wife by certain names, all his siblings call them the same. For example, if a man is married to a certain woman, he calls the father of his wife 'father-in-law'. His siblings, like his elder or his younger brothers will, like him, call such a person 'father-in-law'. Parents of both bridegroom and bride start to call each one another, *bakgotse*. Although *bakgotse* means friends, in this context, it does not mean friends, but it connotes the relationship that has come about due to marriage.

Marriage has certain meanings and purposes. According to Mbiti (1991:110-112), in an African context, the following are meanings and purposes of marriage.

2.1.1 The obligation to bear children

The main aim of African marriage is to bear children. It should be noted that in an African marriage the child born is not governed by blood but by marriage payments (dowry) known as *magadi (dikgomo)*. It is then said *ngwana ke wa dikgomo* (the child belongs to dowry).

2.1.2 Marriage gifts (*Mapege*)

According to Mbiti (1991:108), marriage gifts are the legal instruments which authorise the husband and wife to live together and bear children, and which constantly remind them that they must continue to live together. Without these gifts, marriage is non-existent. This is the reason why Smith (1993:181) calls such gifts 'marriage payments'. Gifts are paid at the payer's will but payments are an obligation. A distinction may be drawn between marriage gifts and marriage payments. Gifts are given during the engagement and continued after marriage

(Mbiti, 1991:108) whereas marriage payments are paid before and during engagement. In the event of divorce, these payments are returned. These payments serve to legitimize marriage relationships while at the same time signifying or marking the transfer of rights in women and children (Smith, 1993:181). For example, among the Northern Sotho speaking people, there is no child who is illegitimate except those whose mothers are not married. If a man marries a woman who already has a child or children not born from the same man, those children become legally his just like those born by him. If he has younger children born by the same woman, both groups of children, that is, those who are not biologically his and those who are biologically his, will have equal status. This is because the woman has been married. The first group qualifies for everything that the second qualifies. If a man has children with a certain woman without being married, those children are culturally not his. They will not even call him their father. They will only address him as their father after he has paid the marriage payments.

2.1.3 Marriage establishes relationships between families

It has already been mentioned that if a man marries a woman, his relatives and siblings become related to the bride's relatives in the same way he is related to them. If for instance, a woman is married by her cross-cousin, say the mother of her husband is the sister to her father (*rakgadi*), she changes the relationship after marriage. She is no more *rakgadi* but mother-in-law (*mmatswale*). The cousin (*motswala*) is no more cousin but her husband.

2.1.4 Wedding ceremonies and festivals

Rituals and ceremonies accompany the occasion of wedding. The aim of these, according to Mbiti (1991:108), is to pray for the welfare of the new couple, to bless them so that they bear children and give them instructions and rules on how

to conduct themselves as a married couple. Among the Northern Sotho people, the heaviest responsibility rests on the bride because, according to their culture, every man can bear children unless he is bewitched. This is called *go laya ngwetši* (to give the bride instructions). When this ritual is done, it ends by the speakers giving gifts to the couple.

To summarise, it should be emphasised that there is no one universally applicable definition of marriage, because of the cross-cultural variability in the social organization of gender relations. What is regarded as marriage in a certain cultural group can be invalid in another culture. Although definitions of marriage differ according to cultures, the universally agreed on definition of marriage at present will be a union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are recognised as legitimate offspring of both partners (Smith, 1993:180).

2.2 SPEECH RITUALS WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO MARRIAGE

2.2.1 The girl's readiness towards marriage

In a traditional marriage, there is no particular age for the girl to be married. It is in civil marriage where age, namely, eighteen years, is the minimum requirement. Although there is no legal age requirement for a legal marriage, the principle generally applied is that the two individuals must at least have reached puberty (Olivier, Bekker, Olivier and Olivier, 1998:07). For all these activities there are specific speech rituals as the following discussion illustrates:

2.2.1.1 Go bona kgwedi (First menstruation)

When a Northern Sotho girl menstruates for the first time, the mother will discover that and tell her mother-in-law. The two will call other senior women within the

family. They will call the girl to a private hut and tell her the meaning of menstruation. Thereafter, they will send young children to go from house to house saying: *Ba rile re tlo le botša gore moketekete o bone kgwedi* (Literally – we have been sent to inform you that so and so has seen a moon). This means that the girl has menstruated for the first time. Menstruation is associated with the moon because the traditional Northern Sotho calendar is counted in terms of the appearance of the first moon although in the Western calendar it might be the tenth. After children will have told each household that so and so has menstruated, women will visit the family to congratulate the girl and teach her to avoid boys. Then the second stage towards marriage will be clitoridectomy. This ritual will be performed on her together with other girls of her age. Sex education is taught to these girls and pertinently stresses the following refrains:

O seke wa robala le monna o le kgweding ka gore o tla mo khutla.

(Do not have sex with your husband while you are menstruating because you will infect him.)

O seke wa robala le monna o le mohwana ka gore o tla gologa.

(Do not have sex with a man while your husband has recently passed away because his testes will be infected.)

O seke wa amuša ngwana o imile ka gore o tla hwa.

(Do not suckle your infant while pregnant because it will die.)

O seke wa robala le monna ge ngwana/bana ba swerwe ke mooko ka gore o ka se foie.

(Do not have sex with your husband while your children have contracted measles because it will never be cured.)

2.2.1.2 Initiation

Go binelwa (A special initiation dance) – This form of initiation is done after clitoridectomy. In some communities clitoridectomy is performed on girls who have not yet reached puberty. In this case, it may not be regarded as a step towards marriage but as a prerequisite for marriage.

In a special dance, the girl will have started to develop physically after the first menstruation. Her buttocks start to grow bigger, her breasts become sensitive and also big and she starts to develop curves. *Mosetsana o a ragola* (the girl develops big buttocks) is then said. The deverbative noun *marago* comes from the verbstem *ragola*. A special week or two will be arranged where other girls of her age and even those senior to her will be called to assemble at her homestead to dance for her. She will then be put in special hut, normally situated at the back of the other huts. She will be taught sex education in this hut. She is called *kgopha*. Her vagina will be stretched to become bigger by the insertion of a small calabash (*kgapana*). The reason for stretching her vagina is that the time she gives birth, the infant should be able to come out easily as there were no methods such as a caesarian during childbirth. If the infant is unable to come out because of the small vagina, the mother will die and it would be said *o jelwe ke ntlo* (she has been eaten by the house). The small calabash used to widen the vagina is called *ngwana* (infant). It is associated with the infant because it is going to come out using the same path.

Unlike in the Zulu ceremony where males are allowed to be present (Krige, 1985:101), in the Northern Sotho culture all males, irrespective of their age, are not allowed to be around during female initiation.

A male person does not undergo the same initiation process as the one above, but before he can be considered to be of a marriageable stage, he must first be circumcised. These forms of initiation are no longer common but are all found in some parts of the Limpopo Province, namely, Sekhukhuneland and ga-Mmaleboho.

2.3 CHOOSING A MARRIAGE PARTNER

In general, the choice of a marriage partner is proposed by the man or his family group to the family of the woman. In Sekhukhuneland, the boy tells the father (Sekhukhune, 1988:104) whereas in the West of Polokwane such as at gaMatlala and Moletji, the boy tells the mother, who in turn will tell the father starting with the expression *le a di swara papago mokete?* ('do you catch the news so and so's father?'). If the boy's name is Kwena, she will say *papago Kwena*. This is because people living in these areas believe that when a person has come to the family to present anything he/she must start with the woman because she is junior to her husband. They say *ditaba di tsena ka mosadi* ('news/messages are presented through the woman'). To them, it is wrong to start with a senior member of the family. Even at the chief's kraal a stranger does not start presenting his/her problems to the chief but to the youngest *mokgomana* ('junior mediator'). When presenting the message to the husband, the wife must always use honorific expressions such as *papago Kwena* and should not address him by his name such as *Thupetši* or *Thaloki*.

In the Northern Sotho community, the choice of a marriage partner as far as commoners are concerned, can be done by the parents or it may be obvious. For example, in the past and some present day communities, it is known that a boy marries the daughter of his maternal uncle (*malome*) whereas the girl marries the son of her father's sister (*rakgadi*). Then, there is a saying – *Ngwana malome*

nnyale dikgomo di boele šakeng (My maternal uncle's son, marry me so that the dowry may be returned).

In the case of royalty, the choice of a queen is not individual but communal (Sekhukhune, 1988:106). This is because she is not the 'wife of the king' only but the mother of the nation. She is called *timamello* (one who extinguishes fire).

There are rules regarding the choice of a marriage partner in Northern Sotho culture. The Northern Sotho law prohibits marriage between people related to each other within the fourth degree of affinity and between the children of sisters (Olivier, *et. al.*, 1998:9). If such a marriage is proposed then it is called *bošola* (taboo).

Sometimes the choice of marriage partner is done abruptly, whereby the girl is 'abducted' by the man or his friends in order to compel the girl's family to negotiate or give consent. This is called *go tšhabiša* (to run away with a girl). If a man has done that, he tells his parents in the morning because abduction is normally done during the night. The parents will then send a mediator to tell the family that their daughter is with their son. When he arrives, he/she will then say *ba ga semangmang ba re nyakelang keno* (the so and so family says you must hunt towards them). There is the proverb that says *kgwale ya monna e sekwa e le thekeng* (a man's partridge is arbitrated while it is on his hip). This means a man is cross examined after he has abducted the woman. There is also an official abduction whereby it is said *lehu le iša ngwetši bogadi* (death makes a bride to go to the bridegroom's family). This happens if a boy or man and a girl or woman were in love but their engagement was not yet formalised. If in the course of the arrangements, death occurs at the man's family, especially if it is one of the man's parents who has passed away, the boy's parents send a mediator to inform them to bring their daughter.

2.4 ENGAGING THE INTERMEDIARY (*MMADITSELA*)

A person who will be selected by the family to negotiate for marriage is called *mmaditsela*. Normally, *mmaditsela* is a woman since the noun *Mmaditsela* is a compound noun comprised by *mma* (mother) + *ditsela* (roads). It literally means the mother of roads. This appointed woman will always be on the road to the other party. While the groom's family selects an intermediary, the bride's family also selects its. The intermediary will always say *re biletšeng mmaditsela*, (call us your intermediary) when she arrives at the groom's family and the bride's intermediary will also do the same when arriving at the groom's family. Both parties cannot communicate without the intermediaries.

2.4.1 Choice of intermediary

Not every person qualifies to be an intermediary. The family chooses a person whom they trust most. Normally, amongst the Northern Sotho people, an aunt is chosen. This aunt can be *mogatšamalome* (the wife of a maternal uncle), *mmane* (the younger sister to the mother of the groom or bride), *mmamogolo* (the elder sister to the mother) or even *mogadibo* (the sister-in-law).

2.4.2 The groom asking the girl's hand for marriage (*go kgopela mosadi*)

When asking the girl's hand for marriage, special, humble language is used. After the bride's intermediary will have been called, the groom's intermediary will greet her and thereafter say:

Ke romilwe ke ba ga semangmang, ba re ke tlo kgopela sego sa meetse/nkgašana/mpšanyana or lešaetšana.

(I have been sent by the so and so family to ask for the calabash for water/ piece of calabash/puppy or a filthy girl.)

Sekhukhune (1988:107) uses the term *mootlelwana* (unhealthy puppy) which is more derogative than a puppy (*mpšanyana*). The bride's intermediary will rightfully understand her and pass on the message to the bride's family. If it is the first time the family receives such good news, the father will reply: go back and come again because *ga ke mogolonoši* (I am not the only owner of the daughter). When the father responds in this way, he wants to emphasise the communal life as lived by Africans. Mbiti agrees with this assertion when he states: "Marriage is a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator" (1990:130). The intermediary will go back and tell the groom how she was treated and they will agree that it is true because *mosadi ga a kgopelwe gatee* (A girl's hand for marriage is not asked only once). While the groom's intermediary has left, the girl's father will send a young boy to call his closest relatives and when the young boy arrives he will state: *ba rile ke tlo le botša le phakele kua gae gosasa* (They said you are invited to assemble at my home tomorrow in the morning). Normally the young boy is sent towards sunset. Another date will be arranged when the groom's intermediary will go to the bride's family again. She will still ask the bride's family to find her the intermediary. She will tell their intermediary that she has come back again with the usual news.

If the father agrees with this proposal, the bride's family will pay something. This payment is called *go beeletša* (to pay deposit). In idiomatic form it will be *go ageletša motšhidi* (to build a fence around the wild plum tree). Wild plum tree symbolises the girl to be married and the verb *ageletša* (making a fence) means to pay a certain amount of money so that no other boy may be accepted by the bride's family.

In the following passage, it is evident that *go beeletša* (to pay a deposit) has been done:

Seo se bego se ba beile sebakeng ke gore Kgagohle o ile go ratana le Mmapelo morwedi wa Thethenkgetša, gwa re go kokota Sekae ba hlanogela Kgagohle ka gona go fahlwa ke leruo la Sekae leo le ilego la ba la amoga kgopolo! (Matsepe, 1974:15).

(What put them on suspension was that while Kgagohle was in love with Mmapelo, the daughter of Thethenkgetša, they refused Kgagohle's marriage after Sekae had asked a girl's hand for marriage because of Sekae's wealth which blinded their thought.)

2.5 **MAGADI AND OTHER MARRIAGE GOODS (LOBOLA)**

Magadi (dowry) refers to payments and gifts that are made to legalise marriage. According to Olivier, *et. al.* (1998:32), the term *lobola* has a religious, magic, social, and legal aspect. As form of religious aspect, it is *magadi* (dowry) that makes the ancestors of the groom to meet the ancestors of the bride at the place where they stay. Magically, after the payment of dowry (*magadi*), children born out of wedlock become legitimate and even inherit from their non-biological father and grandparents.

According to Schapera, cited by Olivier (1998:32), the main function of *bogadi* (dowry) is to transfer the reproductive power of the woman from her own family to that of her husband. In Northern Sotho culture, no cohabitation between a man and a woman is held to be a proper marriage unless it is accompanied by the transfer of *magadi* (dowry). As indicated earlier on, no man can claim the children he has by any woman, until he and his family have agreed to transfer *magadi* (dowry). The following types of *magadi* (dowry) are expected from the groom and his family:

2.5.1 *Dikgomo* (cattle)

In the past *magadi* (dowry) was in the form of cattle, but in today's community, they have been replaced by money. Before *dikgomo* (cattle) can be transferred to the bride's family, they are preceded by other gifts, namely, *dikobo* (clothes). These are clothes for the bride. The groom buys the bride some clothes and shoes. In some communities they are called *dipute*. This is an indication that the boy loves the girl.

2.5.1.1 Different types of *dikgomo* (cattle)

There can be any number of *dikgomo* (cattle) except with seven as a digit that the bride's family will be satisfied with. Seven is not accepted because it is believed that the finger resembling seven is used to point at sorcerers. It is called *monwana wa tšhupašupabalo* (the finger to point at sorcerers). In other words, if there are seven *dikgomo* (cattle or money) seventeen, twenty seven et cetera, they are not accepted. If the groom's family brings seven, they will be compelled to add one to make it eight. The same will be applied to seventeen.

Kgomo ya faene (cattle for a fine)

They are the first *dikgomo* (cattle) which are normally paid if the messengers (*bakgonyana*) arrived late at the bride's family. It is then expected that they sleep at the bride's family before the marriage day or else they should arrive at dawn. When the sun rises they are expected to have already arrived and be seated. It is called *go gata legogo* (to put legs on the floormat).

Kgomo ya pulamolomo (cattle for mouth opening)

It is also called *kgomo ya go tseba kgoro* (cattle for knowing the courtyard). These cattle are paid so that the bride's family will be able to speak to the groom's. If this is not paid the groom's will be unable to negotiate with the bride's.

Kgomo ya phaola (cattle for castrating other oxen)

After the groom has paid the required number of cattle or money, they will be required to pay the cattle that will be used to 'castrate oxen' found amongst the cattle. It is called *phaola* from the verb stem *faola* (to castrate). It is also called *mphaka* (knife).

Kgomo ya go kgopela (cattle for permission)

This beast is paid after all the cattle have been paid to the satisfaction of the father of the bride. Its main function is to ask permission from him to transfer his daughter to the groom's family.

Kgomo ya mpa (the beast for seduction)

In some communities, there is a custom that when a virgin gets married or is seduced a special virginity beast is payable (Olivier, *et. al.*, 1998:57). This beast is regarded as part of the *magadi* (dowry) and it is not returnable on dissolution of the marriage or death.

Among the Northern Sotho speaking people only the beast for seduction is paid before others. Often, the bride's family will send the messengers to report the seduction before marriage. It is called *go lahla patla* (to throw away the stick). If

the groom accepts responsibility for the pregnancy and promises to marry the girl, they will demand such a beast during the payment of *magadi* (dowry). This beast is called *kgomo ya mpa* (the beast for stomach) as *mpa* (stomach) here refers to pregnancy and not stomach or belly as such). This beast is kind of a fine. It is a fine because when the girl is pregnant before marriage, it is said *o lomilwe ke dimpša* (she has been bitten by dogs) or *ba mo robile leoto* (they have broken her leg) or *ba mo kgeiletše kobo* (they have torn her blanket), or *o sentšwe* (she has been deformed). All these actions mean that a bad action has been done to the girl. She, therefore, feels pain.

2.5.2 Gifts during *magadi*

After the bride's family have been satisfied with the *magadi*, they say *re ba khoše* (we have eaten to the full). Although *magadi* (dowry) are currently paid in the form of money, in the areas of gaMmaleboho, Makgabeng and east of Polokwane, the groom must still pay one real head of cattle because it is going to be slaughtered during the white wedding. If he does not pay it on the day of transferring *magadi* (dowry), he owes the bride's family, and he must pay it immediately before the white wedding.

2.5.2.1 *Jase ya papago monnyana* (coat for the father of the bride)

This is a real coat. It is going to be worn by the father of the bride when it is cold.

2.5.2.2 *Tšale ya mmamonnyana* (blanket for the mother of the bride)

This is also a real blanket and will be worn by the mother of the bride, either during the night or during other wedding feasts.

2.5.2.3 *Thakgwana ya kgadi* (the snuff for the sister of the groom)

This gift is from the bride's family. The messengers (*bakgonyana*) will take it when they leave for the groom's family. It belongs to the sister of the groom.

2.6 **GO HLABIŠWA/GO TLOTŠWA MAKHURA (TO SMEAR WITH FAT)**

This form of ritual is a continuation of the marriage gifts. Mbiti (1991:108) states that marriage gifts are the outward symbols of a serious undertaking by the families concerned. They are symbols of the marriage bond or covenant. This type of a gift known as *go hlabišwa* seals up the sacred relationship established through marriage.

2.6.1 *Hlogo* (the head)

The bride's family will tell the *bakgonyana* (messengers from the groom) that they are satisfied with their *magadi* (dowry). They will then say *re le kgotše* (we are satisfied) and present either a sheep or a goat to the groom. They will request *bakgonyana* (messengers) to slaughter the sheep or goat as *sešebo sa bakgonyana* (the relish for the messengers). The *bakgonyana* (messengers) will appoint one of them to slaughter the beast or request the bride's family to slaughter it on their behalf. After it has been skinned, they will cut off the head together with the neck and the ribs from one side, usually the right side plus the arm. A small hole is pierced after three ribs and the arm is inserted in that hole. It is called *hlogo e a phathakga* (the head carries).

The large intestine is taken out together with the droppings inside. It is compulsory that the large intestine should include the anus. This intestine is called *motsila* (anus) because it includes the anus. If the anus is not there it will not be

accepted by the groom and may result in a fine. The intestine is taken, woven around a small stick called *lehlaka* (reed) and cooked with the *lehlaka* (reed). The stomach of the sheep or goat is taken out and washed thoroughly. Inside it, they put the liver of that sheep together with the large intestine and tie the opening of the stomach. They are then cooked together until they are ready for consumption. Other parts of the carcass are cooked without being cut into small pieces. At the end of the day this *hlogo* (head) is wrapped in the skin of the same sheep/goat. The rest of the meat will be eaten by the *bakgonyana* (messengers) together with little girls who dwell in the same community. They are known as *diphelesi* (accompanists).

Before the *bakgonyana* (messengers) can leave for the groom's family they must see their 'mother' (*mmago rena*). This is the girl whom they have come to marry. She will be presented by a *mmaditsela* (intermediary), wrapped in a blanket. To be able to see her, the *bakgonyana* (messengers) must pay a certain *kgomo* (cattle). It is called *kgomo ya go khupurolla mmago rena* (a beast to uncover the bride). Thereafter, they can ask permission to leave. They will then state: *Re kgopela difate* (We ask for mountain passes), *Re lopa ditsela* (We ask for roads), *Re kgopela meetse* (We ask for water).

All these expressions mean to ask permission to leave. After permission has been granted then they take their *hlogo* (head). They leave their walking sticks behind and the bride's family must put them in a safe place. They will be collected during the bride's white wedding feast.

2.6.1.1 How *hlogo* (head) is eaten

In the morning of the following day, the parents will call *sebešo/pitša/kgoro* (neighbours and relatives) to their home. *Sebešo* (fireplace), *pitša* (claypot) and *kgoro* (courtyard) refer to a group of families who are close to the family. They

help one another during festivities, funerals and court cases. The groom's family usually sends a young boy who when arriving will say *ba rile ke tlo le bitša le tlo ja hlogo gosasa* (They said I should invite you to come and eat the head tomorrow morning). In the morning, both men and women will assemble in the groom's home and the conversation will start with *mmaditsela* (intermediary). Females will be divided into several groups, namely, *dingwetšsana* (newly married women), *dingwetši* (married women) and *bakgekolo* (old women). Both *dingwetšsana* and *dingwetši* are called *mathari* (women). Men are called *bakgalabje* (old men) even if some are young. This is honorific usage of language.

The gifts brought from the bride's family are shared among such sub-groups. *Mathari* (women) will eat *tingi* (sour porridge), also called *bogobe bja ngwana* (the infant's porridge). It is called *bogobe bja ngwana* even if the bride is childless. This is because, according to Mbiti (1991:110), the supreme purpose of marriage according to African people, is to bear children, to build a family, to extend life, and to hand down the living torch of human existence. This is supported by Olivier, *et. al.* (1998:33) who mention that the primary function of the *lobolo* is to transfer the reproductive capacity of a woman to the family of her husband. In other words, both scholars agree that in an African context there is a direct correlation between the transfer of *magadi* (dowry) and the reproductive potential of the women.

The *bakgalabje* (old men), now separated from the rest will eat *hlogo*. This is the real head of the sheep/goat, the ribs and the right arm. The *bakgekolo* (old women) will eat the stomach (*mogodu*), the liver and the large intestine woven around the stick.

Before they start with these activities, a *mmaditsela* (intermediary) starts by asking: *le a di swara mmago mokete?* (Do you catch the news mother of so and

so?), referring to the youngest *ngwetšana* (junior woman). *Mmago mokete* means the mother of so and so. It should be noted that honorific morphemes such as *le* and honorific expression such as *mmago ...* and *tatago ...* will be used in all respects during this ritual. The conversation will be as follows:

MMADITSELA : “*Le a di swara naa mmago Kwena?*”
(INTERMEDIARY): “Do you get the news, Kwena’s mother?”

MMAGO KWENA : “*Eng!*”
(KWENA’S MOTHER): “Yes”

MMADITSELA : “*Ke ba ga Manamela, ba re ga re le biletše selo, re re bakgonyana ba tlile le hlogo ebile ba na le mmagorena*”.
(INTERMEDIARY): “It is Manamela’s family, and they say they have not called you for any other thing except that *bakgonyana* (messengers) have returned carrying *hlogo* (head) and also have brought our mother along.)

MMAGO KWENA : “*Aowa, ke tše di botse*”.
(KWENA’S MOTHER): “Oh! Yes! It is very good news.”)

The youngest *ngwetšana* (junior woman) will tell the following *ngwetšana* (junior woman) until it is in the hands of the *dingwetši* (all married women). The same message will be passed to the *bakgekolo* (old women) and the *bakgekolo* (old women) will pass it on to the *bakgalabje* (old men). The *bakgalabje* (old men) will then give permission to start eating.

Before they start eating, the women will cut the *tingi* (sour porridge) into small pieces. They pierce it with a knife and start to allulade, jump and dance. This is

called *go phepela* or *go tila* (to jump and dance). They do this individually with a piece of *tingi* (sour porridge) at the end of the knife. In some parts of the Province, these women are forced to do this activity with no shelter around their buttocks so that men should admire a woman with beautiful and big buttocks. It should be remembered that in Northern Sotho culture, big buttocks are a symbol of beauty, good sex and attraction in women, hence, the men use the saying *nku e rekwa mosela* (the main part of the sheep which is bought is the tail).

Hlogo (head) is accompanied by *fola* (snuff). This snuff is put in a container called *thakgwana* (container used to store snuff). The sister of the groom relevant to him is called to open the container. This is called *go khurumolla thakgwana* (to open a container carrying snuff). The women will share the snuff and say *kgadi ga e na bosehla ka lapeng la mmago yona* (the sister is never looked down at her mother's home). This means that the sister is always important.

2.7 WEDDING FEAST

The wedding feast is accompanied by extensive ceremonies which may last for several days. According to Mbiti (1991:108), the aim of these ceremonies is to pray for the welfare of the new couple, to bless them so that they will bear children and to give them instructions and rules on how to conduct themselves as a married couple. Olivier, *et. al.* (1988) is of the opinion that these ceremonies must be viewed as a ceremonial and ritual process in which the essential legal requirements have been incorporated.

Although there are many ceremonies which can be housed in the wedding feast, the final step is the transfer of the bride to, and her formal and ceremonial integration into, the family of the bridegroom.

The following are some rituals and ceremonies found at a wedding feast:

2.7.1 Marriage session

In the morning men and women of *sebešo* or *kgoro* (fireplace or courtyard) sit in a circular form to officially formalize the feast. There will be other close relatives who probably stay far away. Then, a junior member of the family who is female, such as a *ngwetši ye nnyane* (junior married woman) will start the talks. She will tell the other women of the *sebešo* (fireplace) and say: *Le a di swara naa?* She may use any style of speaking such as *ga se tšeuwe naa, mmago semangmang?* (is it not those news mother of so and so). After the second woman have accepted the news, she then replies: *Ke ba ga semangmang, ba re ga ra re biletša selo, re re ke kgale re swenyana le ba ga semangmang ebile re ba fentše* (Is it so and so family, they say we have not called you for any other thing, except that for a long time we have been negotiating with the so and so family for marriage and we have succeeded).

It is customary that these women will each hand over the message to the one who follows her until the rest of the women have got the message. The last woman will repeat the message to the most junior *mokgalabje* (old man) until the message has been communicated to the most senior old man. This type of passing on the same message over and over is called *go tšhelana ditaba* (to hand over news to one another). The aim of this style of speaking is to give the family head the correct decision. The most important point here will be the number of cattle they paid as *magadi* (dowry) and finally, they will decide on the name to be given to the bride. If it is at bride's family, they will refer to whether there is any other girl who was married to the same family. If there was once a girl married to the groom's family then the name of the bride will be *Molatelo/Mmamolatelo* (One who follows). This name is derived from the verb stem *-latela* (follow), which means to follow. If the bride's surname is the same as theirs, she will be called *Moyagabo/Mmamoyagabo* (One who goes to her home). This literally means the

one who goes back to her home. If there was no one ever married to such a clan, then she will be called *Mmaswarišanang*.

At the family of the groom, the *sebešo* (fire place) will also decide on the name to give to the bride. This will be the legal name that other women and men should use to call her. It is her precious name. To call her by this name indicates respect. To determine who she will be, the family will look at the status of her husband. If her husband is the first born or elder son in the family, then his first child will be named after his father. For example, if his father is *Tlou*, his first born child is going to be called *Tlou* irrespective of its gender. This tradition is applicable in the communities west of Polokwane. In communities east of Polokwane, such as gaMamabolo, gaMmaboi and many more, they name differently. If the baby is a girl, she is named after the senior bride. It is only if the bride is still a virgin that they will name her after a male person. If the bridegroom has an elder brother, his first born child will not be named after his father but after the elder brother. If his elder brother is *Tlou*, his first born child is going to be *Tlou* and there the bride's name will be *Mmatlou* (the mother of Tlou). Because she is married to a certain man, she is not only addressed as *Mmatlou*, she is *Mmatlou* of so and so. If her husband is *Lesetša*, she is *Mmatlou wa Lesetša*. This is because it is possible that there may be many *Mmatlous* in the village. The groom will be called *papago Tlou* while the bride is *Mmatlou* (Tlou's mother). These names will be kept a secret until at the end of the wedding feast where the family head will be called to come and give the bride a name. This is called *go rea ngwetši lebitšo*.

2.7.2 Marching of the bridegroom and bride in white gown and black suit (*go tšhata*)

This type of parade has replaced the old type where the bride was crawling on her knees wearing traditional attire. This was called *go goroga* (to arrive). Currently,

both the bridegroom and the bride will be accompanied to church where the priest will marry them. This ritual will be performed in the church.

2.7.2.1 Wedding songs

These are songs specially composed for the wedding. They carry several messages. The following are a few types of messages conveyed by these songs.

(a) Hardship in marriage

Se gatele mosese kua morago,

Se gatele mosese kua morago makoti!

Hola! Hola!

Hola! Hola! Hola Makoti,

Lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi,

Lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi makoti,

Lebitla la monna ke sapoto,

Lebitla la monna ke sapoto makoti

(Do not pull your legs,

Do not pull your legs bride!

Hola! Hola! Hola, bride,

The grave of a woman is her husband's family,

The grave of a woman is her husband's family, bride,

The grave of a man is maintenance,

The grave of a man is maintenance, bride.)

In this song, the bride is advised not to regret marriage. *Se gatele mosese kua morago* means do not backslide but go forward with marriage. *Makoti* is a bride. There is a proverb used here and that is *lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi* (the grave of a woman is at her husband's home). This proverb states that a woman should never

ever divorce her husband even if she is ill-treated. In this proverb, the bride is told that she is going to experience problems at the groom's home and should never think of divorce. She has to tolerate all the hardships. The second is not a proverb but sounds like one. It says *lebitla la monna ke sapoto* (a man's grave is maintenance). This means that a man must always maintain his wife and children. The wife is his perpetual minor. So, this song advises a groom that he is going to experience hardship in marriage and he will have to tolerate it. As indicated earlier, all children born from the married woman belong to her husband even if they are not his biological children. His duty is just to maintain them.

The second example is:

*Makoti tsoga, tsoga,
O robaletšeng?
Tsoga tsoga
O robaletšeng?
Mmatswale o nyaka meetse a go hlapa,
O robaletšeng?
Tsoga, tsoga,
O robaletšeng?*

(Bride wake up, wake up,
Why are you sleeping?
Wake up, wake up,
Mother-in-law needs water to bath,
Why are you sleeping?
Wake up, wake up,
Why are you sleeping?)

In this song the bride is informed that when she arrives at the groom's place she must work hard because the mother-in-law will be in need of water to bath.

(b) Marriage is everybody's obligation

As indicated earlier, unmarried people in an African community are looked down upon. Mbiti (1991:112) states that without marriage a person is only a human being minus. The following is an example of a song that ridicules an unmarried man:

*Mosadi o a nyalwa,
Mosadi o a nyalwa ka dikgomo,
Kgope se nkgatele mosadi,
Ka diputsu tša maratha.*

(A woman is married,
A woman is married with cattle
Bachelor do not touch my wife,
With your torn boots.)

In this song a bachelor is looked down upon. He is advised that a wife is very important. She is fragile. The bachelor is advised to marry and be clean. It is believed that a bachelor, by virtue of being unmarried, is never clean because his boots will be stinky and torn.

2.8 THE END OF THE WEDDING FEAST

2.8.1 *Go bea ngwetši legogong* (to put the bride on the grassmat)

Before the bride can sit down for a certain ritual, her father must give her a gift in the form of a cow. This is called *go bea ngwetši legogong*. This ritual is often performed at the bride's home. This cow is called *kgomo ya go laya ngwetši* (a cow meant to the advice of a bride). His father will advise her in how to handle the husband, how to handle the in-laws and how to behave generally as a married woman. This act will be done by other relatives first, then ordinary people will follow. In today's feasts, the bride is advised to bear many children and avoid the use of contraceptives. When doing this, they give presents to the couple. When leaving the bride's homestead, the cow, together with the gifts, are taken to the groom's home.

At the groom's home the same ritual of *go laya ngwetši* will be done. The father will give them a cow. It is called *kgomo ya go laya ngwetši*. When this has been done, the bride will be reprimanded until she cries. If she does not cry, she is regarded as abnormal.

2.8.2 Inescapable gifts as means of ritual communication

2.8.2.1 *Lešapelo* (claydish)

This is given at the bride's family. It means she must see to it that the in-laws are kept clean. They must wash.

2.8.2.2 *Ditloo* (ground nuts)

They mean that the bride is ready for sexual intercourse. This is followed by the saying: *mosadi ke tloo, o gola ka fase* (a woman is like the groundnut plant, she is big underground). The interpretation is that even if a woman can be young in age, and tiny in physique, her vagina is big and ready to be used.

2.8.2.3 *Lekeša* (hand hoe)

It communicates to the bride that when she has a family she must plough the fields and feed her children, including her in-laws.

2.8.2.4 *Thitelo* (plastering stone)

It is a flat smooth stone that is used to plaster the floors and walls of mudhomes. When given to the bride, it means she must build homes and a *lapa* (court-yard).

2.8.2.5 *Selepe* (an axe)

This is given by the father of the groom to the groom. It means the groom must build kraals for cattle and a *legora* (fence). Traditionally, these are built with tree branches and stems.

2.8.2.6 *Legogo* (grassmat)

Legogo serves as a bed. It means the couple must have sexual intercourse on the mat and have enough children because in an African context, marriage is meant for protection (Mbiti, 1991:110, *op. cit.*, 1990:130; Olivier *et. al.* 1998:33).

2.9 DIFFERENT KINDS OF MARRIAGES FOUND AMONG THE NORTHERN SOTHO

2.9.1 *Seyantlo* (sorrorate)

This type of marriage is practised when a man's wife is barren or has died childless. If this misfortune happens, a man may claim another woman from her family to replace her. The children born by this substitute wife, are held to belong to the "house" of her predecessor (Schapera, 1984:42). If the woman is married in this way because her sister is barren, then she is called *hlatswadirope*. Literally, it means the one who cleans the thighs. Because her sister cannot bear children, it is believed that it is because her thighs are dirty. When this woman is named during the wedding feast, she will be called *Mmamolatelo* or *Mmamoribula*. The former name means the one who followed her sister and the latter means the one who causes her sister to be pregnant. She causes her living sister to be 'pregnant' because the children she will bear will belong to her sister and not to her.

2.9.2 *Ngwetši ya lapa* (levirate)

Literally it means the bride of the court-yard, or the bride of the family. In Northern Sotho culture, a marriage contract is a matter between two kin-groups and not between individuals, therefore, the death of one of the spouses does not terminate the marriage contract.

Ngwetši ya lapa (bride of the court-yard) is married by the family where the husband never existed. The husband becomes a *lapa* (family). The type of marriage often occurs as a result of the couple being unable to bear a baby boy. The couple may have many children but all of them are females. If the couple is old and cannot bear children anymore, they may decide to marry a *ngwetši ya lapa* (bride of the family).

After such a woman has been married, the family decides which male must bear children with such a woman. In most communities it is the son of either the elder brother to her father-in-law (*ramogolo*) or the younger brother (*rangwane*). But the most preferred is the son of the younger brother. Children born out of this marriage do not belong to their biological father but to the never-existing father. They will call him *rangwane* (uncle). When such a man bears children in this manner, it is called *go tseña ntlong* or *go tsenela* (to enter into the house or to enter into the house on behalf of somebody). This man does not exercise full immediate authority over the widow and her children. Because she is not his wife and those children are not his. The aim of this type of marriage is *go tsoša lapa* (to make the family exist).

2.9.3 Ghost-marriage

It occurs where the husband existed but died young. The husband either died before he could marry or he married and died while the marriage was still new. Children born under this arrangement are regarded as the offspring of the deceased and not of their biological father.

The man who must *tsenela* (enter the house) is always junior to the deceased. For example, he can be a younger brother to the deceased or the eldest son of the deceased. The eldest son does not *tsenela* (enter into) his own biological mother but the other wives of his father. The children born out of such a marriage do not address him as father but as brother even if they are his biological children. They have equal status to him. The aim of this marriage is to avoid children born out of wedlock (*dithaba* and *masenywa*). Many people are products of such a type of marriage, including the researcher's mother.

2.10 DIVORCE

Termination of marriage is not allowed in Northern Sotho communities. Traditionally, termination of marriage could be done by the man and not the woman. He could do this if his wife had behaved immorally or was a witch. But, in most cases, old men would not allow divorce, instead they might encourage the man to marry another wife and have two wives. They would say *ke letsogo la gago* (it is your hand). This means if the man divorces such a woman, there is a likelihood that he may marry a woman of the same type.

If a woman has immoral sex until she becomes pregnant, it is regarded as *o sentšwe* (she has been destructed) and a child born out of such an immoral act is called *tlhaba* (stab). This name is derived from the verb-stem *-hlaba* which means to stab. The following example is taken from Matsepe's *Lešitaphiri* (1989:39):

Pelo ya gagwe e a opa, gobane o amuša kgobogo, o amuša thubamotse yeo a sa tsebego gore e tlile go feletša kae.

(Her heart is painful, because she suckles defamation, she suckles the family destructor of whom she does not know its ending.)

The two words *kgobogo* (defamation) and *thubamotse* (family destructor) refer to *tlhaba* (stab). *Tlhaba* (stab) would refer to the pain that a man feels after he has been stabbed either by his wife with a knife or spear. The pain in this context refers to the pain that a man and all his family members will feel after his wife has been seduced. Because his wife has been seduced, his name has been defamed – hence *kgobogo* (defamation). The result of seduction is often divorce. That is why this type of a child is called *thubamotse* (family destructor).

2.11 CONCLUSION

Marriage is still one of the most respectable rituals found amongst the Northern Sotho speaking people. Unmarried people are still looked down upon by the communities. Because marriage is still important in these societies, it is imperative that speech rituals be analysed in order to facilitate communication amongst the people who live in these communities.

Marriage is a cultural phenomenon. This is one of the reasons why it is difficult to give one universally accepted definition of marriage.

In conclusion, it can be emphasized that this chapter has concentrated on terminology used in marriage such as *magadi* (dowry), *mmatswale* (mother-in-law), *letitla* (spinster), *kgope* (bachelor), and many more. The importance of this appropriate terminology is to enhance effective communication.

CHAPTER THREE

3. DEATH

The aim of this chapter is to explore speech rituals applicable to death situations among the Northern Sotho-speaking people.

3.1 DEFINITION OF DEATH AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

There are many ways of defining death. These definitions vary according to culture. Each culture has its own concept of death. Although there are several definitions of death, all cultures have one common denominator, namely, that death is a stage in life in which a person no longer participates physically but becomes a spiritual participant as an ancestor (Thorpe, 1991:113).

According to Hinduism, death is seen as a door to rebirth. When a grandparent dies, children can happily rationalize such a concept. The Jews believe that death is the end of the secular life but the beginning of the afterlife (Wells, 1988:86). Africans also believe in the hereafter. According to African belief, death is the marking of a physical separation of the individual from other human beings (Mbiti, 1991:119).

Africans also view death as the beginning of a permanent ontological departure of the individual from mankind to spirithood. This traditional African concept of death also views that nothing can reverse or halt the process of death and that death is the end of complete man (*op. cit.*, 1990:16).

Among Africans death brings grief and sorrow. This is the reason why in many cultures rituals are followed after the death of an individual. The rituals followed differ according to the status of the dead person in the community. Rituals that are

followed when the king is dead differ from those of a commoner and those of a man also differ from those of a woman while those of a dead woman also differ from when a younger person or a child has died. When an older member of a community dies, Africans believe that the deceased becomes an ancestor or spirit elder – the most senior member of the community who has become a spirit (Thorpe, 1991:63).

The Northern Sotho people, like most Africans, believe that all people should be enabled to live a normal life, that is, they should grow up, bear children and eventually depart this life for a spiritual realm, whence they will protect and direct their earthly relatives. In return, they must be remembered by those still living physically (*op. cit.*, 115). They believe in *Modimo* and *badimo* (God and the ancestors). In the past, they also believed in their chief or king as the mediator between them and their ancestors. In other words, the Northern Sotho Trinity comprised *kgoši* (king/chief), *badimo* (ancestors) and *Modimo* (God). Even amongst the present indigenous churches they believe in the leader, often a church bishop, angels and God. The bishop or the head of the church has replaced the king/chief, the angels (*mangeloi*) have replaced the ancestors while God (*Modimo*) still remains. The head of the church is able to communicate spiritually with the ancestors of a person, now called *mangeloi* (angels) and the ancestors will pass his/her requests to God.

Every culture has its own origin of death. There are several myths about the origin of death. According to Mbiti (1991:116), people try to visualize death in personal terms. Some people think of it as a monster, others as an animal, while many regard it as a kind of spirit. The Northern Sotho people believe that when a person dies, he/she has been taken away by a wolf. They then say *motho o tšerwe ke phiri* (a person has been carried away by a wolf). A wolf is associated with all forms of grief, magic and witchcraft. Death among the Northern Sotho people is never accepted even if the deceased was a hundred years old. They, therefore, involve a

wolf in all these unwanted acts. It is believed that even sorcerers and witches use wolves during the night as their means of transport. Its tail, when burnt near the doorsteps of a house, will make the people inside the house faint so that witches or even thieves can do what they want inside the house while the rest of the family members cannot hear them. Men who dig the grave where the deceased are to be buried are called *diphiri* (wolves).

In an African context, a person does not die naturally. The Northern Sotho people then say *letlalo la motho ga le bapolelwe fase* (the skin of a human-being is not crucified for fun). It is very rare that death may be caused by God calling old people to leave this life (Mbiti, 1991:118).

Amongst the Africans, the belief exists that death is caused by sorcery. People believe that sorcery, witchcraft and evil magic cause death. In the event of death, someone is often blamed for it and in some cases the suspect may be beaten to death, burnt or thrown out of the district. Relatives of the deceased may also take other types of revenge by the engagement of traditional healers or remedies of the indigenous churches. Some traditional healers even claim that they have powers to make the deceased live again. In Northern Sotho communities, this is called *tatamoloko* (family fetcher). When the deceased is buried the traditional healer performs certain rituals and these will bring magical death to all members of the person who caused his or her death. They will die one after another. This is why this ritual is called *tatamoloko* or *molokwanarite* (family members' fetcher or all family members' death).

Death can also be caused by spirits. According to Mbiti (1991:118), these spirits might be of people who have had a grudge against the person or whose bodies were not properly buried or who had been neglected by their relatives for some reason or another. The Northern Sotho people believe that even if the person was

properly buried, he/she may call his/her partner or his/her child to the place of the ancestors to live with him/her.

Death may also be caused by a curse. Curses, broken taboos or oaths are sometimes believed to cause deaths. Amongst the Northern Sotho people who live west of Polokwane, it is a taboo for the man to see the corpse of his mother-in-law. They often say *mokgonyana ga a boloke mmatswalage* (The son-in-law does not bury his mother-in-law). It is believed that should he be present at the funeral of his mother-in-law, he is going to become ill and ultimately die within a short space of time. If two or more men have children with one woman, these men should not bury each other because it is believed that should one of them die and the other one come to the funeral or even pass a few meters away from the corpse, such a man will die. This is called *maupye*. Even if such a man is not dead but seriously ill, the other man should not pass next to the ill man or even throw a stone to his yard. If he wants the ill man to die soon, he may pass there speaking aloud or throw a stone into the yard. That man will die. In some parts of the Province, this is also believed to occur even amongst women who share one husband.

Death can also be caused by an initiate who may abscond from the initiation school. Should such a person come back home because it is difficult to be at the school, such an initiate will die.

The ancestors may sometimes demand to be given an ox or any other thing. They come to a certain person and instruct him/her to carry out their instructions. If the instructed person refuses or is unable to carry out their instructions, they cause him/her to die.

A man should not have sex with a pregnant woman if the pregnancy was not caused by him. Should he have sex with such a woman, he will become ill and eventually die. The same taboo is applicable to a menstruating woman. If a woman is menstruating, she may not have sex with any man because the man will become ill and die. This is called *go khutlega*.

A widow may not also have sex with a man while she is mourning. The man who has sex with a widow will *gologa*. He will become ill and his testes will become very big until no pair of trousers will fit him.

If all these do not occur when a person dies, it is also believed that the person is poisoned. When a Lobedu queen died in 2005, her controversial common-law husband claimed that his wife had been poisoned or bewitched after she severed ties with some members of the royal family (*Sunday Times*, June 19, 2005).

To summarise the discussion of death amongst many nations dying is regarded as returning home, going away, answering the summons, saying 'yes' to death, disappearing, departing, ceasing to eat, ceasing to breathe, sinking, fighting a losing battle or refusing food. In the Northern Sotho speech community, it is said the person *o ithobaletše* (he/she has slept), *o ikhuditše* (he/she has rested), *o ile badimong* (he/she has joined the ancestors) or *o kgaogile* (he/she has stopped to breathe).

3.2 OMENS (*BOŠOLA*) AMONGST THE NORTHERN SOTHO PEOPLE AS SIGNALS OF DEATH

Signs of the possibility of the coming of the death of a human being are called *bošola* in Northern Sotho. In Northern Sotho culture, there are certain events which give rise to the emergence of death. When they happen it is said *di a hlola* (they cause death to happen). Other people will say *di a šola*. When they happen

to a particular person he/she will say *di a ntšholela* or *di a ntlholela*. In other words, those events, movements or appearances are the causes of death. People who cause death, that is, people who kill others, are called *mašole* (soldiers). In a Northern Sotho society, the soldiers were there to provide security. Any person who intervenes with this task was killed. The following are some of the omens found among the Northern Sotho people:

3.2.1 Special dreams (*go wela-wela*)

These are unwanted dreams. The dreamer often finds himself in trouble. When a person dreams he/she is crossing big rivers, finding himself/herself in large pools of water, then he/she knows that he/she is going to receive a report of a death case of a close relative. Another dream which is associated with death is seeing a large amount of meat. When a person, usually an elderly, dreams in this manner, it is said *o a wela-wela* (he/she falls into water). When greeted in the morning and asked how the morning is, he/she will say *ga se ka robala gabotse, ke letše ke wela-wela* (I did not sleep well, I was falling in water).

A young person does not dream in this way. If there will be death at his/her home, he/she will be ill-treated by peers and other people. It is said *batho ba a mo tšea-tšea* (people take-take him/her). This means people treat him/her badly. When people ill-treat him/her, he/she knows that there must be death at his/her home or in close relatives. This is the reason why if a person has passed away, it is the task of the family members to inform all children and adults of the death case. If they have not been informed, then people will *tšea-tšea* (take-take) them.

3.2.2 Special sound in the barking of dogs (*modi*)

Dogs sometimes change their normal sound when barking. It is said *dimpša di hlaba modi* (Dogs bark with a special sound). In practical terms, they bark in this

manner if they sense a dangerous animal such as carnivore. But, according to Northern Sotho culture, they predict death. If such a dog barks in the homestead, people must hit it with a stick to avoid the coming of death.

3.2.3 Geographical features in the case of the death of royalties or important people such as bishops of indigenous churches

In the event of the death of a king/chief/bishop, a star with a long tail followed by fire will be seen moving in the sky. The star is normally seen in the evening. It moves from east to west. The following excerpt is an example of such an omen:

Bjale mo nageng ye ya Bakwena ba Moletši e sa le go bonala naledi ya mosela wo motelele e thala kua godimo ya go sobela kua fasefase, monna wa kgoro a šikinya hlogo a re: “Bagešo, naledi ye ya motšhotšhonono, e a hlola. Sa yona ke go laetša ditaba tša mahloko a magolo. Wena o hlwaye tsebe o tla tla o ekwa sengwe beke ye e se e fele.”

Go se go ye kae ke ge semangmang a bega taba ya gore mabu a Bakwena ba Mmanose le Sechele, mo Moletši a utswitšwe. Rakgotso, wa mahlomašweu a napa a ithobalela. Setšhaba se llile kudu ka pelo tše bohloko, gobane kgoši ya pelo ye e tletšego lerato go batho ga e topiwe fase. (Senyatsi, 1995:47).

(Now in this land of Bakwena of Moletši, a star with a long tail was seen moving in the sky towards the west, one man shook his head and said: “My countrymen, this amazing star is reporting death. Its task is to inform us about grief. Please, pay attention, you will hear something bad before the end of the week.”

Within a short time somebody reported the bad news that the king of Bakwena of Mmanose and Sechele, had passed away. Make-peace of white eyes then slept. The whole tribe lamented with sorrow, because this type of a king who loves his subjects cannot be found easily).

From this excerpt, one can detect that the star with a long tail is believed to report the death of a king. This star moves from the east to the west. It should be remembered that when the Northern Sotho people bury their deceased, their heads face the west. This is the reason why even beds in the bedroom should not face the west. If a person faces westwards when sleeping, it is said *o a hlola* (he/she invites death).

The speaker says *naledi ya motšhotšhonono e a hlola* (the star reports of the death case). He continues *sa yona ke go laetša ditaba tša mahloko a magolo*. By saying *mahloko a magolo*, he actually refers to the death of a king. When a king has passed away, it is said '*Mabu a utswitšwe*' ('the land has been stolen'). As stated earlier on, when a person dies, it is said he/she has slept. The speaker evidences this by saying *Rakgotso wa mahlomašweu a napa a ithobaletše* (*Rakgotso* – (somebody who loves peace, of peaceful eyes then slept). This clearly shows the tenor, the manner and the mode of discourse analysis.

Another geographical sign of the death of an important individual is the falling of rocks on the mountain. Eclipses of the moon and the sun are also signs of the death of such a person. It is said *letšatši le rapile pitso* or *ngwedi o rapile pitso* (the sun has convened a meeting or the moon has convened a meeting). It is believed that it is God who have called the angels (ancestors) to welcome the deceased.

3.2.4 Seeing certain animals and birds

There are certain animals, birds and reptiles which are meant to bring about death. They are called *diphoofolo tša go šola* (animals with bad omens).

(i) *Katse ye ntsho* (a black cat)

According to the Northern Sotho culture, if a black cat crosses the road while one is passing by, one is going to receive bad news about death. It is said *ke senyama sa katse ye ntsho* (bad luck brought by a black cat). To avoid such bad news one must strive by all means to kill the black cat and burn it.

(ii) *Noga goba mohlala wa yona* (a snake or its spoor)

If a snake passes in front of a person, he/she must kill that snake otherwise it is going to cause death in the family. If a snake could not be killed because it was not seen or it was too swift to be killed, then something must be done with its spoor. One should spit on it or pass water on it and then take the wet soil and smear it on his navel and the remaining urine should be drunk. This is called *go iloša* (to remove bad luck). It is then said *moroto ke moilošo* (urine removes bad luck).

(iii) *Leobu* (a chameleon)

A chameleon should also not be allowed to cross in front of a person. It must be killed because if left, death will come.

(iv) *Leribiši* (an owl)

The owl is also one of the unwanted birds. If it hoots on the house or in a tree within the homestead, certain medicines should be used to avoid the bad news brought by it. In the Independent Churches, sanctified water will be sprinkled all over the yard. This ritual is called *go phoka* (to sprinkle) with water or medicines in order to avoid back luck.

3.3 BURIAL SPEECH AS A FORM OF SPEECH RITUAL

3.3.1 Burial speech after death has been announced

Currently, the public announcement is done by the ringing of the bell either at the churchyard or at the *mošate* (chief's kraal). The bell is ringing very slowly with long strings. People will be able to differentiate between an ordinary church bell or an ordinary *mošate* (chief's kraal) bell and the one that reports a death case.

After the bell has been heard by members of the community, they will find out which family has had bad news. They will visit the family and say *re sa ya go ba ema mahlong* (literally: we are going to stand in front of their eyes). This means that these people will be coming to the bereaved family to console them in the time of sorrow.

When people arrive in the home, they do not start by greeting the family members as if nothing has happened. One enters the homestead and sits down with the bereaved members for about ten to fifteen seconds without saying anything. After those seconds he/she may start by saying *le dira bjang bakgekolo/bakgalabje?* (How are you doing it old women/old men?) The people found there are addressed as *bakgekolo* (old women) or *bakgalabje* (old men) even if they are still young. This is honorific usage of language. The question asked means what has happened or what has caused the death. When replying they will say: *O ka be o re bona motho wa Modimo* (As you see us the person of God).

The following are a few of the speech rituals which will be found amongst the speakers:

Re apeile ka pitša ye kgolo.

(We have used the big pot to cook.)

This means the family is in trouble.

Re tlaletšwe ke meetse/Re tsenetšwe ke meetse a go fiša ka ntlong.

(We have a flood of hot water in the house.)

This means the members are not happy as they are to encounter problems, especially if the breadwinner has passed away.

Lehu ga le ake/ke nnete mmutla ga o ake

(Rumour about death is always true/the hare does not tell lies.)

The speech ritual is derived from the folktale about the hare and other animals.

In a traditional Northern Sotho community, children are not allowed to observe death. Therefore, all children are removed from the homestead to a distant homestead. If they ask what was happening, they will be told that so and so has been taken away by the wolf as has been evidenced by Makwala (1995:87) when stating:

Ka seswana ge motho a hlokofetše go thwe o tšerwe ke phiri bošego.

(In an African culture if a person has passed away, it is said he/she has been taken away by a wolf.)

He will continue by remarking: *Ke ka tsela yeo a bego a ntšhwa ntlong ka sefero sa ka morago legoreng go bontšha fao e tsenego le go tšwa ka mohu (op. cit.)* (That is the reason why he/she was taken out of the house through the hole made at the back of the hut or the fence to evidence the place where the wolf entered and left with a corpse). This is just to cheat the children because the adults know that it is a real death caused by factors mentioned earlier on.

According to Krige (1985:162), the hole at the back was meant that the footprints both in entering and in going out will face outwards. According to this tradition, this forces all the evil spirits that caused the death to go out and never to return.

When making any formal address in the family such as during the first programme during burial, which is normally held at home, speakers always make an introduction such as:

“Mahloko ba ga semangmang”.

(“Grief to you the so and so family”).

It is not acceptable to say *ke a le dumediša* (I greet you or good morning).

Go pantiša (to put a bandage on) is another ritual speech used especially during the night virgil. It is common that a night virgil is held during the night prior to the funeral day. *Go pantiša* means to console the bereaved family. In this context, death is regarded as a wound, and to console the family is associated with putting a bandage on an open wound. Normally, the deceased is praised even if he/she was not good. It is not customary to point out the weaknesses of the deceased at this juncture.

As indicated earlier on, a beast that is slaughtered for the funeral is called *tlhoboša*. In the olden days the deceased was wrapped in the hide of such a beast because there were no coffins. In this regard, Makwala states: “*Mohu o be a phuthwa ka letlalo la kgomo ya tlhoboša goba mapai*” (The deceased was wrapped in the hide of the beast called *tlhoboša* to make blanket) (Makwala, 1995:87). Today the blanket is only put on the coffin.

Men who skin this beast are called *diphiri* (wolves). After skinning they cut off certain types of meat known as *maopelo*. This is also called *mosoba* in the Moletji area. This type of meat is also cut during wedding feasts. The *maopelo* of wedding feasts and those of the funeral differ only in that those of wedding feasts are taken home by the men whereas those of the funeral are eaten at the bereaved family's place. They should not be taken home and it is said *Maopelo ga a tšwe* (Maopelo are not taken home). It is a tradition that the man who is going to chop the bones of *maopelo* should point at Moletji if he is at gaMatlala. This follows an old story of invasions which concluded that *Phukubje ya lla Moletji la ga Matlala la falala*. (When the jackal junks at Moletji, sheep at gaMatlala disperse). Before the man chops the meat with an axe, he will always be reminded by elderly people by saying: *šupa Moletji* (point at Moletji). Before these men called *diphiri* could start skinning the beast, they must first swallow crystals of salt. This action is called *go phura letswai* (to swallow salt). If the deceased is an old man, a bull is slaughtered and if she is an old woman it is a cow.

When the coffin arrives at the homestead, all people present stand up and in modern times a hymn will be sung. Because the Northern Sotho people believe that the deceased person is still around, one woman will recite a traditional poem of the deceased and says to him/her: "*Tsena ke gona ka ga gago/ga geno – O se fšege selo, o fihlile*" (Come in, it is your home/house. Relax, you have arrived).

After the arrival, a family representative will announce that *ngwana wa lena/mmago rena/tatago rena o fihlile* (Your child/our mother/our father has arrived.)

There is a ritual called *go hloboga* (to pay the last respect). Members of the family will look at the face of the deceased and some of them utter certain sentences because they believe he/she is hearing them.

3.3.2 Burial speech at the graveyard

After the procession has reached the gate of the cemetery, it will have to wait for certain speech rituals by the *diphiri*. In some areas, especially around Senwabarwana, it is said that the deceased rests, that is *mohu o a khutša*. All people will be requested to sit down. A representative of the *diphiri* (men) will address the procession. In the rural areas, he will inform the participants about the mode of dress for women and men accepted in the graveyard. The women will be expected to put on hats, jerseys, long skirts and avoid things such as umbrellas. The men will be required to put on jackets and take off their hats. No one will be allowed to speak in the graveyard except the priest and the programme director. No noise is expected because it will be an indication of a lack of respect for the deceased.

In the graveyard, an open grave will be found. The grave may be rectangular, oval, cave-like, and even a big pot made for that purpose (Mbiti, 1991:119). Currently, graves are rectangular. In the past they were oval where the deceased was put in an embryo style. His/her knees were cut a bit so that the deceased would be able to sit like an embryo in its mother's womb. This is the reason why the graveyard is also called *bohunamatolo* (a place where we are unstretched). Africans, like Christians believe in resurrection. This embryonic style was made so that the deceased will be able to stand up easily during the resurrection (Makwala, 1995:87).

In the graveyard, messages on the wreaths will be read. The speech rituals found on the wreaths carry amongst others, the following messages:

“Re tla go gopola ge le hlaba le ge le dikela”.

(“We shall remember you day and night”.)

“*O re romele dipula tša medupi.*”

(“Send us good rains”.)

“*Tate, o re šiile re sa nagana.*”

(“Father, you left us surprisingly”.)

These closing rituals at burial ceremonies clearly reflect the belief in life and afterdeath (Van Deventer, 1989:90). Not only are these speeches uttered in a written form, but verbally by the mourners when throwing soil or flowers into the grave.

Before the final throwing of the soil in the grave by the mourners, one old lady would throw mealies or any form of popular seeds on the grave and sprinkle water on it and say: “*Peu šeuwe o tla bjala ge o fihla badimong*” (“Here is the seed, you will plough it when you arrive at the ancestors’ place”.) Africans believe that the deceased is going to undertake a journey. This is evidenced by speeches such as *o sepele gabotse* (go well). These speeches indicate that life in terms of all its relatives and relationships is thus carried forth in a very real sense in, through and after death (Van Deventer, 1998:71).

In the graveyard, besides the priest, there are three people who may speak. Others should keep absolutely quite. The first will be the representative of the *diphiri* (the men who dug the grave). When the *diphiri* are in the graveyard, they are addressed as *baagi ba ntlo* (builders of the house). The grave is now called *ntlo* (house). Africans live a communal life. One exists because of others, hence they say *motho ke motho ka batho* (a person is a person because of others). After all these speakers have spoken, they conclude with the sentence *ba ga semangmang ba re e se ka be ka mo fela, le ba bangwe le ba boloke ka ona mokgwa wo* (let it not be at this family alone, but do the same with others). These will be the words of the representative of both the *diphiri* and *mošate* (chief’s kraal). The last

speaker of the day will be the family representative. He/she may pass the vote of thanks as he/she wishes but his/her concluding words should always be *ge le tloga fa le fete ka gae le fete le hlapa diatla le be le hwetše meratha* (when you leave here, please go to the bereaved family and wash your hands and you will also be provided with food). If he/she does not want to say it as above, he/she may say *le fete ka gae le fete le enwa meetse* (go to the family and drink some water). This does not mean that the procession must go and drink water literally but must get food.

3.3.3 Burial speech from the graveyard back in the family homestead

It is customary that when the procession arrives from the graveyard they must wash their hands. They usually pour salt in this water. If it is an Independent Church funeral, they pour sanctified water or *segwašo* (a certain type of ash) in the case of the Apostolic churches. The washing of hands means that the ‘deceased was not killed by me’! To the members of the indigenous churches, the sprinkling of water on their faces and back means making them clean again because by attending a burial ceremony they have become unclean. They say *re šilafetše* (we are unclean).

After eating, the two families sit in two groups. These groups are the family members of the wife and those of the husband. If it is the wife who passed away, her family members then say “*lena ba ga semangmang le be le swere maoto, hlogo ke ya rena*” (“You the so and so family, you were having the legs and the head belonged to us”.) This means that even if you married our daughter, we remain the sole owners of the deceased.

The family of the husband will sit down and send an intermediary to the wife’s family to say “*ba ga semangmang ba re re paletšwe ke go diša*” (“We, the so-and-so-family say we were unable to take care of the animal sheep, goat or cattle. This speech ritual means that the family was unable to let the deceased live longer.

As a custom, they will then say *le kgopelwa go kgopa ntlo ya ngwana wa lena e be le hlatswe le diaparo tša gagwe* (You are asked to clean up the house of your daughter and also wash her clothes). Literally, the statement means you must smear cattle dung on the floor of such a house, but communicatively, it means to clean the house. If it is the husband who has passed away, his wife's family members will refuse to clean up the house because *Mmatswale ga a tsene ka ntlong ya mokgonyana* (Mother-in-law does not enter the house of her son-in-law).

3.4 CLEANSING OF THE BEREAVED FAMILY MEMBERS

3.4.1 Cleansing of the widow and widower

According to Krige (1985:163), death defiles the whole kraal; everybody is believed to be weak and to stand in some danger of being drawn after the deceased. This is the reason why strengthening medicines must be taken in various ways after the burial. According to the *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* (1949:173), the relatives of the deceased man were sometimes considered unclean. This belief is still applicable amongst the Northern Sotho people. The widow is expected to come to the centre of the *lapa* (court yard) for cleansing. It is expected that because she is not clean, she will contaminate people and animals with a disease known as *makgoma*. To avoid *makgoma*, she has to kneel down together with her last born child. A fire will be made where she will cook porridge mixed with certain medicines. She will cook this porridge using only the left hand. This is because she has lost her husband who is represented by the right hand. After cooking this so-called porridge, she will eat it together with the last born child. At the moment this child is called *tšhiwana* (an orphan). A goat will be slaughtered and its hide will be put on the shoulders of the widow. By this time, the widow will already have worn black clothes with a black hat known as *sekopodi*. A certain threat-like material will be made and put around her neck. This process is known as *go huna lodi*.

The dialogue between characters in *Tšhukudu* (Matlala, 1980:171) indicates the use of the pot in cooking porridge and also how death is bad. Matome states these words when divinating: “*Le ka tlhlalala o tladie ya mmadisepe, kgobadi yago pitšeng e tla tsena e inolelwe moretšheng, gotlhe gago ka lethabo ga go lalwe!*” (“Death be happy and pour water in a big pot, your grief will be immersed at the sekelbos tree, everywhere there is no happiness, there is no peace”.) This extract indicates that in case of the death of a man, the widow will use a pot to cook such ritual porridge. *Ya mmadisepe* means a big pot. Because the person who passed away was a breadwinner, death brings grief (*kgobadi*). The speaker expresses the idea that the grief that death brings at home will be destroyed by emerging it in the ritual porridge. A sekelbos tree is known for its dangerous thorns. This is the reason why the grief that is brought by death is immersed at this type of tree. He mentions that because of death, there is no happiness and people suffer from insomnia. This means that after this ritual, the grief brought by death will be destroyed. This is probably because in Northern Sotho culture, the younger brother to the husband of the widow and the widow will *tsenela* (bear children on behalf of) his brother and the widow will continue to enjoy sex and bear more children. This ritual is known as *go hlaba tlhako* (to stab the hoof).

In the case of a widower, cleansing will be done by the family doctor alone. He will not cook any porridge or even put on black clothes. A small black material will be sewn and he will put it around his left arm. In the Northern Sotho community, when a man has passed away, the words *go diregile mohlolo* (a miracle has happened) are used. This is the reason why a widower in Northern Sotho is termed *mohlolo*. If it was a woman the words *go diregile mohlologadi* (a miracle by a woman has happened) are stated. The word is *Mohlologadi*. The suffixal morpheme *-gadi* in Northern Sotho refers to femininity.

3.4.2 Cleansing of other members of the family

Even if the last born child is grown-up, has to be cleansed. The family doctor will use his/her medicines to strengthen him/her. After he/she has strengthened him/her, he/she will put a brown and white necklace around the orphan's neck. This necklace is called *pheta ya bolokwane* and this ritual is called *go apeša bolokwane*. It is believed that if the *bolokwane* ritual has not been done on the last born child of the deceased, he/she will always slumber.

Other members of the family will just be strengthened with medicines. After drinking the medicines, members will shave their hair with razor blades. A black cloth will be brought and each member will get a small piece and put it on his/her left arm. This is called *go roula* (to mourn). Women may even put on black materials on their heads. The black clothes have several meanings. The *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* (1949:428) remarks in this regard:

The black is not grief for the dead but the protection of all living from contiguous of death.

After the burial, it is believed that the ghost and spirits of the deceased will come to the homestead. In Northern Sotho culture this is called *moritimosegare* (shadow of the day). The wearing of black by the mourners, the pall-bearers and the undertaker and his assistants was originally intended to make those nearest the corpse inconspicuous and thereby protect them from the ghost and any other spirits hovering near on this occasion so dangerous to the living (The *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, 1949:427).

3.5 THE MOURNING PERIOD

The mourning period begins at death and it is the strictest until burial when nothing at all may be done in the kraal, but relaxes slightly after this until about a month after the death, which lifts all the taboos on all the inmates in the family, except for the close relatives of the deceased (Krige, 1985:166). According to the Northern Sotho people, this period has steps, namely, the period of *setšhila* (uncleanness), *go roula* (to mourn) and *matshediso* (commemoration).

Setšhila (uncleanness)

The mourning period takes about three months and it starts immediately after the burial. Members of the bereaved family and other relatives will shave their hair. According to Mönning (1983:141), men and boys shave their hair off completely, but women and girls shave only the top of their heads, the size of the shaved portion depending on the closeness of relationship. It is during this period that members of the family put a small band of black material around their left arms. The widow as explained earlier, will wear black clothes, black shoes, a black hat and everything on her should be black while the widower will put a black band around his arm. In fact, the custom of wearing distinctive mourning garb probably originated as a warning against contamination by contact with those relatives of the newly deceased (*The Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, 1949:173). In Northern Sotho communities, this contamination is called *makgoma*.

3.5.1 Taboos during the mourning period

During the mourning period all unnecessary occupations cease. There is no singing and no rejoicing and marriages are postponed. In Northern Sotho custom, this is called *go ilela* (period of refrains). In some areas of the Limpopo Province,

namely, gaMatlala and Moletji, widows are not allowed to get into the mealiefields. During the period such a widow is called *mohwana*. During the first rains of the year, all widows who are still wearing black garments are instructed by the chief/Induna to dress off. Then, there is a saying of *digole iphutheng* (cripples take care of yourselves).

3.5.1.1 Special taboos for *mohwana*

When she ploughs her mealiefield, she must leave a certain portion of it unploughed. This is called *go kgetlola tšhemo*. When people pass next to it they will realise that the owner of the field has passed away.

The widow must not attend funerals whilst in black garments. She must not walk during the night or immediately after sunset. There are certain onion-like leaves that she must throw at the gates and cross-roads so that when people and animals pass by they should not contract *makgoma*. This ritual is called *go lahla sebabi* (to throw onion-like leaves). If she happens to visit a close relative under pressure, she has to stand at the gate and a child will give her cattle dung to smear on her hands before she enters.

The widow is not allowed to have sexual relations until a certain ritual is held after a period of one year. To emphasise this taboo, Mönnig (1983:142) states: "Widows must abstain from all sexual intercourse lest men contract *makgoma*." When a man contracts this disease, he will develop a protruding stomach and his testes will enlarge and if not well treated by a traditional urologist, he will ultimately die. The widow may have sexual intercourse after a year when the *hlobola* (undress) ritual have been held. But, before she and her supposed levirate husband can have sex, they must first be treated by a traditional doctor together. This is called *go kopantšhwa* (to make them meet each other).

During the mourning period, the widow may not enter into the cattle kraal. She will make cows not to give birth to calves. It is said *o tla di tsenela* (she will make them ill).

3.5.2 Ritual held after three months

It has already been mentioned that all hair is shaved after the burial. From that time the hair is allowed to grow. This hair and small black materials (*mašelana a maso*) are called *setšhila* (dirt). After a period of three months, the members of the family hold a ritual where they shave and remove the black materials from their arms. This ritual is called *go tloša setšhila* (to remove dirt). An animal such as a goat or sheep may be slaughtered and beer will be drunk. If it was the death of a husband, the widow may also take off the *sekopodi* (black hat) but retain another black one which does not hide the eyes. If the deceased had more than one wife, it is only the chief wife who puts on black garments. The other wives do not put on black garments but are treated by the same doctor who specializes in *makgoma*. According to Elliot Matloa, who was interviewed in the Matlala area, the specialist is always a woman doctor. According to him, men doctors are not appointed by the ancestors to cure this disease.

3.5.3 Rituals held after a year (*go tšola*)

This is the period when a widow or even the widower can be released from the mourning period and start to lead a normal life. The family will sit down and agree on the date for this ritual. They will then choose a mediator to be sent to the in-laws about the date. Although everything is arranged by her husband's family the act of performing this ritual rests with her parents. In other words, it is the task of her husband's family (*ba bogadi*) to buy her black garments and find a doctor to perform the ritual of *go alafa bohwana* but when it comes to the *tšola/ hlobola* (undress) ritual it is the task of her parents. This follows the expression that *rena*

re swere maoto, hlogo e na le beng (we have the legs, the head has its real owners).

The ritual of *go hlobola* (undress) is done early in the morning. The host family takes out all the clothes, which belonged to the deceased and put them at the centre of the *lapa* (court yard). The family doctor sprinkles them with medicines to avoid witchcraft. The family members will divide these clothes amongst themselves. This ritual is called *go phatlalatša dikobo* (to divide clothes among themselves). They will then bring new dresses and shoes and also a special blanket called *tšajana*. The widow will then go into the house and take off the black clothes and put on new clothes. She will then come out to sit at the centre of the *lapa* (court yard). Her sons-in-law will be called to sit next to her. A pot full of African beer will be brought to her. With her left hand, she will give her sons-in-law beer to drink. After this beer drinking by her sons-in-law, other members can bring gifts, usually in the form of clothes for her. The black garments which she wore for a period of a year will be privately burnt by the family doctor.

The last step will be the ritual called *matshedišo* (commemoration). Some families may prefer to hold this ritual a year or two after the *go hlobola* (undress) ritual. The bones of the beast slaughtered for this day must not be crushed. When eating the meat from these bones, the eaters should not crush the bones. Dogs may not be allowed to eat these bones. A family representative would be delegated to collect all the bones. On the following morning, the bones will be presented to the deceased's grave. They will be put together with the hide of that beast, normally an ox. The hide will be used by the deceased to use as a blanket during the night and the bones will be used as food.

3.6 UNVEILING OF TOMBSTONES

Tombstones are foreign in traditional African community. To the Europeans and other people of non-African origin, they may be a mere remembrance of the dead but in an African context, they are not. In Northern Sotho culture it was possible that a person may have problems and when he/she goes to the traditional doctors for divination, it may be revealed that the problem may be caused by one ancestor who complains of cold. It might be said that somebody's ancestor says: "*Ke bolawa ke phefo*" ("I feel very cold".) If it was the case, they would slaughter an ox and take its hide and put it on the grave of the complaining ancestor. The hide would be regarded as a blanket. Currently, if an ancestor complains like this, a tombstone is usually erected. This tombstone has taken the place of the hide. The tombstone ritual is then called *go apeša balala kobo* (to put a blanket on the ancestor). After the unveiling of the tombstone, the person who was complaining of problems will start to experience peace and harmony. It is now said *O laditše medimo* (He/she has fulfilled what the ancestors want.) Literally, it means to make the ancestors sleep.

3.7 CONCLUSION

Death comes at any time. It is therefore said *lehu ke ngwetši ya malapa* (death, is the bride of all families.) Because Africans live a communal life, it is important to understand the speech register pertaining to death. All rituals pertaining to death become more practical and Africans today practice these rituals in public. Even people of a high status such as the State President practises it in public. Therefore, the speech rituals pertaining to death will be of the utmost importance for participants to communicate effectively in such public gatherings.

This chapter has paid special attention to speech rituals involved in death activities, namely, the omens as signals of death such as special dreams to predict death, actions by certain animals, the actions by certain geographical features such as stars, and the appearance of certain animals and birds. The chapter has looked at speech rituals involved in burial speech as from the announcement of the death in the Northern Sotho community to the period of a year after the burial. The chapter has finally examined the speech rituals involved during the commemoration of the deceased.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. RELIGION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on language used in religion as practised by the Northern Sotho speaking people. Because religion is a wide concept, the chapter will focus on religion as practised in the Zion Christian Church. This church was selected because Northern Sotho is its official language. The second reason is that this church is the biggest independent church in Southern Africa. Most Northern Sotho speakers belong to this church. The language used in this church should thus be analysed so that it is understood by everybody in order to bring about effective communication. During the three gatherings held by this church, many people who are non-members flock to its headquarters either as important guests, journalists or ordinary visitors. Because of a lack of knowledge of the language used in the church, inaccurate reporting in the newspapers and periodicals often occur. This chapter will explain the terminology used in the church and the impact that it has on communication in the Northern Sotho speaking community.

4.1.1 Definition of religion

There is no single universal definition of religion. Each study will define religion according to the perspective held by the researcher's school of thought. Although there is no single definition of religion, the common denomination of all definitions is that it is thought to be beliefs and practices associated with the supernatural. The definition accepted by this study will limit it to certain kinds of human beliefs and behaviours. According to Nida (1991:23), religion constitutes a componential feature of all the basic motivations, thus providing meaning with supernatural sanctions. Religion is that which is of ultimate or supreme concern

to individuals or groups. There are individuals or groups who believe that there is no God. According to Lewis and Trevis (1991:24), these people are not included in the definition of religion as they state that any definition of religion which makes belief in a good criterion of religion automatically excludes atheists and dialectical materials. Religion has a particular meaning to people. Some difficult questions are answered by religion. As part of a cultural system, religious beliefs give meaning to life; they answer 'man's questions about himself and the world he lives in (Haralambos and Holborn, 1995:449).

Religion can be seen as a direct threat to social order. Through religion there can be hostility between different religious groups within the same society, such as the Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland or the Hindus and Muslims in India (Haralambos and Holborn, 1995:450). In South Africa, an example can be the hostility between the followers of the Mainline Churches and the Indigenous Churches. The members of the Mainline Churches often accuse members of the Indigenous Churches of wrong beliefs and practices. They sometimes even do not recognize them as churches but as mere pagan gatherings because their practices are based on cultural beliefs and practices. To the Marxists and Leninists, religion is an illusion which causes the pain produced by exploitation and oppression. They regard it as a series of myths that justify and legitimate the subordination of the subject class and the domination and privilege of the ruling class (Haralambos and Holborn, 1995:450). According to the Marxist perspective, most religious movements originate in oppressed classes. Their abject social condition provides the most fertile ground for the growth of new religions (Haralambos and Holborn, 1995:450). In South Africa the emergence of most of the indigenous churches was the result of oppression by white colonial missionaries. These churches include the Zion Christian Church as is evidenced by the messages found in the songs of this church.

According to Ndhambi (1990:52), religion is the pattern of belief and practice through which human beings communicate with or hope to gain experience of that which lies behind the world of their ordinary experience. Religion (*op. cit.*) is a belief system that includes myths that explain the social and religious order and rituals through which members of the religious community carry out their beliefs by acting them out in some way. Religion has several possible functions, namely, that it provides a feeling of security: “God is my Protector, Saviour and Father”; it offers certainties in the place of mysteries: “Faith will be rewarded”: it provides solace, especially in relation to death, and finally, it gives believers a sense of power (Ndhambi, 1990:55).

To summarise, it can be said that although there is no universally accepted definition of religion, most observers agree that religion involves a focus on the supernatural. All agree that religion always involves faith, a belief that is not or cannot be supported or disproved, by scientific proof or evidence (Popenoe, Boulton and Cunningham, 1998:321). It is also important to observe that language plays a pivotal role in religion. This chapter will thus examine the role that language plays in one of the most important churches in South Africa, namely, the Zion Christian Church.

4.2 SPEECH RITUALS IN BOTH THE ZION CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND THE ST ENGENAS ZION CHRISTIAN CHURCH

These two churches are the varieties of one church, namely, the Zion Christian Church of Engenas Lekganyane. Engenas was the founder of the Zion Christian Church in 1910 and formalised it as a sect in 1924. According to Lukhaimane (1980:93), Lekganyane did not appoint his successor amongst his sons and this led to the split of the church after his death in 1948. His second son, Edward Lekganyane, claimed to succeed his elder brother, Barnabas, who died shortly after their father. He based his claim on the law of succession of African

Chieftaincy. Joseph, the fifth child of Engenas, claimed that he was appointed by his father to the throne even if there were two elder sons between himself and Edward. Joseph was supported by their uncle Paulos, but many church elders sided with Edward. The church then split into two opposing groups. The Edwardians are known for wearing a silver star on their badges while the Josephians have the usage of a dove on theirs. Joseph proclaimed his group to be St. Engenas Zion Christian Church in 1966 (Lukhaimane, 1980:163). Although these churches are varieties of the same church, they are similar in regulations, policies and liturgy. Their differences are minor and will be exposed hereunder. For the purpose of this work, both two groups will be addressed as the Zion Christian Church.

4.2.1 Language used by the prophets

The prophets in the Zion Christian Church are known as *mabone* (lights). The term is derived from the verb stem *-bona* (to see). Prophecy has something to do with the future. Through the powers of God, they can foretell what is going to happen in an individual's future. Because of the language they speak, which differs from ordinary language, they are nicknamed *boMmaetha*. Because in their language they often say *Maetha rolia*. This refers to God. Other terms they use to refer to God are *Tsholova Mission*, *Tiki-Tiki ya Legodimo*, *Spitha fly*, *Biovathaka*, and *Mong wa mabaka/Matšatši*. This language is sometimes not understandable because it is believed that it is a divine language.

Prescriptions (*Ditaelo*)

The prophets give the members *ditaelo* (divine prescriptions). *Ditaelo* can be classified into two types, namely, those that give prescriptions and concern the health of a member and those that are instructions.

Divine prescriptions

This is the type of *ditaelo* where the prophet will prescribe either the type of water to be used by the member or the type of tea or coffee to be drunk. According to the church, they have healing powers.

Divine instructions

In this type of *ditaelo* (divine instructions), the prophets often use the expression *Papa o re ke go botše o boele morago* (My father says I should tell you to go back). *Go boela morago* (to backslide) can either mean to leave the church, that is not to be a member again or as used by the prophets in the church, it means to repent. When the prophet gives such an instruction it would mean that the addressee is doing things that are against the church regulations such as lying, bullying, smoking or even drinking. The following extract from a church member addressing the congregation illustrates this expression.

“Go swana le go nna le wena motswalle; ge moprofeta a ka re boelang morago, theetša mosione o mobotse wa go ratega, o fetola ka gore kereke ye e na le melawanalawana e mentši” (Like you and me, my fellow church members, if the prophet might say go back, listen dear sionist, do not say this church is full of laws and regulations) (*The Messenger*, 1999:18).

The expression ‘*boelang morago*’ (go back/backslide) as does not mean to leave the church but to repent from a sinful life.

Greeting terms

When members of the church greet one another they say *kgotsong* (at the peace). The suffixal morpheme *-ng* is used to greet senior people or to show respect.

Without this morpheme, the addressor indicates a lack of respect or he/she is greeting a junior person. The response of the addressee is *ga e ateng* (let it multiply). The same suffixal morpheme is used to show respect. *Ga e ate* is used to respond to the greetings of a junior person. This is rarely used in the church. The prophet may also start greeting the addressee and the helper in this manner as an introduction. The prophet always addresses the addressee in the second person. He/she may say: ‘*Ba ga Lekganyane ba re ke go botše o boele morago*’ (‘The Lekganyane ancestors say I should tell you to go back’). He/she may say ‘*Kgotsong! Modimo o re ...!*’ (Greetings! God says) or *Engenas o re ke go botše* (Engenas says I should tell you). The reason behind this is that he/she is not the person who instructs but God or Engenas. When the prophet ends up his/her prophecy, he/she concludes by saying ‘*ditaba tša gago ba re re se di oketše ebile re se di fokotše, Amen*’ (I have been requested not to add or subtract your news’). Note that the prophet uses honorific language by saying ‘*ba re re se di oketše ebile re se di fokotše*’. It may not be palatable if he/she does not use honorific language. This is probably because the language of the church should be honorific as it is the means of communication between man and God. The language used in the Zion Christian Church also forms the basis of the belief of the members as it is evidenced by Ferguson when he assumes that all religious belief systems include some beliefs about language (Spolsky, 2004:49).

In a traditional society, the traditional healer (*ngaka*) was a mediator between the ancestors and the people. In the Zion Christian Church (Z.C.C.), the traditional healer has been replaced by the prophet. There is a type of a traditional healer known as *lelopo (sangoma)*. In most cases, if a person has signs to become *lelopo (sangoma)* and he/she does not want to be one, he/she dodges from the traditional world and becomes baptized in the indigenous church such as the Z.C.C. Immediately after his/her baptism, such a person becomes a prophet. He/she is still a mediator between a person’s ancestor and a person. Now, the terminology changes. The ancestors are no more called ancestors but *mangeloi* (angels).

Though some prophets still address ancestors as *badimo* it is more acceptable to address them as *mangeloi* (angels) in the church and, therefore, prophets prefer to address them as *mangeloi* and not as *badimo*/ancestors. The following excerpt from the Z.C.C. member evidences this: ‘*A re kgopeleng maatla go Jehova re tle re kgone go kgahliša mangeloi a gabo rena*’ (Let us ask powers from Jehova so that we may make our angels happy) (*The Messenger*, 2002:23).

In the Zion Christian Church, God is addressed as *Modimo wa Engenas, Edward le Ramarumo/Barnabas Lekganyane* (God of Engenas, Edward and Ramarumo/Barnabas Lekganyane). This is because Engenas was the founder of the church and in this split of the church, he was succeeded by his son, Edward. Ramarumo/Barnabas is the son of Edward and the current head of this split. On the side of St. Engenas Z.C.C., God is addressed only as *Modimo wa Engenas* (God of Engenas). Although this split of the church was led by Joseph, also the son of Engenas, his name is not mentioned. The current head of this split is Engenas. Although this type of addressing God as stated above is used by prophets, ordinary members of the church can also use it as an introduction to any speech. When addressing members in *The Messenger*, a member may use this as his introduction: ‘*Ke rata go leboga Modimo wa Engenas, Edward le Ramarumo Lekganyane yo a ntšhireleditšego ge e sale ke tseba gore ke Yena mathomo le mafelelo*’ (I would like to thank God of Engenas, Edward and Ramarumo Lekganyane who protected me since I started to know that He is the Alpha and Omega). (*The Messenger*, 2002:24).

4.2.2 The Zion Christian Church prayers

There are several forms of prayers found in the Z.C.C. An analysis of these prayers will be done separately.

4.2.2.1 Mass prayer in the church

This is the type of prayer which is pronounced in the church services. Like in many African initiated churches, this prayer is said by all, loudly and together (Meiring, 1996:23). In the church services on Sunday, the prayer is divided into two, namely, the opening prayer (*thapelo ya go bula mošomo*) and the closing prayer (*thapelo ya go tswalela mošomo*). Although prayer is said by all present, it is led by the priest. When leading a prayer, the priest has to follow certain steps. The following is an example of these steps:

Step One

'A re ipengeng pele ga Modimo' ('Let us pray for ourselves in front of God').
Every step is repeated three times.

Step Two

'A re begeng masea le baimana' ('Let us pray for the infants and pregnant women').

Step Three

'A re begeng ba ba lego dipetleleng le ditoronkong' ('Let us pray for patients in hospitals and prisoners in jail').

Step Four

'A re begeng dikhutlo tše nne tša lefase' ('Let us pray for the four points of the earth'). This actually means let us pray for everybody in the world.

Step Five

'A re begeng baruti le baprofeta' ('Let us pray for the priests and prophets'). As the church service cannot proceed without the aid of priests and prophets, it is imperative for every prayer to include these people.

Step Six

In this step, the leading priest would state *'A re begeng Mokgethwa wa Kereke/Mohlanka wa Modimo/Mookamedi yo a phagamego'* ('Let us pray for the Church's sanctified/the Son of God/the highest leader'). This expression refers to the current leader of the church. In the Z.C.C., it would refer to Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane and in the St. Engenas Z.C.C. it would refer to Bishop Engenas Lekganyane. No prayer should end without this step. This bishop is a very important figure as he links the members to God. This is the last step of prayer and should be followed by Amen. Any priest who does not follow these steps will confuse the worshippers. Because the bishop is a very important figure in the church, he is addressed by different titles. The following are a few examples:

***Senatla se segolo sa bo Rubene* (The great leader of Reuben's family)**

This is addressed to Barnabas of the Z.C.C. and not Engenas of St. Engenas Z.C.C. The reason is that Barnabas is the son of Reuben. Edward, the son of Engenas, was also called Reuben. When giving the history of the Zion Christian Church, Lukheimane remarks in *The Messenger* (2005:4) as follows:

Engenas o nyetše Sulphina Rabodika ka 1918, ba šegofatšwa ka bana ba tshelago (6): Barnabas, Reuben (Edward), Maria, Ezekiel (Mankwe), Joseph le Piet (Mahudu) (Engenas married Salphina Rabodika in 1918, they were blessed with six children (6): Barnabas, Reuben

(Edward), Maria, Ezekiel (Mankwe), Joseph and Piet (Mahudu). Edward was often addressed as Eddy Ramapanta. Ramapanta means a strong man. Literally, Ramapanta means a son whose body is full of several belts.

Mohwaduba 'a Mmaphaka a bo Monare

This title is attributed to a traditional praise poem. Each Northern Sotho family has its own praise poem. Although there are many families whose praise poems are *Mohwaduba/Bahwaduba*, in most parts of the Limpopo Province the praise *Mohwaduba* refers to Lekganyane, the head of the church. When presenting a speech about the power of God, one respondent will thank the bishop by saying: 'I thank you very much *Mohwaduba Mmaphaka a BoMonare* for having made me an important person in the world'. (*The Messenger*, 2003:10).

Kgomo (cow)

The Bishop is also addressed as *kgomo* (cow) as the *kgomo* is the totem of Lekganyane family. Although they honour the cow as the totem of their spiritual leader, they do not offer prayers to it as Poponoe *et. al.* (1998:322) indicate that a common form of religion among preliterate people is totemism. This cow is called *Sebariki* (Swaartjie). When praying, a respondent has to say the following:

Bjale ka motsotso wo ke tswalela mahlo, ke lebiša sefahlego saka legodimong la boraro la go loka, ke re kgomo Sebariki re swarele o re fe maatla le bophelo. (At this moment I close my eyes, and appeal to the third heaven, which is, holy, I say *Kgomo Sebariki*, forgive us and give us more power and life) (*The Messenger*, 2003:63).

On the Z.C.C. emblem, the colour of this cow is black and white. This means that the Z.C.C. is opened to all races, blacks and whites. Another significance of this cow is that it has a big teat. The teat is full of milk. The milk signifies faith and healing which all people, members and non-members, will get from the bishop.

Other titles are given to the leader, namely, *Mookamedi* (The onlooker) (*The Messenger*, 2003:42). This signifies that the bishop is able to see us committing sins. *Mong wa rena* (Our owner) (*The Messenger* 2003::42), *Morwa Kutwane* (The Son of Kutwane) (*The Messenger*, 2003:58), *Segola ka mpherefere* (the one who grows because of war) (*The Messenger*, 2003:68), *Ramarumo wa dintwa* (Ramarumo of wars) (*The Messenger*, 2003:68) and many more.

These titles have different meanings. Some are historical and some indicate that he is a great man. Because he has provided members with faith healing, they belong to him, he owns them, hence *mong wa rena* (our owner). *Morwa Kutwana* is historical. It tells that he is the son of *Kutwane*. *Segola ka mpherefere* is also historical. It refers to the time of the split. The Edward group was fighting with the Joseph group, hence *mpherefere* (war). In fact, Edward was not fighting against his brother Joseph, but his uncle Paulos whom he suspected of wanting to succeed Engenas even if he was not Engenas's son, but his younger brother. *Ramarumo wa dintwa* (Ramarumo of wars) has a prophetic significance. It was said that Engenas prophesised that during Barnabas's reign, there will be many wars in South Africa and the world at large.

4.2.2.2 *Thapelo ya Sephiri* (individual prayer)

Individual prayer literally means a secret prayer. This is the type of prayer done by an individual member alone at 24h00 (Twelve o'clock). In the past, it was done on mountains and forests. Currently, one is discouraged from praying on mountains and forests because one may be unsafe in the night. One may pray

within one's own yard. This type of prayer may not be said like the one in the church but nevertheless, it must also end by praying for the bishop three times. It is said '*O bege Mookamedi gararo*' (You must pray for the bishop three times). In this type of prayer one prays for all one's secretive problems and requests.

4.2.3 The Zion Christian Church Congregations

The following forms of congregations are found in the church:

4.2.3.1 *Phuthego ya go lala le go hlwa* (the night and day congregation)

It is named like this because members start to assemble on Saturday night and proceed to Sunday. The church service will be held as usual on Sunday at half-past-two until at five o'clock. When members go to the family that is hosting the congregation they say '*re ya mpogong*' (we go to *mpogo*). This is because according to the rules, members must sing this song the whole night. This song is called *mpogo*. Another name is *Kwadi ya Marumo* (A song for spears).

4.2.3.2 *Phuthego ya tšhabang masa* (the disperse at dawn congregation)

As the name indicates, members congregate during the night and leave for their homes at dawn. This type of congregation has replaced a type of traditional congregation which was called *malopong*. *Malopo* (traditional healers) hold their gathering during the night and leave for their homes at dawn.

4.2.3.3 *Phuthego ya basadi ba laboraro* (Congregation of Wednesday women)

It is also called *phuthego ya bomma* (The congregation of the mothers) because only women may attend. In the past, this type of congregation was meant for married women only, hence *bomma* (mothers), but presently any female person,

whether married or unmarried, may attend. The significance of this congregation is for older and experienced women to teach younger and inexperienced mothers many things, especially the church rules with regard to marriage, modes of dress and respect in general. The uniform of these women is a green skirt and a yellow blouse. Members of this type of congregation are divided according to their ranks, namely:

Bomme ba merapelò (women of prayers)

This refers to ordinary female members of the church.

Bomme ba potlana (women with a pocket)

They are senior to other ordinary women in the church. They are identified by a green pocket on their blouses. *Potlana* means a pocket. Their significance is that they may lead the prayer and conduct the grace in the absence of other senior women.

Bomme ba dikeledi (women of tears)

These are the most senior women in the church. They are very important in the church as they perform many duties such as to carry baby girls when they are blessed on Sundays, to lead the prayers on Wednesdays and even conduct the receipt of grace.

4.3 OBJECTS WITH SPECIAL DIVINE POWERS

Any religion has some objects which are perceived to possess supernatural powers or with which it is associated. The Zion Christian Church is distinguished by the following objects:

4.3.1 *Megau* (graces)

They are used by priests to bless other objects and people. There are three types, namely, *mogau wo mošweu* (the white grace), *mogau wo motala* (green grace) and *mogau wa khakhi* (khakhi grace). Women are not allowed to keep them. They are kept by men only. There are several reasons why women are not allowed to keep or even touch *megau*. Some of these reasons are that women are never appointed as priests in the Z.C.C. and they, therefore, cannot bless anything. Women may menstruate at any time. Menstruation is regarded as dirt in the Z.C.C. It is called *tšhilafalo* (dirt). When a woman is dirty as a result of menstruation, she may not even attend church services.

4.3.2 *Metlamo* (white robes)

Metlamo (white robes) are worn around the hips. They are blessed to be protective against enemies and witchcraft.

4.3.3 *Dikutane* (small blue strips of materials)

These are small blue strips of material that are put on clothes and they should not be seen by people. They are put under certain materials – hence their name means to be private. One is called *kutane*. This noun is derived from the verb stem – *utama* (to hide). This is why they must be hidden by clothes. Normally, they protect one against lightning. In Northern Sotho culture, lightning is believed to be caused by witchcraft.

4.3.4 *Mathale* (wires)

4.3.4.1 *Mathale a masesane* (thin wires)

These are wires that are put at the gates and entrances of houses. It is believed that they prevent sorcerers from entering the houses. They also protect vehicles against danger on the road. They have replaced *pheko ya baloi* as stated by Mönnig (1983:95).

4.3.4.2 *Koporo* (copper wires)

These are thick wires. They are put at the gates and also at the centres of the roof of every room. They protect against lightning.

4.3.5 *Dinepe* (icons)

The system of icons was derived from the influence of the main-line churches. In the Z.C.C., icons are pictures of the past and current bishops. Icons of Christ are seldom found in the houses of members. They protect the house against any form of trouble but mainly against thieves. Some icons are photos of the brassband.

4.3.6 *Kotane* (small stick)

This is a small stick of about ten centimeters and is used by priests only. Its main function is to relieve bodily pains. The priests knock the body parts, especially where the patient feels pain. *Kotane* comes from the verb stem – *kokota* which means to knock. It is also called *kokotana*.

4.4 **MEETSE (WATER)**

Water is the main source of life. This is why the Z.C.C. members are fond of saying '*Rena Masiona re fodile ka meetse*' (We, the Zionists, have been healed with water). Water is used for every ritual found in the Z.C.C. It is used to *phetha ditaelo* (direct orders).

4.4.1 **Meetse a moela (flowing water)**

It is found in rivers only and is used for instructions that have something to do with movements such as transfers at job situations or travelling. It is believed that when one is travelling, supernatural forces may cause accidents. The Northern Sotho people have the normal concept of an accident as do Westerners but theirs goes even further. To them, supernatural forces such as ancestors, witches and sorcerers may cause accidents. *Meetse a moela* (flowing water) may be used as *taelo* (a direct order) to prevent accidents. Concerning accidents among the Northern Sotho speaking people, Mönnig (1983:79) remarks:

An accident (*kotsi*) may be seen, in the same way as we do, to be caused by a lack of caution or merely by circumstances. If children at play bump into one another, this may be allowed to be an accident, although, should they sustain serious injury, it may be explained as being caused by a harmful supernatural force.

4.4.2 **Meetse a sediba (spring water)**

Meetse a sediba (spring water) comes from two sources, namely, *sediba sa thaba* (spring water found in the mountains) and *sediba sa fase* (spring water found in the valleys). The prophet has to inform the member from which spring he/she may use water. This type of water is used mainly to provide good health.

4.4.3 *Meetse a legakwa* (stagnant water)

Meetse a legakwa (stagnant water) is the water that does not move. It is used to protect one against one's enemies. Every religion is full of magic. The belief is that the magic found in this water will cause one's enemies to stop thinking about one.

4.4.4 *Meetse a makopano* (confluence water)

This water is used to make people understand each other. Its full name is *meetse a makopano a kopantšha batho* (the confluence water makes people meet). It is used to create peace amongst people. In the past, there was a ritual performed after marriage whereby a man and his newly wed wife were made to have sexual intercourse without problems such as penile dysfunction. A traditional healer was called to mix medicines to let the couple be one. It was called *banyalani ba a kopantšhwa* (to make the couple meet). *Meetse a makopano* (confluence water) has replaced such medicines.

4.4.5 *Meetse a sephiri* (hidden water)

This is the type of water found hidden under big rocks in the river and is used where there are wars, battles, demonstrations or even retrenchments. It is believed that by making use of this water, one may not be visible and the enemy or the employer will be unable to aim at one. This water has replaced what was called *maima* (*cyathula uncinulata*). The root of *maima* (*cyathula uncinulata*) was used in traditional Northern Sotho culture to add to the *seriti* of a man so that no legal action will ever be taken against him (Mönnig, 1983:91).

4.4.6 *Meetse a lešata* (noisy water)

Lešata means the lack of peace, in other words, the presence of harsh words, rebukes and reprimands. This water is used to create peace in the family, at workplaces and anywhere where people mix. At home it is often mixed with *makopano* (confluence water).

4.4.7 *Meetse a phororo* (falling water/waterfall)

Phororo (waterfall) works nearly the same as *lešata* (noisy water). It suppresses enmity. In the modern world, it is used by leaders such as headmen, school principals and employers to suppress strikes and demonstrations.

4.5 **KINDS OF DRINKS IN THE ZION CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

Drinks are the main parts of *ditaelo* (direct orders). They must be drunk almost every week. One respondent priest, when interviewed by a prominent Northern Sotho novelist about the healing powers of *ditaelo* (direct orders), stated:

Rena baruti ba Masiona ge re phethela batho ditaelo re ba apeelee teye, kofi, coacoa, mogabolo le hamburg tea go ya ka mo taelo ya yo mongwe le yo mongwe e mo tšwetšego ka gona ka ge e le tšona ditaelo tše di nwewago ka mo kerekeng ya Zion Christian Church.

(We, the Zionist priests must fulfil direct orders on behalf of members by cooking tea, coffee, cocoa, pure sanctified water and hamburg tea according to the direct orders of everyone because they are drinks which must be drunk in the Zion Christian Church) (*The Messenger*, 2003:42).

4.5.1 *Mogabolo* (pure sanctified water)

This is ordinary lukewarm water blessed by a priest with *megau* (graces). There is nothing added to this water except in certain instances where a prophet may instruct that this water be mixed with three crystals of salt or with another type of water such as *meetse a sediba sa thaba* (spring water from the mountain). This water heals any form of ailment.

4.5.2 *Tee ya senepe* (official church tea)

In the Zion Christian Church, there is a photo of Bishop Edward Lekganyane on the packet and in the St Engenas Zion Christian Church the packet has a picture of a dove on it. This tea is called *tee ya senepe* (the tea with a photo) to differentiate it from unofficial teas. There are types of teas used for ordinary household purposes which can be sanctified and be used, such as *tee ya senepe* (tea with a photo). These include Five Roses tea used mostly by the St. Engenas group and the *Joko* used mainly by the Edward group.

4.5.3 *Kofi ya senepe* (official church coffee)

It also has the photo of Bishop Edward Lekganyane on the packet and acts in the same way as *tee ya senepe*. Young women are discouraged from drinking it. It is believed that it may terminate pregnancy. The photo also distinguishes it from other unofficial coffees such as *Trekker* and *F.G.* Percolated coffees such as *Recoffee* are not used in the church.

4.5.4 *Sepešiale* (special tea)

This is a herb found in valleys and on mountains. It helps to cure the kidneys urinary system and other diseases related to blood flow. It is used only by priests

and is thus forbidden to be used by ordinary members of the church. One may not use it unless the prophet has instructed one to do so because overdosage has side effects.

4.5.5 *Sephontšhe* (sponge)

The mixture of coffee and tea is called *sepontšhe*. It is also drunk after being instructed by a prophet. Coffee and tea are the most acceptable drinks in the Z.C.C. They have all the magical powers to heal all forms of ailments as evidenced by one member:

Ke belegwe ka 1974-02-07, ke belegwa ke Zion Christian Church. Ke kolobeditšwe ka 1993-09-26 ke le motho a beng a phela, ka go tshwenyega, moo ke ileng ka feleletša ke ipoditše gore ke na le bolwetši bja pelo. Bothata e bile gore pelo yaka e be e fela e taboga go pompa madi sebaka sa go tloga gabedi go iša gararo. Seo se nolofaditšwe ke ditaelo (coffee and tea) tša kereke ya rena Zion Christian Church.

(I was born on 07.02.1974, of the Zion Christian Church. I was baptized on 26-09-1993. I was suffering, until I learnt that I had a heart problem. The problem was that my heart was failing to pump blood twice or even three times. This was relieved by direct orders (*ditaelo*) (coffee and tea) of our church, the Zion Christian Church (*The Messenger*, 2002:60).

It is significant to be aware of the implications of the ritual terminology used in the church because if one speaks of a sponge one may think of a non-drink. This terminology is significant to language in order to enhance communication. In this case sponge does not refer to a real sponge but to the mixture of coffee and tea.

4.5.6 Other non-official drinks

Non-official drinks found in the church include cocoa, Trekker Coffee, F.G. Coffee, Joko Tea, Five Roses Tea, Hamburg Tea and Klim Powder Milk. These can be bought at any shop and be blessed by a priest. After they have been blessed they can be used just like those with the official emblem.

4.6 PRAYER GROUPS WITHIN THE CHURCH

4.6.1 *Baruti le baprofeta* (priests and prophets)

A branch of the Z.C.C. will be opened only if there are at least ten priests to serve in the branch. This indicates that priests are very important in the church. Without prophets any branch of the Z.C.C. is dead. They are mediators between God and the members. Since they can see the future life of a person, the appropriate term for them is *mabone* (lights). The Z.C.C., like most independent churches, emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit and to a lesser degree ecclesiastical tradition (Meiring, 1996:142). Before a *lebone* (prophet) can start telling a person about his/her problems, he/she first receives the Holy Spirit. It is called *O tsenwa ke moyo* (He/she is being entered by the Holy Spirit). Thereafter, he/she will speak a different language that one may not understand. It is called *Lebone le bolela ka maleme a maphakga* (The prophet speaks in different tongues). There are two groups of *mabone* (prophets), namely, *mabone a go hlaloša* (prophets that can interpret) and *mabone a go se hlaloše* (prophets that cannot interpret).

Priests are classified into three categories, namely, *bareri* (catechists), *bakolobetši* (deacons) and *baevangedi* (evangelists). *Bareri* (catechists) preach the word of God. They perform all other duties assigned to priests but they do not baptize the converts and do not bless the backsliders and infants. *Bakolobetši* (deacons) differ

from *bareri* (catechists) because they are allowed to baptize the converts. *Bakolobetši* comes from the verbstem *-kolobetša* which means to baptize. *Baevangedi* (evangelists) do all other jobs done by *bareri* (catechists) and *bakolobetši* (deacons) but go a step further. They also bless the people who left the church and have returned, bless infants, and bless new converts after baptism. They do not, however, marry couples. Couples are married by a *ministara* (minister). A church minister is not found in every congregation. Members of the church believe that priests have healing powers ordained to them by the bishop. This is evidenced by one member who remarked:

Modimo wa rena wa Kereke ya Sione le ena o na le ba ba mo thušang, mme o ba file maatla a go fodiša malwetši le mefokolo ka moka elego baruti ba Kereke ya Sione.

(Our God of the Zion Christian Church has people who help him, and he gave them healing powers to heal diseases and other ailments and those are the priests of Zion Christian Church) (*The Messengers*, 2002:62).

4.6.2 *Mokhukhu* (male youths)

Like the Roman Catholic Church which has its own army (Meiring, 1996:141), the Z.C.C. has got its own army in the form of *mokhukhu* (male youths). The St Engenas Z.C.C. does not have this structure. Their uniform resembles that of the military army. It is a *khakhi* suit with white boots known as *manyanyatha* and a navy cap. They are responsible for the protection of the church officials including the bishop. They can be sent to destroy *diagelo* (unofficial churches which are organised by priests).

4.6.3 *Khwaere (male/female choir)*

There are two choirs found in the Z.C.C. – a male choir and a female choir. A male choir is just a choir for luxury songs and cannot *phetha taelo* (fulfil direct orders). They also do not have an official uniform. The most important choir is the female choir because it has an official uniform and can also *phetha taelo* (fulfil direct orders).

4.6.4 *Bonkedi (nkedis)*

They are also in two groups, namely, *bonkedi ba banna* (male nkedis) and *bonkedi ba basadi* (female nkedis). They put on a special uniform which looks like those of the Scottish soldiers. They sing traditional songs but with Christian messages.

4.6.5 *Ditimamello (fire brigades)*

They sing a song called *mpogo*. This song is supposed to be sung by all members of the church, children, the youth, adults, and the elders. But some groups of church members decided that some members do not sing it well so that its meaning of *go phetha taelo* (fulfil divine prescriptions/direct orders) is not delivered. They decided to sing it in their own style, blowing traditional instruments such as *matsie* (whistles), *mapatata* (kudu horns) and *ditshela* (tambourines) while putting *matshogo/mathotse* on their legs. Some members are not happy with them at some congregations and regard them as cults. The reason why they call themselves *ditimamello* (firebrigades) is that they believe that when they dance all problems (*mello*) of the family are solved.

4.7 TYPES OF SONGS SUNG IN THE ZION CHRISTIAN CHURCH

When explaining the operation and motifs in African initiated churches, Meiring (1996:23) states that in the liturgies of these churches, abundant opportunity is given for warmth, empathy and communal emotion while dancing and rhythmic movement play a significant role. He adds that singing uses traditional melodies (*op. cit.* 23). Meiring is correct as will be evidenced by the types of songs below. It is also important to note that the Z.C.C. has its own terminology regarding religious songs as will be illustrated hereunder:

4.7.1 *Mpogo*

Like any other independent church, the Z.C.C. uses the hymnbook known as *Lifela tsa Sione* (Hymns of Zion). *Mpogo* is a traditional song of this church and is regarded as another hymn. While the majority are acting as a background dances, there are a few singers who utter certain sentences. The contents of *mpogo* are varied. The following are a few examples:

- (a) In this song, the leaders of the church are praised, and a special terminology is used:

Mpogo,
Mohwaduba 'a Mmaphaka 'a bo monare Lekganyane,
Mpogo,
Engenase ke Morena wa Marena,
Mpogo
Mohwaduba nkabe e se be wena,
Mpogo
Rena re ka be re le mabitla,
Mpogo,
Kgomo yešo Sebariki,
Mpogo
Le e gameng gabotse Masiona,
Mpogo.

Ka dinaka e a hlaba

Mpogo

Ka dingatha e a raga.

(Mpogo,
Mohwaduba of Mmaphaka of Monare Lekganyane,
Mpogo
Engenase is the king of kings
Mpogo,
Mohwaduba, had it not been for you,
Mpogo
We could have been turned into graves,
Mpogo
Our cow Swartjie,
Mpogo,
Milk it carefully Zionists,
Mpogo,
With her horns she stabs
Mpogo
With her hoofs she kicks.)

In this part of this song, the founder of the church, Engenas, is being praised. The first line depicts the totem of the Lekganyane family. The line actually praises the family for producing such a saviour. The song then states that this founder, Engenas, is not only a king but he rules over other kings. The song furthermore indicates that if Engenas was not there, members of the church could have died because of lack of faith healing. The totem for the Lekganyane family is a cow (*kgomo yešo*) and its name is Swartjie (Blacky). Lekganyane in this context is likened to a cow. 'To milk here means to affiliate to the church. This church preaches moral ethics where members are not allowed to be drunkards. Those who do not live in accordance with these moral ethics often leave the church. The other sentences that emphasise this idea are *Kgomo ka dinaka e a hlaba* (This cow stabs with its horns), and *ka dingatha e a raga* (with its hoofs it kicks). The meaning here is that it is not easy to follow the direct rules of the church.

The same song emphasises the importance of Black moral ethics as the following verses indicate:

*Tswiri tlogela go ja leotša,
Leotša le a tlogelwa,
Sekolo fologa thaba,
Dikgomo tša thaba di a ota.*

(Finch, leave eating millet,
Millet is left,
Hornless ox descend from the mountain,
Cattle grazing on the mountain become lean.)

The term finch in this case does not refer to a real bird, but to a man who commits adultery. Millet is the crop owned by the farmer but in this context, millet refers to unfaithful sex. The finch often steals the millet of the farmer. In this context, the adulterer is stealing somebody's wife. Hornless ox connotes an unfaithful man while the mountain here refers to an unfaithful woman. The verse then denotes a man who sleeps with unfaithful woman and as a consequence, can contract diseases and eventually die.

The song *Mpogo* protests against White domination and Black poverty. According to Molefe Tsele, blackness is both moral and political. Used morally, blackness is an affirmation of the humanity of the oppressed (Villa-Viencio and De Gruchy, 1994:127). Membership in the Zion Christian Church is mainly black; and therefore, blackness and being a Zionist are synonymous. This means that for Zionists as blacks, their humanity is inseparable from their blackness. The following lines depict protest against white oppression:

*Papa o makaditše Mapharise, Majakane,
Kgomo o tšwa go boa Rhodesia,
O makaditše le baruti ba dikholoro,
Rena re ditšhiwana tša bo tšhiwatšhiwe, Lekganyane.*

(The father has surprised members of the Mainline churches, Kgomo has returned from Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) He surprised qualified priests of Mainline churches. We are poor and oppressed, Lekganyane).

In the first line of this song, *Mapharise Majakane* refers to followers of the Mainline churches. These are Black people who shun Black culture. The missionary who delivered the gospel to the Northern Sotho people was Paricius, hence *Mapharisi*, that is, followers of Paricius. Followers of Mainline churches are known as *Majakane*. This sentence means that because the Whites taught their followers not to believe in Lekganyane's gospel, they are surprised because Lekganyane's church now has a large following. A huge branch of the church was opened in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) hence *Papa o tšwa go boa Rhodesia*. (My father has just arrived back from Rhodesia). This was amazing to the church's enemies because the Z.C.C. was becoming bigger and bigger and even went out of the boundaries of the Republic of South Africa. Anti-Lekganyaneism was preached by the priests of the Mainline churches. Because they put a white collar on their shirts as a sign of their qualification, they are identified as *baruti ba dikholoro*. A large following by the Northern Sotho people surprised them despite their preachings against Lekganyane. The sentence *rena ditšhiwana* (we the orphans) has a denotative meaning. *Ditšhiwana* literally means orphans. But used in this context, it means the down-trodden and oppressed. Lekganyane is regarded as the Messiah by the Zionists. It is believed that through his leadership and prayers they will be liberated from White domination. It should be remembered that a large percentage of members of the Z.C.C. are from the proletariat class.

4.7.2 *Dikhorase* (choruses)

There are short songs which are sung by both the *khwaere* (choir) and the *mokhukhu* (male youths). Like the expression in *mpogo*, they may also be divided

into the messages they convey. There are many such choruses but only one example of each type will be provided.

(a) **Choruses that praise the bishop**

*Ke tla dula le Ramarumo,
Ke tshepe yena fela,
Ga ke nyake go ba moeti,
Moeti wo lebakanyana.*

*Mong wa rena o a re rata,
Eupša rena ga re mmone,
Ke tla dula le Ramarumo,
Ke tshepe yena fela.*

(I shall stay with Ramarumo,
And trust him alone
I do not want to be a visitor
A temporary visitor.)

Our leader loves us
But we do not see him
I will stay with Ramarumo
And trust him alone.)

The message in this chorus is that the singer wholeheartedly praises the bishop (Ramarumo). He/she emphasizes his/her trust in him and the love that the bishop has for his followers. The chorus is rich in meaning. There is metonymy as well as repetition in this chorus. The repetition of ‘*Ke tla dula le Ramarumo*’ in the first and last stanzas emphasizes the importance of the bishop. *Moeti* in this chorus does not mean an ordinary visitor, but a patient who stays at Moria for treatment.

(b) **Choruses that emphasise church morals**

*Le ka se kgolwe ge nka le botša,
Tšatši le lengwe ke ile ka lwala,
Ka ya ngakeng tša Sesotho,
Tša re ke hlabe pudi ke tla fola,
Ramarumo a kgalemela,
Ramarumo a kgalemela lewatle,
Kgoši a kgalemela.*

(You will not believe what I will say,
One day I was ill,
And went to consult traditional healers
And they said if I may slaughter a goat, I will be healed,
Ramarumo reprimanded,
Ramarumo reprimanded the ocean
The king reprimanded the ocean.)

In this chorus, the language is poetic because of repetition. In this chorus, the message is that Zionists are not allowed to consult traditional healers. Should one contravene this moral code, the bishop who is equaled to the king will know and reprimand such a member. It should be emphasized that consulting traditional healers is a taboo in the Zion Christian Church because everything that can be obtained from the traditional healers can be obtained from the church as well.

(c) **Choruses also indicate protest against white domination**

*Ba tla mo swara
Ba mo kgoka ka ditšhipi Mohwaduba,
Rena re lebeletše.*

(They (the whites) will arrest him,
They will handcuff him Mohwaduba
While we look on.)

Choruses of this kind were very popular during the sixties when the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress were banished while their leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Prof Robert Sobukwe were arrested. Like these great leaders, it was believed that Edward Lekganyane could be no exception.

(d) **Choruses that reveal the history of the church**

The best example is:

*Kereke ye e thomilwe ke Kgoši Engenas,
A latelwa ke Kgoši Edward,
Gonabjale ke lesedi le ditšhaba.*

(This church was started by King Engenas,
He was followed by King Edward,
Now it is the light of nations.)

The 'light of the nation' here refers to the current bishop Barnabas Lekganyane. The title 'bishop' has been replaced by the title 'king'.

Another example is:

*Enenas o lwele le Sathane,
Engenas o lwele le Sathane ka 1910,
Edward a tsena ntwana ena,
Edward a tsena ntwana ena ka sebele,
Ramarumo o hlotše ntwana ena,
Ramarumo o hlotše ntwana ena ka sebele.*

(Engenas fought against Satan,
Engenas fought against Satan in 1910,
Edward joined that fight,
Edward joined that fight himself,
Ramarumo won that fight,
Ramarumo won that fight himself.)

This chorus emphasizes the inception of the church and its leaders in succession. According to the chorus, the church was started in 1910 by Bishop Engenas Lekganyane, who was succeeded by his son Bishop Edward Lekganyane while the current spiritual leader is Bishop Ramarumo Lekganyane.

Music, singing and dance are very important in the Z.C.C. This is because music gives an outlet to the emotional expression of the religious life, and is a powerful means of communication in African traditional life (Mbiti, 1991:27).

4.8 MISCELLANEOUS TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE ZION CHRISTIAN CHURCH

As Latin is the traditional language of the Roman Catholic Church, Northern Sotho is also the traditional and official language of the Z.C.C. Terminology used in the Z.C.C. clearly depicts the identity of its members. As one of the so-called African Initiated Churches, the Z.C.C. attempts to reconcile Christianity with tradition, and, therefore, serves to illustrate the struggle to develop a Christianity with distinctively African identity (Meiring, 1996:23). Traditional motifs play a major role in the Z.C.C. For example, church government is hierarchical and follows the traditional tribal structure where the church leader (bishop) takes the place of a chief and other officials those of headmen. The following terminology serves as an example: *Kgoši* – this refers to the bishop and not the king/chief. When he marches in front of the brass band it is called *Kgoši o matšha le diphala*. (The bishop leads the brass band). The word *kgoši* (chief) used in the Z.C.C. circles does not mean the chief but the bishop.

Motswalle (my relative) - This word is used in the church and does not mean one's relative as such but one's 'comrade'. In the Z.C.C., abundant opportunity is given for warmth, empathy and communal emotion. This is the reason why Zionists call one another *motswalle*. The term is applicable to both men and women. When

greeting one another, they would say: *Kgotsong motswalle* (Greetings comrade). *Motswalle* has now turned to mean a member of the Z.C.C. For example, one can say: *Malome ga a sa nwa bjalwa ka gore matsatši a ke motswalle*. (My uncle does not drink beer anymore because these days he is a Zionist).

The attitude to healing in this church follows the traditional holistic approach and the office of the prophet is introduced to assume the role of the traditional healer, using methods which closely resemble the psychosomatic approach to tradition. The following terminology serves as examples:

Go ikilela (to abstain) - This means not to have sexual relations on certain days and events. For example, members should not have sex a day before coming to church. They must not have sex on Saturday if they will be attending a church service on Sunday, and so on. The traditional healer also has to abstain from sex before he treats a patient. When responding to the question posed by a church member, Pastor Dibete observed: '*Le lengwe la mabaka a magologolo a a dirago gore moruti a palelwe ke go fodiša molwetši ke go se ikilele*'. ('One of the reasons why a priests may be unable to heal a patient is lack of abstinence from sex') (*The Messenger*, 2003:40).

Go šilafala (to be dirty)

This means either to be dirty because of being present at a funeral or to have had sex. This does not mean to be literally full of dirt. To women, it may also mean to be menstruating.

Go nyakišiša (to search deeply)

Literally it means to search deeply. But, used in the church, it means to find out about the state of health from the prophet. It is equal to divination which is done with the traditional healers.

Lešakeng (in the kraal)

This does not refer to the real kraal where cattle sleep but indicates a sacred place within the church where the prophets are consulted.

Leswikeng (at the rock)

This does not refer to a real rock as such, but the headquarters of the church. If one says: *Ke nyaka go ya leswikeng* (I want to go to the rock), non-members of the church may not understand what one means. Actually one would be saying that one wants to go to Moria (Headquarters of the Z.C.C.).

Makhunamo (places of worship)

In certain areas the church is far away from the people. Because the social aspect of church life is strongly emphasized, the church creates new communities in which people find support, protection and security. These places are called *makhunamo* but they still owe allegiance to the central church.

Mogolo (elder)

The term is not used like in the Mainline churches to refer to the church elder. In the Z.C.C. it means any male person, whether young or old.

Boipolelo (testification)

Before a member can enter into the church service, he/she must first call a priest and reveal his/her sins. It is also called *go ithintha* (to dust off oneself) or *go itlhagiša* (to reveal oneself).

4.9 CONCLUSION

The chapter concentrated on speech rituals that occur in the Zion Christian Church. Visitors and the newly baptised members of the church need to know speech rituals pertaining to this church in order to be able to communicate smoothly. Language used by the prophets as special language has been discussed since it is not used anywhere else in the Province. For example, calling God ‘*Biovathaka*’ may be strange to visitors. The Z.C.C. community lives within other communities and it is therefore a community within a community. Its types of congregations have been analysed. Westerners may find it difficult to identify such congregations as Christian or pagan because dancing and singing are highly traditional. Objects with supernatural powers have been pointed out as well as the powers they possess. Different types of water used in the church have been illucidated.

This chapter concludes by analysing the different terminology used in the church in order to facilitate communication. The church headquarters are in the process of being transformed into the ‘Vatican of Africa’ and this means that it would be a centre of attraction to foreign visitors. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that the language used in the church be understood.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter is to give a summary, the findings and recommendations of this research study. The research topic concerns deconstructing speech rituals in Northern Sotho.

This study aimed at analysing discourses found in the three domains, namely, marriage, death and religion in Northern Sotho in order to provide a thorough understanding of the sociolinguistic discourse milieu among Northern Sotho speaking people.

The first chapter deals with the introduction of the study where the aim of the study, the rationale for the study, the significance of the study, methodology used in the study, and the literature review, are reflected.

The second chapter analyses speech rituals as found in the marriage domain. The chapter points out the importance of marriage amongst Northern Sotho speaking people which has a bearing on language use. The part on speech rituals and taboos concentrated on the following topics:

- (i) language referring to girls and their physical conditions;
- (ii) language used during marriage negotiations;
- (iii) language referring to cattle required during marriage negotiations;
- (iv) language referring to divorce; and
- (v) language referring to types of marriages.

The third chapter explores the speech rituals applicable to death situations among Northern Sotho speaking people. The chapter defines death and its significance.

The language used in the death domain was used to illustrate how the Northern Sotho people view death. Because death is not accepted as a natural phenomenon by Northern Sotho speaking people, several refrains and taboos are associated with it. Moreover, the reasons are given why Northern Sotho speaking people prefer the use of euphemisms to direct language as in the following instances: *go ithobalela* (to sleep), *go khutša* (to rest), *go ya badimong* (to go to the ancestors), *go ngala bogobe* (to refuse eating), instead of *motho o hwile* (the person is dead).

In addition, the chapter deals with language relevant to the following situations: death omens, burials, funerals, cleansing, abstinence from sex and the unveiling of tombstones.

Religious language is dealt with in chapter four and in this instance, the Zion Christian Church has been selected for illustrative purposes. The chapter begins with definitions of religion. Different definitions of religion have been mentioned as well as the significance of religion in a community.

The chapter has focused on speech rituals regarded as appropriate in the following situations: greetings, prayers, ranks of church members, types of congregations, and objects with supernatural powers.

Finally, the chapter discusses the general terminology used in the Zion Christian Church. These are words used in ordinary language which have a denotative meaning, but as used in the church, have a connotative meaning. For example, *kgoši* (which denotatively mean a chief, connotatively means the bishop). *Motswalle* means a relative but as used in the Z.C.C., it refers to a fellow elder brother or any male member.

5.2 FINDINGS

- It has been found that speech rituals play an important part in Northern Sotho as they enhance communication among speakers of this language.
- Speech rituals are situational, that is, they must be used in a suitable situation, such as in marriage ceremonies, funerals and in the church.
- If speech rituals are ignored, there will be miscommunication and cultural intolerance.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Elderly people should always talk about speech rituals in the correct manner to provide the younger members with the relevant terminology.
- Authors must endeavour to write about speech rituals so that readers may become increasingly informed about them.
- The study was limited to the three domains, namely, marriage, death and religion. It is recommended that a further study of speech rituals applicable to other domains be made.
- Language use is of crucial importance in any discourse situation. It is, therefore, equally important that speakers and listeners treat any expression with the respect it deserves. If this is not done, misunderstandings and miscommunications may arise which might ultimately lead to conflict.

- Seeing how vital speech rituals are in Northern Sotho, it would, therefore, be prudent to include them in the curriculum of courses such as Life Skills, Life Orientation and Human Science Studies.

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